

# Heaven's Necklace

Joseph Rindal

# Heaven's Necklace

Joseph Rindal

C

[Christian-e-holdings.com](http://Christian-e-holdings.com)

*Heaven's Necklace*

© Copyright 2022 by Joseph Rindal. All rights reserved.

---

No part of this publication will be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any way by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the author except as provided by USA copyright law.

The opinions expressed by the author are not necessarily those of Christian-e-holdings.com.

This novel is a work of fiction. Names, descriptions, entities, and incidents included in the story are products of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, events, and entities is entirely coincidental.

---

Published by Christian-e-holdings.com

200 Ferguson St | Neillsville, Wisconsin 54456 USA

Christian-e-holdings.com

Christian-e-holdings is committed to excellence in the publishing industry. Joseph Rindal reflects the philosophy, based on John 21:25 (WEB), *"Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written."*

Book Cover design by Joseph Rindal. All rights reserved.

Edited by Joseph Rindal

Interior design by Joseph Rindal

---

Published in the United States of America

ISBN: 000-0-00000-000-0

Fiction / Religious

Fiction / Romance / General

Registration Number TXu 2-311-161

Dedicated to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and my children.

# Preface

God gave me this story in a dream. At the time of the dream, I was extremely sick with the flu. In my dream three images appeared to me, a man, a woman, and a beautiful gold necklace. God's powerful love surround the man, woman, and the necklace. What impressed me about the dream, was the strong unshakable sense of love this man and woman had for one another. I sensed God's strong and undeniable love for the man and woman. I must admit, I have never felt this kind of strong love in my life. I am reminded of God's dynamic love through the scriptures, and the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross. After reflecting on my simple and most unusual dream, I began to understand God's overpowering desire to create love between man and woman. In my past, I suffered heartbreaking divorce. God sent me a message, at the very moment I needed help. God was encouraging me to move on with my life. These three simple images in my dream, inspired my soul, and I jumped to action and drafted this book.

As you read this book, it may trigger raw and painful emotions from your past relationships. Were your relationships good and bad? You may have willingly tucked harsh and unwanted memories in the crevices of your mind, but God forces you deal with the past before He will move you into a blessed future. It is time that you move into a future of love. This story displays tragedy, grace, love, salvation, and redemption. This book is free for the reader to read. Please forgive my grammatical errors and concentrate on the creativity in the book. The last time I checked, God and Jesus are the only perfect creator and savior.

## *Chapter 1*

The scene unfolds, as an elderly woman is praying on her knees. We peer through a rain covered windowpane and listen to her pray, "Dear Lord, I am not sure what to do about my furnace." She softly cries in prayer, "How will I keep warm this winter?" The clock on her nightstand displayed 2:05 pm, through her blurry tear-filled eyes. She whispers another prayer, "Lord, please send someone to help me!"

A milli-second later, a man across town is sitting in his office. John looked at the office clock, as it blinked 2:05 pm. John rubbed his neck and felt bothered and cleared his throat. John defies the flu virus, which has overcome his body and shouts in irritation, "No! No! No! I am not getting sick!" John moans and mumbles, "I am too crazy busy to get sick." He fought off the flu symptoms until 7:00 pm. John left the office. As he walks towards his car, his body is aching, shaking, chilled, and profusely sweating, as the flu virus is in full control. John stumbles to his Cadillac and opens the car door and slid his aching body into the car seat. John made his way home while driving erratically. John's home is located on the west side of the Philadelphia. Driving through the suburb, John reflected on the days, when his two young boys would be waiting for him to arrive home. John loved to have his boys meet him at the front door. His two boys would give John hugs and kisses, along with the usual roughhousing, as the boys welcomed John home. Unfortunately, John's home is silent and void of life, joy, love, and laughter. John's boys have left for college. John avoids his home as much as possible. John's home has become a prison of loneliness, that he has willfully chosen to live in.

John drove in the driveway and stopped his car in a jerking motion. John is too exhausted to lift his aching arm to the visor and press the garage door opener. John's eyes have become blurry, and he shook his head a bit, while his car lunged forward and stopped inches from the garage door. He put his car in park and opened the car door and put his feet on the cement driveway. John attempts to get out of his car but fell to the pavement. He began convulsing with chills and sweating, while resting on the cold cement for moments. John struggles to his feet and stumbles to his front door. He pulls the house keys from his pant pocket and fumbles his keys and drops the keys on the doorstep, while coughing extremely hard. John reaches down and picked up his keys and stuck the key in the deadbolt lock and turned the key and entered his home, while cursing. He slowly staggered

down the hallway and passed out and fell face down on the floor. After a couple minutes, John awoke and found himself lying in the hallway. John continued to remain on the floor and kicked the front door shut. John managed to get up and walk to his couch and collapsed face down on the couch. John felt the coolness of the leather ease his body's elevated temperature. He reached for the remote control on the coffee table and clicked on the television. John watched television while drifting off to sleep. After an hour, John awoke and walked up stairs and showered and settled in for bed.

John tossed, turned, coughed, and sweated profusely all night and into the morning. The alarm clock brutally beeped and flashed 8:00 am. John awoke felt tired and exhausted. John reached over grabbed his cell phone and called the office. John's secretary brightly answers, "This Susan, how may I help you!" John coughs a bit and says in an exhausted tone of voice, "Susan, I am super sick and can barely move. I am not coming in today." Susan says in look of shock, "Oh, Okay, I hope you feel better, Mr. Bannister." Susan hung up the phone and says, "Wow, John is never sick." John ended the phone call with Susan. He rolled over in his bed and nestled his body next to a pillow.

## *Chapter 2*

John is tired and exhausted from the high fever, he slowly drifted back to sleep. John experienced a dream. In John's dream, he is driving his car in a suburb on the east side of Philadelphia. The suburb is known for poverty, drugs, gangs, and crime. John completed a right turn unto Cramer Street and another right turn unto Holder Drive. John is amazed to see the dilapidated condition of the homes in the subdivision. Un-numbered homes have broken windows and glass panes. Multiple windows in multiple homes have plastic sheeting and duct tape covering over the broken windows to keep the chilly weather out. These homes need serious updating and repairs to be livable. John stopped car at the third house on the right. John stepped out of his car, walked to the front door, and knocked on the door.

An elderly lady opens the front door and says, "Can I help you?" John softly says, "I am not sure why I am here?" The elderly lady invited John into her home. The elderly woman says, "What is your name and what can I do for you?" John says, "My name is John Bannister. I am still not sure why I am here. Do you know? What is your name?" The elderly woman says, "My name is Martha Brady." John kindly says, "What can I do for you?" Martha broke down and cried. Once Martha regained her composure, she says, "I need my furnace repaired and do not have the money to fix it. I am on a fixed income and cannot afford the furnace repair." The hard-hearted John says in a compassionate voice, "I will pay for the furnace repair and any other repairs you need!" Martha felt a sense of relief, and she whispers aloud, "Thank you, John, and thank you, Jesus." Martha hugged John, and whispered in his ear, "Go to the fifth home on the right and you will receive a message!"

John wrote down Martha's phone number and address on a piece of paper. John sweetly says, "I will call a heating contractor, and schedule the furnace or replacement. You should have heat in a couple of days." John and Martha say goodbye to one another.

John walked to his car and felt great, while he reflected on the kind gesture that he has just shown Martha. John got into his car and drove to the fifth home on the right side of the street. John stopped his car, got out the car and slammed the car door shut. John's pretentious attitude rumbled back into his spirit, and he whispers



in anger, "I don't have time for this," as he mutters a couple curse words. John walked to the porch of the dilapidated home and knocked on the front porch door and waited. Nobody answered the door. John opened the porch door, walked in the entryway, and proceeded to the next door. John knocked on the second door and waits. As John is waiting, he looked around the porch to see paint on the walls cracked, chipped, and pieces of paint laying on the floor. John thought to himself, *"This place needs a whole lot of work."* Without warning, the door quickly swung open, and a large boisterous woman stood before John. John felt a bit unsettled by the woman staring at him. The woman turns her head to the right and shouts, "Harold, get your lazy butt off the couch and do something!" A man says in an obnoxious tone of voice, "Do not worry about me, woman! Who is at the door?" The woman looks at John and says, "What you want, and what is your name?" John is surprised by the woman's straightforward antics, and he is troubled as she stared into his soul. John felt spiritually violated. John says, "My name is John Bannister, what is yours?" The lady hesitantly says, "Mrs. Harriet Johnson. What you want?" Harriet looks at John with a suspicious and says, "What you want?" John says with a sheepish smirk, "Mrs. Brady told me to come and visit you. You have a message for me." Harriet is suspicious of John and says, "What did you do to Martha?" John reluctantly says, "I am going to buy Martha a furnace." Harriet politely smiles, while letting her guard down and says, "Bless your heart!" as she stairs deeply into John's eyes, while squinting her left eye to winnow his spirit. She used her right eye to penetrate John's mind. Harriet took a big deep breath and exhaled in exasperation. Harriet says, "Give me fifty dollars!" John suspiciously says, "What?" Harriet says, "Give me fifty dollars, and I will tell you what you need to know!" John is confused by Harriet's demand and pulled fifty dollars from his pant pocket and handed the money to Harriet. Harriet snatches the fifty-dollar bill from John's hand and says, "Two houses down and on the right and you will find what you're looking for!" John politely thanked Harriet for the information and turned to walk away from Harriet. Harriet says to John, "Thanks for the fifty. Come back any time!" As John walks away, Harriet hollers to her husband, "Harold, Praise the Lord, we got fifty-dollars from that nice man, that came to the door."

John got in his car and drove two houses down the street and stopped. Suddenly, John got upset and started to swear profusely and sped away from the home. John turns the corner to exit the suburb, when something in his spirit says, *"Turn*

*around!*” John uncontrollably grabs his steering wheel tightly and angrily says, “What for?” A voice in John’s spirit says, “*For Heaven’s sake, turn around!*” John is disgusted but turned around and drove back to the home. John stepped out of his car slammed his car door extra hard and cursed again. He walked to the home and knocked on the door. No one answers the front door. John knocked on the door a bit harder and the door slowly opened. John’s dream quickly ended, and he woke up in mid dream.

## *Chapter 3*

John awoke from his unusual dream and looked at his alarm clock blinking 11:37 am. John's dream is over, and what a crazy dream it was. John rolled out of bed. John showers. John is weak from the flu virus that ravaged his body over the night. John's fever has dropped, he feels better, as he showers. While showering, John ponders his unusual dream, thinking aloud, "What does the dream mean? What if an elderly lady needs my help? Who lives in the third home?" John's dream is so vivid in his mind, that he decides to travel to the area, where his dream had taken place.

John drove to the east side of Philadelphia, where he believed his dream had taken place. John stopped his car and entered the address in his GPS. John followed the GPS instructions and drove through the rundown sub-division. John turned on Holder Drive and stopped in front of the first home. The home is identical to the house in John's dream. John says, "This is weird my dream cannot be real." John got out of his car and walked to the front door of the home. He knocked on the front door.

An elderly lady opens the door and says, "Can I help you?" John says, "More importantly, can I help you?" The elderly woman invited John into her home. The elderly woman says, "What is your name?" John says, "John Bannister, what is your name?" "Martha Brady," the elderly woman says. John and Martha walk down the hallway of her home, and John looked at the multiple family pictures on the walls. John says, "You have a lot of family pictures." Martha says, "Family and friends often forget an old lady like me, but I love them dearly." Martha and John walk into her living room and Martha says, "Please, have a seat!" John is direct in manner and says, "You need a furnace, don't you?" Martha is surprised by John's comment and says with a sense of intrigue in her voice, "How did you know?" John says, "You would not believe me if I told you, but here goes. I had a dream this morning." John told Martha his dream. Martha is excited to hear John's story, and hugs him and says, "God has answered my prayer, by sending you." John kindly says, "Whatever it takes to fix your furnace and any other home repairs you need, I will pay for it." Martha is humbled, and thanked John for his kindness. Martha says, "Go five houses down on the right and talk to Mrs. Johnson! I hope and pray the rest of your dream comes true!" John wrote down Martha's address and phone

number. John says, "I will contact a furnace contractor and give him your number and address. The furnace company will replace your furnace in a couple of days." John and Martha say goodbye to one another.

John got in his car and drove down the street to the fifth home on the right. Just as in the dream, John knocked on the porch door and no one answered the door. John opened the porch door, walked to the second door, and knocked. As John is waiting, he looked around the porch and observed cracked, chipped, and peeling paint on the siding. John thought to himself, "*This place really needs some work.*" Just then, the door swung open, and a large woman turned her head and yelled at her husband. The woman looks at John and says, "What you want? Who sent you? You are not from around here." John is amused by Mrs. Johnson's expressive antics and says, "Mrs. Brady told me to come here and talk to you. You have a message for me!" Harriet forcefully says, "What did you do to Mrs. Brady?" "Martha needs a new furnace, and I am buying her a new furnace." Harriet let her boisterous guard down and says, "Bless your heart! What is your name?" John says, "John Bannister, what is your full name?" Harriet says, "Mrs. Johnson, but you can call me Harriet!" Harriet squints her left eye to look at John and says, "Give me fifty dollars!" John says, "What?" Harriet says, "Fifty dollars, if you want my message." John pulled a fifty-dollar bill from his pant pocket and handed the money to Harriet. Harriet snatched the fifty-dollar bill from John's hand and squinted her left eye at Jon, while using her right eye to search his soul. John felt violated by Harriet's deep stare into his soul. Harriet is thinking in moments of silence. Harriett finally says, "Two houses down and on the right. You will find what you are looking for!" John thanked Harriet for the information, and the two people goodbye to one another. As John walked to his car, he heard Harriet say to her husband, "Praise the Lord, that nice man gave us fifty dollars."

John got in his car and drove two houses down and stopped his car. In his dream, John remembered driving out of the sub-division while swearing and raging. John saved himself the grief, got out of his car and walked to the front door. John knocked on the door and waited for the person the answer the door. No one answered the door. He knocked on the door again. No one answered, just as John is about to leave the door opened a bit. A female voice hesitantly says, "Can I help you?" John says, "Mrs. Johnson told me to come and visit you." The woman looked down to the floor for a second, while John looked at the cracked and chipped paint

on the siding of the home. No answer came from the woman, as she intently stared at him. John felt that the conversation is not getting anywhere and started to turn and walk away. The woman reluctantly opens the door and says, "Please, come in!" John turned walked thru doorway and in the home. John is surprised by the living conditions in the woman's home. Every part of the home is need of repair. John walked in the dark living room and observed the shadow of a young boy watching television. The young boy is sitting on a raggedy old couch. The only light in the living room is emanating from the television, which flickers on the dingy walls. The woman told her son to change his clothing. The young boy left the living room and entered his bedroom. Minutes later, the boy returned to the living room wearing blue-jeans and an Eagles football jersey. The tension is strong in the room until John says to the woman, "What is your name?" The woman says, "Beth Rogers." John kindly says, "Nice to meet you, Beth." John says to young boy, "What is your name, young man?" The boy says, "Jeremy." John says to the woman, "What do you do for a living?" Beth says, "I clean offices for a large high-rise in downtown Philly. The job does not pay much, but it is what I do for a living. I work the night shift."

Beth began to feel uncomfortable. Beth says, "Why did you come here?" John struggled with what to tell Beth. John prays to God in his mind for the first time in over ten years by thinking, "*God, help me to explain this story without sounding like I'm totally nuts.*" John felt an overwhelming spirit of peace come over him. John says, "You are not going to believe this, I had a dream this morning." John told bits and pieces of his dream to Beth and Jeremy. Beth is not believing John's story and is about to ask him to leave, when Jeremy says, "Don't Mom!" Beth remained silent for a second. John must ease Beth's fears and kindly says, "What can I do for you and your son?" Beth does not know what to say, as she sensed John's strength and sincerity. No man had been in Beth's home for the past six years, since Steven had passed away. Beth tests John by saying in a suspicious tone of voice, "No funny business, mister!" John sensed Beth thought he is coming on to her. John looked Beth up and down and thought to himself, "*Beth is a worn-out and middle-aged woman. I have no interest.*" Beth sensed that John has no attraction to her. The awkward silence ended. John says, "No funny business!" Beth senses John's look of disgust towards her. Beth says, "We could use a new couch, if you are willing?" John smiles to say, "Is that all you need?" Jeremy says, "How about a new television

and carpeting?" John says to Jeremy, "What do you like to watch on television?" Jeremy says with a hint of joy and sadness, "My dad and me loved to watch the Eagles play football every Sunday. My dad died." John sensed sadness in Jeremy's countenance. John says with an upbeat tone of voice, "I think I can swing a couch, television, carpeting, and maybe an official Eagles football helmet!" Jeremy looks at Beth with excitement and smiles big to says, "Can I, Mom?" Beth let her guard down a bit and says to Jeremy and John, "Well, okay." John says to Beth, "Maybe this is an answer to your prayer?" Beth kindly and firmly says, "I have not prayed for anything, so it is not an answer to prayer." John is surprised by Beth's comment and says, "Maybe you should?" Beth smiled nice at John, and thought to herself, "*What kind of God would do this to me?*" while politely smiling at John. Beth's heart is devastated, and completely hardened over the death of her husband. John says to Beth, "Pick a time and I will buy some furniture." Beth says, "This is the only night I have off." John says to Beth and Jeremy, "Hey, no time like the present. Besides, I called in sick today." John, Beth, and Jeremy walk out the front door of Beth's home. Jeremy challenges Beth and says, "Bet you cannot beat me?" and hustles towards John's car. Beth quickly locked the front door and ran after Jeremy, while leaving John walking behind. For one moment in time, Beth and Jeremy traveled back in time, to when Steven was alive. Beth and Jeremy would race each other to the car, while Steven trailed behind. John is not sure what to think about Beth and Jeremy's behavior, but John is a bit confused by the race to the car.

John, Beth, and Jeremy get into John's car and drive away from Beth's home. John made a U-turn and drove past Harriet's home. Harriet looked out her window to see Beth and Jeremy in John's car, and shrieks with joy and says, "It is a miracle." Just as John drove by Mrs. Brady's home, he is reminded to call the heating contractor. John called a heating contractor and set an appointment for Martha's furnace replacement. Beth is at ease just a bit more, while she listened to John set up the furnace appointment. Beth says to John, "Why are you doing this for Mrs. Brady and me?" John says, "I really do not know? Sunday afternoon at 2:05 pm, I was working in my office, I looked up at the ceiling and questioned God." Beth says, "What was the question?" John says, "I did not pray to God, but I asked him what he wanted me to do with my life? Seconds later, I started coughing and came down with the flu." Beth's hardened heart did not know what to say in response to John's

story. She thought to herself, *"It is just a coincidence."* Beth's rock-hard heart and spirit mumble, *"Maybe, I will whisper a prayer to God and see what happens?"*

The trip to the furniture store is twenty minutes in length. John drove into the parking lot of an upscale furniture store in downtown Philadelphia. John, Beth, and Jeremy exit the car and walk in the store. Beth and Jeremy search for the perfect couch and decided on a dark blue contemporary style couch. John offers to buy two end tables for Beth and Jeremy. Mother and son agree with John looking at the end tables. John, Beth, and Jeremy scan over the carpet selections; and selected a medium tan colored carpeting for the living room. Jeremy and John picked the perfect television for the living room. While John and Jeremy sit in recliners and watch television in the media center. Beth says to John, "John, will you watch Jeremy? I need to use the restroom." John says, "Sure, take your time!" Beth says to Jeremy, "I will be right back!"

Beth had no intention on using the restroom, but quickly walked to the children's section of the store, where she found a white canopy bed. Beth's childhood memories rushed back to life, as she recollected the day, she selected her white canopy bed. Beth sat on the canopy bed and touched the pink and white bed spread. Beth recalls, "Daddy, I really like this one!" Beth's father says, "Are you sure?" Beth's memory continues, "Yes, Daddy!" Beth hugs father and says, "Oh please?" Teardrops well up in Beth's eyes and trickle down her cheeks, as she fondly remembered bits and pieces of her childhood. The memory quickly faded. Beth thought, *"I better get back to see how Jeremy and John have been doing."*

Beth walked back to the media center, to see Jeremy and John still watching television. Beth says, "How's it going guys?" Jeremy and John respond, with the thumbs up sign. John says, "Are we ready to go?" Beth says, "I think it's time we go, besides, you have spent way too much money on us." John interrupts to say, "I am glad I can help."

As John, Beth, and Jeremy walk out of the furniture store, John felt his stomach growl. John has not eaten in over twenty-four hours. John had lost his appetite because of the flu. John says, "I am hungry, do you want to get something to eat?" Beth and Jeremy agree to eat with John. All three get into John's car and drive away from the furniture store. While driving, John thought in his mind, *"One last kind gesture for Beth and Jeremy and God will release me from this crazy day."* Beth

kept to herself, while her hardened heart whispers a prayer to God. Beth whispers under her breath, *“Dear God, if you answer this pray, I know you still exist. Let John take us to Bassett’s Ice Cream Company, where dad and mom used to take me.”* Just then, John observes the Basset’s ice cream shop and says, “I sure could eat an ice cream cone, what do you think?” Jeremy sat straight up in the back seat of the car and says to Beth, “Can we Mom? Oh, please, I am super hungry for ice cream.” John says to Beth, “Well, what do you think?” Beth says with a smile, “Okay.” In that instance, Beth remembers begging her father to go to Bassett’s for ice cream shop, just after she had picked out her white canopy bed. Deep in her mind, she attempts to justify the answer to her prayer by thinking, *“Just another coincidence!”* Deep in her hardened heart a little crack of hope appeared, as God knocked on Beth’s heart door.

John parked the car, and all three souls walk in Bassett’s Ice Cream shop. Beth’s childhood memories flooded back into her mind, as she walked into Bassett’s. A special piece of Beth’s life puzzle fits neatly in place, when she took a deep breath of the sweet aromas from the variety of ice creams and waffle cones. Beth’s father and mother came back to life, when she looked at the table where she ate her ice cream, while swinging her legs back and forth on the seat. John says to Beth, “Have you tasted Bassett’s ice cream?” Beth says, “When I was a little girl, my dad and mom would take me to Bassett’s for ice cream every so often.” John, Beth, and Jeremy walk to the counter and placed their orders. Jeremy ordered a waffle cone filled three scoops of superman ice cream. Beth ordered a waffle cone with two scoops of chocolate brownie ice cream. John ordered a waffle cone with white and dark chocolate swirled ice cream. John paid for the ice cream. John, Beth, and Jeremy walked to a table and sat and ate their ice cream. The table is the same table Beth would eat her ice cream as a child. John says, “Back to your parents, where do they live?” Beth says, “I really do not want to talk about it. It is a sad part of my life since my parents passed away.” John says in kindness, “I am so sorry to hear that. I do not want to bring up the tough memories.” Beth says, “Jeremy has never seen his grandparents on my side of the family.” John says to Jeremy, “What is your favorite subject in school?” Jeremy says, “Gym and English.” Beth put her hand on Jeremy’s head and shakes his hair and says, “Jeremy is smart. He’s getting A’s in school. I am so proud of him.” John says to Beth, “Sounds like you



are a good mom.” John says to Jeremy, “Keep working hard in school, and you will go far in life!”

After eating the ice cream, John, Beth, and Jeremy left Bassett’s and traveled back to Beth’s home. John drove alongside Beth’s home and looked over to see Beth and Jeremy become saddened. John thought to himself, *“I would be depressed if I lived in this home.”* John attempts to put a nice upbeat attitude in his conversation with Beth and Jeremy, but it is a hard sell for mother and son, as they look at their run-down home. Beth kindly says to John in an upbeat attitude, “I really appreciate all you have done for us.” Jeremy thanked John for the ice cream and the furniture. Jeremy says to John, “Will you come over on a Sunday and watch the Eagles game with me and mom?” John does not like Jeremy’s offer, but smiles politely at Beth and says, “Well?” Beth says, “That would be nice.” John smiles at Beth and Jeremy and says, “One Sunday, I will come over and watch a football game with the both of you!” Jeremy is all excited and shouts, “That is awesome!” Beth and Jeremy get out of John’s car. John says, “Good-bye, and see you soon!” Beth and Jeremy wave good-bye to John, as he pulled away from Beth’s home.

The day slowly fades for John, as he pulls into his driveway. He turns off the car’s ignition and sits in his car for ten minutes, while he absorbs the chain of events, which had taken place. He asks God a question aloud, “What has just happened to me?” So many questions roll around in John’s mind, as he tries to figure out this most unusual day. One thing is for sure, John felt good to have human contact outside of his work. John looks at his empty home and felt desperately lonely.

John stepped out of his car and walked to the front door of his home and opened the door. John coughed a couple times. John felt the aftereffects of weakness from the flu virus. John walked down the hallway and into his kitchen, while tossing his keys on the kitchen table. He walked over to the refrigerator, opened the door, and pulled out a sports drink. John opened the sports drink and chugged the blue liquid down. John walked back to the kitchen table, opened his laptop computer, and says aloud, “Who you are Beth Rogers?” John searched the web for the name “Beth Rogers,” and he cannot find any information on Beth. Nowadays, you can find a person and about everything that person has done, by simply using a search engine. John is a pro at searching out people on the internet because he must research background checks of potential employees for the corporation he works

for. After about fifteen minutes of searching Beth's name, John gave up on his search. John says aloud, "Who are you, Beth Rogers?"

John turned off his laptop computer and goes to bed. John undressed and rolled into bed. John put a pillow on his backside for comfort and slowly faded off to sleep, while whispering, "One of these days, I hope I will find someone to take away my loneliness," as he faded off to sleep. Since Jenna divorced John, he has been hoping for her return. The pillow touching John's backside reminded him of Jenna, and it is as if Jenna is brushing away his loneliness. John whispers, "Goodnight Jenna," while mumbling, "God, bring a beautiful woman into my life!" John listens to a soft muffled voice in his heart say, "*I am by your side!*"

## Author's thought

Oftentimes, our lives are not what it seems to be. The life we chose to live is by our own making, and other parts of lives come to us by unfortunate and tragic circumstances, which we cannot control. Sometimes we go astray and make the wrong decisions, and it forces God to pick up the pieces of our shattered lives. God and Jesus go to work and make something beautiful and new out of our mistakes and unforeseen tragedies. Too many people give up on love, when the tragic blows of life attack, and others will never give up on life, love, and hope, as tragic loss takes hold. Love is the only thing, which makes this crazy mixed-up world keep spinning around. As far as God is concerned, love was never meant to die, nor will it. God's perfect love in Christ will sustain you in the greatest time of loss. Read on to see the power of Gods' love fill your heart!

---

## John the man

Let us talk about John for a moment. This guy is a misguided wreck, who is a hopeless romantic, with no clue, that he has any romantic bones left in his body. John works for a large corporation, and he is a hardnosed workaholic, who hides himself in his work. John has no life outside work, besides running. John works every day and runs every night. What John is really doing is running away from his fears of loss and rejection from his x-wife. The bitter loss of his wife has shipwrecked his soul to a desert island of solitude. John feels there is no hope for life or love and is in a state self-pity and denial. John has two boys in college that he rarely ever sees. John has and old friend from high school and college, which he periodically spends time together with. John's friend Tom is a party animal, who gravitates towards trouble. John has always wanted to be like Tom; but could never do the crazy things Tom does.

## *Chapter 4*

John's eyes open the next morning, and he is disappointed because he had not received another dream. John says, "Time to get ready for another day of work," as he rolled out of bed and walked to the bathroom. John Banister's life is about to change. The life change is not in the physical realm, but in the spiritual realm and high places of John's mind and hardened heart. Little does John understand that God had planted a spiritual seed in John's heart yesterday afternoon. This spiritual seed will blossom into a powerful piece of fruit for John to see with his eyes and feel with his body and spirit.

John rushed out the front door of his home, to see his neighbor across the street wave at him. John waved back at the elderly man. Walter is an extremely opinionated old cuss, who is a widower. Walter shouts out a smart remark to John by saying, "When are you going to buy a condo, and start chasing wild women?" John laughs aloud to challenge Walter, "The same day you buy a condo and start chasing wild women." Walter shouts out a hearty laugh to say, "Well, I guess we're both screwed?" John says, "Yup, I guess so?" Walter says, "You better get to work for nothing!" John smiles back at Walter and shouts, "You are a smart ass!" Walter laughs and says, "I knew that would get a rise out of you. John, you are just like me, only twenty-three years younger." John smiled at Walter and waved at him, while honking his horn and driving away from Walter. Walter waved back at John and knelt on his front porch. Walter whispers a prayer, "Dear Lord, don't let John waste his life, like I did!" Walter knew his life is ending, while John has a chance to change his circumstances for a better life.

John drove into the parking lot at work and parked his car. John knew the day will be a long and stressful since he missed work on Monday. John walked in the office and the secretary greeted him. Susan says, "We missed you." The owner of the corporation walked in John's office. John's boss says, "How are you feeling?" John says to Tim, "I have recovered and ready for a busy day!" Tim slaps John on the back and says in a hearty tone of voice, "Good man." Susan rolled her eyes and looked at John. Tim left John's office. Susan says, "John, you are overworked, and you need to slow down!" John ignores Susan as he looked at his desk full of paperwork. Susan says, "Why don't you call your boys and do something with them?" John mutters, "I am sure they're busy at college, besides, who wants to

hang-out with old boring Dad?” “Yes, but,” Susan sighs at John’s remark. John snaps to say, “But nothing. I love them so much,” and continues to argue, “They will come around, when they need something, and I will be waiting for them.” Susan defies John’s response and says, “Will you wait forever? Please, take this constructive criticism from me! Spend more time with your boys and your life will change forever!” Susan teases John to say, “You might find some time for love.” John smiles politely at Susan, and defiantly walked back in his office. A voice deep in John’s heart whispers, “*You know, she is right.*” John is nervous and whispers, “Why is everyone getting on my case? Just because I had a stupid dream, met a couple poor people, and my neighbor wants me to date wild women and move into a condominium. Susan gave me a tough time about spending more time with my boys and finding love. What the Hell?” John waved his hands in the air and is all disgusted, while plopping down on his chair. John looked up at the ceiling in disgust. John says, “Well, God, what do you want?” John paused for moments in silence, but God does not respond to John’s question.

John prepared reports and had meetings during the day. By the end of the day, John has a large pile of papers piled up on his desk. John found himself all alone at work and noticed the office clock flashing 8:00 pm. John had lost all track of time and the end of the long day had come. John grabbed his coat and turned off his office light. John walked past the officer cleaner. John politely says, “Good night, Mary.” Mary says, “Good night, Mr. Bannister,” and continues to vacuum the carpet. The long day at work has exhausted John. John headed home.

John arrived home. He pulled a frozen dinner from the freezer and put the dinner in the microwave. John grabbed a bottle of water from the refrigerator and sat down at his laptop. John says in an inquiring voice, “Beth Rogers, who are you?” John searched for information on Beth. John cannot find any personal information on Beth. John is thinking Beth is a ghost and the mystery intrigues him. John says in a soft whisper, “What are you hiding? What did you do? It is all in my head, I do not know.” John analyzed Beth’s mannerisms and actions that she displayed, while he talked with her. John says aloud, “Beth’s reserved and articulate and cautious and has good table manners. Beth’s parents had taken her to upper scale ice cream shop. When I paid for the furniture, Beth did not complain about the price. Beth is from an upper-middle-class family. I need Beth’s birth name to take this search any further.” John scratched his head in frustration and turned off his computer.

John walked to his living room and sat down on the couch. He took the remote control and turned on the television. John watched television for an hour and fell asleep on the couch. While John slept on the couch, he has a dream. In John's dream, a bright light surrounds John. John heard the voice of God say, "What do you require of Me?" God's presence stuns John and he is speechless for ten or fifteen seconds. John ponders the question and says, "God, is that You?" Silence is all John heard, but when John replied to God, it is not pretty. John says, "I would like to marry a beautiful and virtuous woman!" God's bright light faded from John, as the glory of God left the room. God did not answer John's request by acknowledgement.

In the morning, John awoke and felt well rested and at peace. John recalled the dream and mumbles, "I must be losing my mind. Did God really ask me what I wanted? What a stupid answer, a beautiful and virtuous wife. I should have asked for money." John inhaled and exhaled and prays, "God, please show me what you are up to because I do not have a clue."

The front door to John's home swung open and John rushed to close the door and hustled to his car. John observes Walt across the street watering a bush and says, "Hey, Walt, did you find that wild woman?" Walt says, "Nope, not yet. How about you?" John says in a smart tone of voice, "Nope, see you later, Walt!" Both men laugh at each other, and say at about the same time, "*You are such a smart ass.*" John backed out of his driveway and honked at Walt. Walt waved at John and then walked over to his doorstep and knelt to pray. John looked in his rearview mirror to see Walt kneeling. John whispers, "*One of these days, I'm going ask Walt what he's praying for.*"

Another day at work is starting in the usual way for John. John held meetings, dealt with too much paperwork, and long grueling hours seemed not to phase John. The money is great, and the trappings of success chained John's ego and pocketbook to his job. John does not mind the long hours since he has no relationship. When John's mind thought about quitting his job, John buried himself in more work and deaden the thought. John soon looked at his office clock, which displayed 9:00 pm. John says, "Wow, where did the time go?" John left the office for the evening and drove home.

## *Chapter 5*

John's days of work, turned into weeks, and one month passed without a day off. John has forgotten all about the people he had met from his dream. John reflects for moments. John says, "I wonder how Mrs. Brady, Mrs. Johnson, Beth and Jeremy are doing? One of these days, I will pay them a visit." John continued to work long hours.

## Chapter 6

John left work early on Sunday afternoon and drove to the east side of Philly, where Mrs. Brady resides. John walked to the front door of Mrs. Brady's home and knocked on the door. Mrs. Brady opened the door and is surprised to see John. Mrs. Brady says, "John, how are you doing?" John says, "I am doing good. How are you doing?" Martha says, "I am feeling warmer, since you bought me the furnace. You are like an angel sent from God." Martha invited John into her home for a cup of coffee. John and Martha's conversation is light and cheery and about family and John's work. Martha changed the conversation from family and work to Beth and Jeremy. Martha says, "Have you heard from Beth?" John says, "Beth called me and thanked me for the furniture and carpeting, but we have not talked since." Martha says with a surprised look, "Oh, really? Did you do anything else for Beth and Jeremy?" while sipping on her coffee. Mind you, Martha had already heard the story from Beth, of what John had done for Beth and Jeremy. Martha sensed John has a kind heart. Martha says, "John, you have a strong quality of kindness in you!" John says, "Thanks, but I am not a real kind guy. More of a blood and guts kind of guy." Martha says, "Do not sell yourself short, what you have done Beth, Jeremy, Mrs. Johnson, and I prove your kind!" The small chit chat between John and Martha continued for a brief time. Martha says, "You should visit with Mrs. Johnson, Beth, and Jeremy!" John and Martha hug one another and John left Martha's home.

John walked over to Mrs. Johnson's home and knocked on the front door. Mrs. Johnson opened the front door to see John standing there. Mrs. Johnson says, "John, how are you doing? Come on in!" John walked into Harriett's home. John says, "You are not going to ask me for fifty dollars, are you?" Harriett laughed a bit and told John her story. Harriet says, "The day you knocked on my door, was the day we were going to have our electricity shut off. John, you were a Godsend for Harold and me. One hour after you left, the electric company came to shut off the electricity. I used the fifty dollars you gave me to pay my electric bill." John sweetly says, "I am glad I could help." Harriett says, "Is there anything else you need to know?" John thought for a moment. John says, "Who is Beth Rogers?" Harriett chuckles and says, "Fifty dollars!" John says, "Fifty-dollars, one more time!" and pulled a fifty-dollar bill from his pant pocket and handed the bill to Harriett.



Harriett snatched the bill from John's hand. Harriett says, "Well, I know this for sure, Beth keeps to herself, and I do not know much about her past. I know Beth was married to a real looker. Steven worked hard but did not make much money. Beth always looked pretty. Steven and Beth looked like the perfect couple, and they were madly in love with each other. About six years ago, a gang member pulled up in front of Steven's home and a fight ensued. The gang member shot Steven and left. Beth ran out to sidewalk, where Steven was lying in a pool of blood. Steven died in Beth's arms, before the medics arrived. The medics could not revive Steven. It was the most awe-full thing that I had ever seen in my life. After Steven's death, we tried to help Beth and Jeremy as much as possible, but it was not enough. Beth really closed everyone out of her life and kept to herself. I really thought Beth and Jeremy would move somewhere else." John says in disbelief, "Have you ever seen any of Beth's family come around?" Harriett says, "Not once." John says, "No family, at all?" Harriett shook her head in silence. John says, "Do you know Beth's maiden name?" Harriett says, "Beth keeps to herself, and Jeremy means the world to her." The conversation continued between John and Harriett for more minutes, and they hug each other, as John thanked Harriett for the information. John walked to his car and drove to Beth's home.

John walked to Beth's door with concern and curiosity, as he stepped onto the stairs of the home. John turned to look back at the sidewalk and envisioned Steven dying in Beth's arms. The horrifying vision of Steven's death stuns John for a moment. John whispers under his breath, "*What a sad tragedy.*" John shook his head and knocked the horrifying death scene from his mind. John knocked on door and waited. Beth opened the door and smiled at John. Beth says, "John, please come in! Jeremy was hoping you would come and watch an Eagles game with him, and guess what? The game is on." John says, "Sounds like a deal," and walked in Beth's home. Jeremy rounded the corner dressed in his Eagles jersey. Jeremy says, "John, will you stay and watch the game with us?" John says with a bit of excitement in his voice, "I think I can squeeze in a game." John followed Jeremy into the living room. John is surprised to see how much the living room had changed. Beth had transformed the living room from dark and gloomy to bright and light. John thought to himself, "*It's amazing, what carpet, and new pieces of furniture, and a television will do for a living room.*" John says to Beth, "The place looks great." The change in the living room is more than physical, Beth and Jeremy

are in a much better frame of mind. Beth thanked John by saying, "We appreciate the carpeting, furniture, and television you bought." John says, "Glad I could help." John's act of kindness has spoken new life into Beth and Jeremy's broken-down home.

Beth says, "Please, have a seat on the couch! Is there something you would like to drink? Popcorn and a soda?" John says, "Soda is fine." Jeremy interrupted the conversation between John and Beth by saying, "The Eagles have been down by one point for about ten minutes." John turned his attention to Jeremy and the television and shouts, "Come on Eagles, kick butt and take names!" Just then, a wide receiver caught the football, and ran into the end zone for a touchdown. Jeremy cheered and shouted, while hugging Beth in celebration. John looked at Beth's profile with a question in his mind, "*Who are you, Beth Rogers?*" John almost shouts out his question, but covered his mouth with his hand, and shouts, "Go Eagles!" Beth looked at John with a crazy look and smiled at him, while getting up and walking to the kitchen. John looked at the backside of Beth, as she walks into the kitchen, and he felt a hint of attraction towards Beth. Beth returned with two bowls of popcorn and a couple of sodas. Beth handed a soda to John. John says, "Thanks, Beth," and took the soda. John inquisitively asks Beth a question, "Something has changed about you, but I cannot figure out what it is?" Beth crinkled her nose to say, "We all have our secrets, and I will never tell." John says, "Wow, a real mystery woman," while smiling at Beth. John thought to himself, "*You are just tempting me to find out who you are, Beth Rogers!*" John felt another twinge of attraction towards Beth; but he will never ever make the same mistake he made with his first wife. John says in his mind, while sitting on Beth's couch, "*Lord, how do you heal my broken heart?*" Beth looked at John and thought to herself, "*He is kind of cute.*"

The Eagles football game concluded with a fantastic final play and the Eagle's won. While John is walking out the front door, Jeremy says to John, "Will you come over next Sunday and watch another football game with us?" John thought for a moment and ups the ante. John says, "It has been a long time since I have attended an Eagle's football game. Would you like to go to the Eagle's stadium and watch a live game?" Jeremy is excited and shouts, "Are you serious?" John says, "Only if your mom will agree." Jeremy looked at Beth and gave her his best puppy dog look. Jeremy says, "Please, oh please, mom?" Beth caved into Jeremy's request to go to

the game. Beth says to John, "What time will the game be?" John says, "I am not sure what time kick off will be. I have a connection in the Eagle's organization and will try to get tickets for the next game." Beth says, "Let me know, what you find out!" John says, "Goodbye," to Beth and Jeremy. John walked back to his car. John's hardened heart thought, "Why did I open my big fat mouth and ask them to a game? You need to be working!"

John headed home, as he reflected on the time he spent with Beth and Jeremy. John would have never thought that he would invite Beth and Jeremy to a football game. Something in John's spirit inserted this notion in his mind, "*Maybe your life is about to change,*" but John's damaged heart pushed back and says, "*The problem is, you are a workaholic, and you like it.*" John wondered how he could fit a football game into his busy work schedule. He pulled into his driveway and stopped his car and whispers, "Who is she?" John searched multiple internet search engines and tried find more information about Beth Rogers. John found information on Steven Rogers, but nothing on Beth. John is frustrated and he is considering hiring a private investigator to find out who Beth is. John mutters, "Beth is forty to forty-five years old, and she is from an upper middle-class family. Beth is from Philly." John relaxed for a moment and laced his fingers behind his head in frustration. John says, "When I first met Beth, she was not attractive, but she has lost weight. When Beth's hair is a ponytail, you can see her beautiful long neck. Beth has a pretty smile, straight teeth, and captivating manners. Beth does not look like an office cleaner." John has a far-out hunch about Beth's identity, but he kept the thought to himself for now.

## Chapter 7

The next morning, John made a call, and he had three Eagle's football tickets delivered to his office. John called Beth. Beth answered John's call by saying, "Hello." John says, "Beth, will this Sunday work for the game?" Beth is surprised to find that John had acquired the football tickets, and says, "That sounds great! Jeremy will be so excited, and I will tell him after school. You do not know how much this means to Jeremy. Jeremy really likes you." John is surprised and says, "Sunday morning at 11:00 am. I will pick you and Jeremy up." Beth says, "What should we bring?" John says, "Bring your Eagles stuff, and I will take care of the rest!" As John hung up from the phone. John looked at his office mirror and observed a big smile on his face. Susan walked in John's office to see a big smile on John's face. Susan had never seen John smiling too much. Susan says, "What is the happy face for?" John frowned while saying, "Nothing really." Susan says, "Yes, you had a big smile and a happy face, and if I was a beating woman, which I am not, I bet you like someone." John says, "Remember, when I was sick on a Monday?" Susan says, "I sure do, you never miss a day of work." John put his hands behind his head and laced his fingers together and told Susan the story about his dream. John told Susan about helping Mrs. Brady, Mrs. Johnson, and Beth and Jeremy. Susan says, "What did you do for these people?" John says, "I bought Mrs. Brady a furnace, I gave Mrs. Johnson fifty-dollars, and I bought Beth and Jeremy some furniture, carpet, and a television." Susan is amazed to hear of John's generosity. Susan says, "That is not like you, but your kindness must start somewhere." John says, "You got that right, but all I can say is, my dream helped three families, who needed stuff. Yesterday, I paid a visit to the three families." Susan says, "How did it go?" John says, "Great, and maybe too great." Susan says, "What do you mean?" John says, "I am taking Beth and Jeremy to an Eagles game this Sunday." For the first time in years, Susan observes a gleam in John's eyes, and she thought to herself, "*This game could change John's life, forever.*" Susan cautiously says, "This might be the answer to your prayers." John says, "What do you mean?" Susan says, "You need a woman to straighten you up!" and laughed jokingly. John huffed at Susan's response. Susan says, "Tell me about Beth!" John says, "That is the problem, I cannot find any information about Beth on the internet. Beth is like a mystery woman." Susan says, "Come on, no one knows about her? Could Beth have a secret past, and she does not want anyone to know who she really is? What

if she is an axe murderer?" John quickly says, "Could be anything, I do not know, but it is driving me crazy." Susan says, "You should ask her about her past." John says, "I tried, but she is extremely evasive, and will not tell me much about her family. Once I get to know her, Beth might feel comfortable enough to talk about it." Susan says, "What made you ask Beth and Jeremy to the football game?" John says, "It was a spontaneous reaction. Jeremy asked me to come over and watch another football game and I asked Jeremy and Beth to go to the game." Susan sensed that John liked to Beth.

Beth hung up the phone and is excited about the football game. Beth pondered in her hardened heart, "*What just happened? Could Jeremy and I be walking out of the Hell; that we have lived for over six years?*" Beth's hardened heart whispers to her soul, "*God, I need this, whatever you are doing, I am ready! Is John the one?*" Beth looked down at the floor and back up to the ceiling while feeling emptiness. Beth says, "God, I am hiding such a big secret, that if John found out who I really am, I am not sure that he would understand. When the time is right, I will tell him. God, please help me get by this secret. I have hurt my family so bad, that I do not think they will ever forgive me." Beth started to cry a little bit, and remembered the trip to the furniture store, Bassett's ice cream shop, yesterday's football game, and the soon coming Eagle's game. Part of Beth's spirit is speaking life into her soul, while her negative side attempts to beat her back down into her self-pitied part of Hell, where she has been living for over twenty years.

Beth met Jeremy at school. Beth says, "I have great news." Jeremy says, "What is the great news?" Beth says, "We are going to the Eagles game." Jeremy is so excited and started to jump up and down like crazy person. Jeremy hoots and hollers, "I am going to an Eagles game." Beth calmed Jeremy down because his is so excitement. Beth hugged Jeremy tightly for a second. After the hug, Beth stepped back to see Jeremy smiling from ear-to-ear, with excitement. Beth ponderer in her mind, "*Jeremy has gone through so much in his short life, since Steven died,*" and she hugged Jeremy tight.

Beth took Jeremy over to Mrs. Johnson's home before she left for work. Beth says Harriett, "Why did John come to my home?" Harriett says, "John is a looker, and all I could think about was you. God might be doing something bigger than you understand." Beth says, "I will see you in the morning, when I pick up Jeremy.

Thank you, Harriett.” Harriett says, “Goodbye, Beth, and don’t work too hard!” Beth walked to the bus stop, and says to God, “God, what are you doing with me?” There is no reply from God.

Beth cleaned office spaces until her lunch break at 2:00 am. While on her lunch break, Beth is walking up and down the flight of stairs between fourth and eighth floor. Beth began to cry, while thinking about the last six years. Beth pondered, Steven’s death, being a single mom, and being lonely. Beth envisioned in her mind, feeling attacked from every angle of life, and felt like every weapon known to man is pointing at her. Beth dropped to her knees, and envisioned a bows and arrows, guns, swords, spears, missiles, and nuclear warheads pointing at her, just waiting to fire on her at any moment. Beth is always on edge. Beth begged for relief from her situation, but nothing ever changed. When John knocked on her door things began to change for Beth. Beth stood to her feet and wondered, “*When will all this good luck end, and beat me back into my depression? I this just an illusion or mirage?*” Just then, a still, small voice in Beth’s heart whispers, “*God has hope for the brokenhearted, and I’ve always been with you.*” Beth dropped to her knees and wept hard and envisioned Steven dying in her arms. Beth felt God’s love touch her hardened heart, while she whispers, “Steven, I still love you!” and cried some more. Beth is an emotional wreck, because of the death he husband.

Death tried to take Beth’s life the night Steven died. Beth was so broken hearted, as she relieved Steven’s blood pump out of his body and unto her clothing and skin. Beth looked into Steven’s blue eyes, as she tried to comfort him, while his body began to tense up and go into shock. Steven’s manly strength faded into lifelessness, as he closed his eyes for last time whispering, “I love you!” Beth relived the cold sidewalk cement numb her legs, and Steven’s warm blood fill her lap. Beth cries to God, “It is not fair, life sucks. God, I hate you. Why did you do this to me?” Beth thought about killing herself, but all she could think about was Jeremy, and this was the only reason she did not commit suicide. Beth had never whispered another prayer to God, until she was in John’s car, and traveling away from the furniture store. Beth’s simple prayer cracked open her hardened heart, ever so slightly. Seven weeks and days later, and Beth is crying out to God and wondering what is happening to her. God’s Holy Spirit comforts Beth all night long, while she cleaned offices.

## *Chapter 8*

John has one passion besides work, and he is out running his life away. Sweat rolled from John's forehead, as his heart dropped to fifty beats a minute, while the heavy breathing ended, and the pain in his muscles subsided. John whispers, "Two miles in, and I am on the other side." John has trained his body for the grueling sport of long-distance running. John loves the euphoric feeling of running, which calms his body and releases his frustrations of the day. The powerful attraction of running has given John an edge in other parts of his life. Most people give up on a situation, but John understands, that pushing through the toughest time will always pay off. John has the physical and mental toughness of steel, and ready to take on any situation. John ended his five-mile run by coming to a slow stop at the doorstep of his home. John walked in his home and hustled to the refrigerator, opened the door, and pulled one sport drink out of the refrigerator and closed the door. John gulped down the blue liquid. John showered quickly, and off to bed he had gone. John must work extra hours during the week to make up the Sunday, when he will take off for the football game.

As John left his home early the next morning, Walt is outside watering his bushes. Walt shouts across the street, "Hey, why are you up so early?" John says, "I am busy at work." Walt motioned with his hand for John to come over to him. John walked across the street and met with Walt. Walt says, "Come closer, I have got something to tell you!" John moved closer to Walt, and Walt yelled super loud in John's ear. Walt screams, "You work too much! Stop it! When are you going to relax?" John is surprised by Walt's smart remark, but remained silent, in respect to an old man yelling at him. Walt yells, "Stop it! You are going to kill yourself you are dumb ass." John says in an angry and smart reply, "Maybe that is the idea." Walt says, "I was just like you, back in the day, and I never took the time to spend with my family." John says, "Did ever break the habit of working too much?" Walt says in anger, "No, but I am going to make sure you break the habit!" John laughed at Walt. John says, "Good luck, on that idea." Walt says, "Next week, you are coming over and we will talk!" John hesitates for a moment and says in sarcastic tone of voice, "What do I have to lose?" Walt says with a smart remark, "You have more to gain, than lose, come over next Wednesday and we will talk!" John says, "Okay, you are on, Walt." John shook Walt's hand and walked back to his car in

anger and drove off to work. On the drive to work, John says to God, “God, what are you trying to tell me? I have been getting beat up, over working too many hours. What else can I do for a living?” John defiantly, laughed aloud in the car, as he pulled into his parking spot at work.



## Chapter 9

Sunday has arrived, and John felt excited to take Beth and Jeremy to the football game. John wondered how he should act around Beth and Jeremy. John says to himself, "Should I be the macho guy or sensitive and caring? I need more advice. I think I will ask Walt. Walt may know how to manage the situation." John exited his home and walked over to Walt's home and knocked on the front door. Walt opened the front door to see John standing there. John says to Walt, "Can I come in?" Walt says, "Come on in! What is on your mind?" John says, "I need your advice! I am taking a woman and her son to the Eagles game today. I want to know how I should manage the situation. Should I be macho or sensitive or what?" Walt says, "Be yourself and no fake stuff, and you will do fine. Is this a real date?" John says, "Not really, it might be a start." Walt says in a noseey manner, "Who is she? What does she do for a living? Where does she live? Is she hot?" John says, "One day I'll sit down and tell you the story." Walt says while shaking his finger at John, "Remember, this Wednesday night, young man." John teased Walt to say, "All I can say is, it came right out of a dream. I am leaving pick up Beth and Jeremy now. See you Wednesday." John rushed away from Walt's door in a hurry. Walt says, "Good luck, and I am praying for you. Man, you need all the help you can get!"

While driving to the East side of Philly, John called Beth to see if she and Jeremy will be ready by the time he arrived at the house. Beth listened to her phone ring and answered the phone. John says, "Are you ready?" Beth says, "We will be ready, and Jeremy is so excited, he could hardly sleep last night. I could hear him toss and turn in his bed all night. This game means the world to him." John says, "Glad I can help, and what about you?" Beth cautiously says, "I think we will have a fun. See you soon."

John arrived at Beth's home and stopped his car. John experienced the "Butterfly" feeling start to rummage around in his stomach. John's hands become sweaty, as he let go of the steering wheel. John is combing his hair when he observes Beth and Jeremy walk out the front door. John quickly stepped out of his car and hustles to the right side of the car. John watched Jeremy run towards him. Jeremy is crazy with excitement. John opened the right rear car door and Jeremy jumped in the car. Beth shut the front door of her home and quickly walked towards John's car. John closed the right rear car door. Beth reached for the car door handle, when

John puts his hand on the door handle and says, "Hey, what are you doing?" Beth stopped with surprise and looked at John. John squeezed in-between Beth and the car door and politely opened the car door. Beth says, "Thank you." John's brown eyes and Beth's blue and gray eyes lock on each other for a second, then they look away from each other in shyness and shame. John walked around to the left side and sat in driver car. John started the engine. John says, "Are we ready for some football?" Jeremy says, "Oh, I'm ready!" Beth looked back at Jeremy, then at John to say, "If you're ready, I'm ready!" John smiled and drove away from Beth's home shouting, "Eagles, here we come!"

John drove in the parking structure near the football stadium. All three souls walk to the football stadium and entered the stadium. John took Beth and Jeremy to the pro shop and bought an Eagles football helmet for Jeremy. Jeremy picked out an Eagle helmet, while Beth looked a little gold locket and chain for a baby picture of Jeremy. John says Beth, "Is that all you want?" Beth is about to reply, when John spontaneously grabbed a pink football jersey from the clothing rack. John says, "What about a jersey?" Beth felt a little embarrassed by John's request. Beth hesitantly says, "I don't know?" Jeremy says, "Come on Mom, model it for us!" Beth took hold of the pink jersey and put the jersey in front of her and smiled at John and Jeremy. Beth says, "What do you think?" John cannot help himself and utters in shock, "Beth, you are so gorgeous!" Beth is surprised by John's response and blushed a bit. Jeremy says, "Mom, you look like a movie star!" Beth is very emotional and says to Jeremy and John, "You are just saying that?" as she held back the tears.

What a shot in the arm for Beth, who felt all had been lost in life. Beth thought in her mind, "*Maybe I have some worth after all.*" After Steven died, Beth felt like she is cursed, and she had no hope at all. John and Jeremy's compliment cracked Beth's hardened heart open a little bit more. Beth heard the Holy Spirit say, "*I've always been here to help, but you haven't been listening.*" Beth's heart jumped a bit, and she felt a warm sensation of joy overcome her body. The power of these three compliments shook Beth Rogers awake. Beth felt alive and bristles with joy. John observes Beth smiling and thinking. John thinks to himself, "*God has put me in Beth's life for a reason, and I'm going to figure out why.*" John looked at Beth to say, "I am buying you the jersey, whether you like it or not!" Jeremy says, "Come on Mom, you can wear the jersey, when we watch the Eagles games at home."

John says, "If I buy you this jersey, you must go with me to another Eagles football game?" Beth smiles at John and says, "I am not sure, maybe." Jeremy says to Beth, "All right, Mom." John, Beth, and Jeremy giggle with shyness and walk to the cashier and John paid for the items and they left the pro shop.

After John, Beth, and Jeremy left the pro shop, they stop by a concession stand and purchased junk food before the game. John purchased three hotdogs, three soft pretzels, and three sodas. John, Beth, and Jeremy wiggle, squeeze, bump, and slide through the crowds and maneuver to the designated stadium seats. These three souls sat down and settle into the green plastic seats and look out over the stadium. Jeremy looked over the stadium in amazement. Jeremy says to Beth and John, "This stadium is awesome, it's so big." John says to Jeremy, "You like it, huh?" Jeremy says, "This is like a dream come true." Meanwhile, Beth handed Jeremy a soda, then handed John a soda. The noonday sun sparkled over and around Beth's brown hair and long neck as John reached for the soda. John kindly says, "Thanks, Beth." Beth looks at John and pleasantly smiles and says, "You are welcome." John thought to himself, "Beth is so beautiful." Beth's blue and gray eyes penetrate John's soul for a moment. All John can think about is, "*Who are you, Beth Rogers?*"

During the football game, John reflected on the past, when he had taken his two boys to an Eagles game. Since Jeremy and Nathan had gone off to college, John is all alone, and missed his boys dearly. John decided to call Jeremy. Jeremy answers the phone and says, "Hey, Dad, what are you doing?" John says, "You are not going to believe this, but I am at the Eagles game." Jeremy says, "I am watching the game on television," John mused a second. John says, "Son, I miss you and love you." Jeremy says, "I love you too. Will you take me to an Eagles?" John says, "You and Nathan need to come home on a weekend, and we will all go to an Eagles game." Jeremy says, "Sounds like a plan." John says, "There may be two other people at the game with us." Jeremy says, "Wow, you are not working? You are always working." John says, "I decided to take the day off." Jeremy says, "I will see you in a couple weeks." John says, "I am calling Nathan." Jeremy says, "I love you, Dad." John called Nathan. Nathan says, "Hey, Dad." John says, "Hey, how are you doing?" Nathan says, "I am super busy at school, but I am watching the Eagles play. I need a break." John says, "You sure do, that is why need to come home in a couple of weeks. You want to go to an Eagles game?" Nathan chuckles a bit and says, "Are you sure, this is John Bannister?" John says with a snicker in his voice, "Okay, I got

it, I got it, and I am serious. I talked to Jeremy, and he is coming home too.” Nathan says, “I will come home.” John says, “I may have two friends with us at the game. Is that okay?” Nathan says, “Who are they?” John says, “Beth and Jeremy.” Nathan says, “Good for Dad, and it is about time. You should have moved on, a long time ago.” John says, “What?” Nathan says with a smart tone in his voice, “I am not joking, I am super serious, and I cannot wait to meet Beth and Jeremy.” John says, “You are kidding me, aren’t you?” Nathan sternly says, “Not one bit, Dad. I love you and will see you in a couple of weeks!” John backed down in the conversation with Nathan. John says, “I love you.” Beth is listening to John’s conversation with his children, and she says, “Boys only?” John beams with pride and says, “I have two boys. If you want to meet Jeremy and Nathan, they will be home in a couple of weeks.” Beth says, “What are you asking?” John says, “I would like you and Jeremy to meet my boys in a couple of weeks! What do you think?” Beth is surprised back at John’s offer and says, “Let me think about it.” Beth decided to play “Cat and mouse” with John and capture John’s attention. Beth smiled at John and tilted her head to the right just a little. Beth looked at John’s brown eyes, to check his sincerity. Beth’s beauty attracted John and he says, “Let me know decision, soon. I will have to find five seats in a row, and that is hard to do for an Eagles game.” Beth says with a smile, “I will let you know by Wednesday.” Jeremy heard the conversation between John and Beth. Jeremy says, “I want to go to another Eagles game! Can we, oh please, Mom?” Beth put her hand on top of Jeremy’s head and shook his hair a bit and winked at Jeremy and John.

Let us not forget the little boy, who is sitting between Beth and John because he has had it tough, since Steven had passed away. Jeremy has always needed Beth, but Jeremy needs John to help him become a man. Jeremy has a little prayer rolling around in his mind, “It sure would be nice to have John, as my dad.” Jeremy, Beth, and John stand to their feet and cheer, as the Eagles score a touchdown. John lowers his fist and says to Jeremy, “Fist bump!” Jeremy smiles at John and “Fist Bumps” John’s fist. Jeremy thought in his mind, “That is so cool.” Beth can see the chemistry between Jeremy and John take place. Beth says, “Where is my fist bump?” Jeremy and John give Beth a fist bump. Beth started to let her guard down with John, but in the back of her mind she thought, “*My fear is so strong, how can I overcome my past?*” The Holy Spirit whispers in Beth hardened heart this thought, “*Grace is the word for you, use it!*” A tear trickled down Beth’s cheek, when she

thought of God's grace. Beth asks in her heart, "*God, it has been so long, how can you still love me?*"

The football game concluded, with a game winning field goal by the Eagles. Every person in the stadium stood and cheered for the exciting win. Jeremy looks at John and Beth and shouts, "Wow, this was an awesome game." John shouts, "That was a great game." Beth shouts, "Go Eagles!" Beth hugged Jeremy, as John looked on, and she winked at John. John says to Beth, "Hey, where is my hug?" Beth smiles and says with a little hesitation in her voice, "Well, okay," and hugged John in a wimpy fashion. John felt exhilarated by Beth's hug.

This insignificant and wimpy hug from Beth softened John's hardened heart. John and Beth have suffered unending pain, loneliness, and loss in life. With hearts broken and hardened, John and Beth walked into total darkness after divorce and death. After John's divorce, he walked into his office and never left. After Steven's death, Beth walked into the night and began to clean offices. God had brought John and Beth together at a football game, where they can overcome their past.

John's ice-cold heart ignited, and the blast furnace fired up in a millisecond. A flicker of fire lit in John's heart for Beth. The touch from Beth is so foreign to John's body, as he felt a strong desirable attraction overcome him. John wants Beth's touch even more, but he thought of Walt's advice, "No fake stuff." John held back his desire to grab Beth and kiss her, while feeling embarrassed and frustrated.

Beth looked at John and thought to herself, "*Is John the one?*" When Beth hugged John, she felt his broad shoulders and strong arms and hands touch her body. So many years, Beth had gone without the touch of the man. Beth wanted John to hug her tightly, but she remained silent. Beth thought to herself, "*I've wasted so many years.*" Beth is not going to let things go too fast with John if love comes at all.

As John, Beth, and Jeremy left the stadium and walked to the car, John has a thought enter his mind, "*What if Beth is the virtuous woman, I asked for?*" John looked for a sign from God, that Beth's the one, but God remained silent. John will soon face a harsh reality, and he will need to deal with this unknown issue. The words of a wise man are often brutal.

These three souls had bonded in a powerful and unknown oneness, while spending time together. The spirit of togetherness evaporated all the hurts from John, Beth, and Jeremy, as the small chitchat persisted on the way to the car and the drive home.

All too soon, John is pulling in front of Beth's home, as the car rolled to a stop. The big day has ended for John, Beth, and Jeremy. Beth and Jeremy seem to be a little down, as they look at their home. John says, "Let me walk you to the door." John, Beth, and Jeremy exit the car and walk to the front door of Beth's home.

Jeremy says to John, "Thanks for such the awesome day." John held out his fist and Jeremy fist bumped John's fist. Beth unlocked the front door and told Jeremy to go inside. Jeremy walked in the house. Beth says to John, "Thank you, for the enjoyable day. I have not had this much fun in a long time." John says, "The pleasure was all mine." John and Beth say "Goodnight" to each other. John turned from Beth and is about to walk away when he spontaneously spun back around and held out his right hand. John says, "May I?" Beth is surprised by John's forward action and put her right hand in John's palm. John lifted Beth's hand to his lips and kissed her hand. Beth says, "Why did you kiss my hand?" John says, "When you modeled the pink jersey, I could see how naturally gorgeous you are. The real kicker was, when you handed me the soda and smiled at me during the game. I could see your gorgeous blue and gray eyes, long neck, and brown hair. Beth, you look stunning." Beth blushed, not knowing how to respond to John's compliment. A single tear trickled down Beth's cheek, as she thanked John. Beth wanted to hug John fiercely, but reframed from doing so, and began to slowly close the front door. Beth stopped closing her front door. Beth says, "Maybe one of these days we could do something besides a football game." John says, "I like that idea a lot," while smiling and walking back to his car. John shouts to Beth, "Remember, I need to know by Wednesday." Beth says, "I will call you with my answer," and waved at John. Beth closed her front door and leaned on the back of the door. Beth's hardened heart whispers to God, "*Lord, I want John to be the one!*"

John drove home, and as he stopped his car in the driveway, he thought aloud, "I might be in love." John inhaled a big deep breath of air and exhaled a big sigh of relief. In John's eyes, the first date with Beth and Jeremy had gone well. John walked into his home and popped open his laptop. John whispers aloud, "Beth

Rogers, who in the heck are you?” John searched for Beth Rogers, on multiple internet search engines, but still cannot find any information. John found one picture that could be Beth, but it is such a far-out notion, that he quickly dismissed the thought. John closed his laptop and whispers a prayer to God, “Lord, I need more information!” John retired for the night and slept.

Beth tucked Jeremy in bed for the night. Jeremy says, “Mom, do you like John?” Beth says, “Well, John seems to be a real nice guy.” Jeremy interrupts Beth to say, “I like John, and he is cool. This was the best day ever.” Beth kissed Jeremy on the forehead and finished tucking him into bed. Beth closed Jeremy’s bedroom door. She walked over to the couch, where the shopping bag is resting. Beth pulled out the pink football jersey and slipped the pink jersey over her green jersey. Beth sat down on the couch and pulled the football helmet and the gold locket from the shopping bag. Beth teared up and her reality, *“I am sitting on the couch John bought, wearing the jersey John bought, holding the locket John bought, and looking at the helmet John bought.”* Beth stood to her feet and walked over to the full-length mirror and looked at herself in the mirror. Beth has really slimmed down since she has started to exercise again. Beth says in a soft voice, “If John only knew, who I really am, things would be much different, but can I trust him?”

## Chapter 10

The next morning, John pulled out of his driveway to see Walt waving at him. John stopped his car and rolled down the window. John says, "What's up, Walt?" Walt wags his finger at John to say, "Remember, Wednesday night!" John says, "I almost forgot, what time?" Walt says, "How about 7:00 pm?" John says, "See you at 7:00, Wednesday night," and drove away from Walt. John says, "I sure hope I am not as lonely as Walt, when I get old."

John walked in the office feeling like he is on top of the world. Everything felt a bit brighter, this Monday morning. John passed by Susan and smiled at her and walked in his office. Susan says, "How did it go at the Eagles game?" John smiled and sat down in his office chair and Susan entered John's office. John says, "It was a really good day with Beth and Jeremy." John says to Susan, "I need your help!" Susan says, "Whatever it takes, I am ready to help." John says, "I need five seats, side by side for the Eagles game in few weeks!" Susan says with a gasp in her voice, "You are asking for a miracle!" John looked Susan dead in the eye and paused. John says, "I need this miracle! Can you help me?" Susan giggles a couple of times and says, "I will do my best."

Wednesday afternoon, Susan had not found the game tickets yet, but she is getting close to the ticket purchase. In the meantime, Beth called John to let him know, that she and Jeremy will attend football game with John. John says to Beth, "That is great news." John stammers in conversation with Beth. Beth knew John is trying to say something and says, "What do you want to say?" John says, "Would you like to go on a date, this Saturday night?" Beth says, "What do you have in mind?" John says, "I know a nice restaurant called La Famiglia, after that, we could catch a movie, what do you think?" Beth says, "I will think about your offer." John says, "Let me know." John and Beth finish the phone conversation. So many emotions and thoughts begin to bounce around in Beth's mind, "*What should I do? Should I go? What will happen if I turn him down? Does John really like me? Who will watch Jeremy? What will I wear? Is this really happening to me?*" Beth is so excited, that she jumped up and down multiple times in her kitchen. In a split second, Beth's fears subside, and she has made up her mind and whispers, "God, if this is supposed to happen, it must be now. I really need a miracle." Beth knelt by her kitchen table. Beth prays, "God, please let John and I have a fun time together!"



After John ended his conversation with Beth, he felt like he has made a big mistake. John whispers, "Maybe I am moving too fast with Beth." John felt a peace come over his body and his hardened heart twinged to life. John looked out the office window to view gray clouds, sprinkled with little specs of blue sky pushing through the cloudy sky, and he thought of Beth's beautiful blue and gray eyes. John says, "I must be losing my mind over this woman. What is going on with me?" At 6:00 pm, John left work to meet with Walt.

## *Chapter 11*

John knocked on Walt's front door and waited for Walt to answer. Walt opened the front door and looked at John. Walt says with a bit of excitement in his voice, "John, come on in!" John walked into Walt's home. John says, "Thanks, Walt." Walt graciously says, "What will you have? Coffee, tea, cola, beer, whiskey what is your pleasure?" John says, "I will have a cola, thanks." Walt says, "Take a seat in the living, and I will get you the cola." Walt hustled into his living room with a cola and handed the drink to John. John says, "Thanks, Walt." Walt hesitates for a couple moment and says, "I have things I would like to talk to you about. The first thing, I have been praying that you do not turn out like me. Since Nancy passed away from cancer, I have been rotting away in this lonely home. I feel like I am in prison. When I was a young man, I worked too much at the office and for what? My wife and daughter pleaded with me to spend more time with them, but all too often, I never came home on time. Now, I live my life in complete solitude, while I slave away cutting the grass, edging bushes, and pulling weeds." John interrupts Walt to say, "I have tried to keep my lawn like yours, but I do not have the time." Walt laughed. Walt says, "Exactly, you work too much, you are divorced, you run, and you work on your lawn. Your life sucks." Just then, John's cell phone rang. John says to Walt, "Excuse me for a second." John answered his cell phone. John says, "Beth, how are you doing?" Beth says, "I am doing well. I would love to go on a date with you." John could hardly contain himself in front of Walt, and gave Walt the "Thumbs up" sign, while answering Beth. John says to Beth, "How about 7:30?" Beth says, "Sounds good to me." John says, "Let's do casual, and I will see you Saturday night!" Beth tilted her head to the right and paused for a moment. Beth says sweetly, "See you at 7:30, goodbye for now." The phone call between John and Beth ended in exhilarated silence. John says, "Good night, Beth." Walt can hardly contain himself. Walt says to John, "Have you been holding out on me?" John told Walt the whole story about his dream, meeting Mrs. Brady, Mrs. Johnson, and meeting Beth and Jeremy. John told Walt about the football game last week. Walt is excited for John, and soon he became depressed. John sensed Walt's depression set in. John says, "Walt, what's wrong, are you okay?" Walt says in depressed tone of voice, "Let me tell you my real-life story. When I was a young man, I had a beautiful wife and a lovely daughter, who I loved with all my heart. I loved Nancy and I my sweet little Linda with every fiber of my being. My little girl

grew up to be a beautiful young woman. At fourteen, Linda started to model and by sixteen, she traveled to Milan, Italy and walk the runway in a fashion show. Linda was on her way to becoming a successful model in the modeling industry. Nancy and I were so excited for Linda, that we had a special gold necklace made just for Linda. The gold necklace cost me big bucks. But, somewhere along the way, Linda reconsidered. Nancy and I presented the gold necklace to Linda, in hopes it would change her mind and Linda not stop modeling, but when I put the necklace around Linda's neck, she tore the necklace off and stormed out of the house. We never heard from Linda after that day. Nancy and I had the necklace repaired, in hopes, that Linda would return someday, but that day will never come. Nancy died of cancer about five years ago, and my life is lonely." A couple of tears trickled down Walt's cheeks, as he finished telling John the heart-breaking story. John looks at Walt for a moment in silence and says in angry frustration, "Sometimes, life just sucks. Don't you just want to kick butt?" Walt laughed a little. Walt says, "Is Beth pretty?" John says, "The first time I met Beth, she was not attractive, but the second time I had seen her, she had slimmed down, now she is gorgeous." Walt excused himself from the living room. Walt walked up the stairs to Linda's bedroom, where Nancy had kept Linda's bedroom the same way Linda had left it. Walt took hold of the jewelry case that held expensive gold necklace and walked back downstairs. Walt whispers a prayer, "Lord, I know Linda will never return, please let this necklace be a blessing for John! If Beth's the one, I pray John will give her the necklace." Walt placed the jewelry case on the coffee table and opened the case for John to look at the expensive necklace. John's eye lit up, as he looked at beautiful necklace. John says, "Wow, this necklace is gorgeous." Walt says, "You see this little nick? I had the necklace repaired and I really believed I would see Linda wear the necklace again, but that will never happen. I am giving the necklace to you. If Beth is the right one, give it to her!" John indignantly says, "No way, Walt! I cannot take this necklace from you. There is no way, I will take the memories of you daughter from you!" Walt cursed a couple times. Walt demandingly says, "Awe hell, for all I know Linda is dead, she never came back. I am going to help you get a woman, so you are going to take this necklace, and give it to Beth!" Walt fought through his tears. Walt humbly says, "If Beth is the one, give it to her, when the time is right!" John insistently says, "I can't, Walt!" Walt says in an irritated manner, "I am not taking "No" for an answer. I made my mind up. The necklace is yours!" John knew, he cannot change Walt's mind. John

begrudgingly says, "I will take the necklace, but I am under total protest." The night ended for Walt and John. Walt is visually tired and stressed from the long stressful conversation. Walt walked John to the front door. John turned and looked at Walt. John says, "I often see you kneeling at your front door of your home, what are you doing on your knees?" Walt reluctantly says, "I have always prayed that Linda would come back and visit me, but I know that will never happen. I will have to live with this thought forever. Let my loss be your gain, goodnight." Walt slowly closed his front door. John solemnly says, "Walt, thank you." Walt says, "John, don't turn out like me!"

John walked across the street to his home. John felt like he had robbed Walt of the one thing that is from the past. John felt like he taken the finest treasure from an old man. John placed the jewelry case on his dresser and opened the case and looked at the sparking necklace. John wondered, what Beth would look like, wearing the necklace. John whispers, "Maybe, when the time is right, I will give this necklace to Beth and kiss her on the lips." John worked the plan in his mind, as he drifted off to sleep thinking about Beth.

## *Chapter 12*

The day at work is shaping up to be a long one for John, when Susan walked in his office and looked exuberantly excited. Susan says, "I found seven tickets in a row for the Eagles game, but it is going to cost you. I had no luck finding five tickets." John says, "How much do they want?" Susan says, "Three Thousand dollars for seven tickets." John angrily says, "That is a lot of money." Susan boldly says, "There is a limited time, for you to be with your family. You better make the best of the time you have with Jeremy and Nathan!" John backed down and handed his credit card to Susan, while saying, "Thank you." Susan smiled at John. Susan says, "The change in you is good to see in you."

## *Chapter 13*

The big night is here for John and Beth and the first date. John showered, shaved, and slapped cologne on his face. John combed his hair in the mirror and turned sideways to look at his profile. John is slender from all the long distance running he has done, but he has a tiny potbelly. John whispers, "I need to lift some more weights and bulk up." John slid into a pair of blue jeans and pulled over his head a white polo shirt and slipped on his leather loafers. John yells at the top of his lungs, "I am good to go, baby."

Beth is in her bathroom taking a shower. After the shower, Beth wrapped a towel around her body and wrapped her hair in pink towel, while she prepared to put her make up on. Beth needed a bit of make-up because she is naturally beautiful. Beth looked at the mirror to see the ravages of time and circumstances imprinting wrinkles of age behind her eyes. Beth looked down at her hands to see her tired and worn-out fingers and nails. Beth looked at her chipped fingernails, and dry skin, and mutters, "What a mess." Beth started to smooth out her nails with a nail file and put lotion on her hands and fingers. Beth admired her strong, defined, and muscular arms. Beth turned sideways and looked at her profile. Beth is looking at her well-toned body and all the stair-step waking has paid off. Beth is looking slim and beautiful. After drying her hair, Beth applied nail polish. Beth squeezed into a pair of blue jeans and slipped into a pink colored sleeveless blouse. Beth patiently waits for John.

John walked out his front door and hopped in his car. Walt steps out his front door and yells across the street, "Good luck, and have fun!" John replies by giving Walt the "Thumbs up" sign, and says, "Walt, I am taking your advice, and chasing a wild woman." Walt smiled back at John and gave him the "Thumbs up" sign, and waved at John, as John drove away.

While driving, John called Beth. Beth answered the phone and played a prank John, as she slipped on her penny loafers. Beth says, "Hello, this is Beth, please leave a message and I'll call you back." John started to leave a message when Beth interrupted John. Beth says "Hi, how are you doing?" John says, "I thought I was leaving you a message." Beth started to laugh, giggle, and snorted, while telling John she was pranking him. John says, "Ha-ha, you are so funny. Beth giggled more

times. Beth says, "When will you be here?" John says, "I will be there in about fifteen minutes." John and Beth end the phone conversation.

While Beth is waiting for John to arrive, she began to feel guilty about dating John. Beth is still in love with Steven and felt like she is cheating on Steven with John. Beth cries out, "Steven, I have always been faithful to you in life and death. I love you." Beth thought about all the good times she had with Steven and how they had met. Beth fought, struggled, and wrestled with her past. Beth cries aloud, "I have to move on Steven, it is for the best," while whimpering some more. Beth shouts to Steven's memory, "I would give anything for you to be here right by my side, but that will not happen." The Holy Spirit comforts Beth with this thought, "*It is okay. It is time to move on.*" The silence from Steven's death slowly faded from Beth's mind, as she listened the honking of John's car horn as he pulled alongside her home. Beth smiled with peace in her spirit, as she opened the door and looked at John walking towards her. Beth closed the door to her past and walked towards John. Beth is still hesitant, as she greeted John with a smile. John says, "Beth Rogers, you are absolutely gorgeous." Beth smiles and says, "You are handsome, John." John and Beth laughed at about the same time in shyness and says, "Thanks," at the same time. John escorted Beth to his car. John politely says, "Allow me," as he opened the car door. Beth says, "Thank you." Beth entered John's car. John closed the car door and walked around to the other side. While walking to the other side of the car he thought, "*She really cleans up nice.*" John opened the driver side door and sat in the driver seat. While John is walking around the car, Beth thought to herself, "*He's cute.*" John says, "Are you ready?" Beth says, "I am so ready," as the car pulled away from Beth's home. John says, "La Famiglia, here we come."

John drove in valet parking area at the La Famiglia and stopped. The valet attendant walked towards John's car and waited for John to step out of the car. John handed his car keys to the attendant and walked over to the right side of his car and opened the car door for Beth. Beth says, "Thank you," and stepped out of the car. John escorted Beth in the Italian restaurant. The restaurant is colored in white, green, and red colored tablecloths. The chairs are dark cherry colored, with white, green, and red velvet stripped seat covers. The La Famiglia is known for the live violin music, while patrons eat at the restaurant. Often, a college student will sing a love song for the patrons. Two waiters escort John and Beth to a table. Beth

ordered the chicken with spinach Alfredo dish, with a side salad and a glass of water. John ordered the steak and mushroom tortellini with a salad and a glass of red sports drink.

John and Beth patiently wait for the meals to come. The two souls talk about their children and tell cute stories about the silly, kind, cute, things the children had done. John says to Beth, "Please excuse me, I have to go to the restroom." John walked towards the restroom in the back of the restaurant. Instead of turning towards the restroom, John walked over the waiter station and talked to a female waiter. John whispered something in the ear of the waiter, and she nodded "Okay" and took John's money. John walked back to the dining table, where Beth is sitting. John has a smirk on his face and is trying to conceal his secret. Beth sensed that John is hiding something. Beth says, "What are you up to?" John thought for fast moment and says, "You wouldn't believe, what someone wrote on the bathroom wall." Beth says, "What is it?" John says, "No, it's way too perverted for a lady to hear." Beth says, "Some guys are pigs," and stopped inquiring of John. The two waiters brought a plate of appetizers, for John and Beth to snack on. John and Beth ate their salads and bread sticks and sipped on water. About ten minutes later, the main course arrived. John and Beth is waited on by the two waiters. Beth began to feel uncomfortable, because of the continual service by the polite waiters. The waiters graciously offer fresh grated Romano cheese, olive oil, and additional bread sticks at the request of John and Beth. Beth thought in her mind, "*I should be serving, instead of being served.*" Beth says to John, "I have not gone to such a nice restaurant in a long time. I feel a bit uncomfortable." John smiles to say, "You deserve a nice night out, after all you have been through a lot of trials." Beth says, "Thank you."

After John and Beth finish eating their delectable Italian food, Celeste is watching from the waiter's station for John's cue. John nodded his head at Celeste and signaled his cue. Celeste walked towards John and Beth, as the lights in the restaurant faded to a dim setting. Celeste grabbed a chair and drug the chair towards John and Beth in a seductive and provocative manner. Two violinists follow Celeste and stand by sultry singer. Celeste bent over the table, where John and Beth sat. The crowd in the restaurant is silent. Celeste whispers in Italian, "L'amore e nell'aria," which means, "Love is in the air." Two waiters assist Celeste unto a chair for all the patrons to see, as a spotlight flickered to light. The two



violinists begin to play a love song, as Celeste began to sing the love song in Italian. Celeste incorporated Beth's and John's name into the song, as she powerfully and passionately sang the song. John and Beth both blush from all the attention the crowd is giving them. John looked at Beth, but she avoids looking at John, and she finally gave in and looked at John. Celeste slowly brought the love song to an enthusiastic conclusion and the patrons erupted with cheers, whistling, and shouts for the vocalist and the two lovers. Celeste stepped down from the chair, with the help of the two violinists. Celeste bowed to the crowd and slowly exited the dining room.

The love song is a total surprise for Beth, and she wondered how she should respond to John. Beth was at a loss for words, so she tilted her head to right and smiled at John, which drove John, crazy. John thought, "*That's the same look she gave me at the football game.*" This once in a lifetime song, is so special for John and Beth, as they both try to recover from the tragedies of life. The special moment was short lived, when Beth told John she would like to leave the restaurant. John is surprised by Beth's request. John says, "I am ready to go." John paid for the meal, tipped the waiters, and John and Beth left the restaurant. John is unaware, that Beth did not want attention by the crowd in the restaurant. The valet pulled John's car to the front of the restaurant and John and Beth entered the car and left the Italian restaurant.

While driving, John says, "You are such beautiful company." Beth says, "I am still in shock from the love song." John says, "We both got lucky, because Celeste was working." John says, "What movie do you want to see?" Beth wanted to see a romantic movie with John. Beth checked her cell phone to see what movies are showing at the local movie theaters. Beth located a romantic comedy for John and her to watch.

The fifteen-minute drive to the movie theater, involves stories of family and friends for John and Beth. John asked Beth about her family, and where she lived in Philadelphia. Beth is extremely cautious with her words, and evasive to John's questions. Beth says, "After my parents passed away, I never kept up with my relatives." Beth redirects the subject back to John and says, "Where are you from?" John says, "My family lives in Cedar Rapids, Iowa." Beth says, "How did you ever get to Philly?" John is a little grumpy and flexed his jaw muscles to reply with a

tinge of disgust in his voice. John says, "My ex-wife is from Philly. We met in college, and after we graduated, I followed Jenna back here." Beth says, "How long have you been divorced?" John says in an up-tight manner, "Just about ten years." Beth can see by John's response, that he still had not let Jenna go. Beth says, "Do you still love her?" John says, "For a long time, I hoped we would get back together, but I know that will not happen." John says, "What about you?" Beth closed her eyes for a moment. Beth is visibly shaken. Beth says, "I was married for about ten years. Steven died on the sidewalk in front our home, about six years ago." John pulled over to the side of the road and looked at Beth. John is sad and says, "I am so sorry that you lost your husband." Beth is sad and says, "I relive Steven's death every day of my life. Steven died in my arms, before the paramedics arrived." Beth started to cry. John reached over to Beth's hand and squeezed her hand softly. Beth thanked John for his gesture of compassion, as she wiped the tears from her eyes. John pulled back on to the road and drove the rest of the way to the movie theater.

John stopped the car in the parking lot. John says, "We deserve a great night out, after all the crap we have been through." Beth says, "We really need this time away from all the troubles." John and Beth walked in the movie theater, like two giddy teenagers on a first date. John paid for the movie tickets and bought a big bag of popcorn and two sodas. John and Beth nestled into the movie seats and watched the previews. They both felt a strong attraction to one another grow. The chemical reaction, between John and Beth took place, when Beth slid her hand under John's hand, which is resting on the arm rest. John squeezed Beth's hand and winked at her, and she winked back at John. They both laughed at the funny parts of the movie and blushed at the serious romantic scenes. One Hundred and fourteen minutes later, John and Beth walked out of the movie theater, as new-found friends. They have started to build a spiritual and physical bound between one another. John and Beth want this relationship to work more than ever.

---

## *God is at Work*

---

This date between John and Beth, is nothing short of a miracle from the hand of God. All the heavenly Father had to work with, is John and Beth's shattered lives filled with fragmented pieces. God's tender mercies brought John and Beth together at the perfect time. What John and Beth could not do for themselves, the Master builder in heaven merely spoke these two souls to life in love. Like an expert craftsman, God examined the two broken lives of John and Beth, He studied the imperfections of their discarded driftwood of life. God masterfully worked with the twists and turns of John and Beth's heartbreaks. God carved into the battered human grains of John and Beth's scared wood, a one and only unique masterpiece. Every man and woman, yearn for a relationship like John and Beth. John and Beth's powerful love for one another is just starting to grow, but God's love for these two souls is beyond worldly expression. God has an intense and powerful love for John and Beth.

---

John escorted Beth to his car and opened the car door for her. Beth says, "Thank you, Mr. John Bannister." John says, "You are welcome, Mrs. Beth Rogers." John entered the driver seat and looked at Beth, who is staring at him. John says, "What are you looking at?" Beth says, "I am looking at a very handsome man, who has treated me to a wonderful night." John says, "I am happy the night has gone well." Beth says, "I was not sure, what to expect on the first date, but you are full of surprises." John says, "I have some tricks up my sleeve." Beth says, "The Italian restaurant, the amazing love song, and the romantic movie, it has been a night to remember." John says, "We really got lucky, Babe." Beth's heart melted when John called her "Babe" and she thought, "*I hope John's the one.*"

While John drove Beth home, he decided to ask Beth about her family again. John says, "I am attracted to you. When you smile at me and tilt your head, I just melt. I want to get to know you better, but you must let me in, and tell me about your family and past." Beth turned her head away from John for a moment, while tears welled up in her eyes, and she thought of a response. Beth does not want to lose John and does not want to tell John about her past. Beth says, "I am really falling for you too, but you are going to have to give me time before I feel comfortable enough to talk about my past. I am not pushing you away, I just need time to think this over and see if I trust you." Beth started to cry and weep some more, while looking at John's questioning eyes. John says, "Can I see you again before the football game?" Beth reluctantly says, "No!" John's heart felt some more cracks of rejection open and remained quiet. John says, "That really hurts. I like you and want to get to know you." Beth says, "You do not want me the way I am, right now. I must work through this myself. Please John, it is the best for the both of us," and put her hand on John's cheek for encouragement. John looks at Beth. Beth says, "All I need is time." John and Beth remain quiet for the rest of the short trip to Beth's home. Much soul searching is going on in the car, while John and Beth try to overcome the baggage and barriers from the past.

John pulled in front of Beth's home and turned off the car. John says, "Can I walk you to the front door? I have not had this much fun in long time. I hope and pray, that you can overcome, whatever this secret is, and let me know who you are." Beth whispers, "That means the world to me, and you mean the world to me. One of these days, I will get my courage up, and tell you about my past." Beth hugged John tightly, pressing her body against him. Beth says, "Goodnight." John

reluctantly puts his arms around Beth and hugged her. Beth can feel John is upset and reminded him by saying, "Remember, the football game. Jeremy and I will be waiting right here for you," as she pointed her index finger to the doorstep of her home. John liked Beth's response and said, "I will be here to pick you and Jeremy up for the game." John and Beth look awkwardly at one another, as the first date concluded in confusion and wonder.

So many emotions circulate in John's mind, as he walked back to his car and left Beth's home. The physical feeling of hugging Beth was amazing. John's hormones have kicked in gear and rage. John wants Beth more than ever, but Beth had put on the brakes, and is not sharing her past with John. All John can think about is the nagging question, "What has Beth done that is so bad? She cannot even tell me who she is." One thing is for sure, John loves Beth with every fiber of his being. John envisions Beth standing in front of him wearing a wedding dress, as John lifts the veil and kisses Beth passionately. John whispers aloud, "I do not want to live without you, Beth." John cries out to God, "I think I found my virtuous woman."

Beth closed her front door and started cry. Will Beth let John into her past or string him along until the relationship ends. Beth is torn, between her own selfishness and secret, and her new-found love for John. Beth whispers aloud, "John deserves to know about my past, and it is unfair to treat him like this." That night, Beth lay in bed wanting the loving touch of John by her side holding her tightly and loving her. Beth can hardly sleep and wrestles with her secrets. What it boils down to is this, Beth has a prideful heart. Beth thought, "*Can I admit my wrongs, to my what's left of my family and friends?*" Beth still struggles with the big mistake she had made over twenty years in the past. Beth wrestles with the beast of pride all night long. Beth does not want to let go and give up her pride, but she says a prayer to God, "Lord, you must have something in the next few days, or I am not sure I will overcome my past. Please, God, help! I want to love John, and I am willing to open my past, and tell him about my life." Beth curled up in a ball and wept on her bed. The scene has been repeating itself in Beth's bedroom for six years, ever since Steven had passed away. Beth must move on with her life. Beth cries in a wavering voice, "Jesus, I am ready to love again!" Beth wants Steven to walk in and love her, but John's love is just around the corner.

## Chapter 14

Sunday morning arrived for John, as he prepared to go to work. The Holy Spirit triggered John's heart, and he decided to stay home. John is not thinking clear, and struggled with his love for Beth, and her mystery. John got in his car and started to drive out of the subdivision, when he looked at the Church he attended in the past. John steered his car into the Church parking lot and parked. John mutters aloud, "It has been a long time, Lord." John walked into the Church. The greeter met John at the entrance and welcomed John. John shook hands with the greeter. John walked to the back pew and sat down, as the congregation is sitting down from singing a song. Reverend Jerry walked to the pulpit, and stood silently for moments, while he looked over the congregation and smiled. Reverend Jerry slipped off his shoes, and stood in silence, while continuing to smile at the congregation. Jerry took off his suit coat, tie, and white dress shirt, while saying nothing, and remained silent. Whispers amongst the congregation say, "What is Reverend Jerry is doing?"

Reverend Jerry stepped behind the pulpit and spoke. Reverend Jerry says, "Has my unusual behavior heightened your interest? It is simple, I am a servant, who follows God and His word to the best of my ability. What you do not see, is I struggle with the same things you struggle with. I have a one-word sentence, which will change your world, and the world around you. God keeps this one-word sentence simple, Grace. Grace holds more power and meaning, than we can understand. In (Luke 22:54-62, WEB), Peter denied Christ three times. Peter was blind to his selfish religious pride, and Jesus graciously humbled Peter three times. Jesus had shown "Grace" to Peter and restored him. Peter the liar, was saved by grace."

Reverend Jerry stepped in front of the pulpit to continued speaking. Reverend Jerry says, "Remember Saul, who was torturing and killing the early Christians of the Way movement. In (Acts 9: 3-8, WEB), Saul had been struck by a bright light on the road Damascus. God asked Saul, "Why do you persecute Me?" Jesus had shown "Grace" to Saul, the murderer. Saul would become spirit filled Apostle Paul of the New Testament. Saul, the murderer, was save by God's grace. In (John 20:24-29, WEB), Thomas would not believe Jesus had risen and requested to see and feel the nail scars and pierced side of Jesus. Jesus appeared to Thomas and made him touch His nailed scarred hands and pierced side. Jesus had shown "Grace" to the faithless

doubter, Thomas. Let us not forget the adulteress woman, who was caught in the act of adultery, by the religious leaders of day. The adulteress woman was brought to Jesus for judgment. In (John 8:1-11, WEB), all the stones were dropped, and the religious leaders walked away. Jesus offered a help and hand to the adulteress woman. Jesus had shown “Grace” to the adulteress woman. What word will Jesus offer you when you fail? Grace, of course.”

Reverend Jerry put his index finger to his lips and ponders in a question to the congregation, “You may have wondered “Why” I had taken off some of my clothing before my sermon. I exposed this simple visual to you for a reason. You must get past my title and suit and realize, I am just another face saved by God’s amazing grace. Please, congregation, as you deal with people in your everyday life, show them the same measure of grace you have received. The final thought I leave you is profound; grace and compassion are the strong suit of a wise person.” Reverend Jerry concluded his sermon with a short prayer. The congregation sang a song, and the Church service concluded.

On the way home, John’s hardened heart is touched by Reverend Jerry’s sermon. John kept thinking about the word “Grace” over and over, until he felt a warm and pleasant sensation inside his spirit. John thought about all the changes in his life, and remembered Mrs. Brady, Mrs. Johnson, Beth and Jeremy, Walt, and Susan all being part of a bigger picture. John thought of his first dream, and his first vision, while trying to grasp the circumstances and situations, which tied God’s perfect timing together in every matter. John says to God, “Lord, I still do not know the rest of your plan, but I know it is coming, soon.”

That afternoon, John walked across the street and talked to Walt. John told Walt everything about the first date with Beth. Walt gave John a piece of advice that stuck in John’s mind. Walt says, “If you love Beth that much, the next time you see her, tell her you love her, and stop wasting time!” John says, “I am not sure I will see her again, until the football game.” Walt says, “Let Beth, know you love her, at the game! If Beth means that much to you, your love will overcome your fears.” John exuberantly says, “The next time I see Beth, I am going to tell her I love her.” “Now you are talking,” Walt says, while slapping John on the back for encouragement. John left Walt’s home and walked back to his home.

John sat on his couch and pondered the day. That word “Grace” kept bothering John’s mind and spirit. John started to think about his terrible divorce, and admitted to himself, that he blamed God for the divorce. John often pondered this thought, “How could such a loving God, let this terrible thing happen to me?” The Holy Spirit prompts John with this thought, “*Did you want to be married to a person, who really never loved you?*” This inner thought struck John’s soul hard, while he thought for a bit. Suddenly, John eyes opened to his reality, and he screamed at the top of his lungs. John shouts, “She never really loved me. If she would have loved me, she would not have left.” John is stuck on this notion, “*How could someone, who loved him so much do such a rotten thing to him?*” God had just busted John’s mind and heart open; this false notion John had been living in for over ten years. John jumps around his living room shouting, “Jenna, never loved me,” hundreds of times. After John settled down and mutters to himself, “Ten years, I have been looking for this answer. How dumb could I be?”

John has a spirit and body rush, and he decided to run five miles. During his run, John prayed to God, and asked for forgiveness and wasting ten years of his life. John’s life was slowly being destroyed by un-forgiveness. John blamed God for the divorce. God’s perfect timing has restored John’s damaged spirit. John prayed for Beth, and he hoped Beth is his virtuous woman, he had asked God for in the vision.

Just as John returned home from his run, he heard his cell phone ring. John picked up the phone and says, “Tom, what’s up, wild man?” Tom says, “Dude, I am coming to Philly for work. We need to get together and hang out!” John says, “When will you be here?” Tom says, “Tuesday night.” John says, “Benny’s Bar and Grill, downtown by the courthouse!” Tom says, “What time?” John shouts, “7:30, and let the partying begin!” Tom says, “I’ll see you, Buddy.” John shouts a manly grunt at his phone and ended the conversation with his best friend, Tom.

After John’s run, he felt a peace in his spirit, that he had not felt in a long time. John’s broken and lonely spirit is restored, by the living grace of God. John thought, “*If I could have figured this out ten years ago, I would have never gone through this loneliness.*” The Holy Spirit reminds John of this fact, “*If you would have not waited ten years, you would have never met Beth and Jeremy.*” John whispers this thought, as he drifts off to sleep, “I guess timing is everything.”



## Chapter 15

Early Monday morning, John opened his eyes and whispered for the first time in ten years, “Lord, help me get survive this busy day at work.” John’s hectic day at work turned from day to night. John’s hard driving spirit is having doubts about working so many hours. John thought, “*Maybe Walt is right, and I may need to back off working so many long hours.*” The office clock is flashing 9:15 pm, as John walked out of his office. John mutters, “I wonder, what Beth and Jeremy are doing?” John reached for his cell phone to call Beth, but remembered in thought, “*Beth needs time, and I don’t want to pressure her,*” and he lowered his cell phone tucked the phone into his pocket. John reminisces about Beth’s gray-blue eyes, long neck, and brown hair, while dreaming of kissing her. John whispers, “I love you.”

Beth whisper aloud, “I wonder what John is doing. I wish he would call me.” Jeremy heard Beth mutter something. Jeremy says, “Mom, what did you say?” Beth coyly says, “Nothing, sweetie. I am just thinking out-loud.” Jeremy says, “I thought, I heard you say John’s name.” Beth says, “Maybe I did.” Jeremy says, “You like John, don’t you?” Beth says, “Yes, I do.” Jeremy surprised Beth by saying, “I would like John to be my step-dad.” Beth says, “Why do you say that?” Jeremy says in a childlike manner, “John is cool, and he likes the Eagles. What else could I ask for?”

Beth is surprised by Jeremy’s simplistic answer. It is so simple to her little boy, while Beth overcomplicated her secret past and her love for John. Beth reminded Jeremy to get his pajamas on, because it is time to go over to Mrs. Johnson’s home for the night. Jeremy emphatically says in frustration, “Mom, I pray you get another job, and never work another night, ever again!” Beth humbly says, “Thank you, for your prayers, and I hope to stop working nights too. One day sweetie.” Beth and Jeremy hug. Beth walked Jeremy over to Mrs. Johnson’s home for the night.

Beth rode on the bus downtown, where she worked in a large office building, cleaning offices. As Beth walked into the door of the large office building, she whispers a prayer to God, “*I hope and pray, I find a different job. I do not want to work at night anymore.*” Beth cleaned offices, until her break. During her lunch break, Beth is stair-walking between 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> floor. Beth is struggling with her past again, and Beth says to God, “How can I ever deal with the hurt, I have caused

my family and friends?” Beth’s pride is taking over her spirit, when God put this thought in her heart and mind, “Grace.” The “G” word is so foreign to Beth’s thought pattern. Beth cannot understand the meaning of grace. Beth looked up the definition of “Grace” on her cell phone. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines grace as, “A way of moving that is smooth and attractive and is not stiff.” Beth understood the definition, but it does not really match her thought of grace. She scrolled down to another definition. Grace, “Unmerited divine assistance given to humans for their regeneration or sanctification.” Beth whispers, “God, you are going to have to help me with grace, and I am not sure I fully understand Your grace.” Beth continued to walk during her lunch break and returned to cleaning offices all night.

Beth left the office building at 7:00 am and returned home to pick up Jeremy from Mrs. Johnson’s. Beth prepared Jeremy’s lunch and walked him to school. She walked home and prepared for bed. Beth looked at the pink chipped fingernail polish on her nails and thought of the date with John. She reflected on the wonderful time she had with John, and remembered the dinner, song, and movie. Exhausted from the hard night at work, Beth faded off to sleep. Beth curled up in a human ball, still suffering from the terrible loss of Steven. Way too soon, the alarm clock started beeping, and Beth awakes to exhaustion. Beth sighs and inhales a big deep breath and says, “Will this ever end? I am so exhausted.” Beth got up out of bed and felt like a walking zombie, as she dressed. Beth slept five to six hours every day, because she worked the night shift, and must pick up Jeremy from school. Beth felt like she has been in a comatose state for the last six years of her nightshift hell.

## Chapter 16

John's reminiscing about all the crazy times he and Tom had, while in high school and college. John wonders, "What insane story Tom bring up tonight?" John reflected on the time, when he and Tom had stolen John's father's car, and drove on the country roads, on the out-skirts of Cedar Rapids. John and Tom had gotten a hold of a twelve pack of beer from Tom's older brother. John and Tom drank twelve pack of beer in a cornfield, while listening to rock-and-roll music. After drinking the beer, Tom is intoxicated and could not drive the car. John had to drive his father's car back home, and sneak Tom into his bedroom window. John made Tom sleep under his bed, and hid Tom from his parents. The next morning, John woke to a muffled cry from Tom screaming, "Let me out!" John fondly remembers, *"We did crazy stuff when we were teenagers. Tom was always in trouble, and I had to cover his back."*

John's day was hyper busy at work, and before he knew it, 6:00 pm is blinking on the office clock. John walked out of his office and passed by the cleaning person. John politely says, "Goodnight, Mary," as Mary vacuumed the carpeting. Mary says, "Goodnight, Mr. Bannister." John stopped, turned around, and thanked Mary for all the hard-work she does every night cleaning the office. Mary says, "Thank you." John smiled and walked away from Mary and stepped into the hallway. In the hallway, John stopped and thought about another cleaning person, Beth. John pulled his cell phone from his pocket and touched the contact list and looked Beth's number. John stared at Beth's number intently. At the same time, Mary stepped in the hallway, while dragging a vacuum cleaner behind her. Mary observes John's facial expression of depression. Mary says, "Is everything okay?" John says, "Can I ask you a question?" Mary says, "Ask away!" John held his cell phone for Mary to see. John says, "Do you see this number?" Mary says, "Yes, I do." John says, "This number is to the woman I'm falling in love with." Mary says, "Have you told her that you love her?" John says, "I want to call her and tell her how much I love her, right now." Mary shook her head and waved her finger at John. Mary says, "No, no, no! You cannot tell her you love her over the phone. You must make it special, something she will never forget. You have never told her, that you love her, correct?" John says, "No, I have not told her." Mary passionately says, "Make it special for Beth, and the next time you see her, tell her you love her! That way, she

will never forget, the day, place, and time when you told her, that you love her.” John says, “You are one smart lady. Thank you, Mary,” and shook her hand.

John left work, while thinking about an unusual way that he could tell Beth how much he loves her. John thinks, “*At the football game this weekend. I will look at Beth’s beautiful blue and gray eyes and tell her how much I love her.*” John has four days to plan something special for Beth. John pulled in his driveway and stopped his car. John prepared for a night out with Tom.

## *Chapter 17*

John walked into Benny's Bar and Grill, where he looked Tom standing in the waiting area. John and Tom greet one another, with a manly handshake, and a few guy grunts, and one manly shoulder bump. John and Tom walk in the bar section and sit at a table. The server says to John and Tom, "What can I get for you?" John says, "Gin and Tonic, and a burger and fries!" Tom says, "Scotch and water, and a burger and fries!" The server left the table. John and Tom start talking. John and Tom start to reminisce about their wild party days. The server returned with John and Tom's order. John and Tom start eating the burgers and fries and sip on the mixed drinks. After John and Tom finish eating, Tom bought more rounds of mixed drinks.

John told Tom about the big dream, and how the dream turned out to be real. Tom has a tough time believing John's story. John says, "I think, I am in love." Tom says in smart laughter, "I remember another conversation, from back in the day. The same words came out of your mouth, and it was about Jenna. Now it is Beth. Remember, history has a way of repeating itself." John is defiant and banged his fist on the table. John says, "There is something bigger going on here, I do not know what it is, but it is going to big. God's putting the pieces of this crazy puzzle together, and I am only one piece of puzzle. There are too many weird things happening." John banged his fist on the table again. John says in frustration, "I don't know what it is, but it's driving me crazy." Tom smirked at John to encourage him. Tom says, "Hey, I am with you man, right? Besides, I need to be the best man again." John says, "You have got buddy." John and Tom continue to drink and talk until 10:45 pm. John looked at Tom in an intoxicated fashion and disgusted look. John says in a drunken slur, "I did it again. Every time we get together, I get drunk. I did not realize I was smashed, until it was too late. I cannot drive home drunk. I got to call cab." Tom slurs in his intoxicated voice to say, "Hey, buddy, I have got a hotel room a few blocks away. You can sleep it off at the hotel with me." John slurs back, "Okay."

John and Tom leave Benny's at 10:50 pm, and start walking towards the hotel, where Tom is staying. John and Tom start acting stupid, while screaming and yelling like to crazy drunk hound-dogs. As John and Tom stagger and stumble along the sidewalk, the two drunks walk around a corner of a building. John plowed into a

lady that is walking around the corner at the same time. The lady is about to fall to the sidewalk when John grabbed her shoulders to steady the woman and himself. John and the woman look at each other for a split second. John shouts in a slurring fashion, "Beth, Is that you?" Beth is startled as John crashed into her, and says nothing in reply, but looked away from John. Beth is embarrassed to have John see her in her cleaning uniform. John is drunk and confused, while he waited for Beth's reply. Beth wiggles free from John's grip and started to quickly walk away from John. John instantly remembered Mary's advice that Mary had given him hours before, "*The next time you see Beth, tell her you love her!*" John started to run after Beth. John shouts, "Beth, wait!" Beth kept walking away from John. John puts his hand on Beth's shoulder and slurs, "Please, stop walking, Beth!" Beth hesitantly stopped walking, as she shrugged John's hand from her shoulder. Beth angrily says, "What?" John and Beth's eyes lock together, as their two worlds collide. Beth says in frustration and anger, "What do you want?" John tried to compose himself, in his intoxicated state. John says in a sobering slur of intoxication, "I'm taking the biggest chance of my life, and I'm opening my heart to you." John paused for a moment to think. John lovingly says, "I never want to let you go again. My heart says, I love you, Beth Rogers! I do not care, if you have a mysterious past. I do not care, if you are a cleaning person. I do not care if you live in a rundown home. I do not care!" John waved his hands in the air and shook his head and continued talking. John says, "If I let you slip away from me, I will regret it for the rest of my life." John put his hand on Beth's cheek and softly rubbed his thumb on her cheek, while he closed his eyes and kissed Beth. Beth wanted John so much, that she kissed John and hugged him. John stopped kissing Beth for a second. John says, "I love you, so much." Beth broke down and wept in John's arms. Beth says, "I'm falling in love with you too." John and Beth hug and kiss each other in timeless passion. Beth says, "I have to get to work." John refused to leave Beth's side. John says, "Is there a room in the office building, where I can sleep off this drunken stupor?" Beth says in a questioning fashion, "I do not think security will let you?" John says, "I don't care, I'll sleep on the floor or sidewalk." Beth knew John's mind is set and will not budge. Beth says, "Maybe, I can find a room for you to sleep in." John and Beth look down the sidewalk to see Tom watching the love story unfold. John waves at Tom and says, "I'll call you, soon!" Tom says, "Okay, Buddy," as he started to walk away from John and Beth. Tom stopped and shouts, "Beth, I have heard a lot about you, nice to meet you." Tom walked away from John and Beth

whispering, "John, you are one lucky dog. One of these days, I hope I find the right woman."

John and Beth walk to the high-rise office building, where Beth works, as a cleaning person. Inside the office building, the security guard greeted Beth with a big smile, while sternly looking at John. The security guard says, "Who's the drunk?" Beth says, "He is a good friend. John needs a place to sleep it off. Can you help?" Sam says, "I'll help him out." Beth says, "Thank you, Sam," and walked to the service elevator, while blowing a kiss to John. John smiles back at Beth and mouths, "I love you," while pointing his finger to the floor. Sam does not trust John. Sam says, "What's your name?" John says, "John Bannister." Sam says, "You need coffee?" John says, "Some coffee, might sober me up." Sam and John walk to the breakroom.

In the breakroom, Sam says, "How do you know Beth?" John says, "It is a crazy story." John told Sam about the dream. Sam says, "You must be something special to Beth." John says, "Why?" Sam says, "Beth, has always kept to herself and will not say much to the other cleaning staff or security guards." John says, "I'm the luckiest man in the world." Sam and John drink two cups of coffee. Sam directed John to a waiting room in the front lobby. Sam says, "You can sleep it off in here. Have a good night!" John says, "Thank you, Sam," and walked in the waiting room. John set his cell phone alarm for 6:55 am and turned off the light out in the waiting room.

While John is resting on the couch, he mutters, "I never thought I would get drunk. I never thought I would run into Beth. I never thought, I would confess my love to Beth. I wanted it to be special, when I told Beth, I love her. God, I really screwed up." The Holy Spirit whispers to John's heart, "It was special for Beth, and just wait until you see what happens tomorrow. The great Master builder is at work in your life."

## *Chapter 18*

While John is sleeping in the waiting room when he has a dream. In John's dream, he put the gold necklace on Beth's neck and kissed her passionately, while standing on the steps of the Philly courthouse. Beth is wearing in a light brown form fitting business dress and wearing high heeled boots. Beth's hair is beautifully styled, and she has gorgeous, manicured nails. John kissed Beth on the lips. John whispers, "I love you." John's cell phone alarm goes off. John jumped to his feet and quickly fell back on the couch. John mumbles in pain and says, "Ouch, my head is killing me." John grabbed his head and closed his eyes for a moment. John left the waiting room and stumbled his way to the security desk. John says to Sam, "When does Beth get off work?" Sam looked at his watch for a second. Sam says, "Just about, now," and pointed his hand towards the elevator. Like clockwork, the service elevator door opened, and Beth walked out. Beth smiled at John, as she expectantly walked towards him. John smugly says, "You see, it is seven o'clock on the dot, and I feel great." Beth snickers to say in John's ear, "You look like you're hung-over." John says, "My head is killing me, but as-long-as I am with you, I am okay. You want me to drive you home?" Beth says, "Are you okay to drive?" John says, "I am a professional. I have something to ask you, on the way home." Beth says, "Let me think, the city bus or your Cadillac? You can drive me home!" John says, "That is great, let's go!" John and Beth walk out of the office building, and to John's car.

All John can think about is dream, while driving Beth home. John says, "What are you doing this morning?" Beth says, "I have to get Jeremy ready for school, then I going to sleep five or six hours, and pick up Jeremy from school." John says, "Can we spend time together, this morning or afternoon?" Beth says, "John, you are really messing with my sleep. It is so hard to sleep during the day and work at night." John says, "This could be the day, which might change your life, forever." Beth smirks to says, "What do you mean by that statement?" John says, "I guess you'll never know, unless you go." Beth says, "What a tease," as John pulled alongside her home. Beth is about to get out of the car when John tapped the electric door locks and locked the doors. John says, "Well?" Beth says in a demanding fashion, "Be back at 9:30, sharp, and I will be ready!" John says, "Sounds like a plan, Babe." Beth hopped out of the car and waved goodbye to John.



John raced home and showered and changed his cloths. John dressed in his dark blue suit and a white dress shirt and a blue and white checkered tie. John slipped on his finest black leather shoes and grabbed his black overcoat. The Fall days have been chilly in Philly. John opened the jewelry case and carefully lifted the gold necklace from the jewelry case. He carefully slipped the necklace into his suit pocket. John called work and request a personal day off.

In the blink of an eye, John is back at Beth's home, and knocking on the front door. Beth opened the door and looked at John. Beth says in confusion, "What are you all dressed up for?" John says, "I want to surprise you with something very special today." Beth says, "And what is that?" John says with a smirk, "I am not telling you, it's a secret." Beth does not want to go with John, because she is under dressed. John says, "I bet you will change your mind, when you see, where I am taking you." John took hold of Beth's hand and pulled her down the sidewalk. John says, "Come on, let's go Babe!" Beth has an idea of what John is up to, and willingly followed. John drove to the downtown area of Philly. John had Beth close her eyes, while he drove in the downtown area. John pulled in front of the world-class Adolf Biecker Spa and told Beth to open her eyes. Beth opened her eyes and looked at Adolf's. Beth had thought that John might do something crazy like this, but not Adolf's. Beth looked at John and messed with him. Beth says in a demanding manner, "I am not going in there. What do I have in common with all those beautiful women?" John looked at Beth and paused for a moment. John firmly says, "You are just as beautiful, as any of the women who walks in this spa. Please, do this for yourself! I want to see you all dolled up! Besides, there is four parts to this day, and if you want to get to the grand finale, you must pass every phase." Beth felt adventurous, and she smiled and squinted her eyes and wrinkled her nose at John. Beth exuberantly says, "What are you waiting for?" Beth flung open the car door, and hustled past the valet person, and opened the door to the spa. John handed his car keys to the valet attendant and walked in the spa with Beth.

John and Beth walk to the front desk, where a well-dressed female receptionist is sitting. The receptionist greeted Beth and John. The receptionist says, "Mrs. Rogers, are you ready for the deluxe treatment?" Beth looked at John suspiciously. John smiled and denied any wrongdoing. John says, "What? I have no idea, what are you taking about." Beth kindly says to the receptionist, "The deluxe treatment, please!" The receptionist penciled in Beth Roger's name in the reservation book.

Beth says to the receptionist, "I think John needs a haircut, don't you?" The receptionist says, "Absolutely, of course, we can style John's hair." John looked at Beth and receptionist and frowned. Beth tilted her head to the right and smiled at John. John gave up in a defiant and disgusted manner. John reluctantly says, "Oh, alright, just for you." Beth smiled at John and kissed him on the cheek. Beth whispers in his ear, "You just might pass the test." John rolled his eyes in disgust. John says, "I love you."

The receptionist, escorted Beth, and John to the changing rooms. In the changing room, Beth took her clothes off and put on a plush white terry cloth robe. Beth looked at herself in the full-length mirror and observes a glimpse of what she once looked like. Beth prays to God, "God, bring back my beauty, I once had, when I was young!" The message therapist knocked on the door and escorted Beth to the message room. Beth received a full-body message treatment from the female message therapist. A hair stylist washed and treatment to her hair with a vitamin E oil. The stylist, cut, trimmed, and styled Beth's hair; then colored Beth's hair dark-brown and washed away the gray. While Beth is sitting in the styling chair, another stylist, walked John into the room. John is wearing a blindfolded. John sat down in the chair next to Beth. John heard Beth talking to the stylist and attempted to take off his blindfold. The stylist held down the blindfold on John's eyes and politely says, "Oh, no mister!" John says, "You can't fault a guy for trying." John listened Beth's hair stylist walk her out of the room. John says, "Where is Beth going?" John's stylist says, "Beth is going to get a manicure and pedicure. Do not worry, she will be back." John napped, while the stylist cut and trimmed his hair.

All too soon, Beth returned to the stylist room. Beth sat down in the stylist chair next to John, while the stylist primped Beth hair. The make-up artist entered the room and brushed a thin coat of foundation on Beth's cheeks and applied eyeliner and mascara. The make-up artist says to Beth, "What color lipstick would you like?" Beth picked her lipstick color. After the make-up artist had applied the lipstick on Beth's lips, she handed the supple red lipstick to Beth. Make artist says, "For keeps!" Beth says, "For keeps, thank you." The hair stylist, make-up artist, and the manicure specialist all rant and rave, at how beautiful Beth looked. All the raving noise awoke John from his nap. John says, "Hey, hey, hey, when do I get to see her?" The stylist walked over to John's chair. The stylist says, "No peeking, until I say so." The stylist took John by the hand and walked him over to Beth and put

Beth's hands in his. The stylist says to John, "Open your eyes!" John opened his eyes to see unspeakable beauty looking at him. Beth's countenance had changed from an average looking woman to a woman beaming with confidence, elegance, grace, and radiance. John exuberantly shouts, "Beth Rogers, you are one of the most gorgeous women in the world." John lifted Beth's hands to his lips and kissed her hand. Beth tilted her head and smiled at John. Beth says, "Why, thank you, Mr. Bannister."

The hair stylist contacted the spa manager and raved about Beth's beauty. The spa manager rushed in the stylist room to see Beth. The manager looked at Beth and began to rant and rave at how beautiful she looked. Beth began to blush at all the attention given to her. The spa manager says to Beth, "I watched you come in this morning, and you will not go out wearing those old raggedy clothes! I have a special dress just for you." The manager walked over to a closet and pulled out a black form fitting evening dress. The manager walked over to Beth and sized her up. The manager says, "You will look good in this, put it on!" The manager handed the black dress to Beth. Beth says, "Thank you." The spa manager says in a fussy manner, "Beth Rogers, you come back next week, and bring all your beautiful friends!" Beth smiled politely at the manager and thanked him. Beth thought in her mind, "*I don't have any friends left.*" Beth returned to the changing room and slipped on the black dress. Beth must wear her beat up white tennis shoes with the black evening dress. Beth walked out of the changing room. John says, "Phase 1, complete. Wow, you look marvelous."

John and Beth left the spa. John wanted to take Beth to a nice restaurant for phase 2, but Beth does not want to walk in the restaurant wearing old white tennis shoes. Beth convinced John, to order from a drive-thru restaurant. John pulled into a drive-thru restaurant and ordered two burgers, two fries, and two sodas. John and Beth eat in the car. John says, "I wanted our lunch to be romantic." Beth says, "Any place with you is romantic," and kissed John on the cheek. John and Beth finish eating the fast-food. John says, "Phase 2, complete."

John says, "Are you ready for phase 3?" Beth says, "Bring it!" Beth pulled down the sun visor to check her make-up. Beth is surprised at how young she looked. Good memories flood into her mind, and she thought, "*My life will change today. Lord, I hope and pray for change.*" Beth's desperation of loneliness and brokenness

has pulled her from the pride and self-pity, which she had clothed herself in, since Steven's death. The old blood-stained rags, which remind her of Steven's death must leave. Beth must move on with John and leave her past behind. God's revelation for Beth awoke when John drove into the parking structure at Bloomingdale's. The past awakes for Beth, as good and bad memories enter her mind. John's car rolled to a stop. John looked over to see Beth thinking about something. A couple tears trickle down Beth's cheeks, and she wiped away the tears. John reached over to touched Beth's hand and softly squeezed her hand. Beth looked away from John for a moment, then looked back at him. John says, "I think you should walk into Bloomingdale's, and pick out the most beautiful outfit you like. Do not worry about the cost! I am for you, Beth Rogers! We need let the past go!" For the first time in ten years, a couple of tears trickle down John's cheeks, as he looked down in sadness. Until that moment, the hardened heart of John had never allowed himself to cry over his divorce. John's revelation startled him awake when he looked up at Beth. John will never walk back into his self-centered bitterness again. The door to John's past slammed shut, and more teardrops, that splash on his suitcoat. John knew Beth would not let go back to his self-pitied ways. John began to weep a little bit, while Beth took hold of John's hand. Beth sensed that John has let Jenna go and hugged him. Beth says, "I let Steven go. You let Jenna go." John and Beth instantly, intertwine in love and life by kissing each other. John wiped away Beth's tears and Beth wiped away John's tears. The spiritual consummation between John and Beth solidifies, while they deeply gaze into each other eyes. The soul searching is over for John and Beth, they want this relationship, forever.

John and Beth walk into Bloomingdale's, like two angels dancing in heaven, as John strutted in his dark blue suit and Beth walked be-side him wearing her black evening dress and white tennis shoes. Beth modeled dresses for John, and finally picked a gorgeous lion-brown business suit dress. Beth tried on different shoes before picking a fashionable pair of dark-brown boots with a two-inch heel. To finish Beth's dress ensemble, she chose a stylish medium-dark-brown Fall coat. John exuberantly says, "Phase 3 is done!"

It is 3:00 pm, and Beth remembered, that she must pick Jeremy up from school. Beth says, "I have to pick up Jeremy from school." John says, "That is right, but it is going to mess up phase 4. Can you call Mrs. Johnson and have her pick up Jeremy

from school?" Beth reluctantly says, "I do not know, I am not hip on that idea. I am the only person who has ever picked Jeremy up from school." John says, "I get it. Once phase 4 is done, we will rush over and pick up Jeremy from Mrs. Johnson's. What do you think?" Beth reluctantly caved into John's request. Beth called Mrs. Johnson and asked her to pick up Jeremy from school. Beth texted Jeremy's teacher and let the teacher and Jeremy know that Mrs. Johnson will be picking Jeremy up from school.

Phase 4 started for John and Beth, as they walk in downtown Philly. John and Beth held tightly, while they walk on the sidewalk. John and Beth near the courthouse. John and Beth started to walk up the steps of the Philly courthouse and stopped on the first landing to rest. John decided to make his move, and surprise Beth. John lovingly looked at Beth. Beth is wondering what John is up to. John says, "I never thought in a million years, that I would ever meet someone as beautiful as you. You are the woman of my dreams. I want to give you something special, that will always remind you of my love. Close your eyes!" Beth closed her eyes and waited with great anticipation. John reached into his suit coat pocket and pulled out the gold necklace. John brushed Beth's dark-brown hair back from her shoulders and placed the necklace around her neck and locked the clasp. John stepped back a little and sweetly says, "Open your eyes!"

Beth opened her eyes and looked down to see the gold necklace resting on her chest. Immediately, Beth broke down and cried, while touching the gold necklace. John is surprised by Beth's reaction to the necklace. John says, "What's wrong?" Beth looked at John, as she cried in pain for moments. Beth says, "Where did you get this necklace?" John told Beth that Walt is his neighbor, had given him the necklace. In that moment, Beth came face to face with her past and John's questioning eyes. Beth put her hand on John's cheek and softly kissed John. Beth says, "Please do not be upset with me, I am taking a big chance and telling you who I really am. I love you so much. I never want to lose you." John is confused by Beth's words. Beth straightened up her back and took a big deep breath and exhaled a sigh of relief. Beth says, "I have been living a lie for over twenty years, and you are the only one, who will know besides Steven." John is still confused. Beth cautiously says, "My real name is Linda Livingston. Walt, is my dad."

John's eyes opened wide, and his eyeballs almost bugged out of his head, as he stepped back in shock. John felt flabbergasted. Beth's revelation penetrated John's ears and mind, as John's mouth hung open a bit. John started laughing crazy hard, while slapping his hand on his knee. John wildly shouts, "I cannot believe this, you are Linda Livingston? What is up with the Beth Rogers stuff? That explains it all, now, I know why this happened. Walt has been praying for you come back and visit. Walt thinks you are dead." John kissed Beth on the lips hard. Beth is shocked. John says, "Let's get Jeremy and visit Walt!" Beth stopped John immediately. Beth defiantly says, "No!" John says, "What do you mean, no?" Beth says, "I have hurt my family way too much and he will never forgive me." John says, "If you do not see Walt, you will never forgive yourself. Besides, I know your secret, and I am going to tell him. Walt loves you, big-time." Beth says, "What would I say to him?" John says, "Tell him you love him and give him a big hug and kiss!" John laughed aloud a bit. John says in a smart tone of voice, "A piece of advice, this time, don't throw your gold necklace on the floor and stomp off like a spoiled brat!" Beth grinned at John and hugged him. Beth joyously says, "Oh, you're just so funny."

Beth took a moment to look up to heaven, then back at John. With a big happy smile on Beth's face she says, "Say my name!" John lovingly looked at Beth. John says, "Linda Livingston, I love you with all my heart." Beth hugged John tightly. Linda says, "Thank you, for telling me I am Linda Livingston again. John kissed Linda. John says, "I love you forever, Linda Livingston." Linda wept, as John held her tightly. Beth cries out to God and humbly says, "Thank you, God, for giving me my name back."

John and Linda quickly walk back to John's car; enthralled in love's powerful grip. They arrive to pick up Jeremy at Mrs. Johnson's home. Mrs. Johnson opened front door and she about passed out, as she stared at John and Beth. Mrs. Johnson shockingly says, "And what do we have here? Girl, you better thank me! Can I pick him, or what? Praise the Lord." Mrs. Johnson is known, as the neighborhood match maker, and she really nailed this match. Jeremy hustled to the front door to see Beth. Jeremy looked at Beth and is shocked. Jeremy says, "No way, Mom. You are beautiful." Beth hugged and kissed Jeremy. Harriett looked at Beth to say, "We will talk later, woman!" Harriett looked at John to say, "You are looking fine." Beth thanked Harriett for watching Jeremy. Beth says, "We will talk soon."

John, Beth, and Jeremy get into John's car. Beth turned to look at Jeremy, who is sitting in the back seat. Beth says, "I have something to tell you. I am ashamed to say this, and I love you so much and never want to hurt you. I have a secret I have never told you. My name is not Beth. My real name is Linda." Jeremy's childlike voice says, "What?" Jeremy paused in shock for a moment and looked at Beth in silence. Jeremy confusingly says, "But, mom, you lied to me?" Beth looked at the hurt in Jeremy's trusting eyes, as tears start to trickle down his cheeks. Beth desperately says, "I know sweetie, and I am so sorry. Please forgive me, Jeremy! I love you and do not know, what I would do without you. We are a team, right?" With loving childlike faith, Jeremy forgave Beth and Linda on the spot. Jeremy wrapped his arms around Beth's neck and says, "I love you, Mom." John says, "That had gone better, then I thought it would." John pulled away from Harriett's home.

## *Chapter 19*

Linda's memories clustered in her mind with anxiety, as John drove through the subdivision, where she once lived. Linda told Jeremy, he has a grandpa, and he will meet grandpa soon. Linda's childhood memories come alive, as she thought of her best friend Peggy. Peggy and Linda would ride their bicycles on the subdivision streets, as little girls. John drove into Walt's driveway and stopped the car. John says, "Are you ready?" Linda kissed John on the cheek. Linda says, "I think so."

Beth and Jeremy get out of John's car and walk to the front door of Walt's home. Linda's tension and anxiety flooded her soul, and she wonders how Walt will react to her return. Linda rang the doorbell. Walt looked out the window next to his front door and looked at John's car parked in his driveway. Walt walks towards his front door and yells, "John, I am coming!" Walt opened the front door and looked at Linda standing there. Linda is wearing her gold necklace. Walt surprised by Linda's arrival. Walt says stupid fashion, "Linda, is that you?" Linda can no longer contain herself and cried. Linda says, "Daddy," and hugged Walt tightly. The prodigal daughter has returned home. Overwhelming emotion floods Walt's heart and Walt humbly says, "Dad's here, I love you!" Walt continued to hug Linda. Walt felt a little tug on his pant leg and looked down to see a little boy looking at him. Walt says, "Who do we have here?" Linda says through her tears, "This young man is, Jeremy. Jeremy is your grandson." Walt bent down on one knee and looked at Jeremy. Walt says, "Nice to meet you, Jeremy," and Walt and Jeremy hug each other. Jeremy says, "I love you, Grandpa!" Walt says, "I love you too!" Walt began to cry even more, as Linda, Walt, and Jeremy hug each other. Walt must ask Linda a critical question. Walt says, "How did you ever get your necklace?"

Through the emotional reunion, Walt heard a car door slam. Walt looked to see John walking towards him with a smug look on his face. John walks up to Walt and shook his hand hard. John says, "Hey, how are you doing? I found my wild woman, where is yours?" Walt and John bust out laughing super hard. Linda says to John and Walt, "What is that all about?" John says to Linda, "I will tell you later." John says, "Who in the world would have ever thought, that Beth Rogers, was Linda Livingston?" Jeremy's simple childlike answer sums it up the best, when he says, "God did."



Walt welcomed Linda, Jeremy, and John into his home for the afternoon. Linda says, "Where's Mom?" Walt's countenance turned to sadness. Walt says, "Mom passed away from cancer about five years ago." Linda's spirit shaken, at hearing about the death on Nancy. Linda started to cry and weep for Nancy. Walt comforted Linda. Walt says, "Mom is looking down from heaven, and she has one big smile on her face. Right now, Mom's dancing in heaven with Jesus." Walt, Linda, and Jeremy begin to weep for the loss of Nancy. After minutes of standing on Walt's doorstep filled with sorrow and joy. John says, "Maybe, we all should go inside!" They all walk into Walt's home. In the living room, Walt sat between Linda and Jeremy, while reminiscing about the past. For hours, John and Jeremy listen to stories from Walt about Linda. Walt's joy was beyond expression, every time he looked at Linda. Walt says aloud, "Linda looks so much like Nancy," and kissed her forehead. Walt looked over at the empty chair, where Nancy used to sit. Walt whispers, "I miss you so much, sweetheart," while winking his eye up at the ceiling. Linda felt a great remorse overtake her spirit, for what she had done to Nancy. Linda started to cry. Linda says, "I am so sorry, Mom. I left you lonely for all these years."

A gentle breeze from the hand of God, pushed open Walt's front door. All four souls looked at the door slowly creek open. A small yellow butterfly flapped and fluttered into the hallway, and gently floated over to Nancy's chair. The little yellow butterfly came to a rest on the armrest of Nancy's chair. Walt, Linda, Jeremy, and John froze in remembrance of the "Lady" of the house. Jeremy slowly walked to the chair, where the yellow butterfly is resting and sporadically moving its' wings up and down. Jeremy lowered his index finger to the armrest of the chair. The butterfly walked unto Jeremy's index finger. Jeremy says in a childlike manner, "Grandma says, hello, from heaven. Mom, I think Grandma has forgiven you."

The sun's evening rays started to set in when Walt asked Linda a question. Walt says, "Will you and Jeremy stay the night?" Linda says, "Well?" Jeremy excitedly says, "Alright, no Mrs. Johnson's couch." Linda remembered about working and says, "I have to work, tonight." John says, "You are calling off tonight and staying here! You would be too tired work." Walt says, "Linda and Jeremy can stay with me on one condition." Linda says, "What's the condition, Dad?" Walt says, "You must live with me for a long time!" Linda says with a hug, "Dad, I will never leave you again." Linda Livingston, the prodigal has finally returned home forever.

Walt, Linda, and Jeremy prepare for bed, and John prepared to leave Walt's home. John began walking towards the front door. Walt says to John, "Where do you think you're going?" John says, "I'm going home." Walt slaps John on the back and says, "You are not going back to that lonely house! You are staying here with us! You touch my daughter; you are dead meat!" John sheepishly smiled at Walt. John says, "Yes, Sir. I have honorable intentions for your daughter." Walt knew, John is in love with Linda from their past conversations about Beth. Walt says in a question, "What's up with this Beth, Linda thing?" John says, "We will talk about it later." Walt showed Linda, Jeremy, and John to the bedrooms.

Walt kissed Linda on the forehead, and she opened her bedroom door. Walt says, "Goodnight, Linda," as he walked away from her bedroom door. Linda walked into a time capsule. Linda's bedroom is the same, as the day she left home, and walked away from her family and a modeling career. Linda walked over to the closet and swung open the doors and stared at her old clothing. Linda's eyes glisten, as she looked at the clothing, she once wore, while modeling. Linda whispers, "My, how things have changed." Linda slipped her clothing off and tried to squeeze into and outfit, but her old clothing is just a little too snug. Linda walked over to her dresser and turned on the lamp switch. The light flickered to life. Linda looked at the picture from her high school graduation and gazed at Walt and Nancy hugging her. Linda picked up the graduation picture and stared intently at the picture. Linda hugged the picture in silence. Linda says, "I am so sorry, Mom. I caused you so much pain. I love you, forever." Linda sat at the edge of her bed and looked at the graduation picture. A thought and word humbled Linda's spirit when she heard the word, "Grace." An angel from the Lord appeared for a moment and faded quickly. Linda whispers to God and Jesus, "God, thank you, for this miraculous Wednesday." Linda touched her gold necklace and walked over to her mirror. Linda looked at the gorgeous gold necklace resting on her chest. Linda is upset, for throwing her gold necklace on the floor and storming out of her parent's home, when she was young. The tears of regret overwhelm Linda's cheeks, like droplets of water cleansing her soul from the self-inflicted curse that Beth had lived for twenty years. Once the tears could no longer flow, Linda wiped the semi dried salty tears from her cheeks. She inhaled in a big deep breath and exhaled a massive sigh of relief. Linda Livingston can finally breath again. The lie is over, Beth is gone, and Linda has come back to life.

A still small voice comforted Linda, as she walked over to her vanity. Linda looked her childhood Bible, and for the first time in over twenty years and she opened the Bible. Linda blindly opened the Bible and put her index finger on a page. Linda tilted her head to the right and intently looked the Bible verse. Linda finally understood, what God's healing "Grace" is all about, while she read Ephesians 2:8-9(WEB), "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith---and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God---not by works, so that no one can boast." There is no emotion left in Linda's spirit, only God's love and truth that envelopes her whole being. Linda walked over to her white canopy bed and flopped on the bed. Linda is exhausted and rejuvenated all at the same time. Linda whispers, "Thank you, God and Jesus for guiding me back home." Linda whispered the childhood prayer created by Henry Johnstone, "Now, I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray ---." Linda drifted into a deep sleep.

-----*The Author's thought*-----

Let us talk about Linda for the first time, as she lay exhausted on her canopy bed. If Linda would have swallowed her pride and humbled herself, and came home, everything would have been different. Linda and Jeremy would have been able to see Nancy before she passed away. Jeremy would have been able to meet his grandpa sooner. Walt would have not been so lonely after Nancy's death. John and Linda would have met five years earlier. Linda refused to take hold of God's grace and return home to her parents. God in his great love continued with an unwavering compassion and worked with Linda's human pride, until another perfect time arose. God always wants to reclaim His lost, but humans fail to see the grace and patience God's lovingly shows to the world.

As you deal with the "Beast of pride" in your own life, remember this, "Do not let pride deceive you into justifying your own prideful actions, or you will live in misery for years. Be the prodigal son, daughter, or friend who returns home quickly, and asks for forgiveness. Let your prodigal moment, as a Son or Daughter of the Lord be an extremely short-lived time in your life!"

## *Chapter 20*

For the first time in years, Walt felt alive again, as he closed the door to Linda's room. Walt's body is energized with life and love. Walt walked down the hallway to crack open the bedroom door, where Jeremy is sleeping. Walt whispers to himself, "Wow, I am a grandpa, I have a lot to catch up on. Goodnight, Jeremy," and softly closed the bedroom door. Walt walked over to the bedroom, where John is sleeping and whispers, "John, Thank you! John was dating my daughter all along, and we did not even know it was Linda." Walt mutters in question to God, "Linda returned in the same way she left," and thought about the gold necklace. Walt turned the hall light off and walked to his bedroom. Walt rested on his bed, thinking of Linda's amazing return home. Walt humbly says, "God, it is a miracle, thank you. God has answered my prayer."

## Chapter 21

Thursday morning is as special as life itself, for the Livingston and Bannister family. How can you define or express in words, what a family is? Not a lonely or dull moment for John, Linda, Walt, and Jeremy, with all the hustle and bustle of getting ready for another busy day. Linda is awake at 6:30, and making breakfast for the family, while Walt is reading the newspaper and sipping coffee at the kitchen table. John is over at his home, getting ready for work. Jeremy must go to school and has no clean clothes. Linda is washing and drying Jeremy's dirty clothes, so he has clean clothes to wear to school. Jeremy is eating breakfast with Grandpa, while teaching Walt how to use the computer. John hustled across the street and knocked on Walt's door.

Walt yells, "Come on in!" John walked in, and the first person he looked at is Linda. Linda says, "Mr. Bannister, you are looking handsome." Linda tilted her head a little and smiled at John. John walked over to Linda and says, "You are looking extra gorgeous today," and kissed Linda on the cheek. Linda quickly pecked John on the cheek, as Walt and Jeremy look on. John says, "What's for breakfast?" Linda says, "Bagels, eggs, beef sausage, and orange juice." John chugged down a glass of orange juice and grabbed a bagel. John says, "I will see you tonight, goodbye," and rushed out of Walt's front door.

Linda looked at the clock and says, "We have to take Jeremy to school, now!" Linda packed Jeremy's backpack, while Walt backed the car out of the garage. Linda and Jeremy hustle out the front door and get into Walt's car. Walt says, "Is everyone buckled up?" Linda says, "Yes, Dad." Jeremy says, "Yes, Grandpa." Walt pulled out of his driveway, with a new-found purpose in his life. Linda and Walt walked Jeremy to the front doors of the school and said goodbye. Jeremy says, "See you after school, Grandpa and Mom." Linda put her hand on her hip and gave Jeremy a quirky look. Linda says, "Grandpa, first?" Jeremy says, "Yup, Grandpa first. Love you, Mom." Walt beamed with pride over his new title. Walt says, "Have a great day!"

While Linda and Walt walk back to his car, Walt looked at Linda with an angry expression on his face. Walt says, "I am angry with you." Linda says, "What did I do?" Walt says with joy, "I have not been able to buy you a single gift in over twenty

years.” That morning and early afternoon was a shopper’s paradise for Linda. Walt bought Linda about everything she wanted. Walt bought Jeremy clothing, shoes, and new toys. The day flew by, as father and daughter caught up on old and recent times.

Walt has a question to ask Linda. Walt says, “Why did you throw your necklace on the floor and storm out?” Linda says, “When I met Steven, it was love at first sight. We fell in love immediately. I knew you and mom would never approve of Steven because he did not make big money. I was not happy with modeling because the other models used drugs and were promiscuous. Daddy, I chose love and poverty over money, drugs, and sex. Daddy, I hope you understand.” Walt choked up a bit. Walt says, “I am proud you, but I wish you would have let us meet Steven. A virtuous woman, is a great spiritual quality, and I am proud of you.” Linda smiled at Walt. Linda says, “Thanks, Daddy.”

Ring, ring, ring. Linda looked at her phone and says, “It is John.” Linda answered her phone to say, “Hi, how are you doing?” John says, “I am doing fine. How are you doing?” Linda says, “I am doing good. Dad and I are going to pick up Jeremy from school. Will you come over after work and visit?” John says, “I cannot wait to see you, Beth, I mean Linda.” Linda paused for a silent moment. Linda says, “Beth does not live here anymore.” John says, “Well, Mrs. Linda Livingston, I will see you after work. I love you.” Linda says with a giggle, “I love you, miss you too, and I will see you after work!”

Walt and Beth meet Jeremy at the front doors of the elementary school. As they walk back to Walt’s car, Walt says, “We bought gifts for you.” Jeremy says, “I cannot wait.” During the ride home, Walt thought up a plan and says, “You know, Linda, you do not have to work as a cleaning person anymore.” Linda says, “What can I do for a living?” Walt says, “That question is obvious. You should try your hand at modeling.” Linda says, “Oh, Dad, I am way too old.” Walt kindly says, “You do not realize how beautiful you still look. I bet you can find work as a model.” Walt convinced Linda to call the cleaning service and conclude her employment with the cleaning service. Jeremy has been listening to the whole conversation between Walt and Linda and shouts, “Finally, I do not have to sleep at Mrs. Johnson’s home,” and sighed with relief. Walt says, “We will have to check and see if we have any old friends at the modeling agency. Just maybe you will get a second

chance.” Jeremy says, “All right, my mom’s going to be a model, how cool.” Linda says to Jeremy, “Do you think I am beautiful?” Jeremy says, “You are the prettiest mom in the world.” Walt says, “I think Jeremy is on to something.” Linda blushed to say, “Thank you, guys.”

Walt pulled into his driveway and stopped the car. The Livingston family unloaded Walt’s trunk full of clothing, shoes, and other gifts for Linda and Jeremy. Linda struggles to believe the last two days are real. Linda reflects, *“Just Tuesday night, I was walking to work, when an intoxicated guy almost knocked me off my feet. Who would have ever thought my collision would be with John? Who would have ever thought John would spend the night at my work? The spa, lunch, shopping, necklace, and coming home, to grace. My Soul is recovered.”* Linda’s heart fills with wonder and thankfulness for all the miracles God had given her. Linda whispers in amazement, “God and Jesus, thank you.” Linda looked out the living room window of Walt’s home to see Grandpa and Jeremy playing with a little remote-control car in the driveway. John pulled into his driveway across the street. Linda hustled out the front door and rushed by Walt and Jeremy and ran across the street. John is getting out of his car when he heard Linda say, “Hey, Mister.” Linda pinned John up against his car. Their bodies meet in loving contact from eyes to toes. They look at each other and Linda kissed John hard on the lips, as their teeth clack together. Linda whispers in John’s ear, “Do not ever leave me, I love you, Mr. John Bannister!” Linda rested her ear on John’s chest and squeezed him tightly, while listening to his heartbeat. John put his hand on Linda’s left collarbone, near her heart, and pulled his hand away and kissed her heart with his lips and says, “I love you.” Linda’s heart knew John really loved her, by this simple loving “Heart Kiss” and she squeezed John tight. Linda says, “Forever!” John and Linda embraced one another for a brief time, then walk across the street to look at Jeremy’s new remote-control car.



## Chapter 22

The next morning, Linda is up early, and preparing for another day. She quietly walked into the kitchen, as the souls of her feet swish along the wooden floor, while beautiful rays of sunlight dance through the windowpanes and softly rest on the stunning Venetian granite countertops. The kitchen glowed with bright glistening sunlight from heaven. Linda reflected on the fond memories of her and Nancy preparing meals together in the kitchen. Linda gently sobbed, as she thought of Nancy. Linda walked over to the kitchen cabinet drawer, where Nancy kept her aprons. Linda opened the cabinet drawer to see Nancy's apron folded neatly and resting. Linda gazed at Nancy's apron and whimpered in sad memory. Linda softly lifted the apron from the drawer and kissed the apron and held the apron to her chest, while trying to touch Nancy. Guilt forced Linda to fall to her knees and clunk on the wooden floor. Linda whimpers aloud, "I miss you so much, Mom!" and continued to cry. Linda hugged Nancy's memory filled apron for a time. Linda's salty tears drop on the apron. After a moment, Linda stood to her feet and started to unfold the apron, when something fell out of the apron. Linda reached down to the floor and picked up the neatly folded piece of paper. Linda could see the folded paper is a note. Linda unfolded the note when a picture fell out of the apron. Linda quickly caught the picture. Linda looked at the picture while shaken to her core. Linda read the note.

*Linda,*

*I love you, my sweet little angel, and I know one day you will read this letter. I can feel you are still alive. This is my favorite picture of you and I making a chocolate cake for Daddy's birthday. Never, ever, ever, ever forget I love you with every fiber of my being, Ms. Linda Livingston! If your single, when you read this letter, there is a guy across the street named John, and I think you two would make a great couple.*

*Love Forever,*

*Mom*

Linda walked over the wooden chair in the corner of the kitchen and sat down and wept, as she stared in blurry vision at the picture of Nancy and her. Heaven had just made a call to earth, and it was Nancy Livingston communicating thru the Royal

Telephone saying, "Linda, I love you!" Linda rushed upstairs to put Nancy's note and picture in her Bible.

## Chapter 23

All too soon, the Friday morning plans were by Walt and Linda. They will drop off Jeremy at school and zip over to Linda's home and pick up personal items. After work, John will drive to the airport and pick up Jeremy and Nathan at 8:00 pm. Everyone will meet back at Walt's home Friday evening.

After Walt and Linda drop off Jeremy at school, they drive over to Linda's home and pick up the personal items. As Walt rounded the corner and into the subdivision, Linda observed Mrs. Brady sweeping the sidewalk. Linda waved to Mrs. Brady, and Mrs. Brady waved back. Walt pulled over to the curb and rolled down the power windows, so that Linda could greet Mrs. Brady. The car came to a stop. Linda says to Mrs. Brady, "Hi, Mrs. Brady, how are you doing?" Mrs. Brady says, "Hi, Beth, I am doing well. How are you doing?" Linda says, "I am doing fine. I know you have never met my father but let me introduce you. Walt Livingston, meet Mrs. Brady!" Mrs. Brady gasped for a moment, while covering her hand over her mouth and looked at Walt. Mrs. Brady says, "Walter Livingston? Did you graduate from Philly West high school in 1960?" Walt says, "Yes, I did." Mrs. Brady says, "Do you remember Martha Nelson?" Walt says with a funny cockeyed look on his face, "Martha and I dated a couple times. Why, do you know her?" Martha looked at Walt for a moment. Walt finally remembered Martha's smile. Walt says, "Martha Nelson, is that really you?" Walt got out of his car and rushed around to hug Martha. Walt says, "It is a small world," as Walt greeted Martha. Walt says, "I cannot believe it is you. How are you doing?" Martha says, "Getting older." Walt says in disgust, "Getting old sucks. You must visit me one of these days and we will catch up on old times." Martha says, "What are you doing here?" Walt says, "We are here to pick up some of Linda and Jeremy's personal items and take the items back to my home." Martha looked at Walt with a confused look and says, "Her name is Beth, not Linda!" Walt looked at Martha and says, "It is a long story, I will tell you later." Martha smiled at Beth. Martha says, "Hmmm?" Walt and Linda say goodbye to Martha and drove down the street to Beth's home. Mrs. Brady waved goodbye. Martha whispers under her breath, "God, I pray Walt asks me over to his home!"

Walt stopped his car in front of Linda's home and the two get out and walk up to the front door of Linda's rundown home. Walt is surprised to see the poor living

conditions Linda and Jeremy have lived in. Walt did not want to hurt his daughter's feelings and he politely says, "Your home sure could use some fixing up." Linda opened the front door, and they walk into the living room. Walt says, "The living room looks nice." Linda says, "Steven used to keep up the house and remodel things as needed, but when he died the house started to fall into disrepair."

Linda and Walt start packing small personal items that could fit into the trunk of Walt's car. Linda started to put household items in the backseat, when Walt says, "Make sure you save room for yourself!" Linda's intuition perks up. Linda says, "I think I know who you are thinking about." Walt chuckles to say, "You ladies are all-alike." Linda smiles, giggles, and snorts to say, "You got that right, Big Daddy."

The car is full of Linda's stuff, and Walt and Linda pull away from Beth's home. Walt made a U-turn in the middle of the street and drove back to Martha's home. Linda says, "What are you doing?" Walt says, "Martha is a lonely, like me, I think it would be appropriate to invite her to my home. We can visit and catch up on old and current times." Walt stopped his car in front of Martha's home. Walt got out of his car and walked to the front door and knocked on Martha's door. Martha opened her front door and looked at Walt, who is standing there with a big smile. Walt says, "I know this is short notice, but would you like to come to my home and visit with Linda and I?" Martha says, "I would love to visit with you and Beth. Just give me a quick moment, while I freshen up and lock up my home." Walt sweetly smiles to say, "I will be waiting." Martha smiled and winked at Walt, then turned and walked down the hallway. Walt winked at Martha. Walt remembered the first date he had with Martha. Time had ravaged Walt and Martha's bodies, but deep inside, they were two young and crazy teenagers on a first date. Martha closed her front door and locked the door. Walt says politely, "Will you allow me the honor to walk you to the car?" Walt put out his arm and elbow. Martha says, "Why, thank you, Mr. Livingston." Walt says, "The privilege is all mine."

Linda watched the touching scene unfold, as Walt and Martha walk down the sidewalk. Linda thought a selfish thought, "*I wish that was Mom instead of Mrs. Brady.*" Tears begin to roll down Linda's cheeks. The Holy Spirit prompts Linda with a thought, "*You and Walt are just alike for both of you lost the love of your life, now you both have a second chance at love again. Your Dad needs Martha, just like you need John.*" Linda stirred up her courage, opened the front car door, and stepped

out. Linda offered the front seat to Martha. Martha says, "Why, thank you, Beth." Linda says, "You are welcome, Mrs. Brady." Martha sat in the car and Linda closed the car door. Linda walked over to the other side of the car. At the same time, Walt is about to open the car door when he says to Linda, "Thank you." Linda smiles and says, "Good luck!" and held out her fist to Walt. Walt says, "What is this for?" Linda says, "It's like a high-five, only you bump fists together." Walt dumped Linda's fist with his fist. Walt says, "I love you so much. I am so happy that God brought you back in my life." Linda says with a big smile, "God gave us the biggest miracle of all, each other. You better go for it, Big Daddy!" Walt smiled at Linda and gave her the "Thumbs up" sign. Walt says, "Thank you."

Walt pulled into his driveway to hear Martha say, "You have a pretty home, and your lawn is so perfect." Walt says with an annoyed twinge in his voice, "I spend too much time working on my lawn. I really despise yard work! I got nothing better to do," when it clicked in Walt's mind, "*Maybe, Martha is your wild woman?*" Walt walked around the car and helped Martha get out of the car. Martha says, "Thank you, Walt." Walt winked back at Martha. Walt politely says, "It is the least I can do for such a gorgeous classmate." Walt walked Martha to the front door and the two walked in Walt's home.

Walt meanders down memory lane to think of the time he first saw Martha back in high school. Walt was walking in the gymnasium from football practice, when Martha caught his eye, while she was practicing for the cheer leader squad. Suddenly, Linda interrupted Walt's memory when he heard Linda's voice. Linda says, "A little help here!" Walt says to Martha, "I better help Linda unpack." Martha says, "You better help Linda." Walt hustled out the front door and to his car.

After Walt and Linda unload the car, Walt tossed the keys to Linda and says, "Go get Jeremy from school! Martha and I will catch up on old times." Linda winked at Walt. Linda says, "Okay, Dad." Walt winked at Linda. Walt says, "Thank you, sweetie." Martha stepped out the front door of Walt's home and waved at Linda. Martha says, "Be careful, Beth!" Linda says, "I will, Mrs. Brady."

John is at the office working hard when he decided to call Linda. Linda's phone rang and she answered the phone. Linda says, "Hi, sweetie." John says, "How are you doing?" Linda says, "Good. Dad and I had gone to my home to pick up personal

items.” John says, “I am happy that you are moving in with Walt.” Linda says, “You will never guess what happened while we were at my home.” John says, “Well, what happened?” Linda says, “You will find out tonight, when you get here, and you will not believe it.” John says, “Stop teasing me!” Linda says, “Have you talked to the boys?” John says, “Yes. I will pick them up at the airport at 8:00 pm.” Linda says, “I cannot wait to meet Jeremy and Nathan.” John says, “The boys and I will be knocking on your door about 9:00 pm.” Linda says, “I cannot wait to see you.” John says, “I love you.” Linda says, “I love you, too.”

Linda pulled into the school parking lot and picked up Jeremy from school. Jeremy walked out the front door of the school to see Linda standing there, but Grandpa is not with Linda. Jeremy says, “Where is Grandpa?” Linda says, “You will not believe this, but Grandpa and Mrs. Brady know each other from high school.” Jeremy says with excitement, “Hurry up, mom, I want to play with Grandpa.” Linda put her hand on the top of Jeremy’s head and shook his hair a little. Linda says, “I think things have finally turned around for us.” Jeremy looked at Linda with a sad and serious look on his face. Jeremy says, “Will you ever forget, Dad?” Linda put her hands on Jeremy’s cheeks. Linda says, “Never, ever, ever!” Linda closed her eyes and envisioned Steven. Linda says, “I see your Daddy every day because you look just like him.” Jeremy smiled as Linda hugged him tightly. Linda says, “Let’s go see Grandpa and Mrs. Brady!” Linda and Jeremy race to the car.

## Chapter 24

Back at the office, John and Susan have been working on a special project for the Bannister and Livingston family. This project has taken days to organize. Susan has been frantically working on the project with the help of John. Susan walked into John's office with a smile on her face. Susan says, "You are all set, you are for Sunday! The most important guy in the stadium will tell you what to do! Only three people know what is going to happen Sunday. What do you think will happen?" John says, "At this point, only God knows." Susan says, "Remember how long you have waited for this special moment. You better leave and pick up your boys!" John looked at Susan with a spirit of gratitude and appreciation in his heart. John says, "I owe you, big time!" Susan says, "I will remember that, when I need time off!" John says, "You got it!" Susan says, "You know, you are not such a bad guy, after all." John apologized to Susan. John says, "I am sorry for being such a pain, my corporate attitude is brutal, please forgive me!" Susan kindly says, "You better get your boys. Apology accepted!"

A jetliner passed over John's car as he neared the airport. John thought of Jeremy and Nathan. John is so excited to see the boys for the weekend. John whispers to himself, "*I really miss my boys. Lord, let this weekend be a powerful weekend for Jeremy and Nathan.*" John started to reflect on the past ten years. John could not help but think that his boys thought less of him because he never dated or remarried. After the divorce, John wanted the boys to have a stable and easy transition while the family broke apart. John had romantic opportunities, but he turned down the advances from the women. John had always known he had to Dad first. John could not have imagined abandoning his children for another woman. Jeremy and Nathan have turned out to be strong athletes and good college students. During the divorce, Jeremy and Nathan would have mood swings. Sometimes they would be all happy and then become angry at the drop of a hat. The bitter frustration of the divorce played with the minds of Jeremy and Nathan. John continued to remind his boys, that they were going to do remarkable things in life. John reminded the boys, that God was going to bless them for the things they had lost and add blessings to their future.

The car door slammed, and John walked towards the airport entrance for arrivals. John looked at the flight arrival board and could see that 1531 had arrived. John

looked through the maze of people walking towards him. Jeremy and Nathan walk towards John. John met Jeremy and Nathan and hugged his boys. John says, "It is great to see you two. Let us get your bags!" Jeremy and Nathan say, "Carry-ons, dad. Let us go!" John says, "All right, fast and easy."

In the car, Nathan says, "Dad, I am hungry." Jeremy says, "I am too." John says, "How about pizza?" John called Linda. Linda answered her phone. John says to Linda, "Do you mind if I pick up pizzas and bread sticks?" Linda says, "Buy enough for seven! There is someone here who wants to see." John laughed at Linda's response. John says, "Still have secrets, Huh?" Linda coyly says, "I have a big secret for you, when you get here." John says, "I will be right over, Babe! I cannot wait to see you." Jeremy and Nathan heard John's conversation with Linda. Jeremy and Nathan tell John his conversation grossed them out. John says, "Just wait until I give Linda a big kiss and hug." Nathan says, "Hey, I thought her name was Beth." John says, "It's a long story, make sure you call her Linda." Jeremy and Nathan look at each other and say in question, "What to heck?"



## *Chapter 25*

“Hurry up, the pizza’s hot!” says Jeremy and Nathan, as John knocked on Walt’s front door. Linda opened the front door to see John and the boys rush in, while she kissed John on the cheek and the boys quickly move to the dining room and put the pizzas and bread sticks on the table. Linda grabbed John by the hand and pulled him in the dining room. Linda nudged John and hinted for the introduction to Jeremy and Nathan. Just then, little Jeremy rounded to corner. Little Jeremy says, “I smell pizza.” Jeremy and Nathan turn back around to see John, Linda, and little Jeremy looking at them. John says, “Linda and Jeremy, I want to introduce you to my sons, Jeremy, and Nathan. Linda Livingston is a special friend of mine.” Linda reached out her hand and says, “Nice to meet you Jeremy and Nathan, I have heard so much about you,” and shook Jeremy and Nathan’s hand. Jeremy and Nathan respond, “Nice to meet you, Linda.” Little Jeremy says, “What about me?” Linda says, “How could I ever forget my son, Jeremy.” Big Jeremy greeted little Jeremy to say, “Nice name,” and shook his hand. Nathan says, “Nice to meet you, Dude,” and shook little Jeremy’s hand.

John says to everyone, “Who wants pizza?” Just then, Linda grabbed John by the hand and led him in the living room, where Walt and Mrs. Brady have been talking for hours. John looked at Mrs. Brady in confusion. John says to Mrs. Brady, “What in the heck are you doing here?” Martha says, “I would have never guessed in a million years that Walt lived next to you.” John says in a confused tone of voice, “But?” Walt says, “Martha and I dated back in high school. Today, when Linda and I had gone to pick up some personal items from her home, we met to Mrs. Brady. You know the rest.” John says, “That is an amazing coincidence. I am glad for the both of you.” Linda is standing next to John when she whispered in his ear. John and Linda walk in the hallway between the living room and the dining room. The hallway is dimly lit. John knew what Linda is up to, as she took John’s arms and wrapped them around her waist. Linda whispers, “I love you.” John says, “I love you, more.” Linda says, “I love you, forever.” John and Linda passionately kiss. They smooch whispering, “Forever and ever,” as they hug each other tightly. After the kiss, Linda says, “Let’s get some pizza before it’s gone.” John says, “You read my mind,” and squeezed Linda’s hand. John and Linda walked in the dining room just in time to save a pizza and breadsticks for themselves. John urgently says,

“Hey, hey, hey, you guys, save some the pizza for the rest of us!” Linda hustles to the living room and says to Walt and Martha, “You better get in dining room before the pizza is gone!” Walt and Martha say, “We are coming,” as they slowly got up and walk to the dining room.

John and Linda gave big Jeremy, Nathan, and little Jeremy a stern look for being such pigs and eating the pizza and bread sticks. Big Jeremy looked at Nathan and lightly punched him in the shoulder. Nathan looked at little Jeremy and lightly punched him in the shoulder. Little Jeremy smiled and thought to himself, “*Finally, I’ve got someone to fight with.*” Nathan smiled to think, “*I finally have someone to pick on.*” Big Jeremy looked at Nathan and little Jeremy to say, “You two punks do not have any swag.” John and Linda giggled a little bit, as the touching family moment unfolded in the dining room.

After the family meal, John and Linda walk out the front door and began to walk around the block. The cool and crisp night began to fall, as John and Linda hold hands and walk around the block. John and Linda reflected in conversation about Walt and Martha meeting. John says, “Who would have ever thought, Walt and Mrs. Brady dated in high school.” Linda confides in John, “You know, until this week, I thought miracles only happened to other people, but I have seen too many miracles happen in less than one week, and it is not a coincidence.” John says, “What miracle are you asking for?” Linda says, “That prayer I am keeping between God and I.” John has a hunch. John says, “Keeping secrets again, huh?” Linda got all arrogant and raised her nose high in the air for a moment. Linda says, “That is for me to know and you to find out!” and sprinted away from John. John ran after Linda and grabbed her by the waist, and Linda spun around John a couple times. Linda kissed John hard on the lips. John says, “What is that for?” Linda says, “Just checking.” John hugged Linda tightly and lifted her off the ground and kissed her. Linda squealed a bit and continued kissing John. John says, “How does it feel to be home?” Linda sadly says, “Good, but I miss my mom so much. Mom’s the piece of the puzzle that is missing.” John says, “Your mom helped me when I had gone through my divorce. Nancy would watch the boys on occasion when I could not find a babysitter. Nancy always had an encouraging word for the boys and I.” John looked down at the ground and looked back to Linda. John says, “I don’t want to bum you out, but you look so much like your mom.” Linda is instantly emotional and grabbed hold of John and hugged him tightly, while she put her head on his

shoulder. Linda says in a wavering voice, "I miss mom," and began to cry. Linda says, "Mom was awesome. I still hurt over leaving my parents and never returning before mom passed away." Linda broke down and really cried on John's shoulder. John held Linda close and hugged her. John encourages Linda with this thought, "You need to make peace with your mom! Tomorrow, I am taking you to her grave! Besides, I need to ask her something." Linda gained her composure, and they finish walk around the block.

John and Linda walk into Walt's home, and see Walt, Martha, and little Jeremy dressed in pajamas and getting ready for bed. Walt says to John, "Your bedroom has been taken by Martha." John says, "No problem, I need to spend time with my boys." John whispers to Walt, "You dog." Walt smiles and whispers in John's ear, "I may have found my wild woman." John says, "Good for you." John, Jeremy, and Nathan say good night to Walt, Linda, Martha, and little Jeremy, and left Walt's home.

The door busted open to the Bannister home and a boisterous noise rumbled down the hallway, as John, Jeremy, and Nathan rough house with each other. John thought, "*Just like old times,*" as he wrestled around with the boys. All three souls enter the kitchen and push each other and rough house a bit more, as John worked his way to the refrigerator. John opened the refrigerator and pulled out three sports drinks and tossed two sport drinks at Jeremy and Nathan. All three men walk in the living room and plopped down on the couch. They open the sport drinks and begin to chug down the green liquid. John says, "It is great to see guys. I have missed you two." Jeremy and Nathan say, "Dada, we missed you too." Nathan says, "Linda seems like a nice person." John says to the boys, "What is your first impression of Linda?" Nathan says, "She is pretty." Jeremy says, "I think you are a lucky guy." Nathan says, "You need someone like Linda! How did you meet her?" John told Jeremy and Nathan the condensed version of how he met Linda, Jeremy, Mrs. Brady, and Mrs. Johnson. Jeremy and Nathan look strange at each other and then back at John. Jeremy and Nathan say in unison, "Wow, unusual story." John says, "Truth is stranger than a dream and fiction." John looked at Jeremy and Nathan and paused for a moment. John says, "God is working a big miracle to heal all of us, we have been hurting for a long time. These whole chains of events have happened for Linda and me. I know God has added you two in on the equation, and you are both part of this amazing story." Jeremy says, "Dada, I think things are

finally turning around for you.” John says with a little excitement in his voice, “It sure looks like it.”

John, Jeremy, and Nathan continue to talk about college and the hard studying the boys have experienced. Jeremy and Nathan complain at how hard college is and all the work they must do to get good grades. John says, “I am so proud of you, and I know you two will finish college. I know God is going to do remarkable things for you, but you must study hard, keep the faith, and press on! Never ever give up on your goals! Let God guide you in everything you do!” John stood to his feet and asked Jeremy and Nathan to stand. John prayed for his boys. John prays, “Dear Lord, please bless Jeremy and Nathan and heal them from all the pain and hurt they experienced from the divorce, in the name of Jesus, amen.” John, Jeremy, and Nathan hug one another and head to bed for the night.

## Chapter 26

The sun started to rise on the Bannister and Livingston homes in the early Saturday morning. Linda called John and invited him over to help prepare breakfast. Linda wanted to impress John, Jeremy, and Nathan by preparing a big breakfast for the entire family. Linda let John in Walt's home; and the two begin to make breakfast. John and Linda make eggs, beef bacon, pancakes, French toast, toast, grapefruit, and orange juice and milk. The most important part of the pre-breakfast details is when John suggestively looked at Linda. John says, "You're looking really hot in the apron." Linda says, "You are looking handsome in that pair of jeans and white t-shirt." John and Linda start to kiss and squeeze each other tightly. John and Linda want to forget breakfast, but they knew the Bannister boys and the Livingston clan will soon be clamoring for food. With every heartbeat of John and Linda's heart they move closer to loving each other. John kissed Linda on the lips one more time. John says, "I will get Jeremy and Nathan." Linda says, "I will wake up my crew." John walked out the front door, while Linda hollered down the hallway, "Breakfast is ready."

Minutes later, John, Jeremy, and Nathan knock on the front door of Walt's home. Walt opened the front door. Walt says, "Come on in, guys!" The lucky seven greet one another with civilities and sit down at the dining room. The dining room table has a large amount of tasty looking food that John and Linda prepared. Everyone sat down at the table. Walt stood at the head of the dining room table and reflected on the six people he is looking at. Walt felt powerfully blessed. Walt says, "Let's hold hands and thank God!" The blessed seven held hands. Walt prays, "Dear Lord, thank you for all these blessings, which have taken place in the last three days. Every person in this room has received a whirlwind of blessings. I know God is going to continue to bless. For God has graciously given His healing spirit to everyone here. Lord, thank you." Walt wavered in his elderly voice, while finishing his prayer. The whole group says, "Amen," in unison. Linda squeezed Walt's hand.

Linda handed the large platter of pancakes to Walt. Linda says, "Dad, you first!" Walt says, "Thank you, sweetie." Linda says, "Pass to the right!" Linda looked at John and winked at him, as she thought of John helping prepare breakfast with his menacing help. John winked back at Linda with a cheesy look on his face.

After breakfast, while everyone is still sitting around the dining room table. John stood to his feet and asked Walt and Martha a question. John says, "While my secretary and I were looking for Eagles' tickets, Susan found seven seats in a row for Sunday's game. Will you and Martha attend the game with us?" Walt says Martha, "Well, what do you think?" Martha says, "Yes." Walt says, "Count us in!" Everyone sitting around the dining table tapped each other with fist bumps and high fives.

John and Linda clear the dining room table, while Walt and Martha walk around the block. Big Jeremy, Nathan, and little Jeremy go outside and toss a football around in the front lawn of Walt's home. Walt and Martha see the boys playing football in the front lawn and Martha says to Walt, "Are you going to let the boys rip up the front lawn like that?" Walt says with a big smile, "I am sick of mowing grass, let the boys rip up my lawn," as he took Martha's hand and squeezed it tightly.

The dishwasher door closed, clicked, and softly started to hum, as the dirty dishes start to wash. Linda looks at John and asks, "What are we going to do now?" John replies, "For starters, I'm going to plant a big kiss on you," and John takes Linda in his arms and kisses her passionately. After the kiss, John says, "I think it's time for you to visit your mom." Linda asks, "Will you visit her grave with me?" John replies, "Let's go, and I'll be by your side." Linda looks down at the floor and then back at John so say, "I love you more than you know." John smiles and looks intently into Linda's eyes to reply, "I have a good feeling about us. Let us blow this popsicle stand!"

John and Linda walk out the front door of Walt's home and hustled across the street. John opened the car door for Linda, and she sat in the car. John hustles around and opened the driver side door and got in the car. John backed his car out of the driveway and rolled down the window. Big Jeremy, Nathan, and little Jeremy stop playing football. Jeremy says, "Where are you going?" Linda leans over John to say, "We will be back in a little bit. Will you watch Jeremy for me?" Big Jeremy and Nathan reply with a "Thumbs up" sign. Jeremy and Nathan say, "We will take care of him." John says, "Thank you, boys. Keep little Jeremy busy!" Linda says to the conversation, "Thanks boys, see you soon and love you." John pulled away from the boys and drove through the sub-division. Off in the distance, John looked at the Church steeple. John pulled along-side the Church and stopped the car. John

says to Linda, "Do you mind if I thank God for the blessings? God has given us so many blessing over the last few months?" Linda says, "Okay." John stepped out of his car and walked to the steps of the Church. John looked up in the air to see the steeple. A sense of gratitude filled John's heart as he slowly knelt on the steps. John whispered a prayer of thankfulness to God and Jesus. Linda observes John kneeling at the steps of the Church. Linda joined John in prayer. Linda opened the car door, walked to the steps of the Church, and knelt beside John. Linda's spiritual rejuvenation began, as she started to pray and ask God for forgiveness of her pride. Linda's heart hurts because she never returned to see Nancy before Nancy passed away. Linda started to weep. Linda's heart and hope is restored as she felt hands touch her shoulders. Unbeknownst to Linda, Walt, and Martha, were walking by the Church and observed John and Linda kneeling on the steps. Walt and Martha pray for John and Linda. After the prayer, Walt bent down and kissed the top of Linda's head. Walt and Martha kneel beside John and Linda to thank God and Jesus for the great miracles they have all experienced over the last months. After the second prayer, John, Linda, Walt, and Martha stand to their feet and hug one another. John and Linda tell Walt and Martha they would return home in a couple of hours.

## *Chapter 27*

The short drive to the cemetery is hard for Linda, as she thought about Nancy. John sensed that Linda is really depressed and stopped by a florist shop and bought roses. John bought a dozen red roses for Linda and one white rose for Nancy. Linda thanked John for the dozen red roses and kissed him. Linda says, "Who is the white rose for?" John says, "Give the white rose to your mom!" Linda is all emotional and says, "You have a heart of gold. I am the luckiest woman in the world," and kissed John on the cheek. John sweetly says, "We are so blessed."

The car slowly drove through the cemetery, which is a solemn moment for Linda, as the car rolled to a dead stop near Nancy's grave. John says, "Let's visit your mom!" Linda says, "I need to talk to mom on my own! I will let you know when you can come!" John kissed Linda on the cheek. John says, "Let me know!" John pointed Linda in the direction of Nancy's grave.

Linda's steps fill with sad anticipation, as she searched for Nancy's grave. Linda located Nancy's grave, and fumbled with her words, while touching the cold and gray gravestone. Linda knelt and began to weep bitterly. Linda cries, "Hi, mom." Linda begged for forgiveness and told Nancy about all the things that happened in her life. All Linda wanted to do was hug Nancy. Linda's tears tumble from her eyes and splash on Nancy's gravestone. After a time of gentle breezy silence, Linda tearfully mumbles like a child, "I love you, Mom." Linda turned and signaled John to come. John got out of the car and walked to Nancy's grave. John says, "Are you okay?" Linda says, "I think so," and hugged John. John looked down at Nancy's grave and says, "Hi, Nancy. Your beautiful daughter is back," as couple of tears roll down his cheek. John wiped the tears of sadness from his cheeks. John and Linda hold each other tightly, as they stand at the foot of Nancy's grave in silence. A gentle breeze brushed by and ushered in a little white butterfly, that softly landed on Nancy's gravestone. The butterfly flutters her wings in-consistently and gently launched back into the soft breeze and flew away. Linda cried in heart felt desperation, "I miss you so much. You flew away before your time." John says to Linda, "Do you mind, I need to ask Nancy a question." Linda looked at John and then down at Nancy's grave. Linda says, "Good-bye, Mom. I will visit again! I love you, forever." Linda slowly turned from Nancy's grave and walked to the car, while



wondering what John is asking Nancy. Linda got in the car and waited for John. A couple minutes later, John walked back to the car and got in the car.

John started the car and drove out of the cemetery. Linda is dying to know what John asked Nancy. Linda says, "What did you ask, Mom?" John decided to play a little game with Linda. John says as he raised his nose in the air, "That is for me to know and you to find out!" John laughed and Linda crossed her arms to mutter, "Very funny." John says, "One day, you will know, but for now, it is my secret." John leaned over and kissed Linda on the cheek, as she pouted, and kissed John back hard. Linda says with a sense of urgency in her voice, "I have a new perspective on life. Life is too short, and I do not want to waste any more time, and that is a big hint, Mr. Bannister." John says with a sweet smirk, "Sweetheart, your hint is well taken." John and Linda both know what they want for the future. John and Linda agree to spend the entire day with the boys.

## *Chapter 28*

John, Linda, Walt, Martha, Big Jeremy, Nathan, and little Jeremy travel to Bassett's ice cream shop. The seven souls walk to the ice cream counter and look at all the colorful ice cream selections. Little Jeremy ordered a root beer float. Nathan ordered a blue raspberry slush. Jeremy ordered a chocolate and peanut butter blizzard. Linda ordered a small chocolate fudge sundae. John ordered a double chocolate cone. Walt and Martha order a large banana split to share together. While waiting in-line Linda whispers in John's ear, "This is where it all started, I had given up on God, and as we left the furniture store, I prayed you would take Jeremy and I to Basset's. God answered my prayer." Linda kissed John on the cheek. John reflected on that day months ago, with Beth and Jeremy.

The Bannisters and Livingstons enjoy eating ice cream and telling each other stories from the past. An old and new tradition rekindled for these seven people, and they all agree to meet once a year to spend time at Basset's for ice cream and share the stories from the past year. Just as they are about leave Basset's, John and Walt start arguing about the tip. Martha's irritated and cleared her throat to get Walt's and John's attention. Martha held a twenty dollar bill up in the air and dropped the twenty-dollar bill on the table. Martha says, "The tip's paid, guys!" Martha smiled and looked at Walt and John in scolding fashion. Martha says, "You guys need to stop arguing over a silly stuff," as she shook her head and pointed her finger at Walt and John. Walt and John say to Martha, "It's a guy thing."

John drove Linda and the boy's home, while Walt drove to Martha's home and picked up some clothing for the football game. All seven souls will all meet back at Walt's home in on hour.

## Chapter 29

Back on Walt's front lawn, John and the boys play football on the green grass. Linda sat on the steps of Walt's home watched John and the boys play football. Linda continued to watch John and the boys throw the football back and forth and run and catch and tackle each other. The game of touch football gets a little rougher with every play. Finally, John and the boys start rough housing in a friendly game of dog-pile. Little Jeremy shouts, "Guy stuff," and jumped on top of Nathan, big Jeremy, and John. Linda cringed, as she worried about little Jeremy getting hurt. The four-man dog-pile got a little rougher and rougher until they lay in exhaustion on the green grass. John and the boys get up and walk over to Linda huffing and puffing from exhaustion and play all nice. Suddenly, John, big Jeremy, Nathan, and little Jeremy grab hold of Linda and drag her unto the grass. Linda started to squeal for help. They four-man dog-pile began tickling Linda so hard she could hardly breathe. Linda squeals, "Come on guys, stop, stop, stop! I cannot breathe." Linda continued to laugh hard and cannot catch her breath. What Linda does not understand, is that God is breathing new life into her body with every big gasp of air. Linda bristles to life, while taking in another gasping breath. Linda thought in her mind, "*What fun,*" as John, big Jeremy, Nathan, and little Jeremy tickle her. Just then, John rolled off Linda and the tide turned, when Linda fought through the dog pile and rolled on top of John. Linda pounced hard on John and tried to knock the wind out of him. Linda shouts, "Hold him down, boys!" Linda gave John a serious bratty look and shouts, "Now, you're going to pay!" and started to tickle John. John fought off the tickle torture for a bit with a stone-cold look on his face, but finally gave in to the torture. John shouts, "Okay, stop, stop, stop!" Linda continued to tickle John. Linda says in a demanding request, "Say Uncle!" John refused and gritted his teeth together. John defiantly shouts, "Nope." Linda tickled John even more, until John could not take the tickle torture. John finally shouts, "Uncle." The boys knew "Big Daddy" is going to get them back. Jeremy shouts, "On three, let him go, get out of here! One, two, three, go!" and the boys jumped off John and ran away as Linda sat on top of John. John lays pinned to the ground exhausted from the tickle torture, and Linda reached down to John's forehead and brushed his messed-up hair to the side. Linda bent down and kissed John hard on the lips. John kissed Linda hard. John whispers, "I love you." Linda says, "Now, you are talking my language," and got off John's stomach and knelt by his side.

Just as John and Linda lay on the green grass, Walt drove in the driveway. Walt and Martha see John and Linda laying on the front lawn. Martha says to Walt, "Remember, when we first kissed?" Walt says, "How could I ever forget. You were the first girl I ever kissed." Martha says, "Kiss me again!" Walt took hold of Martha's hand and kissed her hand gently. Walt says, "Are you sure?" Martha lovingly says, "Let's pick up where we left off!" Walt and Martha romantically kiss one another.

## Chapter 30

John invited the Livingstons and Martha over to his house on Saturday night. The conversations between the Bannister and Livingstons tumble all over the place in thought provoking inquiring and personal stances. Serious discussions concerning religion, politics, opinions, college, and most important God and Jesus bounce all over the Bannister and Livingston's minds, as John's living room comes to life. The blessed seven have differing opinions, thoughts, and ideas, and three things had been agreed upon, first: little Jeremy will graduate from high school and attend college, second: they will all attend Church Sunday morning, and thank God for all his miracles, third: they will attend the Eagles' game. At the end of the family discussion, Little Jeremy shouts, "Go Eagles!"

John walked Linda, little Jeremy, Walt, and Martha across the street to Walt's home. Walt, Martha, little Jeremy say goodnight to John. Linda says, "I will be right in, Dad," and closed the front door. John and Linda stand face to face and toe to toe. John and Linda look at each other in silence. Linda put her index finger in the middle of John's chest and says, "I had a wonderful time today," and bit her lower lip. Linda says in a sultry voice, "The red roses are beautiful." John wrapped his arms around Linda's hips and pulls her towards him. John and Linda's bodies mesh perfectly together. John whispers to Linda, "There is no going back for me. I love you forever." John and Linda kissed each other. The romantic, spiritual, and physical kiss for John and Linda is like two broken angels dancing in heaven for the first time. The kiss for these two damaged and repaired souls continued in timeless love for eternity. The good-night kiss is here, as John says, "I love you." Linda says, "Don't you ever let me go!" John started to walk away from Linda. Linda says, "Hey," and John turned around to see Linda blow him at kiss. John pretended to catch Linda's kiss and put her kiss in his shirt pocket next to his heart. Linda looked at John and bit her lower lip. Linda says, "I love you, forever," and closed the front door of Walt's home.

John walked across the street to his home. All John can think about is how much he loves Linda. John never thought he could love someone more than Jenna. John whispers aloud, "Lord, I cannot believe I love Linda so much. God, it is a miracle." The Holy Spirit, put this thought in John's heart and mind, "*Linda and you love each other so much, but God loves the both of you and the entire world more than you*

*can fathom and understand.*” John’s compelled to kneel on the steps of his home, as he kneeled on the same steps, eight weeks ago. John reflected in a flashback memory of being so sick, sweaty, feverish temperature, and cursing at the nasty flu virus that had invaded his body. John felt a humbling sense of remorse and conviction overtake his spirit, as he whispers a prayer, “Lord, forgive me. Help me to be a good Christian man from this moment on!”

A couple of John’s soulful repentant tears fell from his eyes and land on the cement steps. John agonized in his spirit, and he thought, “*I wasted so much time,*” and reached down to touch the cooling teardrop spots on the cement. John remained kneeling in silent repentance and gratitude for what God had done for Walt, Linda, Martha, little Jeremy, Jeremy, Nathan, and himself. John whispers, “All over the flu virus and a dream. God, I know you can do anything.”

## *Chapter 31*

The next morning, after breakfast, the whole family walked to the little Church down the street. The blessed seven, walk in the Church and where the Church greeter greets them. All seven souls, walk in the sanctuary and sit down in a pew near the back. The service began with two hymnals and choruses sung by the congregation. Reverend Jerry preached another sermon on God's grace. God's Holy Spirit released the healing and power of His grace and kindness upon John, Linda, Walt, Martha, big Jeremy, Nathan, and little Jeremy. The Church service ended, and the blessed seven left the Church and praised God and Jesus. Little Jeremy shouts, "God and Jesus, thank you. Go Eagles'!"

## Chapter 32

The car ride to the stadium involved light conversation and guesses at what the final score of the football game will be. The blessed seven, enter the Eagles' stadium and settle in the seven seats. John and Walt look at each other and say, "We better get some snacks and goodies before the game starts." John and Walt wrote down the snack orders from the family, and wiggle through the crowded seats to the isle. John and Walt make their way to concession area.

During the walk to the concession area, John confides in Walt by saying, "If someone would have told me that you and Mrs. Brady would be here watching the game with us, I would have thought it was impossible." Walt smirks to say, "I'm right with you on that." John shook his head to say, "I am still in disbelief that so many things have happened in such a small amount of time." John stopped Walt. John says, "I have something serious to ask you." Walt says, "What is it, John?" At the end of the muted conversation, John, and Walt shake hands, and continue to walk towards the concession area. John and Walt purchase ten hot dogs, seven bags of popcorn, seven sodas, and five bags of chewy candy for the gang to eat, while watching the game. The crowd chants, multiple times, "Go Eagles!"

The kick-off started the game, and the entire crowd screamed, yelled, and cheered for the Eagles. Linda looks at John and whispers in his ear, "I don't think this day could get any better." John smiled and winked at Linda. John whispers in Linda's ear, "I am right there with you." Just before halftime, John says to Linda, "I need to use the restroom, I will be back in just a bit." Linda says, "Okay sweetie."

John wiggled through the crowded seats and made his way to the restroom area. John used his cell phone to call Vinnie, who's Susan's brother-in-law. Vinnie is the official Eagle's team DJ and operates the stadium's visual and audio systems. Vinnie met up with John and handed John a wireless microphone. Vinnie says to John, "Are you ready?" John says, "Man, I think so." Vinnie says, "Remember, do not turn on the microphone until you see the big green light in front of the press box turn on, good luck!" John says, "I cannot believe I am doing this." Vinnie says, "Susan and Bill are in the press box with me, and they will see it all go down. Good luck, and remember, green light!" John says, "Got it."



Fear started to set into John's heart, as he walked back in the stadium. John thought, *"What if I screw up and say the wrong words. What if she says, no."* John pulled the engagement ring from his pocket and looked at the ring. John whispers, "God, you are going to have to help me with this!"

John made his way through the crowd and sat back down next the Linda. Linda says to John, "You missed a touchdown by the Eagles." John smiled to say in disgust, "That figures." The two-minute warning arrived. John is a nervous wreck while waiting for half-time to start. It is about three minutes into half-time when Linda says to John, "I have to use the restroom." Linda stood to her feet and started to walk away from John. John looked at the green light in front of the press box, which had not turned green, yet. John freaked a little, as the green light finally turned on. John quickly flipped on the microphone switch and says in a nervous tone of voice, "Linda Livingston." Linda heard her name over the stadium's audio system and is surprised. Instantly, a camera focused on John and Linda, and the jumbo screens of the stadium came to life with the image of John and Linda. Linda turned around to see John holding a microphone in his hand. John cleared his throat for a moment. John says, "Linda Livingston, I never thought I would find someone as kind and loving as you. You are bright, beautiful, intelligent, kind, and loving. I want to spend the rest of my life with you! Linda Livingston, will you marry me?" John pulled out of his pocket the engagement ring and held the ring in front of Linda. Without hesitation, Linda walked over the John and put her ring finger in front of John. John smirked and put the engagement ring on Linda's finger. Linda lifted her left hand closer to her face and looked at engagement ring. The engagement ring glistened and sparkled in the sunshine. Linda happily looked at John for a moment of silence. Linda simply says, "Yes!" John and Linda came together and passionately kissed each other, as the crowd roared and cheered for John and Linda. The cheering roar subsided a bit. John says to Linda, "Are you sure you want this?" Linda passionately says, "More than life itself," and kissed John. The crowd cheered and roared even louder, as John and Linda kiss passionately. The jumbo screens in the stadium say with exploding stars and fireworks, "John and Linda, forever!" John and Linda receive continual cheers from family and strangers sitting around them. After the noise died down a bit, little Jeremy hugged John and Linda together. Jeremy says, "So, you're going to be my dad." John hugs little Jeremy and says, "Welcome to the family, sonny!" Little Jeremy is the luckiest boy

alive, because after Steven died, God jumped into action and heard Jeremy's cry for help. God may take His own dear sweet time, but in the end, little Jeremy received a new mom, a new dad, a new grandfather, a new grandmother, and two big brothers in one week. At the completion of this love story, we can all agree, that God and Jesus, love You passionately.

# The End

## After Thoughts

Forgive and forget the wrongs in life as quickly as possible!

