

THROUGH THE STORM

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Prologue

The assassin trained the scope of his rifle toward the preacher's head and then hesitated. His client had paid him to not just kill the preacher, but to make it a headshot. But as he sat in the empty room on the third floor of the office building across the street from The House of God Christian Church, he couldn't muster up enough evil to carry out his client's order. He lowered his rifle and walked the length of the small room deep in thought. He had no problem with killing the preacher. He'd do that in a heartbeat, but what kind of cold monster shot a man in the head while he knelt down in prayer with his head bowed to God? The preacher had been in prayer for the past thirty minutes and the assassin doubted that he would be done anytime soon. The preacher just seemed so engrossed, so happy and so at peace with his time in prayer.

An idea struck the assassin and he smiled. He could just shoot the preacher in the heart or the throat and tell his client that his rifle slipped. He smiled as he walked back toward his rifle, confident that he could finish the job. After all, this preacher man had done nothing to him. He'd never even met the man. So why should he shoot him in the face; causing him to be unrecognizable to even his wife and children? It just didn't seem right. It would be an unnecessarily cruel act that would cause the man's congregation to wonder for years to come if the preacher was truly dead or not. Closed casket funerals

didn't bring closure to family and friends. Those kinds of funerals enabled miracle seekers to imagine that their dead might be just like Tupac; in a witness protection program or some other nonsense.

No, the assassin wasn't cruel enough to do that to the preacher's grieving family and friends. As a matter of fact, in the ten years he'd been an assassin, he'd never done a headshot. He wouldn't have taken this job either except for the fact that he'd already taken and spent his client's money by the time he received the call asking for a headshot.

He hoisted the rifle back onto his shoulder and peered through the scope to find his mark. Just as he suspected, his mark was still on his knees with his head bowed in prayer. But his mark now had company. A huge man stood behind the preacher. He was dressed in this long white gown. A belt hung at his waist with this long golden sword attached to it. The assassin wondered what was wrong with this freak. Why didn't the preacher stop praying and greet the weird looking man?

Before the assassin could further ponder this weird turn of events, the man clothed in white pulled the sword from his side, lifted his massive body from the ground and flew. The assassin thought his scope allowed for some type of 3-D effect, because it appeared as if the man with the sword was fiercely flying toward him. Then a strong wind blew into his room and knocked him down. He dropped his rifle and watched it violently slide against a wall while he, himself was being thrown against a wall on the opposite side of the room. As the assassin slid down the wall and landed on his buttock, he tried to focus his eyes so he could find his opponent. But no one else was in the room with him. The assassin wasn't fooled though, he hadn't knocked himself down or thrown himself against the wall; and... he'd seen that flying freak through the scope of his rifle.

The assassin wondered where that weirdo was as he started to crawl toward his rifle so he could look through the scope, but in the next instant the assassin watched as his rifle crumbled into a thousand little pieces as if the very hand of God had reached down from heaven and crushed it.

Angels, the assassin thought as his mouth hung open in awestruck wonder. He figured that the flying weirdo must be an angel sent to protect that preacher. And at that moment, as the assassin viewed the pieces of what had once been his favorite weapon, he realized two simple truths: there was a God in heaven and he would pay a great price for all the wrong he'd done. He braced himself for the blow that would shatter him into a thousand little pieces like his rifle. When the blow didn't come, the assassin stood, calmly brushed off his clothes and for the first time in his life, he walked away and left a job undone.

The majestic glory of God shown bright as He sat on His throne looking down at His enemy. That old serpent, who'd tricked Eve in the garden, poisoned the minds of a third of the angels in heaven and aided millions of earthly souls in their descent to hell stood before God accusing Isaac Walker of not being a true servant of God.

“Lord, I understand that You are pleased with this preacher man's progress, but do You truly believe that Isaac Walker is crusading for You? What about the glory and accolades he himself receives?” Satan asked.

The Lord had heard it all before. Satan was a creature of habit. Each time one of God's warriors became too much of a threat to Satan's kingdom, he would ask God for permission to send that warrior through the storm to prove whether he or she would still

praise God in the midst of tragedy. Time and time again, God's warriors had stood against Satan's assaults and brought joy to God's very being. But, He'd also lost a lot of good men and women during this shaking process. So once His enemy left the throne room, thunder and lightening sparkled from the throne of Grace, then Michael's glorious nine-foot form stood. His colorful wings glistened as they flapped in the air. "Yes, my Lord," he said, as he received command from the Lord.

Michael left the throne room and walked from the inner court toward the outer court of heaven to convene with Aaron, the captain of the host. He past unnumbered mansions in the inner court; where there was room enough for everyone. But Michael knew that the beauty and splendor of heaven would only be enjoyed by the few that served God. As he passed by the room of tears, he glanced in and shook his head in wonderment. It still amazed him that humans had tears so precious that God would bottle and preserve them in a room as glorious as this. He stepped in and looked at the tear bottle with Isaac Walker's name on it. It was not full yet, but before it was all over, Isaac and his family would cry a river of tears. Michael shook his head as he walked out of the room and continued on his journey toward the inner court.

A great multitude of warrior angels stood in the outer court waiting on their assignments. Their appearance was that of beauty and majesty. They wore white radiant garments with gold edged trim that embellished the front of the garment. At their waist hung a huge golden sword, and large white wings flapped from behind. Michael's sword was longer and heavier than the other angels. Jewels were embedded throughout the handle of this massive sword, a symbol of his many victories. The belt that held his sword sparkled with the gold of heaven. Michael had defeated the Prince of Persia more

times than he cared to remember. But the enemy was getting stronger as his time drew near. Michael eagerly awaited their next meeting. It would be their last.

“We’re going to have a fight on our hands this time, Captain Aaron. I need you to pull together a host of heaven’s best for this assignment,” Michael said as he handed Aaron the scroll that was in his hand.

Aaron took the scroll, looked at it and then reported, “Brogan just stopped an assassination attempt on this preacher’s life. Are you saying we are facing even more trouble than that from the enemy?”

Michael patted Aaron on the shoulder. “You may lose some soldiers on this one, my friend.”

Aaron unsheathed his mighty sword and declared, “We will still fight, sir. For all that is holy and all that is right.”

Chapter 1

Pastor Isaac Walker smiled as he instructed the sorrowful man standing before him to raise his arms and surrender to the Lord. “Repeat after me, Joey,” Isaac said as the man lifted his tatted arms. “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died and rose again so that I might be saved.”

Joey McDaniels lived a hard life of hustling, drug dealing and womanizing. The scars on his face told stories of knife and cat fights. Joey’s sunken cheeks proclaimed that he’d started getting high on his own supply of drugs; which meant he was about to lose his hold on the ghetto kingdom he’d worked years to establish. Isaac knew that Joey only had about six good months of street life left in him, that’s why Isaac and his evangelistic team ministered to Joey every time they caught him on the street. The evangelistic team’s persistence paid off. Joey, the drug dealer, stepped into The House of God Christian Church today, and Isaac preached a message that caused Joey to believe he could change his ways. Joey walked down the aisle when the call for salvation went out to the congregation. And now as tears streamed down his scar tarnished face, Isaac hugged him and said, “You did it, Joey. You did it.”

Joey wiped the tears from his face as he stepped out the Godly embrace and asked, "I'm saved? You mean it?"

"God has saved you, Joey. He's not likely to change His mind about that," Isaac assured Joey just before sending him to the prayer room to have an altar worker pray with him again and give him a Bible and information concerning the Bible classes Isaac developed for new converts with his wife Nina.

"My life is going to be different now, I can feel it," Joey declared as he walked towards the prayer room with an altar worker.

The moment a new convert began to understand that God was truly with him or her always thrilled Isaac. At sixty-one, he had now been a soldier in the army of the Lord longer than he had been a destroyer in the devil's camp. Life was good. Isaac hadn't experienced a sleepless night in over a decade. He was winning souls into the kingdom, after sixteen years of marriage, his wife was still in love with him, and his son was the youth pastor at his church. Isaac only had one problem. His only daughter, Iona Walker's actions were threatening to bring back his insomnia. Isaac walked away from the joy of his pulpit and walked toward his office to meet with his wayward daughter.

As he opened the door to his office, an involuntary smile crossed his lips at the sight of his son, Donovan. His son was six feet, the same height as his old man. Donovan had the same chocolate complexion as Isaac. As a matter-of-fact, both his children had his chocolate kiss complexion and deep dimples. However, Donovan had his mother's hazel eyes and small button nose. Donovan was standing near his desk talking with the church secretary, Diana Milner. Diana had the schedule of

events in her hand and Donovan was asking about certain dates. His daughter was seated on his black leather couch looking through her palm pilot.

The couch had been placed directly underneath a huge picture window. Isaac loved sitting there and watching his congregation. He liked seeing the expression of joy on their faces as they entered God's house. At times, the people looked as if they had allowed God to carry the weight of their world, if only for the two hours during Sunday morning worship service. Yes, Isaac knew that most of the people would continue to carry their own burdens once the service was over, but if they could forget for just a few hours; they would be free for a little while at least.

The parishioners that Isaac did not enjoy viewing through his window were the ones that walked into the house of God filled with scorn and puffed up with attitude. But he didn't have to look out his window to see that. The queen of attitude turned off her palm pilot and glared at him as he took a seat behind his mammoth size mahogany desk. She had dark cold eyes just like his. Of the two children, Iona, looked more like him.

"Hey, Dad," Donovan said as he moved from Ms. Milner and sat down next to his sister.

Ms. Milner put the schedule of events on Isaac's desk and said, "All the dates that have been requested for special events such as singles meetings, marriage retreats and so on have been highlighted on your calendar. I just need an okay from you so that I can let the auxiliaries know if their dates are approved or not."

"Thank you, Ms. Milner. I'll look over this and get it back to you some time next week," Isaac said.

Diana Milner made no attempt to leave until Iona glared at her and said, “That will be all.” Iona then pointed to Donovan, herself and then extended that pointer finger to Isaac and continued, “We need to talk right now.” No one in the room missed the meaning in Iona’s words. Diana was not a part of their inner circle and therefore, she had to go.

Diana’s high yellow cheeks turned red with embarrassment as she lowered her head and walked out of the office. But Iona didn’t care. She wasn’t fooled one bit by long skirt-wearing-praise-dancing Diana Milner. She was after Donovan, but if Iona had anything to say about it, that snake would not be slithering into a princess cut diamond ring purchased by Donovan Walker any time soon.

“Was your rudeness necessary, Iona?” Donovan asked when Diana closed the door.

“Forget her,” Iona said as she picked up one of Isaac’s crystal eagles off of his credenza and stood. “I want to know what’s on Daddy’s mind, and why he feels the need to constantly summons me to this office like I’m ten years old and on the principal’s naughty list.”

Isaac leaned back in his seat and studied his twenty-six year old daughter. Nothing about her was like the ten-year old child who’d given her life to Christ. She was now about 5’7 with a lean athletic body and a go-to-Hades express on her deep chocolate face.

“Calm down, Baby Girl.” Isaac said. “I just need to talk with you for a minute.”

Iona’s chestnut eyes flashed with fire as she put the crystal eagle back on the credenza and strutted over to her father’s desk. She clenched both sides of his desk

and leaned in closer to Isaac and said, “You want me to calm down, Daddy? Then please stop calling me baby girl, and stop summoning me to your office.”

Still seated on the leather couch, Donovan leaned forward and said, “Stop trippin’, Little Sis – you know Dad isn’t trying to treat you like a child.”

Iona whirled around to face off with Donovan. Her thick shoulder length hair fell back into its perfect layers when she came to an abrupt stop. With one hand on her left hip and her pointer finger shaking in Donovan’s face, she declared, “See what I mean. You and Dad are always coming to my office with this Baby Girl and Little Sis stuff. I’m a professional, and beyond that, I’m a grown woman. And I’m tired of the two of you making me seem like less in front of my peers.”

Donovan laughed as he said, “Drama queen.”

“Golden boy,” Iona spat back at him.

Isaac looked at his children. Well no, not children – these were adults that happened to come from his seed. Donovan, his oldest was mild tempered and humble like his mother. Iona was all spit and fire, totally confrontational and didn’t care who knew it. Maybe that’s why she went to law school and Donovan went to seminary. Isaac raised his hand and said, “All right, all right, you’ve made your point. I won’t call you Baby Girl when I come to your office. But when you’re in my office...”

He let that thought trail off and Iona caved with a smile. “Okay, Daddy, you win. When I step foot in your world I’m Baby Girl.”

“Okay, so can we get down to the reason I asked you to meet me in *my* office?”

Isaac calmly asked his Baby Girl.

Iona had gotten her point across, so there was no more reason to fight. She sat back down on the couch next to her brother and said, “What’s up, Daddy? Nothing’s wrong with Nina-Mama is it?”

Nina was Isaac’s wife and Donavan’s mother – Iona’s mother was Cynda Williams. Although she was beautiful, she had been a cantankerous woman who’d caused a whole lot of problems for Isaac and Nina until they all learned how to go along to get along for the sake of the children. Iona had lived with Isaac and Nina since she was ten years old, so Iona had taken to calling her stepmother Nina-Mama. Because it just felt right to her.

“Everything is fine. Nina just has a touch of the flu, so I told her to stay home this morning. But the first thing I want to know from you is how Joey’s case is going?”

Iona rolled her eyes. “Daddy, will you please stop asking me about Joey McDaniels? I have an investigator looking into everything right now – but he doesn’t even go to court until August. This is February, so I don’t have any updates. Okay?”

Isaac’s eyes lit up as he asked Iona and Donavan, “Did you see him walk down to the altar today? That boy is saved!”

“You didn’t give up on him, Dad. You should be proud,” Donavan said.

“No, son, I’m not proud; I’m humbled that God would even allow me to help people like Joey.” Isaac turned back to Iona and said, “Speaking of which.” He opened the top, left side drawer on his desk and pulled out a picture and newspaper clipping. He stood up and walked it over to Iona. “I have another client for you.” He handed Iona the material and reclaimed his seat.

Iona shook her head. “Oh no, not this again. I told you from the jump that I became a lawyer to get rich. I’m not interested in handling these pro bono cases you keep bringing me.”

“Look at the information, Baby Girl. The man is innocent,” Isaac told her.

“So was Vinny the three time loser and Robbie the preschool drug dealer,” Iona said without looking at the information in her hand.

Isaac nodded. “Okay, I was wrong about those two, but you have to admit, the other clients that I sent to you have been innocent, right?”

“Innocent and broke,” Iona whined.

Donavan took the stuff out of her hand, turned the picture and newspaper clipping right side up and then placed it back into her hand. “This guy needs your help, Sis. We’re asking you to do this for the family,” Donavan told her.

“There you go trying to put somebody on a guilt trip,” Iona said as her eyes fell on the photo. It was a Most Wanted picture printed off the Internet. Iona’s eyes widened. “That’s Clarence Mason.”

“Donavan went to high school with him,” Isaac said.

“I know that. I also know that Clarence just pulled off a three million dollar jewelry heist.” She held up the newspaper clipping knowing exactly what it was about. “He can afford the best attorney that money can buy. Why would he want me? I mean, I know I’m good, but I’ve only been practicing law for two years.”

“First of all, Clarence doesn’t have any money, so he can’t just hire any attorney he wants. And I told him that you would be his best bet,” Isaac said, and then added.

“Look, Iona, I’ve been witnessing to this guy for months, so when Johnny arrested him, he used his one phone call to get in touch with me.”

Iona held up her hand. “Wait. You’re telling me that Johnny Dunford arrested this guy and now you’re trying to get him a lawyer?”

Johnny Dunford was a deacon at the church and one of Isaac’s most dedicated members. He also happened to be a cop.

“Johnny will understand. I’m just trying to help someone in need get a break,” Isaac stated.

Iona rolled her eyes. “You’re not just trying to give a guy a break. You’re doing the minister thing; down at that prison preaching Jesus as always. When are you going to finally wake up and realize that some of these guys aren’t worth saving?”

“Iona! What’s wrong with you? This is our life. We preach to these people because we believe God can make a difference,” Donavan angrily said.

Holding up the five finger disconnect to Donavan, Iona said, “You are such a suck up. When will you ever have a thought that doesn’t originate in Daddy’s head first?” She then turned to Isaac and said, “I’m not mad at you, Daddy. Preach Jesus to all the criminals in the downtown jail. Hey,” Iona said with a smile, “it’s admirable.”

“Then take the case, hon,” Isaac said.

“Dad, do you know how busy my schedule is right now?”

“This case will be a huge deal, Iona. Think of how it will look on your resume if you get Clarence off?” Isaac said.

Iona sat quietly for a moment looking at the mug shot and the newspaper account of the robbery. Then she smiled to herself. She looked back up at Isaac and said,

“You know what, Daddy?”

“What, Baby Girl?”

“I think I will take this case.” She stood up and headed toward the door. “Now if you gentlemen will excuse me, I have to go buy some new outfits. I bet there will be tons of reporters at the courthouse for this case, and I must look my best for the cameras. This might even end up on Court TV,” Iona said, giddy with excitement as she closed the door behind her.

Donavan leaned back on the couch and shook his head.

“That’s my Baby Girl,” Isaac said sarcastically. “Always doing the right thing for the right reason.”