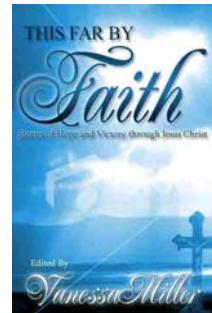


This Far By Faith Anthology Excerpt



TROUBLE IN MY WAY By: Vanessa Miller

Twenty-three and played out. Like the words of a tired old blues song, Kenisha Smalls had been strung and rung out.

“Too young to give up,” she chided as she pulled herself out of bed. But when her feet hit the floor, and her knees buckled from unexplained pain, she reminded herself that she had actually lived a hundred dog years; lapping at the crumbs from underneath other folk’s tables, and being kicked around by more good-for-nothings than she could count. A few years back, Kenisha thought some good would have to come into her life to even out the bad. But when James, her first baby’s daddy got arrested for armed robbery, and then Terrell, her second baby’s daddy got himself shot and killed trying to be a kingpin, she stopped praying for the sun to shine through her drab days, and resigned herself to embrace the rain.

Guess that’s how she hooked up with Chico. Kenisha had been dazzled by his pretty olive skin, wavy hair, and bulky arms. Dazzled by his corporate job, and technical school education. Of course, all that dazzling occurred before her responsible boyfriend started hanging around her crack head brother, Kevin. By the time she gave birth to her

third child, Chico had quit his good-paying job so he could give crack his undivided attention.

Now, the only time Brianna saw her crack head father, was when he made his first of the month visit. Begging for a loan that he knew his broke behind couldn't pay back. She remembered the first time she refused to give Chico her rent money. He punched her in the face so hard her teeth clickety-clacked. Grabbing the iron skillet that she'd been frying chicken in, she chased him out of her house. When she walked back in, and saw Jamal, her oldest child, standing in the kitchen holding a butcher knife, as his eyes blazed with fury, she swore right then that she would have nothing more to do with Chico and his crack demon.

Shaking her head to ward away bad memories, Kenisha grabbed a washcloth and towel from the hall closet. Jumping in the shower, she allowed the hot water to assault her weary bones. As the steam filled the small bathroom, she wallowed in the horror story her life had become. What next? How much can happen to a person before the Almighty decides it's time to pick on someone else?

“Ah, dawg.” She knew she'd forgotten something. Bumping her head against the tiled wall of the shower, she turned the water off and stepped out. She had an appointment that might make her late picking Jamal up from school. Not wanting to leave it to chance, she decided to call Aisha to see if she could pick her son up.

Before she could get her clothes on and make it to the telephone, Chico knocked on her back door. She was familiar with his knock. It was the first of the month, baby, can I please get a loan kind of banging that rolled through her head twelve times a year.

“Don’t I have enough to deal with?” She picked up the pink frilly robe James bought her on her fifteenth birthday. It had been soft and pretty back then, but the drudge of life had worn on it. Thought she would have replaced it long ago. But the kids kept coming, and the men kept leaving.

She picked up Jamal’s leather belt, secured her tattered robe, stalked down stairs and flung open the back door...

Faith Brought Me Through The Storm By: Gail M. Butler

On August 28, 2005 my life changed forever. Born and raised in New Orleans one becomes a creature of habits with seasonal routines. As with every year, citizens of New Orleans plan ahead for activities such as Mardi Gras, Essence Music Festival, Jazz Heritage Festival and the possibility of evacuation from our homes because of hurricanes. However, no one had planned for the events that took place in 2005.

Several tropical storms brewed and were classified as hurricanes but not bad enough to cause evacuation. But on a day when the sky was beautiful and all seemed peaceful, a bulletin appeared on the television, announcing a mandatory evacuation by Mayor Ray Nagin, for the City of New Orleans.

For a moment, I stared at the television, not sure if this was correct. Then my phone rang, it was my niece inviting me to travel with her family as they headed to Arkansas. “Arkansas?” I questioned, caught off guard. I’m not sure why I didn’t accept,

I did believe that a hurricane was on the way to New Orleans. The day before, I had gone to the grocery store and stocked up on necessities just in case there was a power outage.

My niece informed me that most of my family had already begun the process of evacuation and someone really needed to convince my mother/her grandmother to leave her home; because everyone was leaving and she would be left alone and in danger. In the past, whenever a hurricane threatened, my family would book a couple of rooms at one of the downtown hotels. We would stay there until the storm passed; even without my mother who refused to seek shelter other than the comfort of her home. One family member always managed to leave the hotel and stay with her until the hurricane passed; but no one would be able to stay with my mother this time, because everyone was in route to leave New Orleans....

The next morning everyone thought we made it through another storm with high hopes of returning home. During the night the hotel had lost all power, therefore, individuals with portable radios and televisions were very much sought after; their devices were our only source of receiving information. As they shared all the shocking news regarding the devastation in our city, everyone was motionless, speechless, hurt and very scared. The familiar three-day run and return home had come to an end. Our world filled with darkness with no vision of ever returning home. Since that day, our lives became uncertain and frightening; we prayed and prayed, while others cried...

The Second Time Around By: Arnita Fields

Falling in love with my husband Anthony came easy, much to my surprise. He was really down to earth, as well as a real quiet type. We were opposites in so many ways, but so alike in many others. We went together like peanut butter and jelly (both of our favorite sandwiches). Two different textures, but tasted good when mixed together. I knew that when we got married we would have some of the normal potholes that new married couples fall into, but as it turned out we had some holes as large as the Grand Canyon to deal with. These holes were not something that God did not know about, but they were things that God was openly exposing by the light of His spirit.

I can't remember the exact date or time when the trouble began, but I noticed that I became more irritable by the day. Attitudes and mood swings were quite frequent for me. I truly see now that I was a ticking bomb waiting to explode. I had no idea that I had so much bitterness bottled up on the inside. With my husband being the quiet type, our fights were basically one sided. I was always the one who wanted to have the absolute final word.

My purging by God had already begun and I did not even understand what was taking place, I just knew that I was not happy about where I was in my life at that moment. My husband and I had talked about our relationship with the Lord on so many occasions and we always took the time out to read our bible together. We really tried hard to make it work, but something was truly missing. As the year 2000 approached, we began to grow apart in our hearts...

That Kind of Man By: Vicki Austin

The day my father was diagnosed with head and neck cancer, Is one I will never forget. My mother and I had just shared a mother-daughter night out the Saturday before he was to go into the hospital for a biopsy. A big Danny Glover and Mel Gibson fan, Mom and I laughed and held on to the theater seats as we ran, jumped and brought the bad guys to justice while watching “Lethal Weapon”. Afterwards we had dinner, chatted and then parted ways. At about 1:00 a.m. my phone rang. I knew it would probably not be good news. I picked up the phone, and mom told me she was experiencing chest pain.

I dressed quickly, grabbed my young son, bundled him up and put him in the car. When I arrived at my childhood home, mom was ready to go. She looked weak and had difficulty breathing. I wondered why my dad wasn’t taking her to the hospital, but didn’t ask. Once in the ER, they stabilized her. Hooking her up to monitors and inserting IV tubing into her arm and oxygen into her nostrils. While my son lay sleeping, I called my siblings to let them know our whereabouts. They said they would be on the way soon.

After all the tests were completed, the Doctor came and explained to us that mother had a blockage in a coronary artery and it needed to be removed. By 8:00 a.m. on Sunday, they had her in surgery, performing the procedure...

What Did I Do By: Apostle Tracy George

Throughout most of my childhood, I was the ‘do-gooder’. In any case, that was what people called me. At the age of five, with no real knowledge of what I was doing,

one of God's gifts made its first appearance in my life. I had my little friends line-up on the porch and they tarried for the Holy Spirit - I actually worked with them. I talked them through the process and stood there with tissue and wiped their tiny mouths as they called out to God. I was adamant about their salvation even though I did not fully understand what salvation was all about. My mother took notice of us and came to the door. She told us to go play. Later, she initiated my education in the things of God. At that moment I truly felt that the Lord was ready to use me; it was time. Many believe that children do not have wilderness experiences or that God would not allow a child to go through. For me, that is when it all began....

It was the summer of 1977 and school was out. Here I was the tall and skinny kid from Florida ready to seize the opportunity to travel. I said goodbye to friends and prepared for the big road trip to visit relatives. Everything was lovely at first when we arrived at my grandparent's home. We joked; even shared stories. Then my parents left us there for a month and a half. While there, I became acquainted with a completely different lifestyle...

Due Season By: Minister Kim Y. Jackson

Every Christian can be assured that throughout their lifetime, they will go through seasons. This is confirmed in God's word in Ecclesiastes 3:1 which declares, "There is a time for everything and a season for everything under heaven." Throughout the Bible

God refers to specific seasons in the life of His people to show the expected end that He has promised each of us, performed by His sovereign will. The Seasons depicted in the Old and New Testament were written to commemorate explicit moments in the lives of God's people to encourage the generations to come, to know that God alone enables His children to remain steadfast, overcome insurmountable odds, be restored, receive unexpected blessings, become empowered and remain faithful to the calling that He has predestined for us from the beginning of time. Every one of the spiritual symbols revealed in each story about the seasons of the lives of His people shows the mercy and love of God for them.

God allowed me to experience seasons of weeping, seasons of joy, a time of breaking down, a time of healing, a time of silence, as well as a time to speak. While going through these seasons He walked me into the beginning and through the end of the season and showed me the purpose of each one. Walking in Faith through each season I saw God's preordained plan for my life. He even showed me that there is a specific spiritual significance for my "Due Season." Therefore, my brothers and sisters for whatever season you are in at this very moment you can be assured that "God knows the plans that He has for you", Jeremiah 29:11 and He also knows that there is a Due Season predestined for your life to proclaim His Glory...

Don't Worry About A Thing By: Vette Berrian

On November 13, 2002, I came home from work with the worst migraine I had ever had. My head was pounding, the room was spinning and my stomach felt like I was on a ride I couldn't get off of. All I wanted was medication, a dark room with a bed and my husband by my side.

As we sat in bed, Scot, my husband of seven years listened as I regurgitated my day through a stream of tears. I was hysterical and inconsolable. Suddenly I stopped talking. Thinking I was tired and just needed rest, my husband helped me to lay down.

The next morning I awoke to a warm voice saying, "Vette time to get up." As I opened my eyes and looked around the room I found I was alone. Then my bedroom door was opened by this beautiful man who stood in front of me in a blue robe. "Good you're awake," he said. As he continued to ramble I just stared at him in silence. "Vette, say something you're freaking me out."

"I can't," I said.

"Why not?" he replied.

"Because, I don't know who you are, or why you're in my room."

"Vette, stop playing, this isn't funny," the man in the blue robe said.

The look on my face told him I wasn't playing. "I'm Scot, your husband." Silence and a blank stare followed. In the background I could hear children talking. It sounded like they were headed for the room. "We have three children," he said panicked. "Do you know their names?" Nothing followed. With that he turned and said, "Get dressed, I'll be right back."

I'm not sure how much time passed. However, when he returned to the room I was still in the bed. I hadn't moved a muscle. I didn't want to. He came over to the bed

and flashed an ID card with both our pictures then a marriage license. Then he said, “I called your mom she’s on her way.”

A little while later a honey brown woman with short curly hair appeared through the door. “What’s up baby?” She said.

“Are you my mom? I asked...

Your Will Be Done By: Gerri Leggett

David began locking Jessica inside the apartment after he found her sitting by the pool in a swimsuit he’d picked out for her. “Did I say you could come outside half naked?” He threw a towel at her and made her get up and go inside.

A young man by the pool said, “Baby you look too good to have some busta talking to you like that.”

Jessica looked back and David grabbed her by the arm and dragged her inside. “You’re hurting me David.”

“You hurt me when you disrespect me like you did today; letting everybody look at your body and talk to you like I’m not your husband?”

He sounded so sad, Jessica felt bad for hurting him, so she began to apologize. “Just don’t let it happen again,” he snapped, then asked, “What’s to eat?” He never put his hands on her; but he did frighten her.

She ran into the kitchen and began cooking for him even though she didn’t have much of an appetite.

The next day Jessica received a certified letter, but she couldn't open the door to sign for the letter. She opened the window and told the postman she had lost her key to the deadbolt. He passed the letter through the window and went to the apartment office and reported it to the manager. The letter was from her mom. She opened it and found an abundance of scriptures like: In God I trust, I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? (Psalm 56:11); God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power of love and of self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:7); There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear (1 John 4:18). At the end of the letter her mom wrote, 'baby, please pray that God's will be done in your life!' Suddenly, Jessica began to cry uncontrollably. How did her mother know what she had been going through?