

Into the
HAND
of a
WOMAN

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THANK YOU

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- 3 *Sudan: The Cost Of Silence* with photographs
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- 4 *Climbing for a Cause*, Ludington Daily News (01-13-12)
www.thefreedomclimb.net
- 5 *A Climb for Freedom*, Ludington Daily News (02-10-12)
- 6 *Tina Hodges*, a champion for women and children's rights, currently serving on Board of Advisors for Bethania Kids Ministries in India. <http://bethaniakids.org>
- 7 *One Thousand Sisters* By Lisa Shannon
- 8 *The Purpose Driven Life* By Rick Warren

AUTHOR'S NOTE

To my knowledge there are no slave-trafficking camps in Northern Israel. I took license and created one for my novel to tell the story of modern-day Deborah. Mine is not an exact account of the Biblical Deborah, and because my novel is set in the twenty-first century, I have taken many liberties to make it believable for present day.

My hope is that readers will recognize this as a book of faith based on issues prevalent today and will feel outraged about the victimization of women around the world.

Chapter One



“*M*rs. Storm has a right to a fair settlement, Judge. Although she is from a foreign land, she is married to a US citizen, soon to be divorced from a US citizen. Her rights are the same as her husband’s under the law.”

I looked at the woman. *Too young*, I thought. Her teary eyes pleaded with me. She didn’t stand up straight. Her form bowed under clothes too big for her small frame. She was visibly frightened.

With everyone seated, I asked the young bride, “How long have you lived in the United States?” Pitifully, she looked to her lawyer.

Her lawyer stood, “Eleven months and one week--she was a mail-order bride.” She paused. “More like a product of trafficking--”

“Objection!” yelled her counterpart, jumping to his feet.

“Approach the bench,” I ordered.

The two lawyers stepped forward. The husband’s lawyer spoke first, “We are here for a divorce decree. How she got here should not be brought in.”

The plaintiff’s lawyer immediately retorted, “This is the crux of the case. She was married against her will.”

“Judge Miller, all he wants is for her to leave the way she came, with nothing. They’ve been married less than a year. He regrets marrying her. She has been nothing but trouble.”

“Okay,” I said, looking to the girl’s lawyer. “Abstain from the trafficking issue.”

The attorneys walked back to their clients. Considerably older than his young wife, the man grimaced as he shifted in his chair. I referred to the affidavits in front of me, and took a minute to study the girl who sat unmoving, seemingly confused. I spoke directly to her, “Do you want to go back to Israel?”

“No,” she said.

“Okay, divorce is granted, and Mrs. Storm will receive one-half of everything Mr. Storm owns.”

The man’s attorney screamed, “He has nothing!”

“He hired you. Perhaps she should receive half your fee.” I looked directly at him as he shoved papers into his briefcase. “Whatever Mr. Storm was going to pay you, she gets half.”

He looked up, “Your Honor, may I approach the bench?”

“Whatever your client owns, she gets one-half.” I slammed the gavel down.

Referring to the affidavits again, I seriously questioned the man’s role as husband to this child-bride. Stepping down from the bench I asked her, “Where did you live in Israel before you came to America?”

She whispered, “In a tent.”

Upon my instruction, the girl’s lawyer made arrangements for her to be taken to a shelter following the day’s procedures. She needed lodging for that night and possibly for several nights thereafter pending her settlement.

The long day had left me restless. Finally, in my chambers with a rare moment alone, I felt compelled to talk with God.

“What is going on in the world today, God? You know this young

woman. What would you have had *me* do? You know I have been struggling with the questions this case has stirred up. But all I hear is silence, a silence that holds me captive. Oh God, break the silence.”

As days passed I thought more and more about the girl. Having personal interest in Israel, with Jewish ancestry on my father’s side, I was intrigued that she had lived in a tent, and as I found out later, was confined against her will. I thought about the injustices here in America, but there are worse things going on in places far from our shores. Even with thousands of miles of separation over ocean and land, even with world-wide media coverage, we know but a fraction of what is happening elsewhere in this regard. Being close to prejudice here, I felt led to question the inequality in other parts of the world. But, understandably, the minds and souls of Americans, including my own, are centered here with personal lives taking precedence over judicial differences in other countries.

I shared my thoughts with a special coworker, a few years my senior, but not much older than my own thirty five years. A sun-bleached blond who loved her work, Christine was my legal aide who mediated cases and resolved many disputes before they came to me. At almost, a head taller than Christine, I envied the fact that she could wear a dress or skirt with a different pair of high heels everyday. I didn’t have to worry what I wore under my robe, but just the same, some days I longed to shed the robe, and look more like a woman. My brunette locks and little make-up added to the personae of a judge in a robe so I didn’t fight it. Christine was my best friend and confidant. Conversations in my office often concluded a typical case-filled day.

“I think God is trying to tell me something,” I began. She smiled.

“You know, Deborah Miller, your heart is too big for your own good.” She often called me Deborah whenever she was trying to make a point. I preferred being called Deb.

Ignoring the use of my full name, I replied, “I talked to God a lot when I was young. I don’t hear him anymore,” Embarrassed, I confessed, “I’m a little crazy, I know.”

“Hey, talking to God is a good thing. It’s called prayer.”

“I don’t mean prayer. Before when I talked to God, I could hear him talk back to me. It’s been so long now that I can’t remember when it stopped.”

I continued. “I used to sit under a big tree in the backyard, and all the kids came to me with their problems. I advised them--it came from God, literally.” I leaned back in my big chair with a bit of a smile.

“That is grandiose thinking. Do you think God has chosen you to save the world?” Christine paused, sensing my denial. “I don’t think that’s the reason why you don’t hear God anymore. Whether you literally heard him or not, you’re an adult now, and still, you cannot erase your passion for helping others. That is a good thing, Deb. Listen, you’ve worked hard to get where you are. You are a new, highly regarded judge--a female judge. You are doing a good job here. God knows that.”

“No, I need to do more. I feel God is trying to tell me something. It goes beyond high-regard, female, or chosen. I cannot hear him like I used to. It has nothing to do with whether I am young or older, idealistic or realistic.”

“Or *does it* have to do with whether you’re young or older? As children, our minds are open to hear God. As adults, minds get cluttered with a revolving door of too much information.”

Christine leaned over my desk, “Be patient. You’re still young. You know what I mean?”

I got up and reached for my coat. “Christine, this is why I love you so much. No one can settle a dispute for me better than you. Someday, *you* are going to be a great judge.”

I had some knowledge of abuses in American regarding women. After I had women come into my courtroom with bruised faces and arms in casts, I decided to do some volunteer work for a network of shelters in New York City, many were in Manhattan where I lived. Over the past couple of years, justice for women had become an ongoing interest and effort in my life. Even though I knew abuse was prevalent in other countries the Storm case stirred that awareness and left me extremely uneasy.

At one of my visits to a shelter, Mrs. Storm walked up behind me. I didn’t see her until she spoke, “Judge Miller, ‘member me?”

I turned, and smiled. I responded to her in Hebrew, surprising her. “Yes, of course.”

The young woman’s face lit up happy to hear Middle East dialect. “Tell me, Mrs. Storm, how you are doing?”

She immediately opened up to me. “I’m happy, Judge Miller. Well, some happy. I’m Jordana, not Mrs. Storm anymore.”

“What a pretty name, Jordana. You may call me Deb, okay?” I looked at her noticing how lovely she was in a dress that fit her petite frame along with a smile I hadn’t seen before. I welcomed the opportunity to have some time with her. I wanted to know how she had managed to obtain a divorce after being in America so short a time. I was curious to know how it happened that she came here,

against her will, to marry a man she didn't even know. However, I did not want to pressure her to say anything more than she was comfortable revealing.

"Jordana, you will not stay in this shelter any longer than necessary. Once you find work and find your own place, you will be happier."

I led her to a corner where we could be alone. I hesitated, but asked, "How did you find a lawyer to represent you?"

"I answered her advertisement. It was pinned on a board at the market where Mr. Storm took me once a week. When he wasn't looking, I took it off the board and put it in my pocket

I nodded, then continued, "You could read the ad?"

"Only the words I knew—'Need Help?'"

"Had you considered running away and not bothering with a divorce?"

"I was afraid to run—where would I go?"

"To a friend's—anyone you could trust. . ."

"I wanted a divorce. No Mrs. Storm, no Mr. Storm anymore. I wanted marriage to end—be legal!" She announced strongly.

The more we talked the more I wanted to know this smart, remarkable young lady. Though still fearful, and reluctant to say too much, she did tell me more. At fourteen, living in Vietnam, she and her older sister were sold by their parents to men who promised that the girls would have a better life elsewhere. Instead, they ended up in Israel, detained in a prison of tents, beaten and starved, and eventually sold.

She hesitated, but as hard as it was for her to name her jailer, she did.

"Sis-rah--Sis-rah is evil, an evil man. Everyone's afraid of him, even those from the village nearby. No one came to the tents, just

the soldiers.”

“This man you call Sis-rah, he was a soldier? In the Israeli army? Are you sure?”

“Yes, the soldiers who came to the tents wore the same uniform, but his uniform had more color with pins and stripes.”

She stopped. I nodded that it was okay for her to continue. “We couldn’t leave the tents. Many who tried were shot.”

“Prisoners? All women? Why?”

“He took my sister to be his property.”

“His property--what do you mean?”

“He gave her the biggest tent—wouldn’t sell her.”

“Do you think your sister is still there?”

“I don’t know.”

“How many women? How many tents?” I paused, shocked, questioning the validity of her story. *This can’t be happening, not today, especially not in Israel.*

“I need to know more, Jordana. Do you think you could write down what you remember? Can you give me names and places, if you know?”

She agreed, but reluctantly. I could see the fear in her eyes reappear.

“Judge Deb, don’t make me go back there.” The tears sprang forth, “Please, no!”

Several weeks later, I told Christine, “I’m going away.”

“What do you mean you’re going away?”

“To Israel, I’m going to Israel. It’s something I have been thinking about for a long time.”

Questions shot out of her mouth. “But now? When did you decide

this? How long?”

“Four month’s leave of absence, a voluntary sabbatical leave. I need to do this. Don’t ask me why.”

“I’m shocked. Don’t tell me you’ve heard from God-- literally?”

“No, not literally.”

“If you’re not sure why you’re going, don’t go, Deb. Four months is a long time. Honestly, I am afraid for you. That part of the world is lawless. Really, change your mind, Deb, please.”

I did not, could not. My heart-wrenching, soul-searching decision had become irrevocable.

That night I prayed. “God, I need you to talk to me again. Tell me something. I need you to tell me I’m doing the right thing.”

After praying, I sank into a deep sleep. My subconscious released a three-dimensional action with my mother calling, “Debbie, get down. Stop hanging from that tree. Too much blood will go to your head.”

“But, Mommy, I like it. It clears my head.”

I grabbed the tree branch and jumped from a low-hanging branch, making a wild leap to the ground, rolling onto the grassy lawn. The action was surreal. I could actually feel myself doing this.

Then the dream shifted. I sat under the tree. Children gathered around me—they had questions. I gave them answers and they left. Then another crowd gathered around me. This time we were all adults, but one woman, barely an adult, demanded my attention. With her eyes ablaze, full of fear, she targeted me. Slowly, she reached for me, her mouth opened, but no words came out. Anticipating some sort of revelation, my dream intensified. Frantically, I needed to hear her. I screamed, “Speak—speak!”

All of a sudden, everyone around her started chattering. I couldn’t

hear what anyone was saying. Too many mouths were opening and closing. Too many arms were flagging about, gesturing wildly.

Frustrated, I cried out, “What? What do you want? I can’t hear you!”

The frantic girl-like woman backed away behind the others. The whole chaotic scene came to a halt.

Once again my dream shifted. I was young, and Mother was calling to me. “Debbie, who are you talking to?”

“I’m talking to God, Mommy.”

“No one *talks* to God. Quit saying that.”