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A NOVEL

KAREN  
KINGSBURY

Bestselling author of *Beyond Tuesday Morning*

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## DEDICATED TO...

DONALD, my closest friend, my other half, the best husband always and forever. I love you more today than a hundred yesterdays, laugh more at the silliness between us, and live more with one eye on the rearview mirror, only too aware of how fast the days go. With you all of life is a series of memories and blessed magical moments, a roller coaster of thrills in which you are constantly at my side, steady and strong. Remember when you told me you loved the Lord more than me? Let's just say I'm glad it's still true. It's what makes it all so good.

KELSEY, my sweet and precious little Norm, who can boot a soccer ball like no one else and still be the prettiest girl around. I thank God that He lives within you, helping you know right from wrong, helping you understand the plans He alone has for you. Your tender heart has more discernment than most adults. As you told me the other day, you don't need a "play" boyfriend to feel good about yourself. You need the Lord. And I'm so thankful you have Him in a way that shows in everything you do...your eyes, your smile, and the joy you bring me and your dad every day of our lives.

TYLER, my strapping eight-year-old treasure, who has no idea how talented and bright and kindhearted he truly is. If only you could see the picture God is painting of you, the one your dad and I see more clearly every day. Please know that I'm glad you're not rushing the process, grateful that for a little while longer I might hear your humming, happy voice making up the music of our lives. Congratulations on winning statewide honors on your "Reflections" story, Ty. One day I'll be reading *your* dedications!

AUSTIN, who is still Michael Jordan. The marvel of you, my precious child, is not that at three years old you can slip into your No. 23 jersey and dribble a ball between your legs, watching wide-eyed when your dad coaches the big guys and taking in every bit of it. It isn't the way you can reverse dunk on your kid-size hoop, or shoot nothing-but-nets all afternoon. Rather, it's the way your eyes fill with tears when you hear a song about Jesus. We knew from the beginning that your heart was special...we're beginning to see how very special it really is.

E. J. and SEAN—As I write this I am twelve days from taking a plane to Haiti where I will pick you up and bring you home to live with us forever. My prayer for

you, my chosen sons, is that God will impress upon your hearts how very special you both are, how great the plans He has for you. As surely as night follows day, He has amazing reasons why He brought you here to be a part of our family. We have prayed and planned for this moment for a very long time and are humbly awed at the privilege of being your parents. We—all of us—love you more than you could know or understand.

And to GOD ALMIGHTY, who has, for now, blessed me with these.

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# I



Joshua Nunn shuffled between a closet full of file cabinets and the boxes lining his office floor. He hadn't expected it to be this hard—packing up his dead partner's things and facing whatever was left of his own future. There was a heaviness in the air, a somber silence as though even the walls grieved the loss of the charismatic man whose presence had once consumed the place.

Joshua sighed. He had never felt so alone in all his life.

Bob Moses, senior attorney and Joshua's lifelong friend, opened the Religious Freedom Institute in Bethany, Pennsylvania, for one reason only: To take back ground lost to the enemy. "Join me," Bob had said when he presented the idea to Joshua three years earlier. "The promised land awaits!"

And so it had. They'd won two local Pennsylvania cases in the past six months—one in which a group opposed to religious freedom sued a school district to prevent students from praying before football games. The case threatened to capture national attention—much like the one in Texas a few years back. But this time, when the opposition faced Bob and Joshua, they backed off.

"God has His hand on this office," Bob would say. "I can feel it, Joshua. He's taking us somewhere big."

There were dreams of hiring more attorneys, buying a bigger office building, and finding a place on America's legal center stage where they could join similar organizations in the national fight for religious freedom.

But every one of those dreams seemed to die the day Bob Moses slumped over his office desk, dead of a heart attack at age fifty-seven.

Now there were bills to pay, office expenses to maintain, and not a single viable case on the horizon. With Bob gone, clients apparently assumed the firm was closed, and now, after just three weeks of Joshua working on his own, the phone calls were few and far between.

He grabbed another stack of files, carried them across the office, and dropped them in a box. When he was finished clearing out his partner's things, he would deliver them to Bob's widow. The woman was taking it well, but many nights since

Bob's death Joshua had come home to find his partner's wife sitting with his own dear Helen at the dining room table, tears in their eyes.

Poor Betty.

*I know he's in a better place, Lord, but why? He still had so much to do...*

***Be strong, Joshua.***

Be strong? It was the answer he seemed to be getting from the Lord more and more these days and it seemed an odd bit of advice. He *was* being strong, wasn't he? He hadn't broken down or refused to get out of bed. No, he'd been at the office every day since the funeral, and still not a call or case had come his way. He'd researched potential lawsuits, made phone calls, written letters—but still nothing.

The facts were simple. If he didn't start bringing in cases soon, he would have to close up shop and face the reality that at fifty-six years he was as desperately in need of a job as he'd been his first month out of college. A shallow laugh made its way to the surface, and Joshua shook his head.

Be strong?

He and Bob had worked as trial lawyers with Jones, Garner, and Schmidt for thirty years before joining forces in this religious freedom venture. In addition to their lofty goals for the Institute, there were other benefits. No more commutes to the big city, extra time for evening card games and barbecues when any of their kids were home, more time in the town they loved. Joshua felt the sting of tears in his eyes and he blinked hard as he remembered how his partner seemed to have a bounce in his step at the idea of spending more time with his wife.

And with Faith.

There was a lump in Joshua's throat and he coughed so it would ease up. Much as he missed his friend and partner, young Faith missed the man more. Especially now, when it was supposed to be—

He couldn't bear to think of Faith, of how difficult her father's death had been on her. Instead he drifted back to the beginning, back to the early 1970s where it had all begun. The year he was hired by the big city firm, he and Helen and their two girls moved to Bethany—the most beautiful place in all the world. Bob, Betty, and their daughters followed suit two years later, and the families had been practically related ever since. Joshua and Bob would tease each other about being surrounded by women.

“Not a son among us, can you believe it?” Bob would throw his hands in the air.

The memories faded. Joshua carried a stack of books across the room and finished filling the box. As he did he glanced at the portraits on the wall. Bob Moses and Joshua Nunn, attorneys at law. *We were the luckiest guys in all of Bethany, Bob.*

These days everything was different. Bob was gone. Joshua's kids were both married and lived a few hours' drive away, and Bob's oldest daughter lived in Chicago. All that remained was Bob's youngest—Faith—still single at twenty-nine and trying to find her way in a world that offered little assistance, especially when the chips were down. Faith lived in Bethany and commuted fifteen minutes to Philadelphia's

WKZN affiliate station where she anchored the nightly news. Joshua pictured her as she had been a few weeks back at her father's funeral: Long, blond hair and far-off, pale blue eyes. Beautiful girl; a celebrity really.

And very close to her father.

Bob hadn't talked about it much, but Joshua knew Faith was part of the reason he wanted to work in Bethany. "I worry about her," Bob would say now and then. "She's had a rough go of it."

The plan to open a law office in Bethany seemed like a winner from every angle. They could leave the high-powered, high-pressured firm and would work from a leased office anchored in the center of the city's quaint downtown district, just minutes from their homes in Maple Heights. They would spend hours building cases and strategizing trial appearances and swapping stories of the good old days—back when they ran cross-country for rival Philadelphia high schools and squared off more than once on opposing debate teams.

Bob was so sure of himself, so full of energy and desire, convinced beyond discussion that God's hand was in this venture. And from the get-go God blessed their intentions in a way that made it look as though Bob had been right.

Joshua knelt down and yanked packing tape across the flaps of the full box.

"Retirement is for old people." Joshua could still hear Bob's voice as it rang loudly through the office. "We could run this law office another twenty years." A smile would fill his face. "Remember, Joshua...where God guides, God provides."

The memory faded on a wave of doubt. Joshua stopped for a moment, gazing outside at the late summer green in the leaves that lined Main Street. *Why would You guide us here...take us from our steady jobs...just to leave me all alone? How will I provide stability for Helen now? For Faith?*

*Joshua, hear me, son. You are not alone...*

The voice was as strong and certain as ever, a constant reminder that Joshua's relationship with a mighty God was intact, the single guiding force in his life. He opened another box and struggled to his feet. Once Bob's things were gone, maybe he could advertise for a partner. Someone who didn't need to make money up-front. Joshua huffed at the thought. How likely was that? The situation was hopeless.

There was something else, too.

With Bob gone, Joshua wondered whether he was actually up to the task of fighting religious freedom cases. Bob was the outgoing one, the lawyer with flair and style and conviction. Joshua? He was merely a simple man who loved God above everything and everyone else; a man whose arguments in court were succinct and heartfelt rather than memorable. Bob had said more profound things at lunch over a cheeseburger and fries than Joshua had ever said in court. Joshua had figured he'd enjoy fighting nearly any cause at Bob Moses' side. But without him?

His doubts were rampant as barn mice.

Joshua pulled himself into a nearby chair and hung his head. What was he supposed to do now? The firm wouldn't hire him back... His retirement fund was intact,

so it wasn't a financial concern. But with Bob gone Joshua felt as though he'd lost his sense of direction, his focus as a man. He looked up and studied the office, taking in the way Helen and Betty had arranged the plants just so, how the windows on three sides allowed the light to fill the room. Joshua closed his eyes. *This was Bob's dream, God... tell me if I'm supposed to let it go. Please...*

*As I was with Bob Moses so I will be with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you.*

Joshua let the silent thought settle on his heart. It was true of course; God would be with him. But what about the law office? What of the dream to fight tyrannical forces bent on destroying religious freedom?

Joshua was suddenly more tired than he'd been in weeks. He rested his head on his desk and closed his eyes. *As I was with Bob Moses... As I was with Bob Moses... As I was with Bob Moses...* Joshua remembered the two cases he and Bob had battled together, how God had indeed been with them, bringing both victory and visibility, a presence in the Philadelphia area that had caused certain political groups to take notice. *But that was then, God... I'm all alone now. I can't do it on my own.*

*Be strong and courageous... you will lead the people of this town to inherit the land...*

Joshua closed his eyes tighter. *Are You talking to me, God? Lead the people of the town to inherit what land?* He shook his head slightly to clear the strange words. He probably needed more sleep. He might even be coming down with something. That could explain this heavy, tired feeling...

Inherit the land? He couldn't scrounge up a single case, let alone inherit the land.

Before he could pull himself up from his desk he heard a voice. Not the kind of inner knowing that comes when God whispers...but an audible voice.

*"Be strong and very courageous, Joshua. Be careful to follow all the ways My servant Bob Moses showed you; do not turn from them to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go."*

Joshua sat straight up, eyes wide. A clamminess came over his hands and neck, and he glanced about the room. The boxes were no longer scattered over the floor, but stacked neatly by the door. And one of the photos on the wall looked different. In place of Bob's picture hung one of a younger man—a man with angry eyes and a handsome, chiseled face. *What in the...?*

"If... if that's You talking, God... I want to be strong for You." Joshua's eyes darted about the room, but the windows offered none of the familiar views—only golden light almost too brilliant to take in. His heart began to race. "I... I can't do it alone..."

*"Have I not commanded you?"*

Joshua sat stone still in his chair as the voice rang out again. It was booming, yet it warmed the room the way Joshua's heater warmed his car on winter days.

*"Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. Remember the command that Bob Moses, servant of the Lord, gave you. The Lord your God is giving you rest and has*

*granted you this land. You will cross My Jordan, and take possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you for your own."*

Joshua banged his head twice against the palm of his hand. Was he having a stroke? No, maybe it was an inner ear infection, something that made sounds form into sentences when he was the only one in the room. There was a flash of light—and then he saw it.

In the corner of the room, there in front of Bob's old bookcase, stood a man wearing the finest armor, a man whose eyes blazed with shining light. A golden man unlike anyone Joshua had ever seen before. His breath caught in his throat and his jaw dropped as the man drew his sword. Joshua's teeth and even the tips of his fingers trembled, but something deep in his gut told him he was not in danger. He could trust this man.

He stood, his knees knocking, and made his way closer to the soldier. "Are you...are you friend or foe?" Joshua forced his voice to cooperate and then waited stiffly, as though his feet were planted in cement.

"Neither. I have come as commander of the army of the Lord."

Joshua felt his eyes fly open even wider than before. *Commander of the army of the Lord?* That meant the man was an...an *angel?* It was impossible...but what other explanation was there? Joshua fell facedown to the ground, managing in a muffled voice, "What message does my Lord have for me?"

The strangely peaceful soldier studied Joshua for a moment. "Take off your shoes, Joshua, for you stand on holy ground."

Immediately Joshua fumbled with his laces, loosened their grip on his feet, and slid his shoes off, arranging them neatly so they faced Bob's bookcase. Who was this man and where had he come from? If he was an angel did he know about Bob? Had he spoken with him? Was this God's way of getting Joshua's attention? And what of the strange light outside and the odd picture on the wall?

But before he could ask any of the hundreds of questions pelting the roof of his heart, the phone rang. Joshua groped about, but nothing was where it should have been.

Again and again the phone rang, until Joshua sat bolt upright and opened his eyes, his mouth dry, heart pounding. He was breathing fast and he glanced around the room, stunned at the sight that met him.

The man was gone. In his place were all the boxes and piles of papers and books that had been there minutes earlier. His eyes darted to the photographs on the wall and he exhaled his relief. Bob's picture was back, and there was no sign of the angry young man whose picture had been there a moment ago.

Joshua remembered the voice and what had been said. What land? How could he be crossing the Lord's Jordan when the Holy Land was thousands of miles away?

None of it made sense.

The phone rang once more and the sound of it startled Joshua, jerking him further back to reality. There was wetness at the corner of his mouth, and he wiped it

with the back of his hand as everything became utterly clear. He hadn't heard a voice or been visited by a commander in the Lord's army. Of course not.

He had fallen asleep and it had all been a dream.

He reached for the receiver and snapped it to his ear. "Religious Freedom Institute, Joshua Nunn."

"Good. You're in." It was Frank Furlong the town's mayor. Joshua eased back into his chair and willed his heart to slow down. He and Frank had been friends for twenty years.

"Yeah...sorry, I was busy. What's up, Frank?"

There was a pause. "I got wind of something today. Could be big, could be nothing, but I'd like to talk about it. How about over lunch tomorrow?"

Images of the golden soldier and the sound of a booming voice like none he'd ever heard before still clamored for Joshua's attention. "Tomorrow's Saturday. Can't it wait?" He and Helen had plans to drive to the lake and take in an afternoon of fishing. Joshua figured they'd talk about his work plans—especially now that it seemed clear the law office wasn't going to survive.

Again the mayor hesitated. "This is very big, Joshua. If it happens, it'll come down on Monday, and we'll need your help. In fact, you'll be the primary counsel." There was a beat. "Tomorrow at noon, okay? Alvins on Walnut."

The fog was still clearing from Joshua's head, but he heard the urgency in Frank's voice. He and Helen could fish Sunday after church. "I'll be there."

He hung up the phone, staring at it, pondering. What could possibly be so urgent? Whatever it was, it involved the city of Bethany, and Frank wanted him as primary counsel. A surge of hope wound its way through Joshua's being. Was this the answer he'd been praying for? Was God going to let him keep the office after all? He considered the idea when a draft from the air conditioning sifted between his toes.

Frowning, he glanced down. He had only socks on his feet. *What's this about?* In the dream there'd been something about taking off his shoes because the place was holy, but that had only been a dream, right? So where were his shoes? He looked around the room and finally spotted them several feet away.

Sitting neatly, side by side, facing Bob's old bookcase.



Jordan Riley paced confidently in front of the judge like a caged and hungry animal, feeding off the fact that every eye in the room was on him. These were his closing arguments, and in the New York courtroom where the drama was taking place he had already claimed victory more times than he could remember.

He was certain this case would end in similar fashion.

“Finally, Your Honor, Mr. Campbell completely disregarded school policy by praying with a child during school hours.” Jordan reached for a document from the plaintiff’s table and found the highlighted section. “Page four, section thirteen, states clearly that if a teacher ignores the existing separation between church and state he or she shall be terminated immediately.”

Jordan set the paper down and stared hard at the simple man across the courtroom. Flanked by frustrated attorneys from the local branch of the teacher’s union, the man looked calm, almost serene. As though he didn’t understand the ramifications of what was about to take place. Or perhaps he believed, thanks to some misguided faith in God Almighty, that the battle might end miraculously in his favor.

A bitter feeling as familiar as his own name oozed from the crevices of Jordan’s heart and seeped into the core of his being. *We’ll see where your God gets you this time.*

He faced the judge again and motioned toward the defendant. “The religious right threaten to take over this country every day, Your Honor. Their agenda is clear: to evangelize all those around them to their way of thinking.” Jordan took several steps toward the peaceful teacher and gestured in his direction. “Your Honor, the danger here is clear. If we allow people such as Mr. Campbell to control the minds of our youth, we lose the free society our forefathers fought to give us. In its place we will have a culture of robots controlled by some mystical belief in a God that doesn’t exist. Human robots without compassion for people different from themselves. Robots who teach hatred toward people with alternative lifestyles or differing religions. All of this under the guise of public education?” Jordan waited a beat. “It’s a travesty of the most frightening kind, Your Honor.”

Mr. Campbell’s attorneys shifted, glancing furtively at their notes and avoiding eye contact with their client. Jordan resisted a smile. Even Campbell’s counsel could

tell which way the case was going. It was all over but the celebrating.

“For that reason, it is my recommendation that Mr. Campbell be fired by the school district for violating this country’s separation of church and state. In doing so, this court will send a message to other teachers, other school districts that prayer of any sort simply will not be tolerated on public school grounds.” He nodded. “Thank you, Your Honor.”

He took his seat and watched one of Campbell’s attorney’s weakly take the floor. The man adjusted his glasses and cleared his throat. “Our stance in this matter, Your Honor, is of course the matter of freedom.” He checked his notes. “Freedom of speech and religious freedom.”

Jordan was up immediately. “Objection, Your Honor.” He smiled in a practiced way that fell just short of condescending. “Mr. Campbell’s right to religious freedom has never been the issue. No one told him he couldn’t pray. He just can’t pray with a student in a public school setting.”

The judge—an icy woman in her late forties whose patience for the religious right was limited at best—nodded her chin pointedly. “Sustained.” She tossed a disdainful look at Campbell’s counsel. “You will stick to the issue at hand.”

The man looked lost. “Yes, Your Honor.” His eyes fell again to the file in his hand, and Jordan shifted his gaze back to the teacher, still seated peacefully at the table. *Where’s your God now, Campbell? You’re going down in flames.* Jordan relished the thought. One less do-gooder trying to change the landscape of American culture on a belief that was no more substantiated than Santa Claus.

Without warning, a picture flashed through Jordan’s mind of himself at age thirteen, kneeling in prayer, tears streaming down his face and—

For a single moment, Jordan’s heart ached for the child he’d been. He blinked and the image disappeared.

Campbell’s attorney finally gathered himself together enough to speak. “Uh...very well, Your Honor, our stance will focus entirely on Mr. Campbell’s freedom of speech.”

The man looked at his partner, and Jordan almost felt sorry for him. None of the attorneys he knew working for a national teacher’s union would want the job of defending an instructor in a religious freedom case. Obviously the legal team was ill-prepared, and the way they glanced at their watches every few minutes confirmed the fact that they were merely marking time until they could get back to the office.

“Your Honor, you’ll remember that the student Mr. Campbell was praying with had lost her best friend in a car accident the day before.”

Jordan refrained from wincing, but he couldn’t stop his heart from remembering a sorrow that could never be resolved. Praying in the wake of a friend’s death did more harm than good. After all, how would the girl in question face life now, knowing that God—assuming there was a God—had chosen not to help her friend?

Campbell’s attorney was droning on, and Jordan glanced again at the teacher. Much as he disliked what the man had done, what he stood for, Jordan had to admit

there was something likable about the guy. Besides that, something about Campbell's eyes looked familiar. Where had he seen eyes like that before?

Another image filled Jordan's mind, and he flinched as he remembered. Long, long ago...the eyes had belonged to a man he'd trusted...a man he'd loved like a father...a man who'd lied to him.

Jordan brought himself back to the present and made a mental note to stay in tune with the proceedings. This was no time to be drifting back to the hardest days of his life. Back when people's prayers had been for him...back when his mother—

"And so, Your Honor, we'd like you to consider the spirit of the law in this case." Campbell's attorney actually sounded as though he meant it. "The defendant was not leading his class in prayer, nor was he teaching on prayer in the classroom. Rather he was doing what comes naturally for someone of his religion. He was praying with a student who looked as if she needed prayer." The counsel shuffled his notes into a different order and cast a last glance at the judge. "Thank you, Your Honor."

Without missing a beat the judge slid back her chair and leaned into the microphone. "There will be a ten-minute break while I evaluate the information. After that time I will return with my decision." She rapped her gavel on the desk and left through a door behind her chair.

Joshua caught himself watching Campbell's attorneys, how they whispered to their client and shook their heads, their eyes narrow and dark. Jordan looked back at the file on the table in front of him. Why was he so drawn to Campbell, anyway? The man deserved to lose his job; indeed, whatever punishment the court might decide would not be enough to undo the damage done to that student. She would have trusted Campbell. He was an adult—a *teacher*, no less—and clearly the girl was suffering through one of the hardest times of her life. Now she had only two choices: Buy into the faith lie or be scarred for life knowing God had failed to help her friend—and in the process probably doubting whether He even existed. Jordan knew where that went. He never wanted to go there again.

"Great job, Riley." The hand on his shoulder belonged to Peter T. Hawkins, president of Humanity Organized and United in Responsibility, better known as HOUR. The legal group ranked up there with any other civil liberties organization fighting against the religious right. Jordan had been working with HOUR for nearly six years and was considered young and brilliant, talented in a way that made his superiors salivate over the cases they might win at his hand.

"Thanks, sir." Jordan grinned. "Looks pretty good."

"Another slam dunk." Hawkins crossed his arms and smiled hard at Jordan. The senior lawyer had been a brilliant litigator in his day and now made only occasional appearances for closing arguments in the cases of his attorneys. It was considered an honor when he showed up, and he showed up often at Jordan's cases.

Hawkins shook his head. "Lady Luck was smiling on us the day we hired you, my friend. By the time you're done with this country's Jesus freaks, they'll be meeting in barns at night and prayer will be little more than a state of mind. I'm telling

you, Riley, you've got the gift. We have big things planned for you, real big."

The long ago memory of the man's face—of eyes filled with compassion, a voice lowered in prayer—came to mind again, and Jordan willed it away. This was no time to be sucked into the past, not with his career taking off before his eyes. "Right, thanks."

The judge entered the courtroom and resumed her place at the bench, rapping her gavel until the crowd quieted. Hawkins smile faded into an appropriately somber expression as he took a seat next to Jordan. "Here we go," he whispered.

"Order. I have a decision in the case of Humanity Organized and United in Responsibility versus The New York School District." The judge sifted through several pieces of paper and looked at Campbell. "This case is not about emotions, Mr. Campbell. It is not about car accidents or grieving high school students. It is about following the rules as they are spelled out." She sighed and Jordan could taste the victory at hand. "You are a state employee, paid by the state to impart education to the children of this state. The rules—as Mr. Riley pointed out—are very clear in this case: A teacher may not pray with a student because to do so would be a violation of the separation of church and state." She sat back in her chair and angled her head. "The consequences are also clearly spelled out. And since you chose to ignore them, I have no choice but to do as Mr. Riley has recommended and order the New York School District to terminate your contract immediately."

The thrill of notching another win filled Jordan's senses, but rather than revel in the victory he glanced over his shoulder at Campbell. The man lowered his head for the briefest moment—and Jordan had the disconcerting feeling that the disappointment was a mere speed bump on whatever private journey Campbell was a part of. Then Campbell looked up and smiled at the judge, his eyes still full of that strangely disquieting peace.

*Doesn't he get it? No one'll hire him now.* Jordan wanted to shake the man, make him renounce the faith that had gotten him into this mess in the first place. Instead Campbell looked surer of himself than ever.

It was often the way his opponents looked in defeat, and that baffled Jordan beyond understanding.

The proceedings were over and Hawkins was pumping his hand, patting him on the arm and telling him he was a god among men. Even as he did so, a handful of local reporters circled around Jordan hungry for quotes and sound bites. He paid no attention to any of it. His eyes were glued on Campbell, watching as the man stood and shook the hands of his two attorneys. That done, he moved toward the spectator section of the courtroom and embraced a pretty woman whose eyes were filled with unshed tears. Campbell placed his hand alongside the woman's face and stroked her cheek with his thumb, his face lowered close to hers. Whatever he was saying to her, she smiled and nodded in response, circling her arms around his neck and holding him tight.

*Seems like a nice couple...*

They stayed together longer than any standard hug, and Jordan felt a knot form deep in his gut. They were praying. Anger worked its way into his bloodstream, quickening his heart and turning his stomach. Here, in the aftermath of what had to be the greatest blow of their lives, they were praying. Talking to the same God who had let them down and asking...for what? Another job to replace the one Campbell had just lost? Money to fall from the sky? What possible good could it do to pray now, when praying had already cost him everything?

"Mr. Riley...Mr. Riley..." Jordan faced the reporters with an easy smile he knew would make the next day's *New York Times*. Hawkins had told him from the beginning that image was everything and Jordan prided himself on doing his part to keep the firm in a good light. "Mr. Riley, what message do you think this sends to teachers across the state?"

Jordan opened his mouth to answer and for an instant caught a peripheral view of Campbell and the woman walking out of the courtroom, their arms around each other. *I refuse to feel bad*. He faced the cameras squarely. "This case sends a message to every instructor in America: We will not allow teachers to use a public classroom to impose religion on innocent children."

The questions went on for thirty minutes, long after Hawkins winked at him and left through the double doors. When it was over, Jordan loaded a stack of papers into his briefcase and made his way to the parking lot and his shiny, white Lexus. It was quarter after four and he had a date that night with Ashley Janes. Beautiful, plastic-coated Ashley, the well-known model he'd met at a corporate dinner the year before. She was a welcome distraction, but too caught up in the jet-set crowd and her own popularity for anything long-term.

"You're fun, Jordan," Ashley had told him after they'd gone out a few times. "Just as good-looking on my arm as I am on yours."

At the time her words had felt like a slap in the face and he'd regretted his attraction to her. But since then he'd come to understand what she meant. Their looks were just one of the aspects they enjoyed about each other, and since neither of them was looking for a commitment, their relationship was ideal.

Jordan tossed his briefcase in the backseat and headed toward his apartment in the heart of the city, where a forest of dirty buildings made up the landscape and the hum and screech of traffic was constant. Jordan wouldn't have it any other way. The distractions of city life kept him from thinking about the ghosts of his past—ghosts he'd spent a lifetime outrunning.

He smiled to himself. After Monday he'd have one less memory to run from.

He'd already shared his thoughts with Hawkins, and again more recently at a general meeting with the firm's three partners and twenty-one attorneys. To a man the group was excited about Jordan's plan, and why not? Suing a conservative little town such as Bethany, Pennsylvania, over something that should have been taken care of decades ago was right up their alley. Since it was Jordan's idea, he was given the go-ahead to spend a few days in Bethany, where he would file the suit, then round up