

# LOVE'S STORIES

"For He knows the secrets of the heart." Psalm 44:21

## *He Knows*

Baby and I were living in Merced in that lovely big house and so broke. But the most wonderful thing in the world was just being her Mama. I was adopted. She was my first real blood relative, so our relationship was a quiet, everyday miracle.

Being related to someone. Belonging to someone. Someone belonging with me. To fit.

Daycare was not an option for me. I was happy to do with lots less than have to leave her and go away every day. I was blessed with two different jobs where Chloe was welcome with me at the office: one throughout my pregnancy and her birth until she was about 18 months old. The second job started almost a year later and there were some challenges in between, but not a day apart.

These 'challenges' were how God taught me to align my priorities correctly. Let go of the wanting and honor what's important. He grew my faith so that I, in turn, could properly raise His child in the faith. (check out Genesis 18:19) You can set your face like a flint only when you've seen God rescue you personally.



So, one beautiful autumn afternoon, I laid the baby down for her nap and noticed how her legs shot out from her little play suit. Oh, my goodness, her ankle-length pant legs barely made it to her knees! When had *this* happened?

A sense of sadness and hopelessness crept in—I couldn't turn on the heat and I didn't have bigger, warmer clothes for her.



But I believed then, and I believe now, that God gave her to me to raise, and not to have someone else raise. At her age, I believed she needed me more than the niceties I wanted to provide.

I walked back out to the living room and had a chat with my "Husband". Hosea 2:16

"Say, Lord, have you seen how much your baby has grown? My, she needs all new clothes again." That was the end of it and the end of thinking about it. The next morning there were four large, brown paper bags on our side porch filled with beautiful, wonderful new clothes. All in the correct sizes for her right then and to grow into that winter and through the next spring, summer, and autumn. Everything she needed for the entire year.

## Your Heavenly Father knows

Matthew 6:32

### *Sweet Baby Roses*

Oh, what a beautiful spring day in Merced! Lovely and clear and not one of the too's, the only kind of weather in this central valley of California: too hot, too cold, too wet, too dry.

This wasn't the easiest of times in my life so a good, sunny day did miracles for me! A prisoner of hope.

A beautiful baby and a runaway husband. Heartbroken mixed with miraculous provision of a nice home and a place to work where my nursing child was welcome, a part of the team. Like every mom on earth, I was maxed and taxed out in every way. *Good-ness!*

Somehow things held together and every day, *happened*.

Being bright and beautiful and blossoming, I'm sure the day was fragrant all around. Sure of it! My eyesight needed correction at age seven, my hearing was and is excellent, and I have absolutely no sense of smell – *nada*. So, I imagined the fragrance of that heavenly day.

What do you do on such a perfect day? *You scrub your already clean kitchen floor!* When Chloe was born, I moved the TV into the closet so that TV wouldn't shape her world view and, therefore, scrubbing a perfect floor on a perfect day was a no-brainer for entertainment.

I opened the front door to invite in the gorgeous glow. The baby dozed in the sunlight and I proceeded to the task: how welcome is an unwelcome task when your heart is breaking.



Intending to eradicate any possibility of left-over germs or particulate, with straight ammonia I proceeded to strip away everything with an impressive scrub brush and brand clean towels.

Hot on the trail of a speck and the sun suddenly darkened. I turned to see the eclipse and there he was. Chloe's daddy filled the doorway and in every sense was brighter than the sun to me. Tall, very, very handsome, *there he was!*

"Oh my God, get the baby outta here!" he yelled as he scooped the baby up in his arms, taking her outside.

"God! What are you thinking? That's ammonia, the fumes are . . ."

If I had been secretly excited about his sudden visit catching me being virtuous and diligent . . .

If I watched him being loving and protective of our baby,

If I knew those instincts were in him, I only wished he felt so strongly about me, his wife.

Seeing him cradle his child I knew I was right about him: dear, loving, faithful. Which said very clearly that I am not worthy of being loved or faithfulness.

I also recognized my error and whooshed away the cleaning supplies, waiting for him to hug me, too. I knew that goodness, *goodness and compassion!* were in him. So, I stood at the ready for his embrace. My faithfulness and godly virtue discovered.

He spoke with Chloe in such sweet words! Such tenderness and compassion! And I hid my grubby floor-scrubbing fingernails hoping to be good enough.

When the fumes in the room cleared out, he plopped the baby back into her place. And he left.

And then the lovely sunlight didn't matter at all.

I moved between nursing and reading the Word, the Word was the only safe place in my life. I didn't know how to pray, how to pray *big* prayers. I only knew to feed His sheep, Chloe, (owwwwch), and feed on His Word and just hold on.

Although it wasn't yet too hot in Merced day after day, it was hot. So, I packed up the baby to seek shelter from the heat at Alpha Beta, a huge grocery market nearby – with *frigid* air conditioning! Oh, yay!



A wounded spirit – who can bear it? Not me, not so much. Oh, how won-der-ful to walk into the blast of cool and begin to look busy shopping for as long as possible, up and down each aisle with careful inspection of every can of beans, every package of pasta, every . . . anything to while away some time, to stall, in the coolness.

First, the perimeter beginning at the vegetables and fruit. Examining each kind of fruit, vegetable, is a very lengthy process which only a really devoted homemaker would endure. Honestly, I don't think I fooled anyone.

Right in the middle of the fruit and vegetable sections, on the left wall, a small, easily overlooked glass display case which was the "flower department". Inside, a couple of small vases, not vah-ses, vases of flowers: daisies, button mums, baby roses, baby's breath. I continued, I had apples to inspect.

Then, the meat counters – as tho I could afford meat!

And then the fragrance, the intense, sweet fragrance of roses and sugar. Overwhelming fragrance, sweet and roses.

I wheeled the "shopping" cart around to find the source of such an incredible fragrance great enough for even me to smell. Back to the modest, completely enclosed case "flower department". I opened its door expecting to be overcome by the sweet and roses.

Nothing.

Gosh, that's strange.

Meat department, roses, sugar?

And I thought, 'Jesus?', I mean, it was fleeting thought and I *pushed* on thinking 'that is so weird'.

And thinking 'get over it, it's nothing!'

How, how many times does God reach down and speak to you and you push on by Him filling your cart with other things?

Well, when rolling through the market without making a purchase endangered my 'cover', and my post-pregnant feet were shot, it was time to go home.

Oh yeah, did I mention that this was my birthday? What a difficult, inescapable time it was.

My neighbor, Dallas, came over to try to get me out for a walk in the mall.

"Dallas, I know he's going to call me or come by to wish me a happy birthday, maybe he'll bring me some flowers, some roses, I *know* he will and I would never want to disappoint him."

Dallas didn't comment on my hopes, she just said she'd wait a bit more and come by to collect us to go walk in the mall:

*"Walking is the perfect low impact exercise... especially surrounded by the beauty of nature. But, when our valley weather gets too hot, too cold, too wet, too hot, or just too yucky, COME WALK AT MERCED MALL... starting 8:00 am Monday-Saturday ~ 9:00 am Sunday."*

See, the 'too's' weather!

About seven o'clock, I acquiesced and went with Dallas to walk through the mall of things out of my reach to cool down again.



Dallas is such a great friend, wise and so loving. We strolled up and down and up and down and there he was: Chloe's daddy. Walking right by us with popcorn in his hand as if we were invisible. We didn't exist for him.

O, Dear Father! Surely, *surely* bearing his child gave me some worth. Some acceptance. Dallas watched my face as my heart froze.

“Come on, honey, let’s go home. Let’s go home now.”

So as the punishment of the sun began to subside and my baby needing nursing, I set in to endure another unendurable night.

We settled in, Jaws and I, to nurture and feed His lamb, and opened the Bible.

With no air and no fans, the heat was oppressive, leaden.

Then suddenly, wind blew across the heavy drapes making them flutter ferociously and with the Wind, an incredible aroma of roses and sugar. Then the Wind stopped and the fragrance remained – oh, the sweet smell of roses and sugar! How on earth did those heavy drapes move without any air? I got up and inspected but there was absolutely nothing to inspect.

And then I slept.

Beautiful clear sunlight woke me up. Hunger woke Chloe and we nursed as the sun rose to rule.

Still the dutiful, virtuous woman, I had the laundry prepared and took the basket up the walkway to the laundry room while the sun was still rising and the air was still crisp, motionless.

And suddenly an overwhelming perfume of roses, sweet baby roses.

I carried the laundry into the laundry room and raced back to find the source of the sweetness. In the middle of the pathway was a planting of three straggly rosebushes, mostly bare, with four tiny wimpy dried out rosebuds doing their best. I sniffed each of the buds, as tho I could smell them, and nothing.

I reasoned: maybe their fragrance lay there, collecting and intensifying, until the sun released their aroma just as a breeze had blown towards me. But there was no aroma and there was no breeze.

“Jesus, is this You? It *is* You, isn’t it! Jesus, thank You for the roses for my birthday. How Sweet of You!”



# "I am the Rose of Sharon"

Song of Solomon 2:1

## *SHE KNEW HIM*

It was one of those "what was I thinking" deals where I just started out on some adventure automatically, PreProgrammed. Here's a hallmark description: it's something you'd never see yourself doing yet it feels like the most ordinary thing in the world to do. Hint: don't watch yourself do it, watch Him and *just do it*.

So here we were: a Mom-now-almost-again-single and her just-turned-two-year-old daughter walking in to explore a desolate, downtown hotel. Downtown, downtrodden. From the outside it looked like a four-story cement box in the middle of asphalt. One small sign, no trees, no nothing. Inside, absolutely just plain walls. Clever how someone had carried the same barren theme from the outside to the inside: The El Capitan Hotel.

Some kind of green stayed on the hotel walls and large checkerboard linoleum defined the lobby floor but it didn't come off as institutional. Should have, but it didn't.

There was an elevator. Opposite there was a wide, carpeted, grimy dark green stairway. I chose the stairs.

I tiptoed, Chloe swung along dangling from my arm mid-air, her legs trying to climb but not reaching the stairs. I could make better time this way and it was kind of creepy exploring. Intruding, actually. I peeked around at the first floor: dim, dank, moldy, filthy, sad. *Perfect!*

I'd gotten some strange notion to go love the people that lived there. I didn't know who they were but The Project He told me was very clear: *once a week make the best dinner you can for ten people and deliver it to them for one year*. That's all there was to it.

So, I wasn't trespassing, I was doing reconnaissance to see if I could get inside, and I could. And I got out even faster.



I may have been an almost-single Mom but I had a good job, one that even allowed me to take my daughter with me to work so money wasn't a problem. As The Project began, I had a great time shopping, chopping, cooking. Baked chicken, smashed potatoes, homemade gravy, homemade biscuits, gorgeous salad, and I forget the dessert. Some green vegetable, too. I turned it into an all-day Saturday project and it brought me so much happiness.

Our rented home had been handed to us fully furnished including dinnerware and fine dinnerware settings, every imaginable cooking utensil and a complete array of enormous, covered serving platters and vessels, linens and more linens. Who knew we'd love using these! Anything I needed I already had. What seemed useless for a single mom and baby were suddenly perfect. How much fun is this?

Then came the moment of truth: taking huge platters of hot food, cold food down to this nasty old hotel and do what?

Never mind, I was on AutoPilot so I knew I was right on time. So was he: Rufus Grissette. As we approached the entrance, he approached from the opposite corner saying "Here, can I help you with that?" as he opened the door for us. Ah, my *partner*! I thanked him and we introduced ourselves and I asked him if he knew the people who lived at The El Cap.

"Yes, I live here, I've lived here for twelve years and I know most of the people here." He was such an attractive, well-dressed, well-spoken man, sort of Baptist-polite. And totally unsuspecting.

So, I outlined The Project to my pigeon, *partner*, and asked Rufus, (seeing that he knew the folks and their needs), if he could see that the food got to the right folks. I could have asked him to do *anything* and he would have certainly said yes and tried to do it. He's that kind of good. We swapped telephone numbers, got the rest of the food out of the car and settled on Sunday afternoons at 2 o'clock weekly. We were in business.

Things went along smoothly for four weeks and it made my weekends wonderful! Then... an unpleasant request at work to juggle the books and I had to resign, suddenly I was un-em-ploy-ed.

"What were you *thinking*? I mean, it's one thing to do this out of spare change but it's another to do this out of un-em-ploy-ment!" After only one month down the road of twelve and this nasty turn. I just couldn't figure it out.

"Well, OK, I can afford to do it *this week*", I said as I plopped my daughter in her car seat the next Saturday to go shopping. But now I was thinking 'This is not the least bit natural, This Project, it's *weird*. And what about stewardship, huh?! *Hmmmmph*.



I walked into the store. Chicken on sale 19 cents a pound. "Nahhhhhh. Yes, it is. For goodness sake, I can feed them *and us* at *this* price!" Cake mix on sale. Frosting on sale. Salad on sale. Unbelievable."

And now This Project sweetened the whole week, not just the weekends. It became my unemployed job giving meaning and encouragement to me. It saved my life.

Rufus invited me to come visit there, whether out of obligation or real interest I wouldn't guess. It was decided that we, 'together', would host a fellowship group. I went to meet the manager of the El Cap, a Mr. Henry Bhaktha, and asked him if he had any empty rooms. He said 'yes', and the next thing he knew, he had graciously given me a key to one room to use for our fellowship group. AutoPilot.

I made up an invitation and went door-to-door with my little girl down the dark green corridors. What gall! It seemed perfectly normal then.

Let me introduce you to some of our friends.

First door on the first floor there's Johnny West. His door is usually open but it's hard to find him in his room because he sits up on top of things like bookstands, bed frames, windowsills. He jumps from one place to another being a chimpanzee, piercing shrieks come out of his room, out of *him*. Sometimes he's Spiderman. "Wahoowahoowahoo", shrieks coming out - it's chimpanzee time right now. Then he stretches his arms and legs and crawls horizontally on the wall about five feet above the floor - now he's Spiderman. I have no idea what he was really doing but that's how it looked and sounded.



And all the time he's watching me watch him. I passed, evidently, because he didn't attack me. Rufus said that was a good sign. I invited Johnny West, he kept shrieking, I just kept smiling and thanked him as we backed slowly out the door. *Neeeeext*.

Kevin. We loved Kevin, an older man, very friendly. As most of the residents, Kevin was a parolee. Very pleasant man, eager to please and a career child molester. He never missed a chance to get together. Great guy.

More about Rufus: I was right about the Baptist part. What a beautiful tenor voice he had and he knew all the lyrics. He had retired from working at the college library after

long, faithful service. His room was Navy-tidy, as was everything about him, because he was also retired from the navy. So why was he living here?

The speed of cockroaches never ceased to amaze me. That, and the fact that they can go in any direction including right across the ceiling over your head and never fall. I hoped.

I think they were there in Rufus' room out of curiosity because there was not a crumb out of place. I guess they didn't hurt anything but they made the green look like it was *moving* on the walls.

Back to Rufus. He was smiling as he asked me a sudden question but I could see his heart was deeply troubled: "Do you have to be baptized to get into heaven?"

Instantly I saw an image which is the answer, "No!" And The Holy Spirit explained that the thief on the cross didn't have the time to get down off the cross and be baptized, and Jesus promised him "Today you shall be with me in paradise." It is never about our works, never. It is about our faith in the perfect works that Jesus Christ did for us. We cannot add to it, ever. "For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourself: it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

"For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk therein." Ephesians 2:8-10.

All those good things, those nice things we're so pleased with ourselves for doing, these things are the works of God in us and not of us. Through us, yes. **By Him.** Or of our pridefulness thinking we can be our own God, make our own way, and some way be good enough. Never.

Lincoln. Lincoln touched my heart. Among all the folks, Lincoln moved me most. He never came to fellowship but he was always kind when I called on him at his room. Sitting in his straight-backed, wooden chair right in the center of his room, no books, no TV, just sitting there. Never inebriated, just maintaining as he sat with that bottle on the floor next to him. Always lovely to visit, a great gentleman. What moved me so much? Such a quality person, a wonderful man, sitting and sitting and sitting. What was he seeing? I loved him so dearly.

Malachi, who pronounced his name Muh-LA-chee. Always wearing his black, wide-brimmed hat, his hassidic wringlets hanging long over his beard and his black suit, yarmulke and all covered by a long, black coat and his tallit. He was really prepared to meet his G\_D, even in Merced's 104f degree heat.

Malachi was most particular, and his favorite meal was homemade chicken soup with matzo balls, completely kosher. I studied kashr vegetables, separate? Hmmmmmm.

We took Malachi out on errands and fun trips, too. He was very special to us. Turned out he was Irish and not Jewish. We gave him special honor.

Now Robert.

When I first knocked on his door it opened but it took awhile to realize that I was seeing someone stand there in the doorway looking at me. It was pitch black in his room, not a single light on. He was wearing jeans and no shirt and an enormous tattooed spider crawled over his entire chest. Way too much time on their hands in prison. He had impeccably trimmed, dark brown hair and the four or five days growth on his face matched. I recall absolutely nothing of the conversation. Detective Byrd, homicide, gave me his rundown later. Apparently Robert had a thing for women with young children and felt very protective until something went plink!, and then he had a penchant for shooting them through the chest with a sawed off shotgun. Then he'd disappear, usually as a carnie with a travelling show.

Robert didn't show up for fellowship evenings but he *did* accept my invitation to join us for Easter dinner at my house just before he left town with the traveling carnival and I felt it went fairly well. He was so *tickled* to be included.



Detective Byrd frequently parked in an unmarked car and slouched down while he watched me come and go to El Cap or watched my home. So, I started baking cookies for him, oatmeal, chocolate chip, raisin. He loved it! Then I delivered him a bag of the cookie ingredients, minus the eggs, butter, sugar, chocolate - without all the good stuff. And the note read "These cookies are kind of like life without God: all the roughage without the fun."

And Angelina. An-he-li' na. One of the very few women at the El Cap. A long narrow room on the corner. She cordially opened the door praying in a language I didn't know. I mean, she prayed and she prayed and I stood there and prayed with her. Nonstop in The Holy Spirit. What was she doing here? What was her story? I never had the chance to know. She loved the food, she enjoyed the Thought. How did she end up here?

We ran into Angelina at the supermarket once and she seemed almost 'normal' in that setting of neatly organized nearly organic vegetables. Cordial as always. She took hold of my arm to tell me about the dream she'd had the night before: "I saw you and Chloe at a hotel that was on fire, it wasn't the El Cap. People were screaming and going down in the flames and you were covered with soot, running in and out getting people out of the hotel. And Chloe just walked through the fire dressed in white, taking peoples' hands and leading them out and the flames never touched her." I *love* Angelina.

So, we were an odd assortment of people all of whom God had made, all of whom God loves. Child molesters and tenors and people who just didn't know how to tell me 'No!', standing in an empty hotel room, holding hands, singing "God, You're so good, You're

so good to me." Some people brought chairs from their rooms. They treated us like royalty, they were so good to us. Chloe was like a companion pet to them and she loved them.

I like the theatre-of-life approach to learning, so during all this, my child and I fasted together for 24 hours so she'd learn those lessons: hunger, going without, not understanding why. With characteristic oxy-*moron*-ism, I decided to reward us by breaking our fast with McDonalds. Eyes shocked with starvation and fries still intact, her little hands clutched the white paper bag on the way home and she spots Kevin and someone else standing outside the El Cap Hotel at the bus stop. "Kevin! Oh, Mama look, it's Kevin! Those are *our men*, Mama, *stop, sto-o-o-o-o-o-p!* Mama, let's give them our McDonalds, they're probably hungry, too." *She loved them.*

The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. I talked her out of it and kept driving, I was way too hungry and tired. What's *that* express? Being a single mom.

We were in the final quarter of God's one-year gift to us. It was late November and we'd never missed a Sunday except for that stint in LA at the murder trial and the Northridge Earthquake. Thanksgiving, of course, isn't on a Sunday but my heart was aching because I wanted to share Thanksgiving with our family at the El Cap. After months on unemployment, things were more than thin. I was tapped out and very, very sad.

For some reason Chloe and I were sitting together on the kitchen floor. We had one chicken leg without the thigh and one-half a potato for dinner. Neither of us was thrilled about the dinner that we were about to receive. Being ashamed of my thanklessness, I scolded my daughter instead.

"Chloe! You know what we do when we don't know what to do. We pray!" so we scrambled over to the kitchen table in the breakfast nook. It was our place to meet G\_D.

We held hands across the formica tabletop and prayed "Father, we don't have a thing left to pawn or a thing left to sell. If this whole thing has just been my idea and not You, I'm really sorry. But if this was You, then this is a great time to say so, because we need a miracle. I know this sounds big, but if this was Your Project, would You please say so by giving us the money to make Thanksgiving dinner for the guys at the El Cap? In Jesus Na-"

"And pizza. I want pizza, too.  
Amen" squealed Chloe. "Pizza!"

"Chloe!" I mean, it's one thing to ask for spiritual stuff for others, but for fun for just yourself? I know you can't really expect a two-year-old to know any better but still, it scared me that she'd have that attitude praying. Gee, kid, talk about *humility*! Just jump up on God's lap and demand some pizza, why don'tcha?

She wouldn't back down. She knew Him.

I brought the chicken leg without the thigh and the half a potato over to the table and prayed very deliberately:  
"Thank you, Father God, for this wonderful dinner and for your great love towards-" and the phone rang.



It was Susan, a dental software salesman whom I'd met over the summer. I was consulting for a friend, finding some dental software for his practice, and Susan had come to our house to demo her product line. We lived in a lovely, impressive home, incidentally.



Chloe's Daddy dropped by during Susan's visit just as though he lived with us and we were happily married. We were still married, not happily, and he didn't live with us. But Susan didn't need to know. All she knew was appearances: I was a pampered, carefree wife and mother.

Shortly after Susan's demo she unraveled her soul and begged me to pray for her, for her live-in lover, for her outcast baby brother. We covered a lot of ground together with God that day and she left shining with new hope. I remember thinking "Gosh, girlie, don't get your hopes up *too* high, you gotta lot of problems..." There are times I feel like a charlatan after praying for huge things. This girl had major issues woven across her life and she wasn't exactly 'trying to do better'.

"Hello?"

"Joy, this is Susan. I met you last summer and I just had to call you and tell you that everything, *everything* you prayed for me has happened." As though I had anything at all to do with that, but she'd just been reminding me who she was. She continued "I'm on my way home right now, just north of Modesto going to Sacramento, but I just couldn't wait to tell you. Hey, do you mind if I drive back down there and tell you in person?"

She pulled up much less than an hour later which is way too fast and totally Susan. I was so broke that I'd seldom turned on the heat, the lights. We'd bathe once a week because it was too cold. But the house was almost warm by the time Susan arrived and every light was turned on and delightfully cheerful. In she came, all hugs and nonstop talking. I loved her like a daughter. I knew who she was.

Honestly, I don't remember all of her reports but I do remember that God had more than done the miraculous. He's not a genie, but He loves to show himself 'powerful on behalf of those who hearts are blameless' and for me, too. *And for you.*

Susan suddenly *almost* paused: "Hey, I don't know why, but I just feel like I need to tell you this. I got paid today and the first thing I always do is tithe. It's the first check I write out. But today, driving, I just felt - I know this sounds too weird - I just felt like God was telling me to take His tithe and give it to someone to use to buy Thanksgiving dinner. I don't know anyone. Do you? I know you're involved in all sort of things" (Yeah, like survival).

"Can I leave this with you, and can you use it to buy Thanksgiving dinner for the needy?" as she wrote out her check for \$134.00. *That's a lotta turkey.*

"Hey, look, have you guys had dinner? I'm starved! Let's go out for pizza, my treat. Mountain Mike's. It's *delicious*, let's go."

I was stunned with my mouth hanging wide open fixing that 'Mother's Stare' at my daughter to say: "DO YOU UNDERSTAND THAT THIS IS A BONAFIDE MIRACLE?"

She was already headed toward the door pulling on Susan's hand. *She knew Him.*



"It is your Father's good pleasure to give  
you . . ." Luke 12:32



## *HOME*

Although the murder trial ended in a mistrial with a hung jury, I was relieved that we had 'completed' the assignment and were home again.

Sleeping in our own comfy beds, enjoying bathrooms and running water. And a comforting distance from Los Angeles and the Northridge earthquake of 1994. That very Sunday we resumed our ministry of delivering homey Sunday dinners to the men at the El Cap and we were so glad to see our friends again and enjoy this Gift.



We enjoyed cooking in a real kitchen, too. The folks at the El Cap were glad to see us.

I didn't regale them with memories of earthquakes, these gentlemen and the one lady had daily tremors of their own and we were there *for them*. Spring was gentle and bright, everything felt gentle and bright in the aftermath of fires and earthquakes.

I discovered a hummingbird nest, mother hummingbird and her eggs right in the center of the ceiling on our side porch. The hibiscus framed the porch with their lovely scent. All was well again in our world.

We didn't visit very much with Sis at her place. I think we were all satisfied with the space after living together through such difficult circumstances. Sis's best friend, Gladys, our landlady, was coming to town to see her beloved home – *our* home. For Gladys' visit, Chloe's daddy decided to paint the house – a huge undertaking. I was thankful and thrilled at his offer.

Very, very carefully I instructed the painters on only one thing: carefully cover the hummingbird nest with a cone of paper. Do not touch the nest or disturb it and be in and out of that area in a couple hours. "Not a problem!" It was only the side porch ceiling. I'm happy to say that they were good for their word, so much so that Chloe and I watched mama humming return to her nest in the late afternoon, then coming and going through the protective paper cone.

Early the next morning, the painting crew returned - with *new* workers. Moving from section to section of the house, they cleaned up yesterday's area: ripped down the protective paper cone, ripped down the nest, ripped down most of the hibiscus. I was *devastated*. I kept it to myself because I didn't want to upset the crew and run them off the job. Not a shred of the nest remained and no sign of mama hummingbird. Chloe cried and cried and wouldn't be comforted.

There was nothing more to be done.

So, I knelt down on the porch, held her and prayed: "Father, You are Lord of the wind and the waves. You are Lord of all. You care about all that You have created and are loving towards all You have made (Psalm 145:16). Please, Father, bring back mama hummingbird and help her build a nest to have her baby."

Every day we watched for her return. I watched for her to bring more twigs and rebuild. And I watched the disappointment in my daughter's eyes as it appeared that the Lord did nothing. Appeared. We walk by faith and not by sight, but I was walking by what I saw, He did absolutely *nothing*.



One day the front porch was painted and clean, the porchswing back in its place. For a change, I hoped we'd forget about the hummingbird

and sit on the front porch to swing. We snuggled and watched the bit of traffic passing by. Then we saw the world's biggest, loudest bumble bee fly drunkenly in front of us. And then we saw it land, *in the hummingbird nest over our head*. Not a bumble bee but a very tiny baby hummingbird learning to fly. Mama watched us watch her baby fly in to the new nest, home again. God, as always, answered our prayers, and in unexpected ways.

“Call on Me, and I will show you great and mighty things you know not.” Jeremiah 33:3

## *in HAWAII*

So many needs, so many prayers thought and unspoken and yet He answered.

Chloe's daddy had moved to Hawaii and Chloe never stopped asking to go see him. Unlike the hummingbirds, he wasn't coming back.

Unasked but answered and we were suddenly there in Hawaii.



The day started from some unknown origin, shifting quickly into horizontal rain, big fat, warm drops blowing from right to left. The cloud blew on leaving a quiet, bright sunlight with a few flakes of snow. Living atop the Big Island you could ski mornings and surf afternoons. We had all four seasons in one day.



Lots of remarkable things going on quietly in that beautiful island life. Even Mt. Kilauea erupts silently, mere crackles heard down the slope miles later. But Oh! so powerful.

So here we were living in paradise and even the usual was unusual. Time was different, being rich meant many new things, family is whoever you're in proximity with, and Christmas always starts in August. Unusual but pretty cool on the Big Island mauka.

Our landlady was Dr. Angela Longo, Ph.D. UC Berkeley, founder of The Oriental College of Chinese Medicine on the Big Island. Angela is a fabulous lady and uses her exceptional intellect for healing with herbs, acupuncture,



moxibustion, diet, meditation, qi-gong, just to start the list.

Dr. Longo taught others, many others, how to practice these healing arts and even healed herself via a specific diet change. I was there, it happened. She carried the proof in a bottle of preservative to demonstrate this success. Very impressive. Yucky.

“Join Dr. Angela Longo to learn a whole new miraculous way of understanding ...” advertises her expertise and her reputation. She is to be listened to if you can keep up with her fierce rhythms. Her students in herbology and clinics working towards becoming licensed were eager but who keeps up with Dr. Longo?



Angela left nothing unexplored. Here she is dancing her way to “The one Divine Spirit pervading the universe, and the great civilizations of India, China, Japan, Indonesia, Tibet and ancient Egypt have sought . . . this eternal Spirit in their own way through . . . dance to understand a path to union with our Creative Source.”

Her one mission was to heal through any means possible, and she had many.

Dr. Longo has a great heart, we all loved her. I held her in high regard but we weren't close friends, so to speak. I was one teensy part of her universe. A small speck. Less than a particle.



So, I was surprised when she invited me to drive down the mountainside with her to visit a friend and longtime patient. Believing strongly in divine direction, my mind still raced ahead of Anyone's planning and declined the batmobile. She drove faster than she talked.



"Jonathan is a brilliant man, a good friend; he invented the solar car.

***“He's dying.***

“He has a tumor from his chin to his chest. He can't talk or eat. We've tried everything and he just gets worse. I've been trying to keep him alive, hoping that a poi mixture can slide through his throat. Everyone's tried everything and nothing has worked. He can't eat or speak. He's dying!

“I thought maybe you would go and pray.”

“Huh?”

So I ended up sitting alongside her in the ‘bat-out-of-hellmobile’ trying not to throw up as we hurtled down the serpentine road towards the Appointment. Motion sickness blossomed in the humidity and makai heat. I bumbled out of the car.

Angela led the way into Jonathan's condo, up the stairs to his room. Prayer I understood; what I encountered was beyond me.

A naked skeleton, face framed with long, stringy hair, moaned on the bed, bedsheets soaked. The sickly odor of decay was stronger than the visual death. An arm with a claw attached motioned me to vacate, but it was the smell that made me retreat.

A few moments, then Angela beckoned me back inside where Jonathan lay covered with a sheet.

I tried to look him in the eyes to avoid seeing his tumor which appeared larger than what was left of him. His eyes were vacant and clouded. He was destroyed.

“I’m going to leave you alone to pray.” And Angela *left*.

And there we were, two strangers. No possibility of conversation, no folksy “so, how ya doin?”

I took his hand and stroked his head, waiting. My nausea grew. I slipped to my knees, holding his hand.

“Father God, thank you so much for getting us together to worship today. Thank you for your love, dear Father.

“Jonathan can’t talk right now so we’re going to pray together to You. O Lord God, thank You for Jesus! We know Jesus is Lord and Savior and we believe in Him for today and forever. Thank you, Jesus, for Your salvation, for the faith You give us to give back to You. Thank You for forgiving us of all our sins, thank You for Your blood which cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

"Thank You that You have done everything for us that we could never do. Thank you for making the Way to You Father, for your gift of eternal life through Your Son, Jesus. In Jesus Name, Amen.”

Jonathan *SPOKE*. “Hallelujah! Hallelujah!”

Immediately Angela appeared, startled, in time to see her dear friend lift his arms to his Savior. His eyes brightened and he smiled weakly. Still, he would only say “Hallelujah!”

He stood up, holding the wet bedsheet over himself. Angela stared.

He motioned us to leave him, he motioned that he would dress himself, then said "Hallelujah!"

Angela and I left havng very few words on the way home. When Angela burst into the clinic, she tried to explain that Jonathan had spoken but she talked way too fast. That Jonathan had stood up. Her audience, students and teachers, had worked so long for this, and now that it had happened it was hard to believe.

Until 20 minutes later when Jonathan drove in smiling his long ago familiar, healthy smile and no tumor. He and I were still strangers so I just watched as the throng of excited healing students flocked around him.

Jonathan spoke to them effortlessly, walked around the clinic school easily. A party no less.

There's more which could be said, only one thing must be said: *Hallelujah*.

*"He who believes in Me, though  
he were dead, yet shall he live."*

John 11:26



The "Mana La" cruisin the streets of Waikiki.



The alternative energy and lifestyle vision.



Jonathan with first Sunray prototype.

"The most important thing to remember is that "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all" (1 Cor. 12:7, NKJV). Spiritual gifts are for the purpose of blessing the body of Christ, not exalting the person through whom they come." Mike Bickle



## *Healing Touch*

Hawaii is halcyon, the breezes are fragrant yet ever changing their direction, their intensity. I couldn't see the breezes but felt them and in all their moods I loved the winds. Their unpredictability mirrored most of my Hawaiian journey.

And they mirror God: you can't see Him but you can feel Him and see what He does.

The island vegetation is lush, thick, towering and tangled. Nothing overcomes this jungle on the lee of the island. But the windy side, well, it looks like a moonscape with very little growing and staying. And this is a good picture for me trying to reconcile with my previous husband, trying to reconcile, grow and stay.

The personal chaos took a toll and one day I was in such pain I could only crawl across the carpet. With no warning and no explanation for the pain, a neighbor whisked me off to the emergency room. The pain in my chest was unbearable and the morphine did little to help.

Without elaboration, after three days, a wonderful, *good looking* and compassionate doctor came by to talk. He told me about his own journey, his career and practice on the mainland before moving to Hawaii. "I decided it was time to change my life. I needed to be in a peaceful place in order to live a full, whole life. I moved here, changed a lot of how I live. It's time for you to do the same, if you welcome this as a turning point."

Halcyon, heavenly Hawaii wasn't a peaceful haven for me because storms surrounded me and the storms were inside me. I took them everywhere I went. And now I would have to treat those storms with a

couple of medications 'for the rest of my life'.

No problem, medication was the solution and I was thankful a couple pills would save me. The storms wouldn't blow my house down.

Until my company merged with headquarters and closed its offices in Kamuela, ending my insurance coverage. Before coverage expired, I refilled the prescription for an additional month. Somehow a concern piped up in my mind as the refill occurred before the insurance ended but a day inside a calendar month. Meaning that while the pharmacy had no problem at the time, the charges might be refused down the road. The concern didn't dissipate, so I returned the medication unopened.

I was scared to death. In three days' time, I'd run out and the pain would bury me. Doing the right thing didn't compensate for this reality. Fear made the days fly and guaranteed a greater catastrophe.

Angela, Dr. Longo, suddenly rushed in and asked me to help her get the kids to the doctor. She had a gaggle of eight youngsters gathered, all of whom needed medical attention, *gratis*. "The healer only comes here occasionally, so there's always a long, long wait. He's down at the shopping center. I need a hand."

Gotta say, last thing on earth I wanted to do! Heavy, heavy winds and rain made it quite unappealing. This 'healing doctor' rented a small space in an unremarkable strip mall.



One by one visitors would disappear behind a door. Forever, it took forever. Then the last of our children had been seen and we were the only ones still there and it was time to go home. And out came a very compelling man, saying "Who here still needs to be seen?"

Angela said we'd all been seen, and thank you.

"No, there is someone still here who needs to be seen. They are here to help someone and not for themselves. Who could this be?" And Papa Awai's gaze settled on me. "Come in, it's you."



Meet Papa Henry Awae, Master Healer.

In I went.

Well, I knew I had something going on, but what did *he* know? He motioned me to sit down, and so I did without saying a word. He disappeared behind me and began feeling my head. And he really felt around, he, too, not saying a word. I was terrified of being touched by this stranger.

Next he came back around and knelt in front of me. It went from terrifying to terrifying and weird as he took off my flip flops and began feeling my tootsies. When he got up, he moved another wooden, straight-backed chair next to mine, facing me. He picked up my left hand and held it in his two. Oh gosh, total terror, what is he doing....

Papa Awae, Master Healer, continued to hold my hand and then started stroking my forearm, too. "Relax! Relax!" he said and he shook my arm up and down. "Relax! I won't hurt you, just relax!"

What a ridiculous suggestion!



Nevertheless, I tried to be unstiff as Papa Henry stroked my forearm. Can't say that I recall beginning to relax or feel anything at all. Everything that I remember I'm including here, and it's not much.

"OK, your ailment is not in your chest. You don't have this problem anymore. Stay away from anything in the nightshade family, Angela can teach you about this. You are fine, you go."

I emerged back into the waiting room and walked straight out the door. In the torrential rain, I walked about 50 yards and started laughing.

Laughter, great big belly laughter in the rain. Unstoppable rejoicing. I felt nearly drunk and just laughed and laughed and laughed.

Then came the revelation: God had just touched me.

All the fear and anxiety was gone and a lovely, golden warmth clothed me. I saw a picture of Jesus reaching out, "and He touched him and immediately the man was made whole." It might have looked like a man, but inside *this* man was Jesus.

Yes, the Master Healer, Papa Henry Auwae and Jesus were good friends. When he was very young, Christian missionaries arrived and introduced the Two of Them.

He touched me and I was made whole in mysterious ways.

<http://archives.starbulletin.com/2001/01/04/news/story12.html>

"And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." Revelation 22:2

## Into Africa

All her life I've said to Chloe "Haven't you wondered why God has done all these miracles in front of you? Haven't you ever wondered what God's doing?"

"Or what He wants to do through you, and that He's getting you ready? Not everybody gets to see miracles happen, you know."

I never considered that God was actually doing things within *my* life, within *my* eyesight, for an extraordinary purpose. A not-natural, supernatural purpose. Because I don't feel 'worthy', I always think He's doing things 'through' me for someone else....

I can reckon that God in His graciousness uses me because He used Balaam's donkey

to talk sense into Balaam. I'm comfortable being compared to a donkey.

But the miracle of being precious *to God*, "of great value and worth", and I fall down with eyes wide open.

If you try to reverse-engineer your history, you can't. You can't rewind the tape of your life in view of your present. Only the loving hands of God can make something miraculous out of little, daily-life things and big, life-changing things. Something beautiful from a pile of ashes.

Looking back, the loving male arms that held baby Chloe while I got ready for work were: black. Mark Anthony Love, Merced, California. He was a new-release parolee and he lived with us when she was 10 months old because the shelter was full and God called my bluff. Baby's big blue eyes connected with Mark's big brown eyes and it evidently took.

The man who taught her to walk was: black. Lemuel Dantzler, Jr., Merced, California. He used to walk by our house when I'd be out tending the garden with Chloe (fishing for people on the sidewalk) and we three became friends. When he was off his medication, just holding Chloe's hand would calm him and the three of us walked up and down our sidewalk.

The man who taught her to throw a ball was: black. Ramon RayRay Strong, Merced, California. He walked by our house one day and when I said "God bless you" RayRay and the Lord had a meeting right there and then. After receiving the Lord, I told him to receive the Holy Spirit. RayRay put his hands up in the air and prayed in the Spirit so loudly, so fluently, that just for a moment I suspected a con. But it was the Lord God Holy Spirit.

RayRay saw a streetwalker bopping down the other side of the street and called out to her "Hey, girl! Come on over here, I just met Jesus!" Standing there on the sidewalk, she received the Lord, received the Holy Spirit and went on her way, *astonished*. *Astonishing!* RayRay stayed with us awhile and he was a big hit.

And then there was Adam. We were in a season when God asked us to take in parolees with no "clean living" place to live and there were seven: five black, one Hispanic and one Caucasian. The Hispanic, Gabriel, to this day I believe was an angel.

The only one who gave us trouble was Eric, caucasian. I called Papa Finn, our pastor, and told him "Come get him!"

I really don't know anyone after the flesh, so it hadn't occurred to me that the men in her young life were black ~ it wasn't an issue. Still isn't.

So, when one day she asked me "Mama, black people are superior, aren't they?" I could-not-talk. 'Superiority' is anathema, but try explaining *that* to your toddler while wondering where she came up with the word 'superior'. Or the concept!

But I bookmarked it, just like 'and Mary hid these things in her heart.'

Where *did* she get that notion?

Focus on the Family's Dr. James Dobson advises: "Ask your children, 'what do you want to be when you grow up?' " Dobson says watch for their leading from the Lord. So, I asked not-yet-three-years-old Chloe:

"Chloe, what do you want to be when you grow up?"

"I'm going to Africa."

"Oh, that's wonderful. And what do you want to *be* when you grow up?"

"I going to Africa." Just as I, she was confusing being with doing.

"Great. And what are you going to do?"

"Go to Africa."

I may have laughed this off, "Chlo-o-oe, you don't even know what you're saying!," but that would have sounded a lot like my dad talking to me when I was a little girl and the Holy Spirit spoke through me and I told my parents I will go to Africa. So, I asked, "Where *is* Africa?"

She wasn't being silly - she knew what she knew. And she knew Who she knew, because both times when she had what I thought was a weird idea it had then actually happened. Which is one of the ways you know it's Him, He tells you beforehand and then He does it.

Soon thereafter, Chloe started lobbying for a chocolate baby brother.

She wanted an infant child of African descent joining our family. I gently tried to explain why I couldn't just have a baby out of nowhere, or anywhere. Her daddy is white, he is gone, I am single. For a couple days she waged her campaign for her chocolate baby brother.

Then my pastor called and asked if I could go get and take in an abused young woman in a dangerous situation, and her infant baby, Nathaniel – quickly while the dad was out of the house. We immediately drove over while her boyfriend was out and picked her up - and her *chocolate* baby son. We were soon back home, Chloe happily cuddling her new chocolate baby brother. Good thing she didn't know how to say 'I told you so!'



He tells you beforehand and then He does it. You kind of get used to it.

Sometimes a long way beforehand. You can't make things happen in reverse, *or at all*. God calls things which are not as though they are.

I'm beginning to see it: He started this Africa notion before her, *He started the notion in me*.

When I was a little girl, I wanted with my whole heart to be a missionary to Africa. I could see it. I was there. My folks despised the notion because I would always be 'poor'.

When I was about 16, I took off from our church to visit another: Maranatha Church of God.

For the first time I saw black Christians and, apparently *they knew their God* ~ they were *excited about Him*. Outside of myself and the stars, I'd never seen someone excited about God. I felt like I'd just come home, a quiet little white girl amongst fervent black worshippers and I was right at home.

And so many times in my life, God's been black when He shows up in human beings. I've seen Him, His Presence, the Holy Spirit living through people who happen to be black.

And I remember myself as the little girl who wanted nothing but to go to Africa to be a missionary. Should it surprise me to still be striving with everything I have to get into Africa?

## "For I Know The Plans I Have For You"

Jeremiah 29:11

In loving memory of Reverend Ernest S. Hassell  
Dedicated to Ama, Daniel, Seidu and Kamusime, my Beloved  
African Friends

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Ernest S. Hassell gave his first sermon in 1914.