

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **THE BARBER SHOP**

It was a rainy Monday morning in Flagstaff, Arizona. I was sitting in a chair on the front porch, watching the drops fall all around me. I was patiently hoping for a break in the weather so I could walk to the shopping center at the top of the hill. While waiting, I pondered the changes about rearranging my world into a landscape I would no longer recognize.

I had waited until the last minute, as was my usual style, but I was hoping to get a haircut before my graduation night. I really didn't know if I was ready for all the upheaval that was heading my way. It was marching directly toward me. However, ready to knock me over, ready or not, I would be off to college in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in just a few short months.

My mind was heavy with thoughts about the conversations between me and my foster parents this past weekend. I was still shocked that they told me I would have to move out when I turned 18 in July. This really hurt me because I thought they cared about me. It seemed to them I was just another government check each month, and when the checks stopped, I would have to go. It was going to be a huge challenge, but somehow, I would have to make it through on my own in the months ahead.

The rain finally stopped. I peered at the dark clouds and tried hard to determine if the clouds would hold their heavy burden long enough for me to walk to the shopping center. Ten Minutes passed, and there was still no rain. I decided to try my luck and head up the hill. I was almost at the top when it started pouring. I began to run the rest of the way. I was dripping wet and out of breath when I finally made it to the barbershop. What a week I was having!

The door was open, and only the barber was inside.  
As I walked through the door, he turned and looked at me.  
The tag on his coat simply said, "Jah'camo."

"Can I help you?" he asked.

"Yes," I said.

"Do you have time to cut my hair today?"

"Certainly," he gestured toward the empty barber chair.

"Please take a seat, and I will be with you in a minute." He smiled knowingly and handed me a towel. I immediately began to dry off.

I had a seat in the enormous chair and waited for him to come over and cut my hair. By the time Jah'camo returned 20 to 30 minutes later, I was almost dry. He put the strip on my neck and draped me in the cape. Jah'camo asked, "What kind of cut do you want?"

"Just a basic haircut for graduation," I mumbled.

“You look like a man with a lot on your mind,” Jah’camo observed as he expertly lifted a bit of my hair with the comb and started to cut. How could he possibly know about all the worried thoughts in my head? I sat there confounded.

When I didn’t respond, Jah’camo tried a different approach, “Do you have a girlfriend?” This was a direct question that required me to answer. I told him that I just broke up with Nancy, my high school sweetheart of 4 years.

“Why?” He asked. He didn’t look at me. He continued to concentrate on snipping layer after layer. I told him about college in Louisiana and that Nancy was moving to Alaska. Alaska is the kind of distance that would certainly damper any relationship. Besides, we had slowly grown apart over the past year, and it was time to move on.

At that point, I was a flowing fountain of words. I couldn’t stop. I proceeded to tell Jah’camo all about my foster parents. I told him how I felt betrayed by them. I

confessed that once I left Arizona, I would not be coming back. When I finished talking, Jah'camo continued to cut my hair, and for a few moments, there was silence. Then, the conversation took an unexpected twist.

“Steve, do you believe in God?” I had been in the barber chair for several minutes now, but I did not remember telling Jah'camo my name. After several seconds of silent thought, I responded, “Maybe.”

Jah'camo then repeated, “Steve, do you believe in God?” Again, I hesitated.

After another moment's thought, I replied weakly, “most likely.”

The Barber then said in a very firm voice, “It is a simple yes or no question. Do you believe in God?”

By then, I was getting a little frustrated. I quickly answered, “Yes!” I was feeling uncomfortable and wanted to move on quickly.

Jah'camo, however, was just getting started. His eyes showed his interest. "Have you ever prayed about the situation with your foster parents?"

"Yes, a few times," I replied dully.

"Have you ever considered this move could be God's answer to your prayers?" My only response was silence, and this apparently induced Jah'camo to tactfully switch the subject, a change for which I was grateful. No one had ever spoken to me so directly of spiritual things, at least not a stranger. Who was this guy? Finally, the haircut was over, and the barber took off the cape and thanked me for coming. I took my last twenty dollars out of my pocket and started to hand it to him for payment. Jah'camo shook his head from side to side and refused the bill. "You need this more than I do." I thanked him, carefully folding the bill and putting it back in my pocket. As I opened the door to leave the barbershop, I wondered if he somehow knew

that was my last 20 dollars. The rain stopped as I left the awning shelter to start my walk home. What a strange day!

The sun dipped behind Humphreys Peak as I walked home. My foster parents were in the living room when I got home. With almost no words exchanged, we ate supper. Soon after, I got ready for bed. It was late Monday night, and I awoke from a dream, soaking wet from fear. Since the accident nine years ago when I lost both of my parents in the car crash, I've been able to remember all my dreams. I took a very hard hit to the head and was in a medically induced coma for a few days in the hospital, but eventually, I made a full recovery. I was the only survivor of the accident. Since then, my dreams have been just like reality. I still cannot decide if being able to remember all my dreams is a gift or a curse.

This dream was very strange. It started with me moving into a rental house in Flagstaff after high school graduation. I was unpacking a mound of boxes when the

doorbell rang. I went to the front door, and three construction workers stood there. They asked me if I would like to pay them to remove all the rubble in the backyard where the garage had fallen. I told them to go ahead and start hauling it all off, and I would pay them when they finished.

A few hours later, one of the construction workers came to the sliding glass door at the back of the house and handed me a dirty, smashed camcorder. He told me that he found it in the rubble and insisted that it was mine. I thanked him, took the camcorder, and cleaned it up. I hooked it up to the television, which was sitting on a box against the wall in the living room. I could not believe it still worked, so I pulled up a chair and started to watch the tape that was inside. It started on the daily national news channel. They were covering a massive 9.3 earthquake on the Arizona and Nevada border. It cracked the Hoover Dam and caused great damage to several cities. The cracked dam had



flooded two states: Arizona and Nevada. All the airports in the entire area were closed. McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas, Pullian Airport in Flagstaff, and Phoenix Sky Harbor had all taken big hits. Many people were dead.

The news covered all the aftershocks that occurred for weeks after the big quake, some as strong as 8.0. There were also stories about the hardship people endured after the earthquake. Children lost fathers and mothers, parents lost children, husbands lost wives, homes were destroyed, water supplies were undrinkable, and people were hurt and frightened. The coverage was very troubling, and the details of what people were going through were sad and hard to imagine.

Finally, the screen went static, and the dream ended. I awoke drenched in sweat and feeling terrified. After several minutes, I realized it was just a dream. I thanked God that it did not really happen, but I could not go back to

sleep that night. Finally, the sun came up. I was never so thankful for a night to end.

The next Monday, a few days after graduation, I decided to go back to the barber shop at the shopping center on the top of the hill. When I arrived there, strangely, it was closed. I was determined to thank Jah'camo for his good advice about prayer and how God answers prayers, so I vowed to return the following day. On Tuesday morning, I hurried again through the wet grass up the hill to the barbershop. It was finally open and full of people, but I didn't see Jah'camo. When I walked through the door, the oldest of the three barbers turned and asked me, "Can I help you?"

"I'm looking for Jah'camo, the other barber who works here," I replied hopefully.

"There is no Jah'camo working here," he stated with a raised, questioning brow. I explained how I'd come last Monday and how Jah'camo had cut my hair. I told him how

I just wanted to thank Jah'camo for the advice he'd given me. The barber gave me a very strange look before explaining that he had been working at the barber shop for over 30 years. The barber shop had never been open on a Monday. Furthermore, he said there had never been a barber by the name of Jah'camo in the 30 years he'd worked here. I thanked him and left the barber shop.

Was I going crazy? Was the barber shop just another of my realistic dreams? On the walk home, I felt my hair to make sure I'd gotten it cut last week. It was definitely shorter than before. For days, I wondered about Jah'camo. I also wondered about the horrible earthquake dream I'd had the night I met Jah'camo. Was there any connection? I knew one thing for sure: It had really happened because my hair was definitely cut. I felt my newly cut strands again and was awash with relief that this strange week was finally over.