

One Last Stain

Bre Jour

Pastor Terrell Miller stood outside Mt. Calvary Baptist Church, early Sunday morning. Wearing an all white suit, he looked almost like an angel from the distance. He stood still and quiet, trying to settle his thoughts about how to deliver his message this morning. Julia, he knew would be there, but he was not too sure about his wife and children, especially the way things went the night before. He waited there until the sun rose just above the cross steeple before he walked in to set up for the first service of the morning.

The praise team, consisting of a twelve-person choir, ministered “The Presence of the Lord,” in royal blue robes. The people clapped their hands and joined in the worship with tambourines and the stomping of their feet. After they had settled, Pastor Miller approached the altar. He stood at the pulpit, tightening his hands on the sides of the podium. Looking out to his congregation, he took in a great breath as he began the Sunday sermon.

“Good morning church.”

“Good morning Pastor.”

“This morning I would like to begin by acknowledging our visitors,” he glanced over the church and noticed Julia sat to his left right up front. She winked at him. Looking away Pastor Miller continued, “The deacons and deaconesses for their continuous prayer and service to our church as well as my beautiful family, my wife, the First Lady Ms. Angie, my two daughters Lisa and Megan, and of course my son James.” They sat on the right side of the church in the first pew. His wife did not return the acknowledgement. Her face was stern and she refused his eye contact. Their conversation the night before did not

go as smoothly as he had planned. When he came home, there was no dinner waiting for him. Angie was sitting in their reading room in the dark.

“Hi, sweetheart, is everything okay?” Terrell approached her cautiously not knowing what to expect. She remained silent and unmoving in the leather armchair behind the mahogany desk.

“I got a phone call today. Sister Julia.” He had gotten the same call today also. He spent the afternoon trying to convince Julia that she should not go public with the affair, that he would handle it. She thought she would get more from the relationship than what she was getting. She made it clear that she was not happy getting the shorter end of the stick, his stick to be exact.

“Oh, really? What about? I know she wanted to help with the next fundraising event.” Still playing it cool, he laid his briefcase down and sat across from his wife, loosening his tie as he sat. “Where are the kids, it’s only seven thirty, pretty early for them to be asleep.”

Angie turned the desk lamp on. He could see her eyes were swollen and red. The shadows in the room gave her a sickly look. Terrell turned his eyes to some papers scattered about the usually kempt desk.

“What are those? I thought you took care of the bills yesterday.”

“These are not the bills.”

“Okay. So, what happened to dinner, did you guys eat out? I’m really hungry-” He started towards the door, not wanting to comment on her appearance.

“Terrell.”

“Yeah honey.”

“Julia said that you had some important information to disclose with me.”

“I’m not too sure what she was talking about, did she mention anything?”

“She mentioned a lot actually. Do you want to tell me your side? Matter of fact, I have your side right here on paper. See, Julia took the liberty of forwarding your emails, and text messages from the past two months. The children are at my mother’s; we’ll be staying there for a while. We came too far and it took too long for us to get where we are now to still be putting up with this mess. You need to do what you have to, to fix this. Didn’t you learn your lesson the last time? I’m leaving Terrell. I’ve prayed about this, invested ten years in you, and still nothing has changed. I can’t be strong for you any more, I’ve got to take care of my kids and myself.” With tears raining down her cheeks, she got up from where she sat, leaving the

documents which included receipts and pictures on the desk. She stepped out of the house without a sound and without turning back.

“Wait! Angie, please, wait!” Terrell ran towards her. He grabbed her arm and pulled her back.

“What the hell are you doing? Let me go! Terrell, go and get your self some help. You are the Pastor of a church for God’s sake. And look at what you are doing? You’ve destroyed us! Let me GO!”

“No! Listen to me Angie, just listen. She’s lying. Since she came to the church, she has been trying to take me down. She is manipulative and conniving. I love you baby. Please don’t go. We can work through this. We’ve got to pray together. Sweetheart, come on. Don’t leave me right now. I need you. Get the kids and come back home. We can fix it; this is the last time, honey I promise.” Angie looked at him. He was on his knees now, begging her.

“If only you would beg God for that same mercy, and the strength to have avoided that woman when she came here,” with that she got into the car he bought her CLS500 and drove off.

Closing his eyes, the Pastor spoke.

“Let us bow our heads in prayer. Father we come before you today with joy in our hearts and praise on our lips. We thank you Lord, for giving us this day that you have made, that we may rejoice and be glad in it. Lord God, I ask you to invoke your Holy Spirit within us this morning oh Lord. Prepare our minds and our hearts to hear your Word and acknowledge your presence. Father God, as we come together in prayer, I ask that you may decrease my flesh and increase your spirit in me oh Lord. Channel through me the message you have prepared for your people. I thank you for them and for this church Lord God, and I thank you for the message and the Word. Let the church say Amen, Amen, Amen.”

“Amen, Hallelujah,” Pastor Miller could distinctly hear Julia’s voice rising above the others.

“This morning’s service will focus on Holiness. What is holiness according to God? How can we achieve and maintain it in our everyday lives? At the ripe age of 53, I do not want to claim that I am the perfect example, for we all sin and fall short of the glory of God.” Miller took another look in Julia’s direction. Today she was wearing a light blue skirt suit. Not exactly fitting for church, the skirt was about six inches too short and the vest pushed her breasts close together causing them to peak out at the opening. Her legs, her breasts, her lips, pink lipstick set on two full curving lips.

“Open your bibles to Psalms 93:5, it reads “Your testimonies are fully confirmed; Holiness befits Your house, O LORD, forevermore.” If we believe that the Lord God dwells within us, and our bodies is his temple, then our body is His house. We must take heed in keeping His house clean and holy. Qodesh is the Hebrew word for holy. That is to be clean, and to be clean one must be sanctified and purified. We cannot just claim to be holy. We show our holiness to the Lord through pure worship. Our Lord God is holy and clean. We must strive to be holy in all things, our actions and our words, and thoughts. *Julia Ward*. Qodesh is a holy place and sacred thing. Our bodies represent the temple of God. Therefore, we should maintain our temples as Qodesh.”

“Lord knows that’s right,” again Julia’s voice carried over the congregations and into Pastor Miller’s ear. Her voice once had him on his knees worshipping her. Now, he fought the urge to gag in the middle of his sermon.

“Repeat after me church- Qodesh.”

“Qodesh.”

“Now, Qodesh.”

“Qodesh.”

“And lastly, Qodash.”

“Qodash.”

“This means to be sanctified, sainthood, consecrated, set apart and treated as a holy being.

Church, this is our purpose. First Thessalonians says that ‘For God did not call us to be impure but to live a holy life.’ Praise God! I don’t think you hear me. I wish I had one

person in here who could hear me. Hallelujah Jesus! I said we are called to live a HOLY

life, Lord God. But the devil is here and, in this house, trying to break up this ministry

and the plans that God has for his house. Oh Lord God, Help me Jesus! Can I get a

witness?” The church people rose to their feet shouting and praising, clapping and

jumping. Pastor Miller turned around in circles hopping up and down the altar. The

organ player bounced in his seat as he attacked the keys in melodious praise. In all the

excitement of the moment, Angie sat rigid. Pastor Miller caught notice of this and

returned to his position at the podium. He raised his hands to settle the church once more.

I’m ready now Lord. I know what I have to do. Peace be upon this house.

“I chose this topic this Sunday because the devil is in this house. We have to take it back

and restore it to its natural order. He has sent demons upon the head of this church to

destroy us from the very core of what holds us together. Pastor Miller fastened his eyes

on his wife, pleading for forgiveness. “The bible says that we ALL sin and fall short of

the Glory of God. I myself am not exempt. Over the years I have had many battles with

alcohol, drugs and sexual addiction. Most of which I have overcome with the power of

the Holy Spirit and support of my family. Yet, there was and still is one that has held on

to me and I have failed at containing. You see, Satan knows where we are weak and

where we are strong. He may leave us for a moment, but he will always return at the right moment, stronger in an attempt to completely destroy the men and women of God.”

There was a lot of murmuring in the church now. The people did not understand what was happening. Angie changed her disposition in an attempt to hide a flow of tears, she held her children closer to her. Julia sat upright and stared hard into the Pastor’s face, who still denied her any eye contact. Pastor Miller directed his eyes to his wife.

“I am an addict. My addiction is not of any substance, but of a fleshly desire to couple with women who are not my wife.”

“This is ridiculous!” A church member cried out from the audience. More voices proclaimed similar thoughts. The panel of deacons whispered softly to themselves, but kept their composure since the onset of Pastor Miller’s outbreak.

Pastor Miller continued. “You see, this has been my battle for over ten years. I believe it began in my college years as a phase that I would outgrow. Yet, even after I got married, had my children, and became the man that stands before you this morning as ‘Pastor Miller,’ I have struggled to subdue my urges. I prayed about it, but never got past my pride to ask for professional help. The final straw was last night. My wife of eleven years left our home for the first time. She humbled me. I thank God for her every day, and the thought of losing you Angie, is not something I am prepared to deal with. For the past two months I have engaged in a sexual relationship with Julia Ward.” By this time, members including a few deacons began to leave. Julia stood up and attempted to gain access to the pulpit. She lunged forward and two ushers were there to restrain her.

“You bastard! You said that you loved me and that none of this mattered. It would be you and me together. That you would leave that slut! I hate you, I hate you! I hope you rot in hell you dirty piece of-”

“ENOUGH!” Deacon Brown now stood up. Julia was hysterical now, shouting and fighting. He whispered in Pastor Miller’s ear.

“Do you think this is the right thing to do, right now, today?”

“Yes, the time is now.”

“It would have benefited us if we knew of your issues beforehand.”

“This was not even my own plans, so please-” Just as he said this, Angie was making her way out of the church. She weaved through the crowd of disgruntled and confused people with her children following right behind her.

“Angela! Don’t walk out on me again.”

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The phone rang several times before anyone answered.

“Hello, Mrs. Jackson. Hi, it’s Terrell. Is Angie there? Ok. Did you give her my messages from earlier? Ok. Well thank you. Bye.” It has been three days since the church incident. Terrell hasn’t heard from Angie since then. The kids called and spoke to him, but not her. His phone rang. Picking it up on the first ring, he answered expecting Angie to be on the other end.

“Hello, Angie?”

“Uh no. It’s Julia.”

“Oh God. What the Hell do you want? You’ve ruined my life thank you.” He hung up the phone.

It rang again. “Hello,” Terrell increasingly agitated now.

“Look, I just wanted to say I’m sorry. I am seeking forgiveness also. I just wanted you to realize that you had a good thing going and that you would have to pay for your actions. I hope everything works out for you.” And just like that she hung up the phone.

“Oh my God, my God, why?” His phone rang again. This time it was Deacon Brown.

“Hello?”

“Pastor Miller.”

“Yes Deacon.”

“The Board has made its decision.”

“Ok. I’m ready.”

“We have decided to make effective immediately your suspension. You will be ordered to mandatory counseling, and your reinstatement will be voted upon, at the end of a two-year period. Hello? Eh, Terrell, are you still there?”

“Ehem, eh yes, Deacon. I’m here. Thank you.”

“We will be in contact, son, don’t give up hope. Goodbye.”

“Bye.” Everything was lost. Terrell sat down at his desk in his empty home, defeated.

He held his face in his hands and for the first time in ten years, he cried.