

From
Broken
To
Beautiful

Written by Caleb Leavitt

Illustrated by Jacob Leavitt

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Dedication

Jesus Died For You

Jesus died on a wooden cross,

To save us from our loss.

He saved us from our sins,

So we can live with Him.

When He defeated death, hell, and the grave,

He made the Devil our slave.

Then he rose again,

So we don't have to sin.

Jesus loves us all,

So don't feel small.

All the hairs on your head are numbered,

And you are remembered.

Give your life to him,

So you can be born again.

This book is dedicated to my Lord and Christ, Jesus.

You always help me find my way back to You.

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Special Forces Personnel File:

Joshua James Adkins



Born: March 3, 1995

Birthplace: Philadelphia

Parents: Deceased

Siblings: none

Height: 6'

Weight: 210

Hair color: Brown

Eye color: Hazel

Education:

University of Florida graduate;

enlisted in Special Forces

immediately after graduation

Religious preference: ?

Prologue

As the dark storm draws steadily closer to the city of Philadelphia, a muddy white van that can hardly be called white anymore, rolls slowly through a row of nice, big, elegant houses. The van stops in front of an especially big and fancy house.

“That’s where we will be staying as a guest tomorrow night,” the driver announces to the rest of the men in a thick German accent. As he looks around at his crew, he feels quiet satisfaction. With this crew of men, who include Hector Ivanov and Luther Smirnov (members of the Russian Mafia), Ron Conley and Erin Motest (ex-CIA agents), Kevin Tarn and Garret Johnson (ex-M16 agents), Chang Lee (a master of seven martial arts) and Robert Keyes (an excellent sniper), he knows that tomorrow’s heist and kidnapping will go down without a hitch. He slowly drives away and smiles to himself with grim satisfaction.

It had to work. Otherwise, he would lose his job tomorrow.

Possibly his life.

Chapter One

More Than One Surprise

Sixty- seven miles outside of Philadelphia, a young man was sleeping peacefully. Suddenly, like the crack of a whip, a tree branch smacked against the window beside his head as a storm blew in. Josh, the young man, was jolted from his exhausted sleep to full wakefulness. He lay there a few seconds listening and he began to think, *what woke me up?* Then a long, loud blast of thunder sounded throughout the entire house, seemingly shaking the mortar below his bed. His face quickly lost some of its color and he felt a quiver of fear run through him. He had been afraid of storms ever since his parents died on a dark and stormy night when he was only 10 years old. Their car had been run off the road and both of them had died that night. Josh himself had barely survived the crash or the ache in his heart afterwards. He was still scared to drive in the rain. Just as he was thinking, *great, I have to bring my cousin to the airport in three hours, what am I going to do?* there was a break in the thunder and rain for a few seconds. The thunder was replaced by the *squirt, squirt* of wet shoes walking on the tile outside his door. Josh rolled off his full size mattress and landed softly on his plush, teal Jacksonville Jaguar rug that lay on the ground next to his bed. He crept silently to his bedroom door and just as the intruder started to turn the doorknob, Josh ripped open the door. In a split second, Josh took in two things: the intruder was a man and he was big.

The man tried to grab Josh but he was able to duck under the man's hand and lash out with his own hand into the man's stomach. The man doubled over and Josh quickly grabbed him, forcing him to the ground. Suddenly the man cried out, "Stop! Josh! It's Mr. Cornelius!"

Josh finally let go as he recognized the name of his “uncle”, the man that had taken care of him for a year of his life.

“Uncle Cornelius! How’re you doing?”

“Fine, fine. I see that you’re still as quick and agile as ever. Ha ha! How are you?” Uncle Cornelius replied.

“I’m doing well. I’m not trying to be rude, but why are you here?” Josh asked.

“Well, I’m here to tell you something. It might not make any sense to you, but here it goes. Josh, your first parents weren’t really your parents at all. You were abandoned by your real mother about 21 ½ years ago. And if you think that’s something, then just wait because there’s more. Josh, your real father was the son of Arnold Swarzenager.”



Jacob '08

Chapter Two

Questions and Answers

Josh just sat there staring at his uncle for a couple of minutes. Then he said, "Yeah, yeah. Good joke, Uncle Cornelius! Why are you really here?"

"Josh, I'm telling you the truth. Everything that I told you right now was real and true."

"But how can this be possible? For my whole life, I thought that the Adkins were my parents. I look just like George Adkins!" Josh replied.

"Well, your real mother, Martha Smith, had you by accident. Everyone told her to have an abortion, but she didn't want to and decided to keep you instead."

"At least she made one good decision about me," Josh muttered.

Suddenly his uncle got very angry and shouted out, "Don't you ever talk about her like that again!"

"I'm just saying what I was thinking. How did you expect me to respond when you shake up my entire life and everything that I've ever known? Did you really think that I would be happy and understanding? Well, I'm not! My whole life has just been turned upside down! I want to know why I didn't know about this sooner," Josh said.

"Your 'parents' were told not to let you know until you were at least 21. I'm sorry, Josh but I have to catch a flight to Chicago and I really need to get to the airport. I'll come and see you soon and we can talk some more then," Cornelius replied.

As Cornelius walked out of Josh's room, and seemingly out of his life, Josh felt a strange fear inside and lurched to his feet. He had always had a kind of sixth sense about danger and now it was like an alarm going off.

“Stop Uncle!” Josh yelled a split second before the window beside his Uncle exploded.



Chapter Three

Home is for Homicide

Cornelius was thrown sideways into an oak desk in the hallway. Josh grabbed his Browning pistol and ran to the shattered window, where he saw a dark blue Cadillac pulling away. He lifted the gun and shot twice. The first bullet shot out the back window. The second bullet hit the shooter that was in the car, making him fly out of the shattered back window. Josh immediately turned back to his Uncle.

The bullet had hit Cornelius in the side. It looked like it went through his right lung because Cornelius' breathing was heavy and irregular. Every exhaled breath sent blood-spattered spittle onto his lips. Josh quickly called 911 and then went to get a first aid kit. He explained the situation to the dispatcher, who said that the ambulance would be there in a few minutes, if not sooner. Josh got off the phone and tried to stop the bleeding in his uncle's side. Cornelius' eyes flickered open and he moved his mouth to say something.

Cornelius gasped weakly, "Josh, look up information...on your parents... and look for them...they may still be alive...your father...was in Michigan....the last time he wrote me....find him...he still loves you....a lot."

Cornelius breathed his last breath and his chest heaved once, and then lay still. Josh hadn't cried since he was ten years old, but now one tear escaped and fell on his uncle's chest. When the paramedics arrived five minutes later, they found Josh still huddled over his uncle's corpse. Josh went outside to check on the shooter from the car and found him dead also. He checked for identification and found a wallet with a driver's license. The name read Tavaris Williams. The young man was black and 5'11", 190 pounds and only 19 years old.

“He’s only slightly younger than me. Man, he’s dead already. That could be me. It seems like everyone related to me either gives me up or dies,” Josh stated wryly.

“Sir,” an officer walked up to him and said, “We need a full report from you on this homicide.”

Josh slowly turned and nodded. As a special agent himself, he knew how critical and necessary it was to interview witnesses of crimes. As he made his way towards the house, he saw his Cousin Charlotte coming towards him. She was crying hysterically and rushed to him, asking over and over again, “Why?!Why?!Why?!”

Josh didn’t answer her because he didn’t know the answer to that himself, although he had a pretty good idea that it had something to do with a recent case. Instead he said, “Go get your bags ready, we have to go to the airport in a couple of hours.”

“Alright. I’ll see you soon,” Charlotte replied as she moved off down the hallway to her bedroom. She spent a lot of her time at his house because her mom was a drug addict and not home much. She had to use care because they were still working the crime scene and the body and blood was still in the hallway.

Josh went into the living room to answer the questions about the killing. He answered every question truthfully and the best he could. About halfway through the questioning, Charlotte came in and sat down next to Josh. He comforted her and wrapped an arm around her. About an hour after the questioning, the police and paramedics left with the bodies.

Josh and Charlotte ate a quick breakfast, careful to avoid the blood and crime scene. Then the two traveled out of the house, driving to the airport in Josh’s Mustang. All the way there Josh

was thinking hard on the information that he had just learned about his parents. He dropped off his cousin at the airport. After a tearful good-bye, she went to catch her flight.

Josh drove home alone, not sure what he was supposed to do now.



Uncle!!!
NO!!!

Jacob '08

chapter 3

pg. 15

home is for homeoside



Chapter Four

Almost a Murder

As Josh pulled into his driveway and climbed out of his car, he could hear his dogs expectant barking in anticipation of their early morning meal. He had three dogs: a golden retriever named Bella, a Rottweiler named Raxy, and a pit-bull named Psycho.

He walked up to the door with a grim face and attitude. As he turned the doorknob, he suddenly realized, *I locked my front door before I left, but it's unlocked now.* Josh threw himself to the right at the same time that his door exploded outward. The force of the blast sent him flying back ten feet. He landed hard and felt the breath *whoosh* out of his lungs. He quickly recovered and rolled to his feet, diving behind a row of bushes just as a stream of bullets rained down out of the house towards him.

He pulled out his 9 millimeter pistol and shot off a round, taking out two or three of the guys. The gunshots stopped coming and everything stood still. Josh laid there catching his breath and tried to think of what he should do next. He slowly raised his head above the line of bushes and a shot rang out. A twig beside Josh's head exploded and he quickly ducked down again. He crept along the edge of the line of bushes, and then readied himself to make a dash for the house. Dirt flew up at his feet as he ran towards the hole where his front door used to be with all the speed he could gather. He dove inside and came up fighting. Five guys ran towards him, while one stayed by the window. The first man tried to dropkick Josh, but was stunned when Josh instead grabbed his foot and flipped him into two other guys, knocking all of them off their feet. He lashed out with an uppercut straight into one of the attackers jaw, knocking him out cold. One of them was

at least 6'5" and looked to be 350 pounds of solid muscle. Josh simply stepped aside as the man tried to bulrush him. The man rushed right by him into the old oak wardrobe in the guest room.

Josh shot out his foot in a roundhouse kick into the last assailant's chest, knocking the breath out of him. Then he punched him in the jaw. Josh called the police and the FBI and then watched over the men until they arrived.

"You seem to be famous this morning, Josh!" one of the policemen joked.

"Well," Josh stated to the officer, "I was recently involved in a case in which a man named Army 'Rock' Wetsner was killed. His gang has been after me for a few days now. I was almost run over two days ago and now all this today. Tavaris Williams was involved in his gang and I believe these men were too. I believe that with all them either arrested or dead, it's finally over."

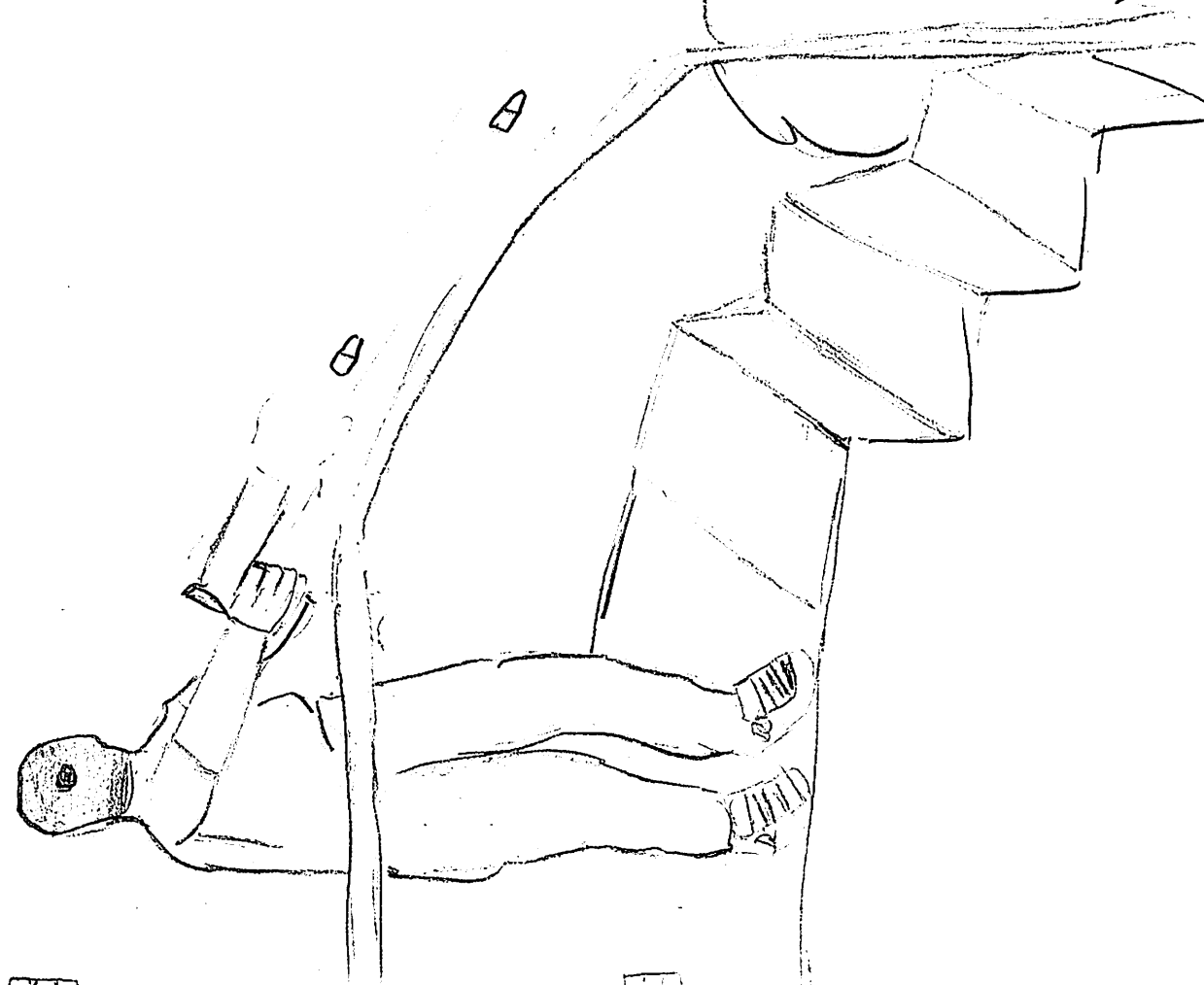
"I hope so, Josh," the policeman replied.

Josh's dogs began to bark again. They had been silent since the explosion. Josh went through his side gate and into his shed. He grabbed a bucket of Pedigree dog food and a pail of water. He walked over to where the dogs had a fenced in area of land about half an acre big. He undid the latch and brought the food and water into the area where he filled all three of their dishes. When they were done eating and drinking, he played fetch with them. He called some repair men and they came to install a door and new windows. The forensics team checked the bullets and body of the assailants, but found nothing special or unordinary about them. Then the team cleaned up the crime scene.

He went inside and answered the police's questions for the second time that morning. The cops left, but the FBI stayed to ask specific questions. Once again, he answered them all

truthfully and to the best of his knowledge. The FBI looked for any clues to help them wrap this case up and then they left. Josh had never felt so empty and broken in all of his life.

WILSON



STAIRS

eh4

Almöstam. W. J. R.

Chapter Five

Memories

After all of the excitement was over and the FBI left, Josh cleaned the blood off the ground in his hallway. He then sat down at his dining room table and thought about the good times he had experienced with his Uncle Cornelius. There were many memories that came to his mind, but there was one in particular that stood out in his mind. He could remember it as if it had happened yesterday. As his mind went back he smiled, something his stoic face didn't do much.

Josh jerked awake to the sound of screaming and realized he himself was the screamer. He closed his eyes as the familiar sights and sounds of the nightmare came rushing back into his mind's eye. His uncle walked into the room and sat silently on his bed.

"Another nightmare?" He asked the sixteen year old boy. Josh nodded miserably.

"Don't worry, they will go away in time," his uncle consoled him gently.

"I don't know, Uncle. I've had them for six years now and they keep coming in more and more gruesome detail of that night. I don't know if I can take it anymore!"

"Josh, you have to! Your parents would have wanted you to go on in life and not wait on them," Cornelius stated wisely. "Listen, maybe we can play some games on the XBOX 360 to keep your mind off your parents and the nightmares."

"Alright Uncle, let's go. I call Eagles on Madden '11."

"Sure. I got Jacksonville like always."

Josh and his uncle played Madden '11 well into the night and talked about many things like politics, death, and Jesus. Josh had just recently accepted Jesus as Savior and still had many questions.

When Josh finally went to bed in the red recliner at 4 o'clock in the morning, he did so with a smile on his face. His Uncle pulled a blanket out of the hall closet and draped it over Josh's lanky form, then went to bed himself.

Josh's cell phone jolted him from his remembrance of his uncle. He quickly grabbed the juke phone and answered "Agent Joshua Adkins" when he saw that it was his boss in the Special Forces.

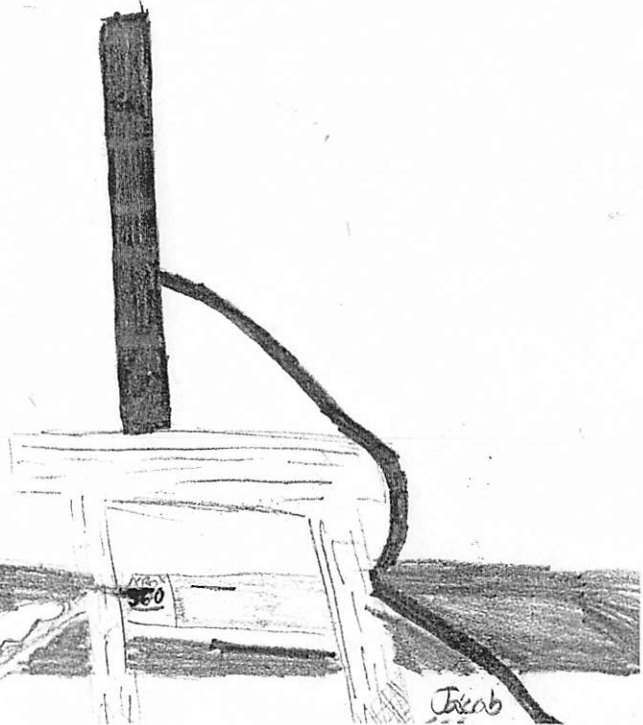
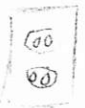
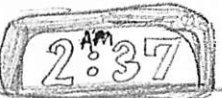
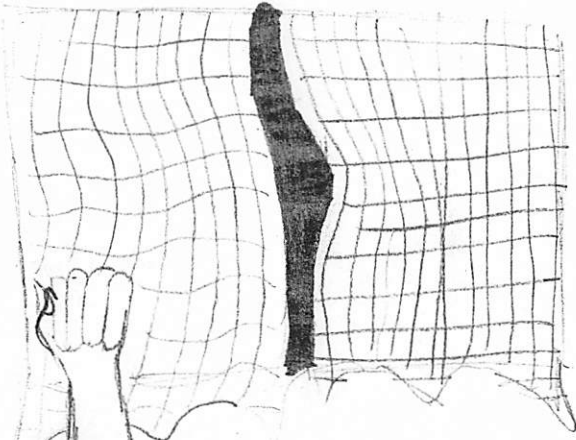
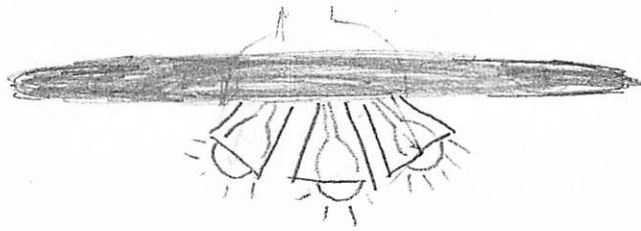
"Hello, Joshua. I need to meet with you and your team at Olive Garden in one hour. You have your next case tonight at the Myser Mansion."

"What's the case, sir? If I may ask."

"I'll tell you at the restaurant."

"Yes, sir. I'll see you there."

He hung up and changed into a sports jacket and nice jeans. Then he headed out the door to Olive Garden in his 2024 Mustang GT.



Treab

Chapter Six

Strengths and Miracles

Josh arrived at Olive Garden right on time. As he walked in, a waitress walked up to him and asked if he was Joshua James Adkins. He answered yes and she led him to a booth on the far side of the restaurant. There was a large group of people seated there. He recognized his boss and the other six members of his Special Forces team. The other people he did not know and had never seen before.

“Hello, how are you, Josh?” his boss, Mr. Johnson, asked.

“Not too good,” Josh answered. “My uncle was murdered this morning.”

“I’m so sorry, Josh. I didn’t know. When did it happen and how?”

Josh explained what had happened to his uncle early that morning. He also told his boss that he was confident that both incidents were related to the recent case involving the ‘Rock’ and that it was finally over with the arrest or death of all of the members of the gang. His boss expressed heartfelt apologies and spoke comforting words. Josh sat down and the waitress came to get their orders from them. Josh was introduced to Nicole and Walter, who were owners of a mansion and had been receiving threats and warnings to not hold a party they were planning. One threat even said that if they did host the party, someone would die.

“Why would any one care if they had a party?” Josh asked.

“The party is being held in protest against companies that are polluting the world. I guess some people don’t like that,” Nicole replied.

“And let me guess...our job as Special Forces is to protect you and your dad,” Josh stated.

“The people at the party will need to be protected also, Josh,” Mr. Johnson chided.

“So what will our positions be?” Josh questioned.

“We will intermingle with the crowd and if we see anything suspicious, report it and watch that person, or persons, carefully,” the leader of the team, Aron, announced in his quiet, yet authoritative, voice.

“Alright. Enough talk. Let’s eat,” said Matt, another member of the team, as the waitress appeared with the food. They all tore into the food and when they had finished, made small talk. Later, Josh left to make arrangements for his uncle’s funeral. When he had left, Nicole said quietly, “He’s a strong man to go through what he went through today and not shed a single tear.”

“Yes, he is strong, but he’s also unsettled like he never has any peace inside. After his parents’ death and living in foster homes for five years, it’s like he’s made of impenetrable steel. Not just on the outside physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. He’s built a wall up around him that separates him from everyone, including God. At one time in his life, he knew God’s love and salvation, but he has allowed the events in his life to harden his heart. As a matter of fact, he believes God couldn’t possibly love him anymore because of all that he’s been through,” Mr. Johnson said softly and sadly.

“That’s so sad!” Nicole replied.

“Yes, it is. But he has to make his own decision and follow Christ for himself. Something that I think he will never do unless a miracle happens.”



Jacbo '08

Chapter Seven

A Halloween to Remember

Meanwhile, Josh had traveled to the local morgue to make the funeral arrangements. The whole cost would be several thousand dollars for the headstone, burial, coffin and funeral service. Josh took care of the bill and then went to the library to look up information on the mansion where Nicole and her father lived.

As he studied the blueprints that he had found, something clicked in his head.

He said loudly, "I know this house!"

"Shh! Sir, be quiet please!" the librarian who had been helping him find materials on the house said in a hushed tone.

"I'm sorry, Maam, but I know this house. When I was there, it was condemned and haunted. You see, everyone avoided the big old mansion. It was believed to have the blood of Mr. Henry Myser as well as his ten descendents. It was said that Mr. Henry himself committed suicide there and that all of his descendents that stayed in the house were murdered, tortured, or left for dead. My whole life, I had seen the old house and wondered what had really happened there. When I was sixteen, I was about to find out!

"When my parents left for a week and a half to go on a cruise, they left me behind. It was right before Halloween and I thought I would die of boredom. That is, until my friend Eric offered to let me go on a sleepover at the old haunted mansion that his family owned. They were the last living descendents of Mr. Henry Myser. My parents had always told me not to go

anywhere near the house, but by then, I was mad at them for leaving me behind and said yes just to spite them.

“As I pulled up to the house, I noticed that there were only three other people, including Eric, at the house. I started to have second thoughts, but I pushed them out of mind quickly and walked up the driveway. Eric and the two other people, one a girl I didn’t know, welcomed me. I grew more uneasy as I thought of what my teen youth leader from church had said, “Don’t go to sleep overs with girls, especially if there are no chaperones.” I told Eric this, but he just blew it off and said the girl wasn’t going to sleep in the guys room anyway. So we all entered the walkway that turned at the end and opened an old oak door. It screeched and creaked as it opened and Eric took a step inside. The moment I walked in through that old door, I felt an oppressing spirit grip my soul. I told Eric nervously, “I don’t think we should be here, guys.” But Eric just replied, “It’s all right. Don’t be scared man.” So I tried to quiet my nerves as we walked into the ‘Homicide Sitting Room’. Rodney, a Senior at our high school said, “They say that two people were shot and killed in this room.” There was an eerie spirit hanging in the room. I saw an open door and as I cautiously walking over to it, I asked, “What’s in here?”

“Suddenly, an evil and sinister feeling assaulted my mind, heart and soul. It was so strong that I fell to my knees and cried out in pain. Then a dark, demonic form flew out of the alcove. The girl, whose name I had learned was Elizabeth, screamed and was thrown across the room. I struggled to breathe and felt helpless. I found it hard to think, let alone know what to do. So I did the only thing that I could think of. I managed to call out in a strangled and hoarse voice, “Jesus! Help me! Help my friends!”

“Instantly the whole room became as silent as a tomb! Then in a flurry of movement, the room exploded into activity as ten more black forms appeared in the room. Eric shouted, “Oh, no!” fearfully. But before any of them could move, a thunderous voice proclaimed, “You, dark ones cannot have them! I command you in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ to leave this instant!”

“As soon as the voice stopped, the dark figures disappeared. I went over to check on Elizabeth and found that she was fine, although badly shaken. As we all ran out of the house, I thanked God for His miraculous protection. I also asked him to forgive me for not listening to my parents!”

“What an incredible story,” said the librarian. “From this information we’ve found, it looks like now the owners have renovated it and that they’re Christians.”

“Mrs. Chapman, please come to the front desk,” a voice called over the intercom.

“That’s me. I guess I need to see what they need. It was good to meet you and thank you for sharing your story with me,” Mrs. Chapman said as she turned to walk away.

Taking the blueprints and information, Josh left the library and headed towards the Myser Mansion.

Josh had no idea that he was not the only one preparing for the party that night. There was also a group of men in a muddy white van making sure they were ready for a kidnapping.



JESUS
HELP
MEE
EFFEM...

Jacob '08

Chapter Eight

The Party

Josh arrived at the Myser Mansion about two hours before the party began. He and the rest of the team scoped out the land and studied the blueprints Josh had picked up from the library. As the start of the party drew closer, the team changed into dinner suits with bullet proof vests underneath their shirts. Josh dressed in a black suit with red pinstripes. His tie matched his suit and he wore a solid black dress shirt. Each team member was assigned to a different spot throughout the room as guests began to file in the room around eight o'clock that night. The party went well for the first two hours with no problems.

Then, a little after ten o'clock, eight nicely dressed men met over by the refreshment table. "It's time," said the shadowy driver to his crew. "Go for the girl Myser and kill anyone that gets in your way."

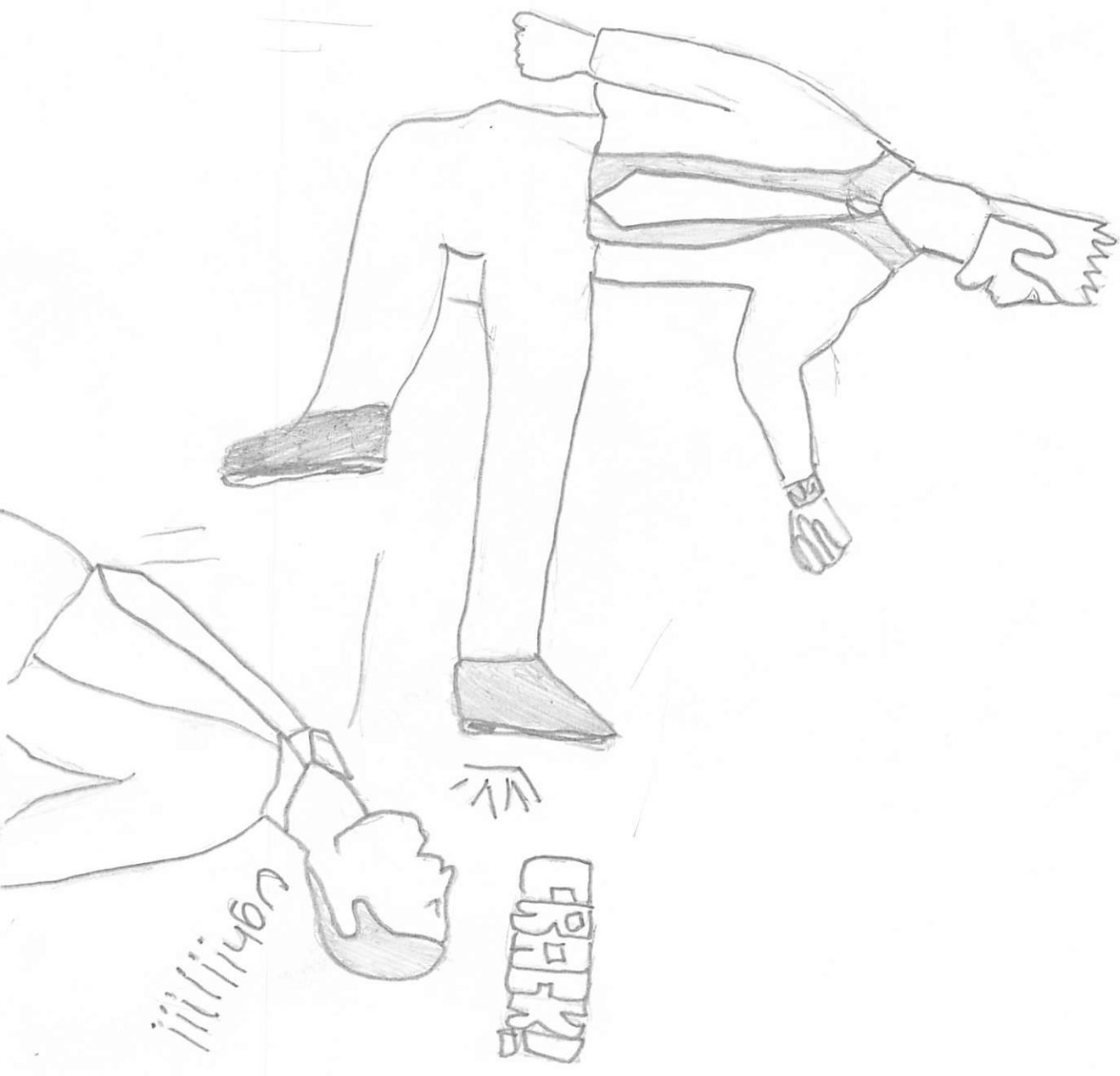
Suddenly pistols appeared from no where and all eight men headed towards Nicole. Jake, a Special Agents operative, quickly pulled out his walkie talkie and said, "Eight men with guns coming for Nicole."

Aron said calmly into his hidden headset, "Charles, Jake, Tim, Andrew: join me to head him off. Josh and Matt, cover the doors in case they get through us."

Just then, the five agents pulled out their guns and stepped into the path of the kidnapers and killer, blocking their way. Then, the room erupted in gunfire as eleven shots were fired at the same time. Jake was taken down with a head shot and never moved again. Andrew and Tim were fighting hand to hand combat with Chang Lee, when two sniper bullets found their marks and dropped them like leaves. Charles and Aron managed to get Hector and Ron down before

Charles was injured badly in the leg and neck. Aron shot down Robert from his perch on a balcony, but was then knocked out by a karate chop from Chang Lee.

“Come on, Matt, we’ve got to go!” Josh yelled over the crack of bullets, and screams of bystanders. They charged into the fray and suddenly everything else faded from Josh’s vision except the enemies that stood before him. He pulled out his Desert Eagle while Matt used his Colt .45. Josh shot the driver and Luther while Matt took care of Erin and Garret. Then Josh squared off against Chang while Matt did the same thing with Kevin. Chang tried to use the Judo take down Yuko, but Josh himself issued a Koka and then a roundhouse kick to Chang’s head. Chang got up slowly and then came at him with a forward kick. Josh grabbed his leg and flipped him onto a nearby table. When Chang tried to stand, Josh hit him with an uppercut to the jaw that knocked him out. Josh looked over to see that Matt had subdued Kevin. He breathed a sigh of relief that Nicole was alright, but inside he was saddened by the loss of some very good friends. They had been like family to him. He was beginning to wonder if anything else could go wrong in his life.



11/11/11

ERIK

local '08

Chapter 8
"The Party"

pg. 31

Chapter Nine

Salvation

Two days later...

The hard *thud, thud, thud* of the punches and kicks landing on the black punching bag was the only sound in the still quiet of early morning in Josh's private gym. He hit harder and harder, until his fists were a blur of movement, faster than the eye could follow. After 15 minutes he moved on to the other exercise equipment. When he finished on the treadmill, he continued on to a few other machines, desperately trying to work out some of his frustration with the latest mission that had gone so terribly wrong. Another hour later and he had moved on to weight training. He managed to lift 420 pounds, doing five reps, a breather and five more reps. Just as he was finishing, he heard his door bell ring. He grabbed a towel from inside his hall closet and wiped off his face. He pulled the front door open as he was putting the towel around his neck.

"Hi, Josh," Nicole said cheerfully as she entered behind her Dad, Walter, and Josh's boss, Mr. Johnson.

"Hello," Josh responded. "How are Aron and the rest of the team doing?"

"They're doing well, Josh. The doctors say they should be out of the hospital in less than a month," Mr. Johnson answered.

They talked about the condition of the men for a while and then Mr. Myser excused himself to go use the bathroom. Soon after Mr. Johnson had to leave.

"Are you doing okay, Josh?" Nicole questioned softly.

"Well, I guess," he responded unconvincingly.

"You don't sound okay."

“Nicole, it’s just that...ever since those guys died two days ago, I’ve been thinking about life and death. The after life. I don’t know anymore exactly where I would go if I died. But I have a good idea. Hell. And it scares me.”

“Josh, you can come back to Jesus anytime and he will accept you just as you are. The Bible says that God is married to the backslider and He loves you very much. You have to surrender your life and wants and come with a broken soul. He will turn your soul into something beautiful. From broken to beautiful. Do you want to give your life back over to Jesus again, Josh?”

“Yes, Nicole, I do.”

Nicole led him in a simple, yet heart felt and touching prayer.

“I feel brand new on the inside!” Josh stated with tears in his eyes. “And I know one thing for sure... I will never be the same again! Thank you Jesus! Nicole, I’m wondering if you’ll come to Michigan and help me find my father?”

“Of course, Josh!” Nicole answered excitedly.

“Great! We’ll head out tomorrow at 9 am!”



Someone got saved

Praise & Worship

God i'm sorry...

GOD IS MY BEST FRIEND

↑ in heaven ↓

Jacob '08

Chapter Ten

No Searching Anymore

Nicole left, saying that she would be at Josh's house around 8:30 am so that they could be on the road by 9 to the airport. The airport was about an hour drive from Josh's house. Josh packed enough clothes for three or four days, along with his toiletries, sandals, tennis shoes, a couple of hats, a belt, his iPod, and the book *War and Peace*. It was a long book but had an exciting story line if you could stick through the entire book. Then he called Matt and Aron to ask if they were interested in going with him to search for his father. They both answered yes. Josh went to bed that night feeling the most refreshed that he had felt in a long time.

Josh was up bright and early the next morning and double checked his bags to make sure that he had everything he needed. He had just finished eating breakfast when the doorbell rang. He threw his Styrofoam plate away and opened the door. Matt and Aron entered, followed by Nicole and her father. They talked for a while about Aron's condition and then they loaded the luggage into Nicole's 2025 Tahoe. The group made their way to the airport and took off for Michigan. Josh read *War and Peace* all through the plane ride and became fascinated with the characters and the plot.

The small group arrived in Lansing on their layover and then continued on to Detroit. Josh's boss, Mr. Johnson, had used his connections to find out where Josh's dad lived. When Josh and his friends exited the plane, they made their way to 815 Launching Place Road, the last known address for his father.

They pulled up to a three story house with a four car garage. Outside, a man of about fifty or so was pulling weeds in the garden on the property. He walked up to their car and addressed them, "Hi. How may I help you?"

"We're looking for Mr. Reginald."

"I'm he," the man answered. "Who are you?"

"I'm...your son, Joshua Adkins!"

"What?! Oh no! You've come because you're mad, haven't you? I'm sorry that I didn't tell you. I didn't want to face you after what I'd done...ignoring you for twenty two years..."

"Dad, it's alright. I forgive you because I've just been forgiven for a life filled with transgression and sins that stained my very soul. But Jesus came and turned that all around for me. He can do that for you too Dad. The Bible says in Romans 3:23, 'For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God'. It also says, 'For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord'. You see Dad, God will take you just the way you are with all of your sin and uncleanness. But He won't leave you that way. He'll change you from glory to glory and never leave you. Do you want that Dad? God in your heart?"

The older man began to weep and cried out, "Yes!!Yes!! I do! Help me to know your God, son!"

"Repeat after me," Josh said as he led his father in the prayer of salvation. Afterwards, he cried out joyfully with his dad.

He then remarked, "You know, the best day of my life was yesterday when I gave my life to the Lord. The second best day of my life is today when you gave your life to the Lord. I know

that the rest of my days will be filled with as much joy as yesterday and today because Jesus is my Lord now. I serve Him willingly and with all of my heart!”



Jacob'08