

# Heavenstruck



**Generations**  
PASSING ON THE FAITH



# Heavenstruck

**A TREASURY OF AMAZING CONVERSION STORIES  
OF GOD'S POWERFUL GRACE WORKING UPON THE HUMAN SOUL**

Ed. KEVIN SWANSON



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PASSING ON THE FAITH

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# Introduction

The power of God is supremely evident in the wondrous works of God everywhere in His spectacular creation. The miracle of life itself bears testimony of a wisdom and power that cannot be explained by brilliant scientists who would opt for the insanity of unbelief rather than admit an almighty power working in the creation.

What has man wrought? Not much, really. He forms cabinets and chairs out of dead wood. He manufactures robotic dogs out of metal and plastic parts—a thousand times less impressive than real dogs. He harnesses God's atoms and drops a few nuclear bombs on Japanese cities. But that is nothing compared to God's Sun which is firing off a trillion nuclear bombs. . . every second. This relatively small star is built to last billions of years—quite a bit of fuel there, and an adequate safety factor. The exploding stars of the supernovas have exercised the energy of a hundred billion times thirty-two million seconds times one trillion nuclear bombs going off all at one time. That's quite a lot of power. But now consider *the quasars*, the most energetic of which was discovered in 2024. This tremendous energy source shines at a brightness sixteen trillion times the brightness of our Sun, equivalent to four hundred galaxies the size of our Milky Way, all at one point in space. Such descriptions of power are too much for the human mind to comprehend—yet still they are only

tokens of the infinitude of divine power.

**Not unto us, oh Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name  
give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake. (Psalm 115:1)**

In the spiritual realm, we face principalities and powers far greater than ourselves. But here too, God is of infinitely greater power than the demonic realm. When the Son of God walked the earth, He handily cast out the demons into a herd of swine. No contest.

How *does* infinity compare with infinitude? Infinity is 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 times greater than 10, and that does not even begin to make the comparison. All the energy contained in all the galaxies, the quasars, and the hypernovas in the universe did not even begin to deplete the infinite reservoir of God's power at creation.

**What is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward  
who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,  
which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the  
dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,  
far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion,  
and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also  
in that which is to come. (Ephesians 1:19-21)**

The only manifestation of power greater than all of that described here thus far is discovered in the resurrection of a human soul. Certainly, the restoration of life to a dead human body is itself the ultimate miracle to be witnessed in the physical realm. The temporary resuscitation of Lazarus, who would eventually die once more, was impressive. But even more so is the restoration of permanent physical life for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. The original creation of life is praiseworthy and beyond anything the human mind can comprehend. The birth of a baby is cause for ceaseless wonder! But to restore life to a cadaver from which the breath of life has already disappeared—that is another matter altogether. The resurrection of the Son of God is the ultimate demonstration of the exceeding greatness of the power of God, and this is the power that works in those who believe and are converted.

The resurrection of a human soul is the greater miracle, more impressive and praiseworthy than the incomprehensible, immeasurable power of God manifested in all the burning galaxies, the quasars, and the creation of the material world in time and space.

**For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**

**(2 Corinthians 4:6)**

Several years ago, I interviewed the pastor who baptized Jeffrey Dahmer—arguably the most notorious sinner of the last generation in America at least. Hundreds of films, television miniseries, and documentaries have explored in nauseating detail the evil works of the devil in this man. The serial killer and cannibal was confined in a maximum security prison in a rural area of the country, when a small-town pastor received the call: “We have a prisoner named Jeff here who has requested the company of a pastor.”

When I heard the story of Jeffrey Dahmer’s conversion, himself testifying of it on an NBC interview shortly before he died in the prison, my first thought was: “No! Jeffrey Dahmer in heaven? Impossible!” My second thought came on the heels of this first thought: “Kevin Swanson in heaven? Impossible!” Have any of us seriously considered the sheer impossibility of regeneration and conversion, repentance and faith? How does one explain the demoniac from the Gadarenes sitting there in his right mind and speaking of Jesus on Dateline NBC?

Every true conversion tells a story of the impossible—that “exceeding greatness of the power of God to us-ward.” To any person who has been made alive to these spiritual realities, each story is supernatural, beyond any natural explanation, an otherworldly, earthshaking reality leaving the reader stunned, overwhelmed, and utterly incapable of adequate response to it.

How does one explain the terrorist who is about to bomb an evangelistic tent meeting in Zimbabwe falling down on his knees broken before Jesus and the next day dedicated to Christ’s

service for the rest of his life? How does one explain a pharisaical persecutor of Christ turning into an Apostle for Christ inside of ten seconds? How does one explain the mighty conversion of Mitsuo Fuchida, the Japanese captain who led the attack on Pearl Harbor, or the final surrender of the rebel who would never surrender: when Nathan Bedford Forrest was converted to Christ? The world is more concerned with whether Japan or America won the Second World War, or whether the North or the South won the Civil War. More importantly for us, is that *Jesus wins his wars every time.*

There is only one explanation for every true conversion and every radical resurrection from death to life that has ever happened on this earth. *These have been heaven struck.* God intervened. God opened blind eyes. God raised the dead. God flooded the soul with His life. God rent the heavens. God came down. God surprised us. God did awe-full things which we did not look for—that which ear has not heard and eye has not seen since the beginning of the world. God saved. These have truly become the objects of divine power and the glorious trophies of His grace. They have been struck by divine lightning, and they wake up into a new world, a new reality, and a new life.

**For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16)**

These extraordinary testimonies of the power of God in conversions to Jesus Christ contain a Gospel message for others. The stories render a special Gospel power with the strong potential to convert others. For nothing calls an adult or a child to salvation more than the essential message that *God saves.* He has all the power to save. He has saved others, the chiefest of sinners, the very worst, the most rebellious, and the most impossible of sinners to save. I daresay stories like this may be the most powerful instrument whereby faith is stirred and many others will be brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

This is a collection of the great conversion stories in Christian

history that have stood the test of time. The stories will be told into the eons of eternity, to the praise of the glory of the grace of God. But now it is for us to begin telling the stories to succeeding generations. While the accounts here are laid out in chronological order, that should not dictate how families or individuals will choose to read the material. The more contemporary stories may strike the reader as more relevant, more understandable, and more edifying. Pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance in how to mine these gold nuggets for maximum encouragement and edification.

**Be thou exalted, Lord, in thine own strength: so will we  
sing and praise thy power.**

**(Psalm 21:13)**

Kevin Swanson, Pastor

October 1, 2024







## CHAPTER 1

# The Conversion of Augustine of Hippo



Excerpted from *Augustine's Confessions*, Book VIII (AD 378)

Translated: E. B. Pusey (Edward Bouverie), AD 1907

Language Updated: Kevin Swanson, AD 2024

O my God, let me, with thanksgiving, remember and confess unto You Your mercies on me. Let my bones be bedewed with Your love, and let them say unto You, "Who is like unto You, O Lord? You have broken my bonds in sunder; I will offer unto You the sacrifice of thanksgiving." And how You have broken them, I will declare; and all who worship You, when they hear this, shall say, "Blessed be the Lord, in heaven and on earth, great and wonderful is His name." Your words had stuck fast in my heart, and I was hedged round about on all sides by You. Of Your eternal life I was now certain, though I saw it in a figure and as through a glass. Yet I had ceased to doubt that there was an incorruptible substance, whence was all other substance; nor did I now desire to be more certain of You, but more steadfast in You. But for my temporal life, all was wavering, and my heart had to be purged from the old leaven. The Way, the Savior Himself, well pleased me, but as yet I shrunk from going through its straitness. And You put into my mind, and it seemed good in my eyes, to go to Simplicianus, who seemed to me a good servant of Yours; and Your grace shone in him. I had heard also that from his very youth he had lived most devoted unto You. Now he was grown into years; and by reason of so great age spent in such zealous following of Your ways, he seemed to me likely to have learned much experience; and so he had, out of which store I wished that he would tell me (setting before him my anxieties) which were the fittest way for one in my case to walk in Your paths.

For, I saw the church full; and one went this way, and another that way. But I was displeased that I led a secular life; yes, now that my desires no longer inflamed me, as of old, with hopes of honor and profit, a very grievous burden it was to undergo so heavy a bondage. For, in comparison of Your sweetness, and the beauty of Your house which I loved, those things delighted me no longer. But still I was enthralled with the love of women; nor did the apostle forbid me to marry, although he advised me to something better, chiefly wishing that all men were as himself was. But I, being weak, chose the more indulgent place; and because of this alone, was tossed up and down

in all beside, faint and wasted with withering cares, because in other matters I was constrained against my will to conform myself to a married life, to which I was given up and enthralled. I had heard from the mouth of the Truth, that there were some eunuchs which had made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake: but, He has said, "Let him who can receive it, receive it." Surely vain are all men who are ignorant of God, and could not out of the good things which are seen, discover Him who is good. But I was no longer in that vanity; I had surmounted it; and by the common witness of all Your creatures had found You our Creator, and Your Word, God with You, and together with You one God, by whom You created all things. There is yet another kind of ungodly persons, who knowing God, glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful. Into this also I had fallen, but Your right hand upheld me, and took me thence, and You placed me where I might recover. For You have said unto man, "Behold, the fear of the Lord is wisdom," and "Desire not to seem wise;" because they who affirmed themselves to be wise, became fools. But I had now found the goodly pearl, which, selling all that I had, I ought to have bought, but I hesitated.

To Simplicianus then I went, the father of Ambrose (a bishop now) in receiving Your grace, and one whom Ambrose truly loved as a father. To him I related the mazes of my wanderings. But when I mentioned that I had read certain books of the Platonists, which Victorinus, sometime rhetoric professor of Rome (who had died a Christian, as I had heard), had translated into Latin, he testified his joy that I had not fallen upon the writings of other philosophers, full of fallacies and deceits, after the rudiments of this world, whereas the Platonists' ways led to belief in God and His Word. Then to exhort me to the humility of Christ, hidden from the wise, and revealed to little ones, he spoke of Victorinus himself, whom while at Rome he had most intimately known: and of him he related what I will not conceal. For it contains great praise of Your grace, to be confessed unto You, how that aged man, most learned and skilled in the liberal sciences, and who had read and weighed so many works of the philosophers;

the instructor of so many noble senators, who also, as a monument of his excellent discharge of his office, had (which men of this world esteem a high honor) both deserved and obtained his own statue in the Roman Forum; he, to that point a worshiper of idols, and a partaker of the sacrilegious rites, to which almost all the nobility of Rome were given up. He had inspired the people with the love of

Anubis, a barking Deity,  
And all monster gods of every kind,  
Who fought against Neptune, Venus, and Minerva:

whom Rome once conquered, now adored. These gods the aged Victorinus had with thundering eloquence so many years defended—he now blushed not to be the child of Your Christ, and the newborn babe of Your fountain; submitting his neck to the yoke of humility, and subduing his forehead to the reproach of the Cross.

O Lord, Lord, Who have bowed the heavens and come down, touched the mountains and they did smoke, by what means did You convey Yourself into that breast? He used to read (as Simplicianus said) the holy Scripture, most studiously sought and searched into all the Christian writings, and said to Simplicianus (not openly, but privately and as a friend), “Understand that I am already a Christian.” Whereto he answered, “I will not believe it, nor will I rank you among Christians, unless I see you in the church of Christ.” The other, in banter, replied, “Do walls then make Christians?” And this he often said, that he was already a Christian; and Simplicianus as often made the same answer, and the conceit of the “walls” was by the other as often renewed. For he feared to offend his friends, proud demon-worshippers, from the height of whose Babylonian dignity, as from cedars of Libanus, which the Lord had not yet broken down, he supposed the weight of enmity would fall upon him. But after that by reading and earnest thought he had gathered firmness, and feared to be denied by Christ before the holy angels, should he now be afraid to confess Him before men, and appeared to himself guilty of a heavy offense, in being ashamed of the sacraments of the humility of

Your Word, and not being ashamed of the sacrilegious rites of those proud demons, whose pride he had imitated and their rites adopted, he became bold-faced against vanity, and shame-faced towards the truth, and suddenly and unexpectedly said to Simplicianus (as himself told me), "Go we to the church; I wish to be made a Christian." But he, not containing himself for joy, went with him. And having been admitted to the first sacrament and become a catechumen,<sup>1</sup> not long after he further gave in his name, that he might be regenerated by baptism, Rome wondering, the Church rejoicing. The proud saw, and were wroth; they gnashed with their teeth, and melted away. But the Lord God was the hope of Your servant, and he regarded not vanities and lying madness.

To conclude, when the hour was come for making profession of his faith (which at Rome they, who are about to approach to Your grace, deliver, from an elevated place, in the sight of all the faithful, in a set form of words committed to memory), the presbyters, he said, offered Victorinus (as was done to such as seemed likely through bashfulness to be alarmed) to make his profession more privately: but he chose rather to profess his salvation in the presence of the holy multitude. "For it was not salvation that he taught in rhetoric, and yet that he had publicly professed: how much less then ought he, when pronouncing Your word, to dread Your meek flock, who, when delivering his own words, had not feared a mad multitude!" When, then, he went up to make his profession, all, as they knew him, whispered his name one to another with the voice of congratulation. And who there knew him not? And there ran a low murmur through all the mouths of the rejoicing multitude, "Victorinus! Victorinus!" Sudden was the burst of rapture, that they saw him; suddenly were they hushed that they might hear him. He pronounced the true faith with an excellent boldness, and all wished to draw him into their very heart; yea by their love and joy they drew him thither, such were the hands wherewith they drew him.

Good God! What takes place in man, that he should more rejoice at the salvation of a soul despaired of, and freed from greater peril,

than if there had always been hope of him, or the danger had been less? For so You also, merciful Father, rejoice more over one penitent than over ninety-nine just persons that need no repentance. And with much joyfulness do we hear, so often as we hear with what joy the sheep which had strayed is brought back upon the shepherd's shoulder, and the goat is restored to Your treasury, the neighbors rejoicing with the woman who found it; and the joy of the solemn service of Your house forces to tears, when in Your house it is read of Your younger son, that he was dead, and liveth again; had been lost, and is found. For You rejoice in us, and in Your holy angels, holy through holy charity. For You are ever the same; for all things which abide not the same nor forever, You forever know in the same way.

What then takes place in the soul, when it is more delighted at finding or recovering the things it loves, than if it had ever had them? Yea, and other things witness hereunto; and all things are full of witnesses, crying out, "So is it." The conquering commander triumphs; yet had he not conquered unless he had fought; and the more peril there was in the battle, so much the more joy is there in the triumph. The storm tosses the sailors, threatens shipwreck; all wax pale at approaching death; sky and sea are calmed, and they are exceeding joyed, as having been exceeding afraid. A friend is sick, and his pulse threatens danger; all who long for his recovery are sick in mind with him. He is restored, though as yet he walks not with his former strength; yet there is such joy, as was not, when before he walked sound and strong. Yea, the very pleasures of human life men acquire by difficulties, not those only which fall upon us unlooked for, and against our wills, but even by self-chosen, and pleasure-seeking trouble. Eating and drinking have no pleasure, unless there precede the pinching of hunger and thirst. Men, given to drink, eat certain salt meats, to procure a troublesome heat, which the drink allaying, causes pleasure. It is also ordered that the affianced bride should not at once be given, lest as a husband he should hold cheap whom, as betrothed, he sighed not after.

This law holds in foul and accursed joy; this in permitted and





## CHAPTER 2

# A 17th-Century Account of God's Extraordinary Work in Young Children



Three conversion accounts taken from the book  
*A Token for Children*, by James Janeway, first published in 1671.

Edited by Kevin Swanson



Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And He laid His hands on them and departed from there. (Matthew 19:13-15)

*Ed.: A Token for Children was written as an "exact account of the conversion, holy and exemplary lives and joyful deaths of several young children"<sup>2</sup> by a New England Puritan minister whose writing for English-speaking Christian children was second in popularity only to John Bunyan's.*



### Preface from the Author

To all parents:

I have often thought that Christ speaks to you as Pharaoh's daughter did to Moses's mother: "Take this child and nurse it for me." O consider what a precious jewel is committed to your charge! What an advantage you have to show your love to Christ, to stock the generation with noble plants! And what a joyful account you may make if you be faithful!

Remember, souls, Christ and grace cannot be overvalued. I confess you have some disadvantages, but let that only excite your diligence. The salvation of souls, the commendation of your Master, the greatness of your reward, and everlasting glory will pay for all. Remember the devil is at work hard, wicked ones are industrious, and corrupt nature is a rugged knotty piece to hew. But be not discouraged. I am almost as much afraid of your laziness and unfaithfulness as anything. Do but fall to work diligently, and who knows but that rough stone may prove a pillar in the Temple of God. In the name of the living God as you will answer it shortly at his bar, I command you to be faithful in instructing and catechizing your young ones.

If you think I am too preemptory, I pray, read the command from my Master himself in Deuteronomy 6:7. Is not the duty clear? Dare you neglect so direct a command? Are the souls of your children of no value? Are you willing that they should be brands of hell? Are you indifferent whether they be damned or saved? Shall the devil run away with them without control? Will not you use your utmost endeavors to deliver them from the wrath to come? You see that they are subjects capable of the grace of God.

Whatever you think of them, Christ does not slight them. They are not too little to die. They are not too little to go to hell. They are not too little to serve their great Master, too little to go to heaven, for of such is the Kingdom of God. And will not a possibility of their conversion and salvation put you upon the greatest diligence to teach them? Or are Christ and heaven and salvation small things with you? If they be, then indeed I am done with you. But if they be not, I beseech you, lay about you with all your might. The devil knows your time is going apace. It will shortly be too late. O therefore what you do, do quickly and do it, I say, with all your might.

O, pray, pray, pray, and live holily before them, and take some time daily to speak a little to your children one by one about their miserable condition by nature. I knew a child who was converted by this sentence from a godly school mistress in the country—"Every mother's child of you is by nature a child of wrath." Put your children upon learning the catechism and the Scriptures and getting to pray and to weep after themselves after Christ. Take heed of letting them misspend the Sabbath. Put them, I beseech you, upon imitating these sweet children. Let them read this over a hundred times, and observe how they are affected, and ask them what they think of those children, and whether they would not be such. And follow what you do with earnest cries to God, and be in travail to see Christ formed in their souls. I have prayed for you. I have often prayed for your children. And I have prayed over these papers, that God would strike in with them and make them effectual to the good of their souls. Encourage your children to read this and lead them to improve it.

What is presented is taken from experienced, solid Christians, some of them in no way related to the children, who themselves were eyewitnesses of God's works of wonder, or from my knowledge, or from reverend godly ministers, and from persons that are of unspotted reputation for holiness, integrity, and wisdom; and several passages are taken verbatim in writing from [the children's] dying lips. I may add many other excellent examples if I have encouragement in this piece. That the young generation may be far more excellent than this is the prayer of one that dearly loves little children.

—*J. Janeway*



EXAMPLE I.

*Of one eminently converted, between eight and nine years old, with an account of her life and death.*

**M**iss Sarah Howley, when she was between eight and nine years old, was brought by her friends to hear a sermon where the minister preached upon Matthew 11:30: "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light," in the applying of which scripture this child was mightily awakened and made deeply sensible of the condition of her soul and her need of Christ. She wept bitterly to think what a case she was in and went home and got by herself into a chamber and upon her knees. She wept and cried to the Lord as well as she could, which might easily be perceived by the look of her eyes and countenance. She was not content at this, but she got her little brother and sister into a chamber with her and told them of their condition by nature and wept over them and prayed with them and for them.

After this she heard another sermon upon Proverbs 29:1—"He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his heart, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy"—at which she was more affected than before, and was so exceedingly solicitous about her soul that she spent a great part of the night in weeping and praying



CHAPTER 6

The Radical Conversion of a  
Rebel in Prussia,  
George Müller



From *The Autobiography of George Müller*  
by George Müller

I was born at Kroppenstaedt, near Halberstadt, in the kingdom of Prussia on September 27th, 1805. In January 1810 my parents removed to Heimersleben, about four miles from Kroppenstaedt, where my father was appointed collector in the excise. As a warning to parents, I mention that my father preferred me to my brother, which was very injurious to both of us: to me, as tending to produce in my mind a feeling of self-elevation; and to my brother, by creating in him a dislike both towards my father and me.

My father, who educated his children on worldly principles, gave us much money, considering our age; not in order that we might spend it but, as he said, to accustom us to possess money without spending it. The result was that it led me and my brother into many sins. For I repeatedly spent a part of the money in a childish way, and afterwards, when my father looked over my little treasure, I sought to deceive him in making up the accounts, either by not putting down all the money which he had given me, or by professing to have more money in hand than was the case, and counting it out accordingly before him. Now though this deceit was found out at last and I was punished, yet I remained the same. For before I was ten years old, I repeatedly took of the government money which was entrusted to my father, and which he had to make up; till one day, as he had repeatedly missed money, he detected my theft by depositing a counted sum in the room where I was and leaving me to myself for a while. Being thus left alone, I took some of the money and hid it under my foot in my shoe. When my father, after his return, had counted and missed the money, I was searched and my theft detected.

Though I was punished on this and other occasions, yet I do not remember that at any time, when my sins were found out, it made any other impression upon me than to make me think how I might do the thing the next time more cleverly, so as not to be detected. Hence it came that this was not the last time that I was guilty of stealing.

When I was between ten and eleven years of age, I was sent to Halberstadt, to the cathedral classical school there to be prepared for the university; for my father's desire was that I should become

a clergyman: not, indeed, that thus I might serve God, but that I might have a comfortable living. My time was now spent in studying, reading novels, and indulging, though so young, in sinful practices. Thus it continued till I was fourteen years old, when my mother was suddenly removed. The night she was dying, I, not knowing of her illness, was playing at cards till two in the morning, and on the next day, being the Lord's Day, I went with some of my companions in sin to a tavern, and then we went about the streets half intoxicated.

The following day I attended, for the first time, the religious instruction, which I was to receive previous to my confirmation. This likewise was attended to in a careless manner; and when I returned to my lodgings, my father had arrived to fetch my brother and me home to our mother's funeral. This bereavement made no lasting impression on my mind. I grew worse and worse. Three or four days before I was confirmed, (and thus admitted to partake of the Lord's Supper,) I was guilty of gross immorality; and the very day before my confirmation, when I was in the vestry with the clergyman to confess my sins, (according to the usual practice,) after a formal manner, I defrauded him; for I handed over to him only the twelfth part of the fee which my father had given me for him.

In this state of heart, without prayer, without true repentance, without faith, without knowledge of the plan of salvation, I was confirmed, and took the Lord's Supper, on the Sunday after Easter 1820. Yet I was not without some feeling about the solemnity of the thing, and I stayed at home in the afternoon and evening; whilst the other boys and girls who had been confirmed with me walked about in the fields, I also made resolutions to turn from those vices in which I was living and to study more. But as I had no regard to God and attempted the thing in my own strength, all soon came to nothing, and I still grew worse.

Six weeks after my confirmation I went for a fortnight to Brunswick, to a sister of my father, where I became attached to a young female who was a Roman Catholic. My time till Midsummer 1821 was spent partly in study, but in a great degree in playing the pianoforte

and guitar, reading novels, frequenting taverns, forming resolutions to become different, yet breaking them almost as fast as they were made. My money was often spent on my sinful pleasures, through which I was now and then brought into trouble, so that once, to satisfy my hunger, I stole a piece of coarse bread, the allowance of a soldier who was quartered in the house where I lodged. What a bitter, bitter thing is the service of Satan, even in this world!

At Midsummer 1821 my father obtained an appointment at Schoenebeck, near Magdeburg, and I embraced the opportunity of entreating him to remove me to the cathedral classical school of Magdeburg; for I thought that if I could but leave my companions in sin and get out of certain snares and be placed under other tutors, I should then live a different life. But as my dependence in this matter also was not upon God, I fell into a still worse state. My father consented, and I was allowed to leave Halberstadt and to stay at Heimersleben till Michaelmas. During that time I superintended, according to my father's wish, certain alterations which were to be made in his house there for the sake of letting it profitably. Being thus quite my own master, I grew still more idle and lived as much as before in all sorts of sin.

When Michaelmas came, I persuaded my father to leave me at Heimersleben till Easter and to let me read the classics with a clergyman living in the same place. As Dr. Nagel was a very learned man and also in the habit of having pupils under his care, and a friend of my father, my request was granted. I was now living on the premises belonging to my father under little real control and entrusted with a considerable sum of money which I had to collect for my father from persons who owed it to him. My habits soon led me to spend a considerable part of this money, giving receipts for different sums, yet leaving my father to suppose I had not received them.

In November I went on a pleasure excursion to Magdeburg, where I spent six days in much sin; and though my absence from home had been found out by my father before I returned from thence; yet I took all the money I could obtain and went to Brunswick after I had,

through a number of lies, obtained permission from my tutor. The reason of my going to Brunswick was the attachment I had formed eighteen months previously to the young female residing there. I spent a week at Brunswick in an expensive hotel. At the end of the week my money was expended. This, as well as the want of a passport, prevented my staying any longer in the hotel; but as I still wished to remain at Brunswick, I went to my uncle, the husband of my father's sister, and made some excuse for not having gone to him in the first instance. My uncle, seeing I suppose my unsteady life, intimated after a week that he did not wish me to remain with him any longer.

I then went, without money, to another hotel, in a village near Brunswick, where I spent another week in an expensive way of living. At last, the owner of the hotel, suspecting that I had no money, asked for payment, and I was obliged to leave my best clothes as a security and could scarcely thus escape from being arrested. I then walked about six miles, to Wolfenbüttel, went to an inn, and began again to live as if I had plenty of money. Here I stayed two days, looking out for an opportunity to run away; for I had now nothing remaining to leave as a pledge. But the window of my room was too high to allow of my escaping by getting down at night. On the second or third morning I went quietly out of the yard and then ran off; but being suspected and observed, and therefore seen to go off, I was immediately called after and so had to return.

I now confessed my case but found no mercy. I was arrested and taken between two soldiers to a police officer. Being suspected by him to be a vagabond or thief, I was examined for about three hours and then sent to jail. I now found myself, at the age of sixteen, an inmate of the same dwelling with thieves and murderers, and treated accordingly. My superior manners profited nothing. For though, as a particular favor, I received the first evening some meat with my bread, I had the next day the common allowance of the prisoners—very coarse bread and water, and for dinner vegetables, but no meat. My situation was most wretched. I was locked up in this place day and night, without permission to leave my cell. The dinner was such





CHAPTER 7

The Powerful Conversion of  
the British Evangelist  
Brownlow North



Excerpted from: *Brownlow North, His Life and Work*,  
by Kenneth Moody-Stuart



### *Brownlow North's Earlier Years*

**B**rownlow North was born on the 6th January, 1810. He was the only son of the Rev. Charles Augustus North, Rector of Alverstoke, Hants, and Prebendary of Winchester, and of Rachel, daughter of Thomas Jarvis, Esq., of Doddington Hall, Lincolnshire. His grandfather was the Hon. and Rev. Brownlow North, D.D., Prelate of the Noble Order of the Garter, who was successively the Bishop of the sees of Lichfield, Worcester, and Winchester.

At the early age of nine he went to Eton, when Dr. Keats was headmaster, and remained there six years, in Dr. Hawtrey's house. He did not distinguish himself there by application to his books but was known as a first-rate swimmer and general good fellow by the [nickname] of Gentleman Jack, in contradistinction to a bargeman of his name, with whom the Eton boys of that time were familiar. The prayers and pious training of his mother, who was a most godly woman, bore as yet no fruit in the wild and wayward character of her boy, who was strongly averse to all that was good, his influence upon his schoolfellows being exactly the reverse of what she would have desired. His father dying in 1825, young Brownlow was removed from Eton, and went out to Corfu with his cousin, Lord Guilford, who was Chancellor of the Ionian Islands, where he had founded a theological college, in which it was hoped his young relative might be induced to continue his studies. Nothing, however, seemed able to subdue the wild, high spirits of the lad; and the old gentleman, after finding one day that the window of his classroom had been made the winning post and last jump of an amateur steeplechase, which Brownlow had got up, regretfully sent him home again as beyond his control. He was then sent abroad with a tutor to make, as it was then termed, the grand tour; but this experiment proved no more fortunate than the preceding, for meeting with his tutor in a gaming saloon the first night after their arrival in Paris, he insisted, under penalty of

exposure, that all the books they had brought with them should be left behind in Paris as unnecessary encumbrances, and afterwards, on the journey to Rome, he won from the miserable tutor at *écarté* all the money with which he had been entrusted to defray the expenses of the tour, so that their position became completely reversed; the pupil was now master, and the tutor only tolerated as a useful and humble companion.<sup>22</sup>

On returning from the Continent he joined his mother, who had gone to live at Cheltenham. Here for a time he thoroughly enjoyed himself; for he was at that age, seventeen, very fond of dancing and riding, and both pleasures were here to his hand in perfection. So great an impression did he make upon his fair partners, that he proposed to no less than nineteen in one winter and was accepted by them all! His fond mother had at first considerable difficulty, and felt no little embarrassment in satisfying the expectant mothers-in-law of a future earl that her son was quite a boy, and that nothing serious could be entertained; but after the experience of a few similar situations her replies almost formulated themselves, and it was with difficulty at last that she could refrain from yielding to a strong desire to laugh at the extraordinary absurdity of the whole affair.

His propensity for riding, which developed itself in racing up and down the promenade, a long straight boulevard, which those who know Cheltenham will recollect, had well-nigh brought him to his end, had not a merciful Providence watched over him and interfered to save his life. He was racing with one of his companions and had just been successful when his rival challenged him again to another contest, but stipulated they should change sides of the road, owing to some fancied advantage the right side possessed over the left. It was agreed to, and they started at full speed when, unfortunately, coming down the hill round the corner where now stands the Queen's Hotel, there appeared a traveling carriage and pair of posters. To avoid a collision was impossible, and the horse and rider on the right-hand side went straight into the body of the carriage. The rider was thrown over the top, and taken up senseless, and afterwards died; the

horse was so injured that it had to be immediately destroyed. This melancholy event made Cheltenham no longer agreeable to young North; and as he had made the acquaintance during the winter of several Irish families who had come there for the season, and who had pressed him to go and see them in Ireland in the summer, and as he was intimate with some of the officers of the regiment then quartered at Galway, he determined to cross the Channel and try the attractions of the Emerald Isle. These proved too much for him; for the daughter of a highly esteemed Protestant clergyman so captivated him that he induced her to give him her hand, and was married to Grace Anne, second daughter of the Rev. Thomas Coffey, D.D., of Galway, on the 12th of December, 1828, before he had completed his nineteenth year. On the 12th of December, 1878, Mr. North would have completed fifty years of wedded life, and those who knew him may remember how he looked forward to celebrating his "golden" wedding. The issue of his marriage was three sons: Charles Augustus; Brownlow, who [died before] his father by a short interval; and Frederic, who died in early childhood.

About this period, however, great—and to him most important—changes had taken place in the circle of his relations. His kind old friend and cousin had died and had been succeeded in the earldom by his uncle Francis, his father's eldest brother. Naturally an austere man, he had no sympathy with the youthful extravagances of his nephew, and when the death of his wife took place, after nearly thirty years of wedded life, he told him he should marry again. He was as good as his word, and marrying a lady some twenty-five years his junior, he became the father of a family, and though his eldest son did not live to succeed him, his grandson now perpetuates the name, Dudley Francis, 7th Earl of Guilford.

[Mr. North's] expectations being thus doomed to disappointment, and his young wife having borne him two sons, the question as to the maintenance of himself and them asserted itself persistently and painfully. His sole income was derived from his fees as registrar of the diocese of Winchester and Surrey, to which office he had been

appointed when quite young by his grandfather, the bishop. His work was done by two local solicitors, who paid him a yearly allowance, and retained the balance of the fees for their services. At that time he was in receipt of about £300 per annum,<sup>23</sup> a sum quite insufficient for his habits, so to improve his finances he had recourse to the gaming table, with such bad success that he lost a much larger sum than he could possibly pay; upon which he left England for Boulogne, taking his wife and children with him. Here again for some time he amused himself as before, but finding his funds running low and wishing for fresh excitement, he sent his wife and children home to his mother and started off himself as a volunteer for Don Pedro's army in Portugal. His mother received his wife and her two children, adopted the eldest, who was called Charles Augustus after her husband. Mrs. North then returned for a time to her old home in Ireland. After an interval of several months, Don Pedro's affair being settled, the prodigal returned home, to be forgiven; and in the summer of 1835 we find him going down to Scotland with his brother-in-law, Mr. Hayward, who had taken Abergeldie Castle for the shooting for that year. His wife and two younger children accompanied him, and from that time till his death, with only one interval of any importance, Scotland was the land of his adoption, in that it was the home of his choice. Thus, though an Englishman by birth and education, he became almost a naturalized Scotsman, and was greatly attached to the country and thoroughly conversant with the habits of thought of the people, whom he was destined afterwards to move so deeply and widely to concern about their eternal interests. But as yet his own thoughts and pursuits were running in wholly different channels.

For the greater part of the next four years, Brownlow North remained in Aberdeenshire, taking a shooting during the season and wintering in Aberdeen. It was then that he made his match with Captain Barclay of Ury, whom he had ridden over to see from Aberdeen in so short a space of time, as he said, that the captain declared it impossible. "Do you call that impossible?" said Mr. North. "I will engage to ride from Aberdeen to Huntly and back at the same



CHAPTER 10

The Extraordinary Conversion  
Story of  
Pasha Tichomirow  
and His Band of Bandits



From: *Greasy the Robber*, Author Anonymous

Translated: Charles Lukesh, ca. 1940

The nickname “Greasy” was given to Paul when he was but eight years old, under special circumstances which we shall mention later. His real family name was Tichomirow. He was the son of a farmer from one of the poorest villages in the government of Mogilew.<sup>36</sup> The family consisted of the father, the mother, and two children—the ten-year-old Shura (Alexandra) and the eight-year-old Pasha (Paul). They lived peacefully, were religious in the Orthodox way, and enjoyed the respect not only of the inhabitants of their own village, but of those of all the district. On the holy days the local Orthodox priest used to visit them to play cards with the father, not for money but merely to pass the time. Sometimes the game was “Dulatchki,” at which it was customary that the losing one had to suffer the pack of cards to be thrown on his nose. If either of the players had some money, they sent the children for liquor, which would put them in a hilarious mood, during which the priest, whom they called “Batushka” (Daddy), used to say: “It is no sin to drink with moderation. Even the Lord Jesus loved to be joyful and at the wedding in Cana changed water into wine.” The children loved to look on and noted with special interest how the nose of the priest would become more and more red—whether it was from the use of the liquor or from the frequent hits with the pack of cards, thrown at him cleverly by the father, who usually won the game. The good-natured priest used to say with a croaking voice: “Who will endure to the end will be saved. I shall have my turn, my beloved, and then look out, because it is written: ‘Owe no man anything, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.’”

This hilarious life came to an abrupt end. Several successive bad harvests compelled the farmers of the village of Sosnovka to consider moving to Siberia. In groups they talked over the matter with one another and finally decided to send out messengers to find an appropriate piece of land in one of the Siberian districts. Because he was a clever and experienced man, Tichomirow was among those land-seekers. After three months the messengers returned; they had found land in the government of Tomsk. Promptly selling out their



land and property, the farmers started on their way. That was in the year 1897.

During the trip the trains made slow headway and had to make long stopovers at the crossroads in Samara, Tcheljabinsk, and Omsk. The moving farmers had to wait for weeks to get trains for further travel and had to spend the days and nights in the small railroad stations, lying on the floor. The boiled water was not sufficient for all; nor could the people afford to buy warm foods from the restaurants; consequently, the poor, simple people satisfied themselves with dried herring or other dried fish and drank unboiled water. As a result, many had stomach trouble, and cholera set in; the older especially were afflicted by the plague. On the last stretch before Tomsk, Mr. Tichomirow became sick. All indications signified cholera. To the horror of his wife and children, he was taken from the train in one of the stations and put in a barracks for the infectious diseases. It was only natural that Mrs. Tichomirow and the children leave the train also. They found refuge not far from the barracks, behind the snow fences along the railroad tracks. Daily they inquired about the condition of the father, but the information was every time more sad. After three days had passed, the sorrow-stricken mother had to declare to the children that she was sick. It was a heart-breaking scene when the stretcher had to take the mother away from the crying children. In her they lost their last support. With a sad heart the mother parted from her children, suspecting that she would never see them again. But more terrible to the mother was the possibility that her beloved children would be fully orphaned in a strange land.

As the mother was carried into the barracks, the desperate children ran crying behind the carriers until the heavy barracks door was slammed in their faces. How lonesome and miserable Shura and Pasha felt! As if bereft of their senses they circled the barracks, crying now for the father and then for the mother. The only answer they received was a coarse cry from the guard, threatening them with whipping if they would not leave the barracks. But the children did not cease to cry and ask to be let in. They wanted to die with their



parents, since they felt they could not live without them. Thus they kept running around the barracks till late at night when the severe cold compelled them to think of their warmer clothing, which they had left with some other things behind the snow fences. However, when they came on the spot where they had abode with their mother before her sickness, they found no sign of their baggage. Apparently, someone had taken the few poor things of the immigrants.

Crawling behind the snow fences, the children huddled together to keep each other warm. Shura, who was the older, was very much concerned about her young brother and during the night, which seemed to her like an eternity, did not close her eyes. As soon as Pasha awoke, the children hastened again to the barracks. The first guard whom they met told them, "Do not come again. This morning we carried away the body of your father, and your mother is likely to die today."

It was impossible to compel the children to leave the barracks. Again and again they looked through the windows and called for the mother. Should her beloved voice be silenced forever? And would she be only a cold corpse in the morning? Yes, in the evening they were told that the mother had died an hour ago. Hugging each other, they sat behind the snow fences and cried bitterly. That night even Pasha did not sleep; with his back against the snow fence he looked into the distance, where the rails seemed to disappear out of their sight; and in his childish mind the terrible happenings of the last few days passed again before him. When he finally saw the train drawing nigh, he said: "Shura, I will live no longer without Father and Mother. Come, let us lay ourselves on the rails. The engine will crush us, and then we shall be dead. What do we have to live for now? Where shall we go to and to whom shall we be of any use?" With these words Pasha took his sister by the hand and dragged her to the rails. Shura was terrified; she took her small brother in her arms and cried with sobs:

"No, for nothing in the world will I go with you to cast myself under the train; neither will I let you go. I am terrified! It is terrible!"

“Let me go; I shall go alone!” cried the boy.

While they talked to each other the train rushed by. Pasha threw himself on his face to the ground and began to complain loudly: “Why have you held me back? I do not want to live anymore.” However, his sister spoke to him kindly in order to persuade him to give up his horrible thoughts. After a long time, when he had become calmer, he promised not to think any more on death and not to leave her alone in the world.

Thereupon the children, huddling together in their refuge, waited for the break of day, determined to see the grave of their parents in the morning. To the freezing and hungry children, the cold night seemed infinitely long. Finally, at daybreak, they hastened to the cemetery, where in an especially enclosed corner were buried those who had died of infectious diseases. At the gate the children begged the keeper to be let in and asked to be shown the grave of their parents. But the man answered in a harsh voice: “How many bodies were carried out here only last night! How could I know who is buried here? Besides, ten bodies are usually thrown into one hole. Sometimes even twenty.”

Not achieving anything, the children looked with eyes red from weeping through the cracks of the fence toward the irregular mounds of wet clay. For a long time they stood there crying and looking at the graves, till the keeper drove them away. Oppressed with sorrow, the children, holding each other’s hands, returned to the snow fences, which were the witnesses of their cruel experiences of the last five days, including the parting with their beloved mother. This place now became for the orphaned children their second home. Under the protection of these fences they began to consider what to do further.

The very thought of being put into barracks for orphans seemed terrible to them; yet they realized that that would be their salvation from hunger, which began to be more and more intense. Their meager supply of food, as well as money, had been taken from them with the rest of their baggage.

Fear overshadowed the lonesome, hungry, and freezing children, although high above them the larks were joyfully singing their spring



CHAPTER 11

# How Jesus Won the War for Mitsuo Fuchida



by Kevin Swanson

**O**n December 7, 1941, Lieutenant Commander Mitsuo Fuchida (1902–1976) led the surprise air attack on the American forces in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, killing 2,400 Americans and destroying or damaging twenty naval vessels and over 300 aircraft. Mitsuo Fuchida was the critical actor at the initiation of World War II into the Pacific theater. When the smoke had cleared, the terrible conflagration had produced a death count of 3.1 million Japanese, 1 million Filipino, and 110,000 Americans.

His grandfather of the samurai class, his father a principal of a primary school in Kashihara, Japan, Mitsuo Fuchida entered the Imperial Japanese Naval Academy in 1921. By sheer determination, he clawed his way to the top of his class, and as a 19-year-old, he was accepted into the academy's flight training program.

After successful wars against Russia and China, the Japanese nation had taken its position as one of the five major world powers at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. The Japanese war machine was well in progress, and Mitsuo Fuchida was at the forefront of the development.

When coming across a Christian church building in his native country at twenty years of age, Mitsuo remarked to a friend that, "If I had my way, I'd tear that building down!"<sup>37</sup> His own personal animus toward anything foreign, particularly American, was further intensified upon a visit to San Francisco in 1923. The young man's studies in Japan's military academies warned of the British, the Dutch, and the United States occupations of the Asian countries of Burma (now Myanmar), Hong Kong, Indonesia, and the Philippines over the previous centuries. The time was right for Japan to take its rightful place as a leader and defender of the Asian continent, and at least one student in the class—Mitsuo Fuchida—was utterly taken up by the vision.

Before entering the conflict which would turn into World War II, in December of 1937, the young man paid a visit to the Ise Grand Shrine, in which he paid his respects to the "goddess of the sun" at Japan's most sacred place. He would fight for the spiritual descendant

of the goddess herself, found in the emperor, Hirohito. The emperor was only a year older than the young military pilot.

Mitsuo Fuchida was assigned commander of the air attack on Pearl Harbor in October of 1941, under Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo and Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto. Early in the morning on December seventh, 360 Japanese aircraft launched from aircraft carriers eight hours north of Oahu, with Commander Fuchida in the lead. Approaching Pearl Harbor, Fuchida fired his signal pistol, releasing a black dragon flare, signaling to the squadron the attack. From his B5N2 bomber, he instructed his engineer to contact the Japanese emperor with the prearranged signal by telegraph: “Tora! Tora! Tora!” translated, “Tiger! Tiger! Tiger!”<sup>38</sup> The die was cast.

He returned to Japan on December 23 to a hero’s welcome. The admiral of the Japanese fleets wrote him a poem commending “Fuchida’s brilliant action.” Three days later, the victorious commander was invited into the presence of the emperor. Fuchida reviewed the attack in great detail, after which the emperor asked a simple question: “Were any civilian planes shot down in the attack?” Fuchida answered that one might have been a civilian plane, to which the emperor answered simply, “I hope it wasn’t.”<sup>39</sup>

Commander Fuchida led another squadron of 376 aircraft in a devastating raid upon Darwin, Australia on February 19, 1942. Later that year, he followed up with more air attacks on British naval bases in Ceylon—described by Winston Churchill as “the most dangerous moment”<sup>40</sup> of World War II.

Fuchida’s ship was bombed at the Battle of Midway, and he was wounded. He narrowly missed dying in the Hiroshima atomic bombing, called back to headquarters only a day before the bomb hit.

Upon his return to Hiroshima the next day, Fuchida reviewed the utter devastation of war upon the wasted, charred landscape of the remains of the city. An elderly woman, dragging a cart on old bicycle rims, came up to him and spoke in a quiet rage: “You lied to us about everything. You betrayed us. My husband is dead. My sons are dead. My daughters are dead. This is all I have left,” she lamented, pointing

to her cart of half-burned possessions. She grabbed on to Fuchida's lapels, crying out to him, "Everything is lost! Gone! Destroyed! Now, where will you lead us! Where do we go now!"<sup>41</sup> The old woman spoke the sentiments of a nation, remarks directed at the commander who himself had initiated the conflict at Pearl Harbor.

Standing in formation with the other commanding officers of the Japanese army on the deck of USS *Missouri* on the morning of September 2, 1945, Mitsuo Fuchida listened intently to the words of General Douglas MacArthur resounding over the loudspeakers: "As I look back on the long, torturous trail from those grim days of Bataan and Corregidor, when an entire world lived in fear, when democracy was on the defensive everywhere, when modern civilization trembled in the balance, I thank a merciful God that He has given us the faith, the courage and the power from which to mold victory."<sup>42</sup> Hearing the US general speak of God with such humility was surprising to the proud Japanese. There was no mention of America's power and victory.<sup>43</sup> MacArthur explained to the men, "The problem, basically, is spiritual and therefore requires a spiritual renewal. . . It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh. Let us pray that peace be now restored to the world and that God will preserve it always."

His biographer describes the moment: "Fuchida looked down at his feet, stunned. He was entirely unprepared to hear such humble words from the victorious Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces. He knew if the Japanese had won, they would never have spoken to the Americans with such magnanimity."<sup>44</sup> This was only a first taste of what was to come on Mitsuo Fuchida's journey to the knowledge of Christ.

Yet, this "peace" about which the general spoke seemed to him farfetched, as well as the "everlasting peace" of which he had heard the emperor speak. For indeed, hate is strong, and mocks the song of "peace on earth, goodwill to men."<sup>45</sup>

The next summer, the retired military captain was settled into a farmhouse in the village of Unebi, near Osaka, Japan. Carefully, scribing in Japanese calligraphy upon rice paper, he wrote these words:

Mankind must escape from this cycle of hatred generating hatred, of resentment breeding resentment. Only by translating destructive emotions into brotherly love can humanity be saved.<sup>46</sup>

When his daughter, Miyako, asked him, “Who put the North Star there?” his only response was,

“I don’t know. I don’t know who put it there.” Yet, as he would survey the rice fields, and study a single rice shoot, he couldn’t help but think that this was the product of a “good God.” Yet, the more he considered the goodness of God, the more he realized that “man was not, that *he* was not good.”<sup>47</sup>



### *The Power of Love and the Conversion of Mitsuo Fuchida*

Where was this love that could conquer the gross evil of the world and the horrors of human hate? Where was this goodness to be found in a world destined to endless warfare and unrelenting bloodshed?

God’s hand was upon his life now. The captain would discover a different way in the years following.

In July 1947, Captain Fuchida met an old friend disembarking a ship at Uruga Harbor, recently released from a US prisoner-of-war camp. Hoping to hear something of American atrocities, he grilled his friend, a former flight engineer named Kanegasaki, about his experience. “They treated us well,” he said. “But I need to tell you about an American girl who was there at the hospital in Salt Lake City. She spoke excellent Japanese. She always asked if there was anything we needed, if we had any problems. She brought us books and magazines in Japanese. . . She helped us with sending letters and worked very, very hard and we were all so impressed with her kindness, especially when we found out that she traveled so far from home to come there to work. She was like an angel from heaven. . . and it seemed like she had a great debt or obligation to pay to the Japanese people, as if some



CHAPTER 13

How the Lord Jesus Called  
**Stephen Lungu**  
Out of the **Black Shadows**



This account is taken from *Out of the Black Shadows* by Stephen Lungu with Anne Coomes, published by 10Publishing. Readers may access the whole story of Stephen Lungu's forty-year ministry at [10ofthose.com](http://10ofthose.com).





### *My Unhappy Home*

I lay on the big untidy bed and watched my mother drink beer from her jug. She held it high in both hands, tilting her dark head back, drinking deeply, savoring each swallow. At last she sighed with contentment and lowered the jug to the floor, wiping her lips and chin with the back of her arm. ‘Ah,’ she breathed. Expertly her calloused toes eased the jug back into its hiding place under the bed.

A spasm hit me and I coughed, spitting onto the flowered bed cover. I stuck a grubby fist to my mouth to try and still the sound. Mama got cross with me because I coughed so much. She complained to my aunts that I was always sickly. But the pains in my chest had been bad today. When I opened my eyes, her dark eyes were full of exasperated affection—she always felt better after beer.

‘Ah Stephen, what can I do with you? You are always, always poorly.’ I liked it when she’d had beer, because it made her less cross with me.

‘Mama.’

She contentedly stretched out on the counterpane beside me and I snuggled up to her—her warm teenage body and bosom spelled love and contentment for me. She was tiny and very dark and I thought her beautiful.

Outside in the late afternoon heat the hens clucked drowsily to themselves, and some children squealed in play and raised clouds of dust. Some men called to one another. This was 1946 and the black township of old Highfield on the outskirts of Salisbury, Rhodesia, was a quiet place, if very poor.

Mama stroked my hot forehead. ‘So where’s your father then, eh?’ She whispered fretfully, watching the flies on the ceiling. We hadn’t seen him for the last few days, and Mama had not been happy about that. ‘I have no money to take you to the hospital.’

Papa worked for the government. He was a telephone repair man,

based in a post office in Salisbury. Somehow, when he did not come home after work, it made Mama cross with me and John, my two-year-old brother. The following morning she'd stomp off to work in the field with the other women, muttering to herself. She would slap John and me for any little thing as we played near where the women worked.

It was a curious thing, because when my father finally did return, as he always did, Mama never seemed glad to see him. Standing in the doorway, her arms folded across the bosom of her colorful dress, her face would go darker than ever with anger.

Her marriage to my father, I would learn later, had always been difficult. Mama had been only thirteen years old when he had arrived in Highfield, a man nearly fifty years old, with two marriages behind him. According to traditional custom at the time, marriages were arranged, and for some reason, Mama's parents had decided to give her in marriage to him, much to Mama's distress. Mama had spent the first year of her marriage, even when she became pregnant, running away from her husband, seeking refuge back with her parents. They returned their young daughter every time, forcing her to go back to the husband she did not want. I was born out of this unhappy union, when Mama was only fourteen years old.

'I love you, Mama. Can't we just be happy together?' That was what my four-year-old mind felt, but I was not old enough yet to express it in words.

So I loved these times when she had, had some beer, either alone, or with some of her girlfriends. Beer helped Mama forget her misery for a while. It gave her the only comfort she had. The times when she drank beer with me were quiet, contented, dreamy times. She sat quiet and I could get close to her. My brother John, almost two, would play nearby. She'd even cuddle me.

The sun sets swiftly in Africa and our township experienced a brief flurry of activity as people went to and fro, locking away chickens, looking for children, looking for husbands (often in vain). Women busied themselves with their outdoor cooking fires and men gathered

for an evening of beer-drinking as the sun set over the untidy mix of corrugated asbestos roofing and the thatching of the older huts.

Mother got up and lit an oil lamp as the smell of cooking fires drifted in. She busied herself outside with the cooking pot, humming softly to herself. In the violet twilight, the bats flitted overhead as they left the forests around the township.

Then we heard footsteps and a neighbor's dog barked, and Mama stiffened and listened intently. I heard them too—a man's footsteps.

Mama rushed into the bedroom and swilled some water in her mouth. My cough was painful. 'Mama!' I held out my arms.

She turned on me with a look that made my words die on my lips. 'You shut your mouth! You're always fussing.' I began to sob, which made me cough. 'Mama!' I wailed. She came to the bed and grabbed me tight by my upper arms. 'You be quiet! And if you tell him I've been drinking beer—I'll beat you—give you something to really cry about!'

Appalled by her anger, I slid even further under the flowered coverlet, pulling it tight over my head. I watched her through one of the holes in the coverlet.

Mama slid her hands to her hair, and patted it neatly into place. She quickly drank some water, and popped a small onion into her mouth to disguise the smell of the beer. She smoothed her sleeveless cotton frock down over her still slim eighteen-year-old hips. She stared up at the geckos on the ceiling for an instant, composing herself. As she turned to go out of the room, I doubt she even heard my whimpers. The moths, tilting crazily, followed her oil lamp. The geckos watched them go in disappointment.

I lay tense as I heard the footsteps arrive outside our little red-brick house and my father's harsh voice demand, 'Where's my dinner?' as if he had been at work in Salisbury all day and not on one of his periodic disappearances.

My mother's reply was shrill and hostile. I buried my face in the grimy pillow and tried not to hear.

'... and Stephen's ill again, and how I gonna call the doctor with

no money?’

‘That boy is always ill,’ my father sneered. I closed my eyes and clenched the coverlet tighter as my father stomped into the room. He held the oil lamp high above me. Roughly he pulled off the coverlet and rolled me over onto my back. I opened my eyes and peered fearfully up at him.

My mother was now shrilly defending my right to be ill though she sounded fairly angry with me as well. ‘We could all die and you wouldn’t know. You’re not even here. You have another woman—I know you do.’ She was probably right—Mama knew he’d left his last wife and son behind in Malawi some years before. He’d headed off to the goldmines of South Africa, and simply never gone back to them.

But Father stared down at me as if he were looking for something and could not find it. He wheeled on her. ‘Well, why should I be here? Why should I raise this boy? You tell me this is my son. He doesn’t look like me at all. I tell you I am not his father.’ He had said this before, and it always left me with a very strange lost feeling. ‘Who is my papa then?’ I would ask myself.

My mother cried protests, but got too close. My father suddenly sniffed suspiciously. ‘Eletina, you have had beer,’ he snarled.

‘No! No! Always you accuse me.’

I lay still, hoping my father wouldn’t push his big feet under the bed any further—he’d kick over mama’s beer jug. Mother flounced out of the room with him close behind her. My coughs were ignored. As their argument raged in the other room, I lay, racked with pain, crying silent tears. Silence was safest. My parents got angry when I cried aloud.

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When I awoke next morning, everything was different. The house was quiet. Bright sunlight streamed through the curtains as a cheery breeze rustled them with unseen fingers. Chickens clucked contentedly outside the door.

My father washed and shaved in silence in the basin by the back