

Dr. Ryker and Dan Gunther sat in the pastor's office after a good night sleep. The rally the night before paid for the phone bank and some food for the men who came. Most of the pastors slept in the auditorium on the padded pews. Some church and state conflicts could last up to three months before everything was resolved, making a motel stay prohibitive financially for these pastors.

"Dan, if every pastor in the state of Indiana would come here and stand up for this pastor, all of this would be over in a matter of hours."

"I know, David. I have personally called over eighty pastors myself. Many of them send their blessings. A few of them said they would send an offering to help with the defense fund. Out of the two-hundred and fifty Indiana pastors we have called, only forty of them have come. It's unreal."

Dan, most pastors are too busy with their own lives and ministries to be concerned about this one, even if in the long run it does effect their own."

"I had one preacher tell me that he would like to come, but if he did, the authorities would find out where he's from and come after him."

"Then we have those like our friend Haskill over in Indy."

"I don't know what has gotten into him. He used to fight with us at the state legislature. Now, half the preachers I call say they are going to see how Dr. Turner is handling this before committing to us."

"They never realize that it is Emmaus Bible Church today; their church tomorrow."

"Dr. Ryker." Mary Sanders stuck her head through the open door of the Pastor Hancock's office, now used by Dr. Ryker. "Someone wants to see you. They said they are from Washington, D.C."

"Send them in, Mary. Stay here, Dan. I want you to witness this."

A young man in his late twenties and a woman in her late thirties entered the pastor's office, shook hands with the two preachers, and sat across the desk. Both of them were immaculately dressed in business suits and carried expensive leather briefcases. Dan imagined them as having just stepped out of an ad for business wear. The young man seemed to be the one in charge.

"I am Kurt Rogan, and this is Elaine Fife. We're with the International Church of Self-Awareness. Our headquarters is located in Washington, D.C. We have come here to see if we can be of any assistance to you in your stand."

"Exactly what kind of assistance," stated Dr. Ryker.

"Our church has authorized us to contribute to your cause the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars."

Dan Gunther's eyes grew to over twice their normal size.

"Also," the woman said, "since we have been fighting government regulation and encroachment for years, even all the way to the Supreme Court, we are authorized to offer you the law firm who works for us. They have agreed to take your case."

"I don't think we're interested," said Ryker calmly.

"Let's be reasonable, Dr. Ryker," stated the young man. "We are both fighting the same enemy, and for the same cause; religious liberty."

"What is the catch, Kurt?"

“There is no catch, Doctor. All we ask is that you let our people handle the legal arguments in court. That is all.”

“You are the people who are so against animals being used in scientific experimentation, correct?”

“Why, yes, we are,” stated the young man.

“Then why do you want to use this pastor and this church as your own guinea pigs for your Constitutional arguments? No, I say we keep it just as I is.”

“Doctor, you know you will never raise enough money for this kind of defense. Your kinds of churches will not support this kind of conflict.”

“Maybe not, Kurt, but if we lose, at least the God of the Bible will be pleased with our efforts. I’d rather be poor, with my God, than be rich with cult money.”

The two did not flinch when the term *cult* was used.

Then woman answered, “It is your choice, Pastor.”

“Not really. It is God’s choice. And He doesn’t want us to be unequally yoked with unbelievers.”

“As you wish, Sir....”

The two rose from their chairs and picked up their briefcases. They turned toward the door.

“By the way,” added Ryker, “how much are you going to donate to the cause of religious liberty if you can’t have total control?”

“Our organization has not authorized any funds to go out under those circumstances.”

“In other words, you are no better than the government you fight against. You both want to control this church for your own financial gain.”

The two walked toward the door as the young man added, “We do hope you will win. It will help us, too.”

“And since I am not supposed to wish you Godspeed, I hope you trip on the way out.”

After the two were sufficiently down the hall, Dan Gunther said, “Twenty-five thousand dollars?”

“I’d rather lose everything than take money from a cult that is sending hundreds of thousands of people to hell, Dan.”

“I know. Speaking of hundreds of thousands of people, I’ve called and notified everyone on our list about the midnight vigil at the courthouse.”

“How about the television people...?”

“The only one committed is channel thirteen.”

“If we had hundreds of thousands, we would get more media.”

“I think I can come up with an idea about that. We may not get all the media this time, but wait until the next vigil after this one.”

“You are here awfully early doing research, Mr. Jones,” said Professor Gannon, standing next to the table where Randy had his face embedded in volume one of Blackstone’s Commentaries. Because of Randy’s full concentration in his reading, the words of the law professor startled him. He looked up at the elderly man.

“Well, with professors like you, some of us have to put in all the overtime we can.”

Gannon smiled down at the student. "So, you are helping that church in Crawfordsville."

Randy was amazed at the insight of the professor. "How did you know?"

The law professor produced a book from behind him and held it open for the young student to see. "You left *Brown versus Board of Education* face down on the copy machine, plus that mistaken identity in the hall yesterday."

"I am just helping them with a little legal research. It's no big deal."

"Are you helping their attorney?"

"No, from what I gather, they are not going to have an attorney represent them."

"Do they know what they are doing?"

"I think they have procedure down. They just need help with research in case they have to appeal."

"Randy, you surprise me. I always took you for the future ultimate, corporate lawyer." Gannon smiled again.

The young man returned the smile. "A lot has happened lately to make me want to root for the underdog."

"I can say that I am pleased with your course. Now maybe you will wish you had listened more closely in my Constitutional Law class last year."

Randy took the little reproof with a nodding of his head, realizing he squeezed out a "C" in the class, which was his lowest grade while in law school.

Changing the subject, Randy said, "So what is your opinion about the situation in Crawfordsville?"

"It seems to me to be a set-up situation. Probably not the ACLU, because it's not timed right for court.... It is probably the Welfare Department, because win or lose this case; they can draw enough attention to it to get legislation passed before the case is done."

The young law student became intrigued with his teacher's analysis. "They sure have messed it all up in the press."

"That's because the press is the tool whereby you change public opinion so that the public will vote for more stringent laws. You see, the ordinary person does not know that in order to preserve an appealable argument, you need to remain silent, show an injury, demand your rights at all times, and everything else that was in the notes you copied from Jenkins in order to study for my final exam."

Randy thought, *How did he know about Jenkin's notes*, but said, "So what would you advise them to do?"

"Randy, what did you get in your Corporate Law class?"

Showing a perplexed face, he said, "An A-plus."

"Uh-huh, I thought so. Randy, your problem is that you view this church as a corporate structure, and I view them as a group of people who have a common problem. In other words, you're looking at *Brown versus Board of Education* and wishing that this church were Mr. Brown. I look at the church and see an entire group of Mr. Browns. If you want to win over public opinion, do not show only this church to the public; show them all the people whose rights are being violated."

"I think I am beginning to see what you are saying."

"Each parent has the right to educate their child in the way that they want. The only requirement here in Indiana is that they be educated 'equivalent' means. Therefore, all

these parents want their children educated in this church's preschool. Now what looks worse, the Welfare coming after a lone church, or the Welfare coming after thirty or forty sets of Indiana parents?"

"Of course.... Nearly everyone in the state would rally behind thirty sets of parents being wronged at the same time. How can sixty to eighty parents be denied their constitutional right to educate their children?"

"Bingo. And I hope you can find the time to take my class again before you graduate. You might even contribute something the next time."

The old professor walked away from the young man without waiting for another response. In deep thought for a few moments, Randy pulled out his pen and started writing furiously as he outlined his plan to present to Lee and Laura.

"You will prosecute this man to the fullest extent of the law. Won't you, Mr. Riley?"

The prosecutor looked over at Ms. Hyde-White as she said his name. He remained quiet for the time being, taking in the magnitude of the strange meeting in City-County board Chairman Douglas Springer's office. Riley read the faces of everyone present. Hyde-White had firmness in her face, matched only by the tone in her voice. Thomas Boyd looked as though he wanted to crawl under a table each time the prosecutor gazed into his face. Fellow Bar member Victor Venchenzo revealed no emotion at any time through his dark beard and mustache. His friend Doug Springer never looked up from his desk.

"I always prosecute to the best of my ability, Ms. Hyde-White." They all could see a touch of irritation in Riley's eyes; a man not noted for hiding his feelings well.

Arnold Sawyer entered the room and took the final chair, next to his friend and boss.

At least the odds are evening out, thought Riley as his friend sat down.

"Attorney Venchenzo's firm has done most of the legal work for the state Welfare Department for the past ten years. They wrote the procedures which our office carries out." She continued. "We believe he can assist you in prosecuting this very important case."

Seeing his friend's face turn red prompted Doug Springer to come to his defense. "Buster Riley's one of the best prosecutors in the state. You can be assured that he will do an outstanding job in this case."

"If there is a case," said the prosecutor as he stared at Boyd.

The woman's vice became shrill. "There most assuredly *is* a case?"

Looking over at Sawyer, Riley asked, "What did you find out, Arnie?"

The smooth voice of the investigator always came out with calmness; totally the opposite of his friend's. "I have been to each and every set of parents who have their children enrolled in the Day Care. I found twenty sets who said absolutely nothing and five sets who had nothing but praise for the pastor and church. Their children all seem quite normal to me. The other twenty sets, well, I was not allowed to see their children."

"I know there is something going on. They're hiding something." These were the first two words out of Boyd's mouth, and Riley just stared at him and shook his head.

“Boyd, you’re an idiot,” said the prosecutor. “Why don’t we torture all those parents until they admit their child has a bruise on him, and then we can torture them for having put the bruise there? Then we can torture them for lying to us. What do you people want anyway?”

The woman spoke. “We have all the evidence we need with the Swartz woman’s little girl.”

“First, lady, there absolutely was no physical abuse; much less the sexual abuse stuff you’ve been feeding the press. Second, Marie Swartz is a Welfare caseworker,” reminded the prosecutor. “With that kind of evidence, I’m dropping the case.”

Anna shot a glance at the councilman. “Mr. Springer?”

Doug Springer picked up his telephone and pressed a one and seven other numbers. They all waited.

“Yes, this is Councilman Springer. The Senator is expecting my call.”

Another short wait seemed much longer.

“Just a moment, Senator...” The councilman cupped the receiver with his hand as he held it across his desk. “Buster, this call is for you.”

Riley stood from his chair and walked over to his friend’s desk. He could see beads of perspiration on Doug’s face. His friend still did not look at him.

“Hello?”

“Hello, Buster, this is Gary. How are you today?”

The prosecutor did not appreciate the friendliness in the tone of the senator on the other end of the line. “I’m fine. Senator, what is this all about?”

“Buster, I was to be called should you decide to try to drop the case you are on. Since you are on the line, I suppose that is the decision you have made. I am afraid we cannot allow you to do that. Should you continue with your stubbornness, I am afraid that the City-County Council will vote to remove you from the case and appoint Mr. Venchenzo as a special prosecutor.”

“If they do, Senator, I will go public with this whole stinking episode. I’ll blow the lid off of this case before you could get anyone together for a vote!”

Laughter came at the other end of the phone.

“They already took the vote, Buster. It was contingent upon whether you cooperated or not. So technically, you were off the case long before this meeting. Should you decide to go public, I will just go a little more public, and let them know how you were removed from the case because of prejudice. The whole council will back me up.”

Riley looked at Springer, whose face continued to look down at his desk. He seethed as he thought of every angle. If he did not take the case, he knew that both the pastor and the church would suffer. If he took it, it would be against his principles, but at least he could be in charge to make sure there was justice involved.

As calmly as his investigator friend’s voice, he said, “All right, Senator Allen. I’ll cooperate.”

“We all figured you would. Remember, we did not have this little chat. Good-bye.”

He handed the phone to Springer, who placed it in its cradle. Slowly he turned around, walked over to his seat, and sat down.

“Now will somebody tell me how to prosecute a case with absolutely no evidence?”

Vechenzo spoke. "We charge Hancock with physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse. Any lawyer he gets will pressure him to plea bargain it down to only the emotional abuse."

"What if he won't plea bargain?"

"Then we prove the emotional abuse charge. With a jury, I feel the odds of conviction are fifty-fifty."

"What evidence is there of emotional abuse...?"

"The pastor always has the children in the school chapel meetings. This girl has confessed that the pastor told the children that if they were not saved, they would go to hell. This statement has very much upset the child, causing deep emotional problems in her life, according to the psychiatric evaluations. Place her and the psychiatrist on the stand, and Mr. Hancock is defeated."

"What about the church Day Care?"

"We will split the two cases," answered Venchenzo. "You may handle that case alone. You just need to wait until this Jackson is apprehended. Then simply take the infractions Welfare found against the Day Care and use them."

"You mean the two dead flies they confiscated, and the broken fan, and the pictures of crumbs on the floor? What in the world kind of case can you make on that kind of evidence?" Riley found himself back in his challenging mood.

"Actually, we do not care, Mr. Riley," said Ms. Hyde-White. "By the time that case makes it to trial, we will have our legislation and can enter the Day Care legally."

The three Welfare people filed out of the office, leaving the county officials to themselves. Springer stood up from his desk and looked out the window.

"Doug, level with me," the voice of the prosecutor showed concern and care. "What does Gary Allen have on you? I need to know."

"Buster, I can't tell you," he said quietly, still staring out of the window.

"By not being able to tell me, tells me it's pretty bad."

"That's only a guess, Buster."

"If I find out, and it's connected to your office, you know I'll have to nail you, my friend."

"If I'm going to be nailed, Buster, I trust it will be by you and not that other crowd."

"Maybe some day I'll get the opportunity to prosecute the person who has this on you."

"Maybe...maybe."