

The clock on the back wall in the sanctuary of Emmaus Bible Church read six o'clock as Lee Jackson passed under it after entering from the foyer into the auditorium. Lee glanced over his shoulder to see if he was late to this specially called Morning Prayer meeting. He smiled as he looked at the clock and kept walking up the center aisle toward the front pews. No one had yet realized, or probably would in the future, that it was the new associate pastor who miraculously found the way to start every service on time and cause the habitual late-comers to arrive early just by setting this clock back three minutes. It was humorous to him to be on the platform before the service, opening his songbook to the first hymn, only to see the normal late-comers rush in, finding out they still had one minute until the service started.

Pastor Hancock entered from the office area to the front and left of the auditorium. Two of the deacons, Daryl Snyder and Simon Brown, followed directly behind him locked in conversation. The pastor shook hands with all those who had sacrificed to be at this meeting, thirteen people in all. Present were George and Henrietta Fuller, Bill and Brenda Owens, Roger and Helen Bowers, Dr. Vince Kirkwood, Arly Richards, and the other church deacon, Wayne Pollard.

The Pastor took a music stand from off the platform and placed it in front of the left section of pews. After welcoming everyone, he started with a brief explanation.

"I want to thank you all for coming out so early this morning. When I announced this special prayer meeting last night in the service, I didn't know how many people could rearrange their schedules in order to be here. I called you here for one purpose only, and that is to pray for God to place a hedge of protection around our church building and our church families. I knew when we started the educational ministries this fall, that we would be opening ourselves up to the direct attack of Satan. I can say that God moved upon our hearts to start these ministries, so if He started them, then He's going to have to protect them. Satan always goes after the most vulnerable ministries of a church. We must prepare ourselves for this attack. We must stay unified. We must pray together for a revival in our hearts and in the hearts of the people who call this church their home.

"We were placed here by God Almighty as a church in order to do battle against the forces of evil. We have battled for years to capture those who called the Devil their Father. We have won many of these people to the Lord. Now, hopefully for a short time, the battle will change to a defensive one. We will be the ones attacked, not doing the attacking. I have preached for years that we must prepare ourselves not only to go out and fight the battle, but also to band together and be able to effectively fight a defensive war. We must constantly remind ourselves of the number one rule of fighting a unified, defensive battle. That rule is, and you've heard me say it hundreds of times, 'Mouth closed, church open; mouth open, church closed'.

"Most of you will realize now why I spent so much time and effort training you and teaching you these truths. You will go through times of not understanding what is going on, or why. At times like that, please do not hesitate to call me and ask me. Remember, we can never be defeated from without. God as promised to protect His

church. The only way we can be defeated is from within. That to me is sobering truth. We must go to prayer. Do any of you quickly have anything you would like to add?"

"Pastor, may I say something?" It was Arly Richards from the right side of the group. Arly, at 92, was still actively farming his crops. For as far back as anyone in the church could remember, Arly had not missed a service the church had. Everyone knew how much he loved and respected his pastor and his church. When this old Christian farmer spoke, even the youth in the church would listen quietly.

"Certainly, Arly."

"Pastor, the reason I'm here this morning is because the Lord has placed a tremendous burden on my heart. I was sitting on my tractor earlier this morning, when the thought came to me about what all the Lord has done for this old man. The only thing I have left to fight for, since my Greta went home to be with the Lord, is this church, you brothers and sisters, and my Pastor. I don't have any children in the ministries here, but I don't have to have a reason to do right. Following the man that God has placed over this flock is a matter of principle. I've done it in the past, and the Lord has blessed me as a result, Pastor, you can count on me when the battle begins." Arly sat down as several "Amen's" sounded from the other men in the room.

"Thank you, Arly. We'll have one more person say something, but please be quick."

Bill Owens stood. Bill had never spoken in front of others before, and everyone was overwhelmed, including his wife, who sat with eyes opened to twice their normal size as she gazed up at her husband.

"Well, Pastor, you, uh, know something has, uh, happened if I, uh, stand up, uh, and, you know, talk. B-Brenda and I decided last night, when you talked about the Wel-, uh, Welfare Department, that we were gonna come in here and pray every morning when we dropped the boys off. It, uh, you know, ticks me off to think that there are people in this world who would hate God so much to try to destroy these ministries. We're behind you, Preacher. I, uh, just wanted you to, you know, know how I felt."

Brenda Owens looked over at her husband, her eyes glistening, and took hold of his hand. Simon Brown stood.

"Pastor Hancock, let me briefly say that you can be assured we all will stand with you, because we all love this church with all our hearts. None of us would let anything or anyone harm this work. This church has done a great work for the Lord over the years. I have been here Twenty-seven years, for fifteen of those years I have served as a deacon. I have seen several pastors come and go, but God's church still stands. This church is a lighthouse; a beacon to the lost and dying world around us. Even though in the beginning I was against starting a school and a Day Care, I certainly will do everything I can to make sure the church stays open."

"We'll not take anymore testimonies," said their leader. "Maybe someone can share on tomorrow. Let's get a partner and gather around the altar and pray."

With serious and humble faces, each person came to the altar and paired up with a person. Pastor Hancock prayed with Dr. Kirkwood. Deacons Daryl Snyder and Wayne Pollard knelt together. George Fuller knelt next to Bill Owens. Mrs. Fuller grabbed Brenda's hand and went in front of the first pew. Roger Bowers prayed with his wife Helen, and Lee helped Arly to his knees, who was praying before he was even down. Simon Brown prayed at the left end of the altar.

Fifteen minutes later, four other couples joined these as car doors would be heard outside the church from those dropping off children for the day.

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To Judge Jones, it seemed like a secretive meeting. To the others in the small, but exclusive group, it was breakfast as usual. Having an attendant park his car as he pulled up to the front of the Westin Inn across from the Capitol building was no strange occurrence. Having a young lady escort him through the lobby to the elevators, up one flight, and in the opposite direction of the original place for the meeting, Graffiti's restaurant, was strange. He had wondered if the three knocks on the door of the Senate Suite was a code. Upon entering the lavish surroundings, the judge was led to a second room of the suite in which a large breakfast buffet was set up. Coming out of an adjacent room was the Senate Majority Leader, Frank Haley; the man who arranged this meeting. Haley stood taller than the judge by several inches. His black hair hid the fact of his many years in public service. The lines on his forehead and his face portrayed the many smiles a politician has to show over his political life. Years of party leadership required him to be a man who delved into the personal lives of those with whom he dealt. The outgoing personality had a way of making each person he came in contact with feel that he was their best friend with their best interests in mind. He made a good Majority Leader.

"Randall... so good of you to come." The smile was automatic. "Let's go ahead and fill our plates. The others will be here shortly."

"Actually, Frank, I'm not too hungry this morning."

"Come on, now. One needs one's strength to wrestle snakes."

Judge Jones grabbed some toast, a few grapes, and some apple juice. Upon being seated, three knocks were heard in the outer room, and shortly after, two others entered the buffet room.

"Anyone notice you coming up here?" Haley stood while asking his question to the man and woman who had entered.

"Probably not," said the tall, graying woman, dressed in a dark blue business woman's outfit. "Roger led me to three floors on three different elevators, while pushing every button every time we got off one."

"On a news worthy day like this, and with press maggots crawling, it's best to be cautious," said the man.

"Randall, this stunningly beautiful woman is Patricia Milton, who is on the Judiciary Committee, and this handsome gentleman, upon whom greatness is destined, is Roger Parrish, Chairman of the same committee."

"Cut the political jargon, Frank. You already have our vote," laughed the chairman. "Hello, Judge Jones. We have met before."

"Yes, Senator Parrish. You used to handle cases in my court, didn't you?"

"That's been well over fifteen years ago, when I was just starting out in law as an assistant prosecutor."

"And when I was just starting out as a judge." He turned to the woman. "And how do you do, Senator Milton?"

"With Frank's compliment, quite well now. Please call me Pat."

With introductions finished, the two filled their plates and took a seat around the table.

“Randall,” said Haley seriously, “The Governor wanted me to have this meeting in order for us to discuss with you the direction the hearing will go today. Call it, if you will, a briefing, for want of a better term. Also, he wanted me to assure you that by the end of the day, you will have a favorable recommendation to the Senate by the Judiciary Committee. After that, it’s only the formality of a Senate vote, and you’re the next Supreme Court Justice of the State of Indiana.”

Senator Parrish continued. “Judge Jones, I’ve already polled the committee by phone or in person. The vote will probably be seven to two, or at the worst, six to three.”

“Here is the list of committee members,” inserted the lady Senator, handing the judge a sheet of paper. “The first two are Roger and myself. Underneath our names are the four other commitments, Senators Garr, Grimes, Ireland, and Vorbach. The next one down, Senator Winiger, so he may come around. The other two names are your enemies. Senator Betty Snodgrass and Senator Gary Allen.”

“We wanted you to be aware of the fact,” continued the Majority Leader, “that the two of them will be out for blood. They know they can’t possibly stop your confirmation, but they can use this opportunity, and the expense of your reputation, to promote all of their causes while they have a platform to do so.”

“What you are telling me is,” summed up the judge, “if I can answer Senator Snodgrass and Senator Allen’s questions, the rest is downhill?”

Smiles and nods of reassurance came from the legislators seated at the table.

“One thing would be helpful for us to know, though...” stated Senator Milton hesitantly. “Is there anything in your past that the opposition could dig up to make you look bad? Any drug usage, or alcohol, or extra-marital affairs?”

“It would make it a lot easier on you, Randall,” said his friend, “if either Pat or Roger could bring something sordid up first. They could make light of it, or pass it off as nothing. It steals the opposition’s thunder, if you understand what I mean.”

“Even something from as far back as college becomes all Allen or Snodgrass needs to make you look bad,” added Parrish.

The judge thought for a few seconds. “Perhaps I don’t understand the mind of a legislator. You want me to tell you my past indiscretions so that they can be made light of, instead of being used to hurt me?” Bitter sarcasm enunciated each word.

“Please, don’t get upset, Randall. We’re only trying to help you.”

“The only thing you did was remind me why I never wanted to become a politician, Frank. For the record, there is nothing like that in my past. If anyone come up with something, they’ll have to fabricate it. If you will excuse me, I need to meet with my family and pick up some things at my office. Thank you for the breakfast.” The judge arose and moved out of the room. Frank Haley followed.

They shook hands at the door. “Interesting meeting, Frank.”

“We meant no harm, Randall.”

“No offense taken.”

“The other side doesn’t play fair, my good friend. The only way to keep them at bay is for us to play unfair and counter their moves.”

“There is another way, Frank.”

“What’s that?”

“The truth,” stated the judge as he turned and walked down the hallway toward the stairs leading directly to the hotel lobby.

Returning to the others, the Majority Leader sat back down and stared at the food on his plate.

“Your friend doesn’t like playing politics, does he Frank,” said Parrish.

“A Statesman usually doesn’t, Roger.”

Pat Milton added, “Too bad. A man who can’t be controlled doesn’t go far these days. If he would have showed some cooperation, the result could have been different.”

“It’s a shame. He probably could have been the best Supreme Court Justice in the history of Indiana.” Even though feeling truly sorry, Frank Haley still smiled.

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Across the courtyard from the Westin Inn, five people had just finished having their breakfast dishes cleared away at the Loft restaurant, located on the second floor of the Hyatt Regency Hotel. They were all now absorbed in reading the contents of several file folders. Every so often, one would stop reading and write a line or two on a legal notepad each of them had on the table in front of them. The sharply dressed man with the dark beard looked around at the others.

“Well, we may not have enough to stop him, but we can make it interesting,” said VelDeggio.

“I can take him out. When I get through questioning him with what you people have given me, he’ll never forget the name Senator Gary Allen.”

“Calm down, Gary. Save it for the hearing,” stated Daniel Frazier, head of the Indiana Civil Liberties Union.

“Let him alone, Dan. I love it when a man can’t control his emotions,” offered Monica Parke of the Indiana Chapter of the National Organization of Women, more commonly known as NOW.

“I love it, too.” The voice belonged to Joel Ashton, president of Justice, Inc., the homosexual lobby group in the state.

“What did you think of the article I wrote this morning, Monica? Did I quote you enough?”

“Joe, I couldn’t have written my position any better myself. If you ever get out of the newspaper business, you could have a place on my staff.”

“I thought it would be timely to write exactly who is against this nomination for Supreme Court Justice.”

“I didn’t go far enough, Joe,” said Attorney Frazier.

“The News is still a conservative paper, Dan. To continue having a voice, I have to compromise some.”

“Don’t talk to me about Freedom of the Press, Joe. The ACLU invented the First Amendment.”

Allen spoke. “Did anyone check out this woman he was engaged to?”

VelDeggio responded. “I called the number several times, but never got an answer.”

“This may be my best line of questioning. I just need some recent connection between them.” Senator Allen grabbed the files in front of him and stood up. “You have

done a good job of researching this man. I need to go to my office and check this out with my sources. If my hunch is right, this may be the day when I rewrite the History books.”

“Your Father would be proud,” stated VelDeggio to the departing young senator.

“His father would have run us all out of the state,” commented Frazier to the remaining party.

“Joe, how did that hot head get elected in the first place?” asked Monica.

“You mean, if people really knew he was a hod head. It’s probably the best kept secret in this century. His father, Vance Allen, you remember him, don’t you, Daniel?” Frazier smile, nodded, and raised his eyebrows all at the same time. “Well, United States Senator Vance Allen was one of the most respected and powerful politicians in the country, much less Indiana. Even though I hated the guy, I never wrote a degrading word about him. That’s how much I respected him. Plus, I would have lost my job and my head if I ever wrote a bad column about him. He could have run for President in 1972 if it wasn’t for the fact that he loved his state more than his country.

“Well, enter the little brat. He’s the only person his dad couldn’t control. I guess ol’ Vance wanted to continue serving Indiana from the grave, because he groomed little Gary in his footsteps. He taught him how he needed to act in order to be a politician; even resigned from the U.S. Senate prematurely in order to help campaign with his son. Vance promoted him at every opportunity and got his son in the news as often as he could. Vance called me one day and asked if I would write an article about how the two of them were so similar. I wrote it, too. My editor never laughed so hard. I said they both had hair, and teeth, and arms, etc., etc., but in character were as similar as a star is to a worm. Needless to say he didn’t print it. Anyway, the people voted Gary Allen in. I guess they figured half an Allen is better than no Allen. And here we sit, with half an Allen doing our dirty work. His dad must be doing graveyard somersaults. Almost makes you want to pray, doesn’t it?”

“Not me,” said Joe.