

FELICIA

By Alan Powell

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ISBN 1-60003-040-8

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Cast: one female

Lights up on FELICIA, a heavy set jovial black woman in her late forties down on one knee in prayer, cradling a closed Bible in her hands.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you for giving me the strength to endure the hard times and the times that are ahead. I am by your side no matter where you take me. 'Cause I know that wherever you take me, it's gonna be beautiful. Where there is no darkness and I'm invincible. Amen.

(SHE rises and does the sign of the cross and steps back taking a seat in the front pew. SHE looks about.)

It's so beautiful in here. So peaceful. The house of God... My man used to say, "Go git your praise on, woman. Go on. Nothin's gonna change while you're gone, anyway... I'll still be here and you'll still be my angel." I thought he meant well by it but I was never sure. He smiled when he said it and he seemed sincere... It was the only thing he said that lit me up during our eighteen years of marriage so I wanted to believe he meant well by it... It was just the way he said it. Made me feel uneasy and I never had the nerve to ask what he meant either. Hell, I could always predict his behavior on a question like that. A slow turn of the head, I could feel his glare before he even had it in his eyes. This long snarlin' type of look that pretty much said everything I needed to know. God, did that ever scare the hell outta me. I could feel his anger cut right through me. It was quite the embarrassment when we were out with friends and that look came up. I'd just laugh it off, like it was nothing. He didn't. He just sat there. Then in the car, "Wait 'till we get home," he'd say. "If we weren't around such a fine type of people I'd of whipped you right then and there. Man, you know how to piss me off! Why do ya do it? Why do ya do it, Felicia?" I'd just sit there with a blank expression. Not knowing what to say. For fear that saying the wrong thing would get me slapped. "I'm sorry, sweetheart. I didn't mean nothing by it. It was an innocent joke." WHHHHAP...!

(Imitating the backhand, SHE immediately goes back to that moment in time.)

"What did I do? I didn't do nothing!" But I paid for it. Time and time again.

(SHE closes her eyes and hums 'Amazing Grace'.)

... Open space. Darkness all around the sides. But it's light where I'm standing. So bright I can feel the heat. Hmmm. Feels good. I never thought I'd see that light.

(SHE hums a few more bars then opens her eyes.)

It was either him or me. "Damn woman, get it together or get the hell outta my house!" And when I got up to go he'd shoot me right back down, "Where the hell you think you're going?" He drove me nuts. Man, if I had a gun I could've shot him twenty times over. And then I'd get to feeling guilty for not trying hard enough. Maybe it was me. Maybe I need to see this whole thing from the other side. That would be his side. And seeing it from there always made me look bad. So I was always the one in need of improvement. With an attitude and outlook like that it's no wonder it took me eighteen years to smell the coffee. And man was it strong when I finally did smell it. I had my hand on the door for a long time. But I just couldn't turn the handle. I hadn't the strength to push it open. I peered through the peep hole and saw what could be. But that wasn't for me. I hadn't earned it. I had to stay with my man and work things through. And together we could walk through that door of opportunity. Yeah, together. Amen. And the good true Lord looked down upon His people and said 'he who knoweth me shall know the kingdom of heaven and all that it bestows upon its angels'... One day I pictured Christ in all His glory looking at me in my sleep. I was turned away and He asked me to look into his eyes so that I may find redemption.

(SHE begins to tear up.)

And I couldn't look into his eyes. I tried. Man, did I try. But I just couldn't bring myself to look into the eyes of a man that I knew loved me no matter what. I had pushed Jesus away. He was no longer in my heart. And I felt so lost...so lost.

(Long pause.)

When I told the judge about the beatings and that Neil would be abused too - he laughed. He laughed. The damn judge laughed. And I looked around and saw my husband smiling and making some snide comment to his lawyer - They were on easy street. Hell, They didn't even have to show up. Didn't make one bit of difference what I said. It was just some power thing for them. Just to spite me.

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