

# A White Stone

*A prophetic novel that addresses heart preparation  
and godly solutions that allow Jesus Christ to live His passionate life through you as the only  
proper response  
to His life, death, and resurrection*

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Bible refers to a time and season that will usher in the final days of life as we know it. It states that there will be wars, rumors of wars, and great upheaval in all nations as a purifying of the church, and as a call to many who do not know God or do not believe that He is an integral part of everything that happens, and that what is evident in our daily lives corresponds to what is happening in the unseen world of the heavenlies.

The book, A White Stone, has been written to display the transformation that must take place in the church so that she might become a true representation of how God wants everyday people to live as passionately as Christ did in a world looking for honest answers to life's questions. It demonstrates the power of God at work when He has surrendered vessels for His use, and the true freedom an individual can have when he or she has entered into the peace of living under the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ, which results in the ability to live above the entanglements of surrounding circumstances. It is a fictional account of probable coming events, divided into sections that flow into one another with no definitive time boundaries.

The characters are a composite of people Merry and I have known and some others that we would like to know. Their lives are intended to relay to the reader that the Spirit, the power, and the quality of the life that Jesus lived as our example are available to each of us as we surrender fully to Him. In a time when fanatics with dead hearts claim that they are representing God in their murderous actions, God is raising up a standard of integrity and love that overcomes any despicable action - disarming an enemy and presenting the Lord's real life of love through His people to nullify the grim death of hate.

Since its debut in 1997, A White Stone has been revised to better address the issues arising in our rapidly changing world as Christ would. In our own nation, we have gone from functioning as a carefree society not very familiar with the need to exercise caution as we travel, work, and play to a people who must ponder and prepare for drastic life changes as part of our daily routine. We now understand that we live in a world in which peril will most likely invade our lives at any unpredictable moment and we have no clue as to how to deal with it in a Christ-like manner.

Merry and I realize that these circumstances do not necessarily mean that we are living in biblical end times. During many seasons in history, people have felt that they were living near the end; and in looking for the immediate return of Jesus, produced confusion and regrettable actions because of their misguided zeal. There is a need to be careful.

In these days, however, it does appear as if the Lord is exponentially accelerating the pace at which predicted events are coming to pass. So we must take note.

During these very important and very perilous times, we are convinced that our Father in heaven is bringing us to Himself by making us aware of our need of Him. We believe He is challenging each one of us to allow Him to make us His holy people and sense that He is willing to impart Himself, His peace, and His kind of freedom from fear to anyone who desires it.

Although A White Stone does take the reader into an end-time scenario, I am convinced that our Lord would have each of us live the kind of life portrayed in this story on a daily basis, so that we might truly prosper through perilous times. Living passionately for Jesus and for the best interests of others is our directive as followers of Christ, no matter where we are in the times and seasons of the Biblical calendar.

Jim Corbett

A White Stone will rebuild your confidence in Father God and the work of the cross. Through the Holy Spirit, it will refresh your heart, reestablish your hope for the future, make you fall in love with Jesus all over again, help you realign your priorities; and reignite the wonder of the life of freedom that was won for you on Calvary. You need to come home again to Jesus through the overcoming power of His blood!

*Revelation 2:17 AMP He who is able to hear, let him listen to and heed what the Spirit says to the assemblies (churches). To him who overcomes (conquers), I will give to eat of the manna that is hidden, and I will give him a white stone with a new name engraved on the stone, which no one knows or understands except he who receives it.*

*From Our Father's Heart*

*How many people have seen My Son in your life? How many have chosen to serve Me through My Son because they have seen Him in you? How many have turned from their ways to My ways because of your ways? Does your neighbor know that you are My tabernacle? Does your enemy know that you are told to lay your life down for him and have agreed to do so? Do you know that I love the abortionist, the pornographer, the homosexual? Do you know that I have sent you to them that they might see My Son through you, so that they might accept Him? Do you have the eternity of your every contact in mind when you address them? If not, why not?*

## CHAPTER ONE

*“...Go out into the highways and hedges and urge and constrain [them] to yield and come in, so that my house may be filled.” Luke 14:23 (amp.)*

*“Behold, I am sending you out like sheep in the midst of wolves; be wary and wise as serpents, and be innocent (harmless, guileless, and without falsity) as doves. ...do not be anxious about how or what you are to speak; for what you are to say will be given you in that very hour and moment.” Matthew 10:16,19 Amp*

“O.K., God, what in the world am I doing in a neighborhood like this?” Tom Bracken silently asked as he walked along the neglected, decaying sidewalk, trying to remain in the lighted areas of his surroundings. “I must have been nuts to come here all by myself.”

Tom had been told by his boss to determine the amount of damage that had been inflicted on the hospital, which was given to the firm “to do with as they pleased.” No one wanted it because it was located in an extremely dangerous neighborhood and because the building appeared far too antiquated to renovate although it had been in moderate use until a recent bombing blew out the front door and some of the windows.

Now that he saw the damage and overall condition of the building, he made up his mind to hand this job over to Jimmy, his apprentice, as soon as he got back to the office. The moment he stepped in the door he knew he wanted no part of this project. In fact, he couldn’t understand why his boss would even consider it in the first place.

Almost fleeing the building, Tom traveled at a fast pace, as his assessment of the neighborhood barraged his thoughts. The pace and his constant vigilance sent him tripping over a small chunk of concrete, which had separated itself from the overused and abused sidewalk. A nearby, rusty lamppost stopped his fall as he lunged and held it tightly until he could regain his footing.

“Boy, I’m sure glad I don’t live anywhere near this place.”

As he leaned against the post, he raised his leg across his knee to look at the scuff inflicted by the concrete. Wetting his finger and rubbing the damage to his shoe, he mumbled, wishing the posted signs had allowed him to park closer. Traffic had been minimized in the area of the hospital since several bombings had taken place in a short period of time.

“Once I’m out of here, I’m gone for good,” he vowed in his heart as he zeroed in on the location of his car and hurried toward it.

Tom’s vehicle was now only four blocks away in a well-lit parking lot. He minimized his fear of being alone on the city streets in this kind of neighborhood as each step he took brought him closer to his destination – his getaway car. Once he made it around the corner, he would be able to see the lot. That thought made him feel a little better.

Unfortunately, the darkened block right in front of him caused him to imagine that unthinkable peril lurked behind every bush, down every stairwell and in every yard, especially those that imprisoned vicious-sounding dogs that ran aggressively to the chain link fence as he

passed by. He found himself walking cautiously on the road near the curb just in case one of the fences broke loose as an agitated dog bounded against it, protecting its worthless domain.

Forcing himself to concentrate on the neighborhood architecture – what else would an architect do in this situation?– he avoided escalating his state of mind from fear to panic. Tom marveled as he walked past houses long past their prime. They seemed like silent tombs staring at the dirtied street. Numb from years of neglect, their outward appearance seemed to indicate the dying inside of them.

Totally unfamiliar with this kind of neighborhood, and unaware of any potential for happiness or life of any kind behind the dingy, brown-stained shades, Tom was confused about his feelings. On the one hand, he hated what poverty had done to the people who were living there. Righteous indignation rose up within him. How could this happen? On the other hand, a compassion stronger than he had ever felt began to stir in his heart. Imagine the children, the broken, the hurting, who must live behind the peeled paint of every front door and eventually become a counterpart to the decaying exterior of every residence.

“Did year after year of bad decisions or bad luck, or just plain bad everything bring the residents of the dilapidated structures to this point?” he questioned. “Was there ever a time when someone was able to leave this kind of life?”

Tom felt a different kind of sadness, one that embodied hopelessness and helplessness at the same time. “This must be how some of these people feel all of the time.”

Then he noticed the little American flags in almost all of the windows, symbolizing the owners’ love for their country and the freedoms that they possess. Somehow those tiny flags transformed impersonal dwellings into homes with people very much alive in them; thinking, feeling people with dreams and hopes just like he had.

“How different can we be?” Tom thought. “Maybe some day I should take the time to really get to know someone who lives like this. Maybe...” Reason put an end to those thoughts. Tom knew that a lot more than distance separated him from anyone who lived in this neighborhood.

Passing a hedgerow of dried lilac bushes, Tom was startled as a young boy of eight or nine years of age ran into him while pursuing a basketball down the nearby driveway. In reflex action, Tom caught the ragged object and automatically flipped it back to its owner.

“Nice ball,” was all he could muster as the boy and his playing partner instantly overcame their surprise at his intrusion into their lives and spat foul words of disdain in his direction.

“What you doin’ here, rich man?” they tried to intimidate Tom as he walked a little faster past them toward his mobile refuge. Much to his relief, the presence of two men sitting on a bench at the end of the block stopped the two boys from following him. Their helpless fish was off the hook and by the looks of his clothes, a well-to-do one at that.

As Tom neared the bench sitters, something rose up within his heart that took his mind off his fear. Both men were disabled. One had a leg missing and the other had lost his right arm and shoulder. His face was visibly disfigured, too. Assuming that they had been hurt in some of the past terrorist activities or possibly in Vietnam, his heart of compassion reached out to them. He wanted to do something to help them.

“Maybe I could tell them about the love of Jesus.” The thought took him by surprise - even though he did have his little pocket Bible with him, having gotten into the habit of carrying it around ever since he became youth minister at his church. It was really more for show, a way of making a statement to the kids more than anything. He hadn’t opened it for quite some time. In fact, he couldn’t remember where it was in his briefcase.

“I’m sure these guys have no desire to hear about Jesus or anything else from someone like me,” he rationalized. Anyway, it had been quite some time since he last told anyone about Jesus. He slowed his pace long enough to deliver a simple, wordless acknowledgment and half-hearted smile, and then continued quickly on his way.

Tom didn’t want to wait for the light to change at the intersection, but there was enough traffic to cause him to stop, stand and pray like crazy. With his back to the two men, he could hear their jibes and laughter at his expense as a seeming eternity of seconds passed. Just as he was about to step off the curb, one of the men stopped laughing long enough to address him.

“Hey, stranger,” the man called to him. Tom turned around. “What you doin’ in this neighborhood?” he said with a knowing grin. “You a little outta place, ain’t you?” he continued, giving his buddy a little elbow jab to show he was about to have some fun with the “outsider.” “But them are some pretty nice shoes,” he said, looking at Tom’s shiny, maroon-colored penny loafers.

Tom looked down for a moment at his very out-of-place shoes and then at the one-legged man.

“I could use that right shoe,” the legless man teased as he leaned forward on the bench. The man put his hand to his chin and furrowed his brow as if making a decision on whether or not he should buy the shoe. The comment made both men laugh uproariously. One of them laughed so aggressively that he began to choke, which loosed some phlegm from his throat and sent it flying right next to Tom’s foot.

“You must have some kinda story to tell us po’ city folk,” the second man spoke, becoming suddenly solemn, “so get on with it.”

Tom, startled at the seemingly open invitation and an opportunity to follow through on his thoughts of a little while ago, began telling them that he had just finished an inspection of the hospital down the street and then somehow found himself flowing into a presentation of the gospel as the two men sat stupefied by the stark transition. For a time, they seemed mesmerized and simply stared and listened. As near as Tom could determine, they appeared to be held silent, almost captive, by some unknown force. Then as if released from unseen restraints, both men became visibly agitated, almost angry.

“Look, we got no need for God or Jesus, or any of that religious stuff.”

“We got everything we need right here,” the legless man reaffirmed. “Unless you give me your right shoe,” he continued, looking into Tom’s eyes with a dead serious intensity.

“Yeah, or unless you got some extra money in them fine pockets,” the other man said.

Tom knew that it was time to go. These guys were interested in only one thing from him and it wasn’t Jesus. He knew that if he stayed any longer they would find a way to get it, even in their impaired physical condition. He turned and walked across the road without saying anything. If he hadn’t been frightened out of his wits by the blaring horn that erupted from the car that he had stepped in front of in his haste to get away, he would have been privy to some foul cursings from the two hapless men. When he did reach the other side of the road, he momentarily turned back in time to receive a physical, one-fingered statement of their displeasure.

Actually, Tom was somewhat relieved that the men cut his story short. He still had several blocks to go and the early evening light gave way to an eerie, darkened atmosphere. He couldn’t wait to get inside his car. It was getting late now and growing frightfully darker by the minute. Shadows turned threatening and the somewhat unfamiliar became totally foreign.

Tom began to walk even faster after glancing at his Rolex. Fear rose up in him. He had to consciously repress it or it would easily turn to panic as he heard his own footsteps echoing on the pavement. Almost at jogging speed, Tom turned the corner to Beecher Street when something caught his eye.

“Nice rags, man!” Tom heard from one of the darker doorways.

Tom stopped so fast he almost fell as his leather-soled shoes slipped against the concrete pavement. His eyes, wide with fear, focused on the figure emerging from the shadows.

“Yeah! Hey, look at the Bible Man!” came a second voice from the side of the building, referring to the small Bible that Tom had taken from his briefcase during his conversation with the two men on the bench. Now how he wished he were still a few blocks away, even with them.

The men had been watching Tom for some time, waiting for the right moment to approach him. In fact, they had targeted him the minute they saw his car pull into the parking lot earlier that day. They had considered making their move when he was on his way into the hospital, but decided that it would be easier and safer to do it later - the later the better. All afternoon they plotted their strategy, even practicing their attack while waiting for him to emerge from the hospital’s makeshift yet secured front door. In catlike fashion, the three tracked him all the way back from the hospital, just waiting for the perfect time to act.

Tom spun in reaction to the second voice, then turned back in the direction he had been heading. For an instant, he thought of running toward his car, which was now only two, but seemingly fifty-two blocks away.

“You a preacher man?” came a third voice that belonged to a steely-eyed person who moved in front of him, blocking his only escape. “Preacher Man, you shouldn’t be walking all alone in this part of town,” he continued.

“Yeah,” the first voice said as he moved directly to Tom’s right. “Someone might see those fine clothes and think you might have a lot of money or somethin’,” he continued.

“Do you have a lot of money, Preacher Man?” the third man said as he pulled something from his pocket. Tom heard a definite click. The light from the lone street lamp danced off the shiny metal switchblade knife and as it did, Tom’s heart sank. He could actually feel the blood drain from his face and he knew there was way more to this than money.

As each man became more visible, it struck Tom that even though their faces and clothes were different, they all looked the same. Their baseball caps were all cocked at precisely the same angle; and their eyes, facial expressions and movements all gave the situation the feel and appearance of a well-rehearsed play. It was as though “tough” had been practiced and the next choreographed move could almost be anticipated. It seemed to him that the young men were actually reveling in making him afraid. He sensed that they aimed to draw out this event, giving them more time to instill fear into their prey. They were definitely experts.

Consequently, a sense of fear, anxiety, dread and helplessness greater than Tom had ever felt before swept over him. Unfortunately, an involuntary, nervous smile formed on Tom’s face. This only aggravated his captors. His initial assailant gave him a slap across the face in violent reaction to what looked like a smirk. The second grabbed him by the arm and spun him around, forcing him deeper into the shadows. Tom literally saw his life flash in front of his eyes as the third man, who now proudly displayed his knife, strutted toward him. The man in the shadows held Tom, twisting his arm behind him and secured him by grabbing his hair and jerking his head back. As the man with the knife feathered the side of his neck with the blade, Tom experienced his warm, foul breath against his face and up his nostrils. Playtime was over. Gripping anger and hatred zeroed in on Tom as the man’s face inched closer.

“You think this is funny, Preacher Man?” the man said slowly. “You think you’re gonna live to tell your pretty wife about this? I think we need to show you how funny it’s gonna be to die slowly, right here, right now.”

The man pressed the edge of the knife to Tom’s throat, poised to finish what he’d started. Tom held his breath.

*From Our Father's Heart*

*Do not worry, for I have My hand on you. You shall not lack. Do not look to the things that are said by man. My hand directs the stars, My voice commands the rivers to flow. They would stop if I desired it. My desire is for you to serve Me. Nothing will stop that. Draw close.*

*I notice the terrors of Satan that bluff and talk as if they know what they are saying. They do not know what I have in store other than what I have told them. You shall go forth for I am your God. Not the God that can be changed by the whims of people, but the God that is moved by faith in Me being able to perform what I promise. Have I not promised you?*

*When will you realize the magnitude of My power? When will you begin to truly trust Me? Seek Me for Me; not for what I can do for you, but for who I am as God.*

*You have no idea what I have in store for you, but I am excited by what I see. I am pleased by My people who have said "Yes." When I am praised, all creation knows that I am God.*

## CHAPTER TWO

*“All whom My Father gives (entrusts) to Me will come to Me; and the one who comes to Me I will most certainly not cast out [I will never, no never, reject one of them who comes to Me].”*  
*John 6:37 AMP*

“Oh Lord, help me!” Tom silently pleaded as he waited for the man to cut his throat. Off to his left, he could hear nervous, excited laughter and knew the one “unoccupied” aggressor was ecstatic over the prospect of taking a life. He encouraged the steely-eyed man gleefully, “Poke him a couple of times for me before you finish him off.”

How could this be? All of his life, Tom had taken the safe path, a path with the least potential for harm or misfortune. But now, here he was, moments from death in the hands of three men on a dark street - men that simply seemed to want to vent their anger, frustration and hopelessness on somebody - anybody. Years of emptiness, despair and survival had taken its toll on these young lives; and the value of life had long ago lost its impact because of the hurt, pain and sin that were part of their everyday existence. Now to simply take what they wanted was not enough. They would get what they wanted anyway. There seemed to be a score to settle and Tom was caught in their midst - helpless!

“Is it money you want?” was the only thing Tom could think of to say. “There’s about twenty dollars in my pocket. Take it - it’s yours.”

“Oh, we’ll take it!” came the reply. “But first maybe you should...”

“Maybe he should what?” came a voice from the shadows. At the sound of that voice, the man with the knife pulled back cautiously and the man who locked Tom’s arm and head in position sprang back into the shadows like he’d been contacted by a stun gun.

“Oh Lord, I think I’m going to be sick,” Tom thought as he turned and saw where the voice came from.

“I said, maybe he should what?” the voice said again to the three men, as Tom’s widely opened eyes caught sight of the most imposing gun he had ever seen. It was pointing in their direction.

“Train,” as he was called on the street because of his power in warfare and almost unstoppable battle prowess, stood looking past or through Tom - actually over him - directly at each of the now immobile men. One of the largest men Tom had ever seen - at least seven feet tall with arms and bare chest bursting from a former blue jean jacket, now minus sleeves, buttons and anything else that defied his freedom of movement- Train was somehow his ally in this time of need.

Known and feared on the street as one of the most vicious warriors, nobody - not even two or three - would attempt to try anything against him. His size alone almost guaranteed that someone was going to get badly hurt if they should be foolish enough to risk a confrontation. But more than that, it was well known that Train just didn’t care. Past recklessness, past fearlessness, Train defied pain, defied death - even seemed to welcome them - at any opportunity. It was well known that once something was started with him, only death would stop him - his or yours! And street talk said that more than once that’s what happened to an ignorant challenger.

Tom could only stare at his massive rescuer.

“We don’t mean nothin’, Train,” one of the men said.

“You can have him,” said the steely-eyed man, folding his knife as he continued distancing himself from Tom.

Train stood poised, ready for anything. His eyes danced from one man to another; his gigantic muscles were tightened, gun held steady. Tom stepped to the side, gently massaging his throat as Train moved steadily past him in the direction of the three intruders. The smoothness of his movements defied his massive structure. Tom thought of a poised mountain lion he had seen in a recent movie.

Understandably, the trio’s macho toughness dissolved as if masks had been removed from their faces. At a precise moment in time each knew that they had lost. There was nothing to do but retreat.

Almost as if on command, the three street toughs, now looking and acting more like little boys, turned and ran at breakneck speed. Tom watched them as they disappeared into the darkness. By the time Tom remembered where he was, Train had turned away from the fleeing men and was looking straight at him. Because of his focus on the men, Tom hadn’t noticed that Train had moved within several feet of him. Awestruck by the immense size of the man standing before him, Tom could hear nothing but his own heart beating so loudly he thought that Train must have been able to hear it, too.

“Which was worse,” Tom asked himself, “my fate with the three men whose intent was obviously not the best, or now this- this gorilla minus hair standing in front of me?”

Past feeling, past emotion because of the events that had just occurred, Tom was almost comatose. The man in front of him was so big that Tom felt like he was standing in front of a small building. “Thanks,” was all he finally managed to say from a throat that felt like it had a lump in it the size of a tennis ball as his rescuer placed the revolver at about Tom’s eye level in a pocket on the inside of his jacket. Tom hoped that this actually was a rescue and not someone stealing prey from another, not willing to share the prize.

Tom noticed that the street had become silent. The two men on the bench had disappeared, the sounds of doors and windows closing, even the distant barking of a dog had ceased. So much was happening - so much to think about. Unanswerable questions flooded Tom’s mind: “What should I do? How can I live through this? Is there anyone to help me? Is there anywhere to go?”

Time seemed to stand still, but Tom’s mind raced on. He scanned all of his surroundings, looking for a way out, never even thinking what he would or could do if he found some sort of escape. His legs wouldn’t move. As a matter of fact, the only things he knew to be working in his body were his eyes, which were probably bulging and extremely wide; and his heart, which was beating so loudly he was sure the people behind closed doors could hear it.

Train took about five steps away from Tom to position himself under the street lamp, which stood just outside of the shadows. Tom just stood and stared. Train reached into his outside jacket pocket with his left index finger and thumb, and pulled a cigarette from the pack he kept there. With the same movement, his other hand produced a match, which he struck one-handed and held the flame, lighting the cigarette. Tom watched as the man who had just rescued him leaned against the black, steel lamppost. His size made the lamp sway, casting moving shadows against the pavement. For what seemed like an eternity, Train just stood against the lamppost, shoulders slumped, looking at the sidewalk. Finally, he looked at Tom.

“I’m Train. I been watchin’ you. Been listenin’, too,” he continued. “You didn’t see me ‘cuz I been hidin’, but I been listenin’ while you talked to them busted up guys on the bench. I

need to ask you some questions. I'll stand over here so you won't be so afraid. I'm not gonna hurt you," he said quietly, much to Tom's relief.

It was about then that Tom felt his heart re-enter his body. "What do you need to know?" he forced himself to say, his throat still hurting from the pressure of the knife.

Train shifted his weight away from the lamppost, and with one fluid motion threw the burning cigarette on the concrete and moved back toward Tom, who instinctively stepped back a few feet. Train kept coming until he was only a foot away from Tom's face. An intensity shown in Train's eyes – the kind Tom had only seen in his son, Tommy, when he really needed an answer.

"Is it true?" Train asked earnestly. "Is it true about this guy you called Jesus - that He can take away hurt and forgive me no matter what I done? Is it?"

The question startled Tom. Of all the things this man could have asked, this sure wasn't what Tom expected. Tom didn't know how to respond. He saw more pain in the man's eyes than he had ever seen before. The sincerity and pleading need to have it be true almost overwhelmed Tom.

"Yes, it is," Tom said hesitantly, timidly clearing his throat again. "It is one of the only absolute truths."

Tom had no idea how he came up with that response. He also didn't know why his hand started to reach into the inner pocket of his suit coat. There he discovered his little Bible in the place he'd put it right after talking to the men on the bench.

In an instant, Train's pleading expression changed to one of relief. He straightened for a moment and released a great sigh. As quickly as relief had come, his countenance changed once more to an expression best described as terror. He paced in front of Tom, his voice getting louder as he spoke.

"Why would He let them do that to Him? He coulda killed them all, couldn't He?"

Train again stopped directly in front of Tom, his piercing eyes demanding an answer.

"I heard you tell them men on the bench He was God. He coulda killed them, and nobody would be able to put Him in jail or nothin'; but He let them hurt Him and He didn't even say nothin'. Why did He do that?"

"Because He loved you and me," Tom choked, remembering the response from a Sunday sermon. Tom grabbed the small brass snap on the leather cover of his Bible and shakily opened the unworn pages. For a moment, his thoughts were paralyzed.

Was John in the New or Old Testament? "Oh, help me, Lord," Tom mumbled. "Matthew, Luke, Acts, Romans.... No, there it is - John, John 3:16."

Tom's hands were shaking so badly he could hardly read the words. He had to bring the little book close to his face. "See, it says 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'"

Tom kept paging back and forth through his Bible as if looking for verses, never taking his eyes from the pages. And he talked. Almost afraid to let the man in front of him say anything, he talked. He talked about the cross and love and God and whatever came to mind. Where was it coming from? Tom felt like he was on Bible knowledge autopilot. Bible verses he hadn't quoted or even read in many years were pouring from him; he wasn't reading them. He was just mouthing what was in his heart. For what must have been quite some time, Tom was used by the Lord to say what needed to be said. When Tom finally looked up, he could hardly believe what he was seeing.

Tom was looking into the face of a man so much in pain that if he hadn't known better he would have thought Train had been stabbed in the chest. Train began to double over in agony, holding his stomach. Tom put his hand on Train's back as he let out a long, suppressed groan, releasing tears that he had never been able to release before. Tom kept his hand on Train's back while Train walked in a continual small circle on the sidewalk, still bent over, almost as if trying to escape the horrendous pain.

"Nobody ain't never loved me," Train whimpered as memories of rejection and abandonment started to visibly wrack his gigantic frame. "Nobody ain't never loved me like that."

After several minutes, Train stood erect again, sobbing and wiping his tear-streaked face with his calloused, massive hand. He turned toward Tom.

"I gotta do somethin' to thank Him for what He done. Can you tell Him for me, Preacher Man? Can you tell Him thanks for what He done?"

Tom looked up at the most broken man he had ever seen. Without hesitation, Tom put his hand on Train's arm - something unthinkable just a short time ago.

"I think Jesus would like it very much if you'd tell Him yourself, Train. I think He would be very pleased to have you talk to Him."

Shocked at the thought that God might listen to something he might say, Train stepped back a couple of steps in disbelief. Then he looked directly into Tom's eyes. Tom looked directly back into his, assuring him that it would be all right.

"Do I gotta go to a church or somethin'?" Train questioned.

"No," Tom smiled. "We could just sit here on the curb and you could just tell God what's on your heart."

Tom started to move toward the curb to sit down when he noticed that Train had dropped into a kneeling position right where he'd been standing. Tom moved next to him, giving a quick look to see if anyone was watching. Train knelt silently for a long moment, his head bowed and his hands folded in front of him, resting loosely against his body. Quietly he began.

"God..." he hesitated to wipe the tears from his eyes. "God, this is me, Train. I ain't never talked to you before 'cuz I been afraid..."

The next few minutes was one of those rare instances in life when you have the privilege of seeing the God of the universe once again come to visit one of His chosen ones. Quietly, peacefully, almost too wondrous to relate in words, the work that was accomplished on the cross at Calvary two thousand years ago once again became real and alive in one of His creations.

A lifetime of the disease called sin was banished, never to return, as this mountain of a man was visited by the One who loved him most. Anger melted in the light of love; rejection was washed in the love of acceptance; loneliness was erased by the Spirit of Adoption as this lost, wayward lamb was gently led home to warmth and safety. Tom knelt in awe on the cold, hard pavement with Train as he watched a transformation from death to life take place. Cleansing after cleansing became evident as tides of tears flowed from a freed heart so long held captive.

Silence... peace... hope... restoration... healing... right there on the street which only moments before held fear, anger and death threats. Oh, the wonder of God!

Both men remained momentarily silent following the most tender, loving communication Tom had ever heard anyone have with God. Tom stood to his feet and waited for Train to speak.

"What do I do now?" Train said as he got up. "How do I do what He wants me to?"

"You need to read His Word, believe what it says and live your life like Jesus did," seemed to be the right thing to say.

"How do I do that? I ain't got no Bible," Train questioned.

“Take mine,” Tom said, almost without thinking, extending the little book toward the massive man. “I have other ones.”

Big hands reached to touch, then caress, what he must have previously spit upon. Now, however, nothing seemed more dear as he held the Bible close to his expansive chest. It almost disappeared amidst the sheer size of his clasped hands.

“Thanks, I ain’t never gonna lose this,” Train said, wiping the last residue of tears from his face and straightening to his full height. He let out another long sigh of relief.

A big smile, revealing magnificent white teeth, turned to a questioning, quizzical look as Train grabbed his stomach.

“Hey!” he exclaimed, feeling different parts of his stomach as if looking for something. “Hey! I don’t hurt no more. Every day I hurt here,” he said, pointing to the middle of his stomach. “Now I don’t hurt no more.” Train smiled again. “I don’t hurt no more.”

Darkness had now completed its cover, hiding the filth of the street for another day. Tom had lost all track of time. But then, time no longer seemed all that important.

Tom noticed his knees beginning to weaken. In fact, he felt as if he were going to faint. The gravity of the encounter with the three men suddenly hit him like a brick wall. If Train hadn’t intervened, he’d be dead.

“Those guys almost killed me,” he said, remembering the edge of the knife and pointing to the spot where he’d been held. Everything happened so fast with Train, and because his focus had been on answering the questions Train asked, Tom hadn’t had time to think about what could’ve happened. Now that he had time to reflect, he felt queasy. He leaned against the building.

“You O.K.?” Train asked.

“I don’t know,” Tom stated, staring at his hands, which were shaking uncontrollably. Knees buckling, Tom slumped against the building. As he did, Train knelt beside him, putting a comforting hand on his back very much like his mother had often done when he was a little boy. Of course, her hand didn’t cover as much territory as Train’s.

“That your car over there?” Train questioned, nodding his head in the direction of the parking lot where a lone BMW glistened under the lights. Without waiting for a response, Train easily lifted Tom to his feet and headed him toward the parking lot.

“Make sure you read that Bible,” Tom said as they neared the car.

“You know I’m gonna,” Train replied.

Tom groped for his keys and then opened the locked door with his remote. Train handed him his briefcase, which he’d picked up off the sidewalk. In the commotion, Tom had forgotten he even had one. Train smiled, responding to Tom’s surprise.

“I didn’t take nothin’,” Train stated defensively and out of habit. Realizing that the statement was unnecessary, he raised his shoulders sheepishly.

“It’s O.K.,” Tom responded, trying to make him feel better.

“I...” Tom hesitated with his hand on the door handle. “I guess I don’t have much to say right now. How can I ever thank you for what you’ve done? You saved my life.”

Train quietly put his head down.

“I think you saved mine, too,” he said, tearing up again.

Not knowing what else to do, Tom got into his car and started it. He sat and stared at the steering wheel for several moments and then slowly shifted into gear. Train backed away from the car a few steps. Tom gave a small wave as he pulled away. It seemed that there was little to

say that could adequately complement the experiences that both men had just shared with each other.

Tom glanced in his rear view mirror at the man who meant more to him in the space of a few short minutes than anyone else would mean in a lifetime. Train stood quietly, following the car with his eyes as it pulled into the street. Tom saw him light a cigarette, turn and walk slowly into the darkness.

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