

CHAPTER 3

Kyla was one of the first persons at work on her first day. As she drove into the compound, she noticed a two-door, light green Rav4 parked there. She wondered which member of staff it might belong to and concluded that it might be Phyllis' since she was the receptionist and would want to be there early in the event there were any walk-ins. Parking next to the vehicle, and leaving the glass down just a bit to air the vehicle, Kyla made her way to the office, but when she walked through the doors, there was no smiling Phyllis there to greet her. She made her way to her office thinking that Phyllis was probably in the ladies room freshening up. She remembered only too well the many times in England when she had gone to work very early just to get out of the apartment and had used the office rest room to put her face on. Not that she was really into makeup and such, but a light colorless lip gloss and a little skin toning powder did go a long way to enhancing one's appearance. As usual, she was almost always the first at work and the last to leave. She did not have a social life. She lived for her job and besides, the one guy she had been attracted to in a very long time had turned out to be a playboy who was engaged to be married...

Dr. Brian de Silva's family owned GRACE. In fact, the GRACE institution in London was Headquarters to GRACE offices around the world. There were 30 GRACE Agencies in 28 countries. Kyla had been 29 years old when they met. She had gone in for an interview after emerging top not only in her class but in the Westford University where she had been pursuing her Doctorate in Educational Psychology. There had been six people around a large imposing glass table in the conference room when she stepped in for her interview. After inviting her to take a seat, the young man who turned out to be Brian de Silva Jr, did the introductions. He introduced his father, Dr. Brian de Silva Sr, who was President and Founder of the GRACE Institute. The others were members of the Board of Directors who had a hands-on approach to running GRACE. Kyla was eager to begin and she was confident of her capabilities. If she had not been, their grim faces might have intimidated her. She was bent on showing them why she was the best candidate for the position of Chief Education Psychologist at GRACE. On her way in she had noticed three other persons a man and two women also waiting to be interviewed. The man looked to be 40 or so while the women, young ladies really, looked to be just out of college. One of the reasons Kyla had applied to GRACE was that it was family owned and that it was founded on Christian principles. The de Silvas were Seventh-day Adventists, but their work catered for all. Every opportunity to help someone they saw as fulfilling the Great Commission of Christ who commanded that man do to others that which he would have others do to him.

"What makes you think that you are the best candidate for this job?" The question had come from Brian de Silva Jr and he was looking at her like he thought he had taken her by surprise. But she was thinking, *good open-ended question.*

"I do not *think* that I am the best candidate for this position Mr. de Silva, I *know* that I am," Kyla said confidently and paused to let it sink in. She enjoyed the look of surprise on their faces and would have laughed had the situation been less formal.

"Go on," de Silva senior prompted, with a glint of mischief in his eyes.

"You have my transcripts. Of the 300 students I came the top of my class, in fact the top at my university. I have excellent communication skills, and education psychology is my passion. I am already an asset to the GRACE Institute because I am aware that you are currently using the measuring instrument which I created to assess your clients."

There was a long pause and de Silva Jr gave her a wink. Her confidence was such that she knew that the interview was a mere formality. She knew that they had been inquiring about her at the university in the hopes of recruiting her so she was not worried.

"I like your spunk young lady," the older de Silva said laughing, "When can you start?"

"How about right now?" she rejoined and everyone laughed.

"I told you that I liked her," senior de Silva said looking around at his board members. Then turning to Kyla he said, still smiling, "I understand your excitement but today is already Friday. Do you think that you can hang on until

Monday morning to start?"

"Do you think that you can wait that long to have me start?" she responded with a question of her own. They were all still laughing when she left the interview room.

That night young de Silva called to take Kyla out to dinner to celebrate her success and she agreed. He picked her up at her apartment a some time after 7pm for their dinner appointment at 8pm. They drove for about ten minutes before he pulled into the well-lit parking lot of a quaint little restaurant called 'Murla's Kitchen'. He helped her out of his Mazda RX8 and walked with her to the entrance of the restaurant where a beautifully clad waitress was waiting to take them to their seats. While they sat awaiting their meal Kyla asked: "Do you celebrate all your successful applicants like this?" He did not miss a beat as looking directly into her eyes he responded, "No, only the beautiful ones."

An uncomfortable hush fell over the dinner table as it was quite obvious that he was hitting on her. She knew that there was an attraction between them, but felt that he was moving pretty quickly, and for some reason it made her feel cheap. Maybe she was too old fashioned, but she wanted to be lifted gently to her feet, not swept off them. She was much too independent to ever allow herself to be swept off her feet, and unless she felt that she had something to contribute to a relationship it would not work. *If the only way I can contribute is off my feet, then it definitely won't work* she thought to herself. Brian knew the moment things changed and for the life of him he could not understand what had happened. Although she was still courteous and smiling, something was different. They continued some small talk as they enjoyed their dinner of tossed salad with baked kingfish in white wine with garlic bread. He had a glass of red wine but she had orange juice. The cheesecake when it came was mouth-watering good! They laughed over something silly which he said and Brian took that opportunity to tell her how impressed his father was with her.

"Usually no matter how impressed we are or how much we want a candidate, after the interview we formally thank them for coming and advise them that they would hear from us within a day or two".

"Really?" she asked and burst out laughing, "What changed with me?" when he made to respond Kyla jumped in, "Ok, don't tell me, I know."

"You do?"

"Yep! Your approach humbles them and makes them wonder if they are good enough. This way by the time your call comes in, they are only too happy to jump at the chance of being chosen. Great strategy."

"It has always worked," he told her, "but with you it was different. I do not think anyone at the table doubted for one second what you would have done had that line been thrown at you. I can see you now, standing up and telling us very politely that we need not bother to call, and walking out."

"Was it so obvious?"

Brian nodded his head and they were both quiet for a little while, but this time it was a comfortable silence. In that time Brian was thinking that maybe he needed to move more cautiously if he were to win her at all, and she was thinking maybe she had been a little too hasty in dismissing his advances. When it was time to leave he pulled her chair out gallantly and the drive back to her apartment was made in the same comfortable silence. At her door he wanted so badly to take her in his arms but something held him back, and he chose to shake her hand firmly, thanking her for a wonderful evening. She watched him go with a small frown creasing her forehead. She had expected him to try to kiss her, and though she would have pulled away, she felt cheated that he had not bothered to try kissing her. But it was all good since she had never subscribed to the notion of workplace flings or affairs and did not want to begin now. She could not help wondering though, what it would have been like being kissed by him. As it happened nothing came of it, he never asked her out again....

The flashing red light on her telephone brought her back to the present as she realized that a call was coming in. Before she could pick up the call however, the light stopped flashing indicating that Phyllis was back at her desk. Kyla waited until the light was off and dialed zero thinking it was the receptionist's extension, but nothing happened. She replaced the receiver, got up and went in search of Phyllis. She was walking down the corridor and

had just reached Dr. Ryan's door on her way down when it opened with a sudden jerk making her jump. A man stood in the doorway, a scowl on his face as if she had somehow disturbed him. He was about six feet three inches maybe in his early or mid-forties. He had a military crew haircut and had his face not been screwed up in that ugly scowl he would be a handsome man. Piercing black eyes fringed with long lashes looked right back at her, one eyebrow lifting questioningly as if wanting to know if she was satisfied with her inspection. Catching herself staring, Kyla stretched out her hand and said, "You must be Dr. Derek Ryan, I am..."

"I know who you are Dr. Tuitt," was his succinct interruption. He stared at her, taking in her beautiful oval face with its shimmering full lips and big brown eyes. Her short wavy black curls framed her face softly. He ignored her outstretched hand completely asking instead, "Is there something I can help you with?" Taken aback by his rudeness, Kyla stood there staring as he stepped around her and walked down the corridor toward the reception area, limping slightly. By the time she began to get angry, he had passed Phyllis' desk and walked out the front door. She returned to her office fuming and wondering how on earth such a disrespectful man could lead an august institution such as GRACE.