

*The sun shone brightly as the storm continued to beat on the walls of the two-story colonial home complemented by the carriage house, beautiful gardens and gazebo. Tears trickled down Joy's face as she stared at the paradoxical site in the sky. How could the sun shine with the dark clouds, lightning, and wind surrounding it? What was God trying to tell her?*

*And then she remembered her grandmother's words: "When the sun is shining in the middle of the storm, the devil is beating his wife."*

And so it was. Joy went to work each day with a smile on her face, but on occasion makeup covered a bruise or a black eye. No one could ever know the secrets in her home. No one could know how little freedom she enjoyed. No one could know she hated herself for allowing this situation. She deserved a life of freedom and happiness, but it seemed the desires of her heart were beyond her grasp. Now, there were holes in her heart where the love she was saving for better days with Jonathan had slipped away.

Joy knew it was inevitable...she and her twelve-year-old son, Donovan, had to leave their beautiful home, but she needed to have a plan before, during, and after. Unfortunately, there wasn't one available—at least not one she was immediately aware of. She was too embarrassed to ask her friends or family for help because they would jump to rescue her, all the while thinking she was crazy and weak, or so she thought. Her family might even make the consequences worse for her if Jonathan sought revenge. She never knew what would set him off. Most of all, Joy feared word would get out that she was a fake and the identity she displayed to the public was a crafty disguise.

It took a few years, but Joy wasn't ready until she had been punched one time too many. After a public confrontation with Jonathan and his mistress after work, Joy took a beating when he returned home in the early hours of the next morning. There was not enough makeup to conceal the swelling under her eye and she looked horrible. Joy knew it was over and she was ready to move on. She prepared her exit with the advice of an attorney, a domestic violence agency, and weeks of careful Internet research that Jonathan couldn't detect or trace. On her way out of the house with Donovan, she turned her face toward heaven. With a sigh, she began her journey out of bondage and a relationship anchored in violence and pain. In her heart, she knew she needed to trust God. Ultimately, He showed her through the wind, thunder, lightning, and rain that the sun could still shine on her tormented life.