

## CHAPTER 20 - Adventures of The Heart (Excerpt)

...It was evident that their recent break-up had taken a toll on him, too.

Cynthia responded with equal eagerness.

Then, she finally dared to speak her heart.

"Robert, I'm going to make a serious break with regular tradition right now and just frankly ask your opinion about something."

"Of course, hon. What is it?"

"What do you think about a woman, asking a man for a date?"

"It all depends."

Robert had answered cautiously.

A mischievous grin slowly filled his face.

"Was it on February 29<sup>th</sup>?"

Cynthia raised an eyebrow, clearly puzzled.

Robert returned her bewildered pause with a playful silence.

He smiled broadly, holding the phone receiver, waiting for her to figure out the enigmatic meaning of his words.

She finally did.

She chuckled as the leap year date dawned upon her realization.

Afterwards, they laughed together heartily for a few moments spent in good humor.

"You are obviously referring to the ol' tradition where the woman asks a man to marry her on a leap year?" she said.

"Yes, of course," Robert replied simply.

Even though she could not see him, Robert's expression took on a more serious look after their playful moment. He now desired to answer Cynthia's question more fully.

"Well, I do believe tradition serves a real purpose. Traditions and norms form well-defined boundaries on social behavior for our own protection and wellbeing. How else would we know what to expect from each other? But wait a minute, why do you ask? Do you know a woman who is interested in a prospective date? How well does she know the man?"

Robert frowned and wrinkled his eyebrows.

He tried to guess which young woman within Cynthia's social sphere could have put her up to getting his opinion on this matter, and who she, in turn, might be interested in.

Cynthia's voice precipitously took on an alluring and mysterious quality.

"How well does she know the man?" Cynthia repeated rhetorically. She answered her own question. "She and the man have been close friends since grade school."

"Is he a Christian?"

"He sure is—just the best Christian man I know."

Robert stared at the phone receiver.

His lips involuntarily parted and fell open slightly.

His jaws clenched.

Was he really hearing his fiancée admiring another man so openly with his very own ears?"

Cynthia continued with her line of logic.

"He's also warm, caring, loving, and sweet. Graduated third in his class with a B.A. degree in Accounting. His job recently gave him a promotion. Just the kind of guy I would love to marry..."

Cynthia's voice trailed off dreamily.

She let out a stifled giggle, typical of when she was feeling momentarily self-conscious or embarrassed.

*She's talking about me, Robert realized happily.*

He jutted out his chin mischievously and decided to go along with her little charade.

Robert loved Cynthia's occasional lighthearted, good-humored moods.

She was such a delight to him, innocently attractive with her youthful girlhood, yet equally mixed with womanly charm.

"I think I know the woman," he teased back. "She's kind, beautiful, smart, a wonderful Christian with whom I'm madly in love. And, she's the *only* woman I plan to marry."

They both smiled at his humorous quip.

Robert added, "...and she can ask me for a date— *anytime and anywhere!*"

Cynthia and Robert laughed heartily again.

"How would you feel about us getting together right *now*?" Cynthia asked abruptly.

"Oh, I thought you'd *never* ask," Robert replied.

After weeks of being apart, Robert desired a little casual playfulness in their relationship, wishing to hold onto their carelessly-buoyant temperament for just a few more moments...

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## **PREFACE TO CHAPTER 5 (Excerpt)**

...During harsh trials, this path of life that we walk may sometimes is like a time of lingering shadows; the broken road before us appears unclear and difficult to follow.

This is when human frailties and vulnerabilities are at their lowest point.

The overwhelmed and gloom-filled heart is broken, dreams are shattered, and it literally feels as though every shred of hope and joy have fled the scene. Prayers and tears seem to go unanswered and unheard.

Loved ones and friends may not know what to say. In sudden awkwardness, their visits and words of consolation may even seem trite and insincere.

Yet, in your heart, you know that they are merely trying to do their very best to help you through your sorrowful time.

If this is your story at this very moment, it may feel as though your hurting soul *cannot* find God. Yet, please do not allow yourself to wallow in self-pity, no matter how deep your pain. Be assured that He Who created the vast universe during creation, is the same loving G-d Who will never abandon you. Jesus solemnly *promised* that He would be with us always, even until the end of the world (Matthew 28:20).

At this time, I would like to disclose a little insightful story to demonstrate these Truths from a difficult event in my personal family background.

My father was born in Kansas, but spent his childhood growing up on a small midwestern farm in Oklahoma. Before he and my mother married, he had served in both the United States Army and Airforce. However, he unexpectedly went home to be with the L-RD on Resurrection Sunday (Easter) 1995 in a tragic car accident.

It is a day I will never forget. He and his apartment manager were driving away from their security residence. My father went to open the metal lock on the fenced apartment complex, when the car suddenly jumped out of gear and hit the gate. The gate then violently ricocheted against the wall and hit him, severely damaging his leg. He fell down severely injured, and immediately suffered a fatal heart attack.

We grieved his loss greatly. As youngest of our family of six people and the only daughter, I was understandably devastated. It was as though the entire world had changed overnight. In my grief, I could hardly take in the devastation of the Oklahoma bombing, which occurred just two long days later...

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