



Heaven Sent
by Montre Bible

chapter 1

Hurry! Get in the car!" She yells at the top of her lungs. She is running so frantically that she doesn't notice the blood running down her leg. She doesn't have time to notice. All she can see in the pitch-black darkness are the taillights of the car ahead of her. She runs with the wind, and even the broken branches on the stony trail don't seem to trip her up. The young man in the car starts it up and she jumps in. He cranks the engine, and before she can even close the door he is off. Dark whispering shadows consume the forest behind them.

"It's moving faster!" she yells.

He takes a glance at her leg. "You're bleeding."

"Drive faster!" She doesn't care about herself. She turns to the backseat at the little innocent eyes staring back at her.

"I'm trying!" he yells back. She knows they can't run for long. They've run for far too long already. She reaches to the backseat and tries to comfort the crying baby.

"I won't let him get you," she says through her tears, but her eyes grow even larger as the darkness behind them is now practically on the car. She can hear the whispers cackling through the window and scratching the surface. A look of panic and then anger fills her eyes. The car jumps as if something is trying to pick it up from behind.

"What's happening?" he yells.

"Don't stop! I won't let him get . . ." The back window shatters and the darkness grabs the baby.

She reaches out while releasing a spine-chilling scream. "Andrew!!!"

"Andrew!"

I jumped up from my sleep. Mrs. Gardner was standing over my desk giving me that stern look. I flipped through my book attempting to find the correct chapter the rest of the class was reading. A couple of people in class chuckled. I was embarrassed for falling asleep and my heart was still beating hard. These crazy dreams have to stop. They have been really interfering with my school performance, and if I have them I'm still tired when I wake up.

I looked up at the clock. This class was way too long. I couldn't wait until I was

finally through with school. There has to be more to life than people frantically going to school, getting a job, falling in love, getting married, and having children, only to teach them the same routine. There has to be more. Throughout my life I have tried to find some logical explanation for this mindless rut.

Trying to find my life's purpose, I'd sit for hours daydreaming that I was part of some adventure, ya know, the type of stuff you see on TV. I hoped that one moment I would find out that I was from Krypton or somewhere. Okay, maybe I read too many comic books and just maybe I daydream too much while I'm supposed to be paying attention in my history class. But dang, Mrs. Gardner had to be the worst teacher in the world. Why do people with horrible speech skills become stuff like history teachers? History lessons need to be upbeat and fun for people my age not to fall asleep.

I sat there listening to her ramble in her quiet monotone voice about something or other. I really, honestly, was trying to pay attention but the rain hitting the window next to my seat was more interesting.

Next to me, Tonya Jeffries was putting on makeup. I watched her for a second. How much makeup was she gonna put on? She was already beautiful to me. Too bad she was going with that butthead Leonard Freeman. I think if she wasn't with him she would be dating me. Well she'd be dating me if I actually tried to talk to her. She was fine to every guy in school, but every time she spoke to me she talked to me like I was her brother or cousin or something. Matter of fact, that was her title for me, "cuzzin." I guess it was because we all attended the same church.

"Tonya, this ain't cosmetology class," I joked with her. She was liable to create a permanent line with that eyeliner pencil if she did one more stroke.

"Boy, you crazy." She smiled. "Hey, Andrew, let me borrow your notes after class—okay, cuzzin?"

I nodded in agreement. Okay, my name is Andrew and I am a sucker with a capital S. Look, up in the sky, it's Suckerman! I wasn't even taking notes. If paying attention actually paid money, this teacher would be in debt. I guess I could give her yesterday's notes. She didn't pay attention in class ever. Maybe one day Tonya would realize that the true love of her life was the man who helped her keep her passing grades in this history class.

Just look at her, was there any flaw in this woman at all? She had a Janet Jackson smile and the skin of a goddess. Her hair was incredibly long and brown and completely all hers, no extensions at all. Did I mention how deeply hypnotic her eyes were with their diamond-like sparkle and their cinnamon color? I loved the way she pulled the hair behind her left ear and how the remaining would fall ever so slightly over her right eye. Her lips were coated with a thin layer of gloss, giving them that wet sensuous look that made me just want to kiss them so-so softly.

I turned around and looked at my reflection in the misty window—I wasn't a bad-looking brotha either. I wasn't your typical-looking seventeen-year-old. My face was smooth, unlike most kids my age, no facial hair at all except for my sideburns. I had just had my birthday a month ago, so I thought it was because everyone else in my

senior class was older than me. My hair was curly and thick but I had never put any type of hair chemical on it at all.

People asked me often if I was mixed with something else. Nope. Both Mama and Daddy, Andrea and Anthony Turner, were as Black as can be. Mama, however, could be mixed; for a black woman she had a bright complexion and she was adopted, so she didn't know her real parents.

Daddy had left us a long time ago, and I hadn't heard from him since I was a little boy. Sometimes he would drop by late at night and talk to Mama and leave the same night. He was a preacher, and some people rumored that he went crazy. I guess that's why I don't get into my Bible a lot. I mean, I'm a Christian, but not as much as I could be. If God couldn't protect my father from insanity, then why should I even bother with getting deep into religion? Besides, the Bible just appeared to be a bunch of stories that had nothing to do with the life I was living; in a nutshell, I just didn't see the point.

I stared at myself. I wondered if I looked like my daddy. Maybe I got his ears. I knew I was taller than him. I didn't like being tall. I had a manly body with a baby face. I had these dark, defined brows that accented my every word. My eyes were a light brown, almost green, but really brown—okay, hazel. Physically, I could be quite a pimp . . . oh yeah, I could see it now, my harem of women walking behind me as I went to class. Hey, Andrew! I love you, Andrew! they would say as I strolled down the halls.

Pop that fantasy. Let's come back to reality in Mrs. Gardner's history class. What was my problem? Why didn't I have a girlfriend or, for that fact, Tonya? Oh yeah, I didn't know how to talk. When a girl came around I was bound to say something really dumb, and girls at this school seemed to be very attracted to verbal communication. There was a class on everything but pickup lines. Now that would be a cool class. I would take it, twice maybe.

So I had to settle for "friends," the closest I would get to any female. Now Tonya was fixing her hair, her long brown hair. She was seriously primping. How she did all this beauty preparation without the teacher saying anything was beyond me. I was deep in the friend zone with Tonya. Once a guy falls into the friend zone there is no way out. Girls make sure of that. This zone has a door with a handle on only one side. Once you walk in, you don't walk out. You can't. It's a zone where a female will talk to you, cry to you, hug you, almost undress in front of you until she remembers that you are a guy. You have access to her mind but no access to her heart. In a nutshell, this zone is hell; complete, utter hell.

If this was hell, was Tonya Satan? No, nothing that beautiful could be Satan. But I think I remember in church the preacher saying that Satan was beautiful, the most beautiful angel in heaven; that is, before he got exiled and took a third of the angels and fell to earth. How many exactly were a third of the angels in heaven? And where are all these angels now? All these crazy thoughts were spinning in my head like a whirlwind; it made me wonder if my father had gone nuts because he thought too much. The bell finally rang a sound better than what any angel could sing in my opinion. I grabbed my books and stuffed them in my bag.

"Cuzzin, you forget about me?" Tonya asked, still at her desk, her arms out as if she

were a helpless damsel in one of those romance novels beckoning my strong arms to pick her up and embrace her ever so gently.

"I could never forget about you . . ."

"You said I could use your notes!" she interrupted me. Okay, scratch that last thought.

I pulled some notes out of my folder. "Um, Tonya, you know it's raining and you worked all that time on your hair."

"I knooooow," she whined. "Hey, can you be a sweetheart and let me borrow your umbrella?"

"But uhh, I gotta catch the bus, and Leonard takes you home."

"I know, but I gotta walk to the car, pleeeeeease." Her eyes were piercing my very heart. The friend zone had caught me in its horrible web. I was a pitiful fly waiting to be sucked of all life by the black widow. God forbid she gets wet.

"Okay, here." I handed it to her. "Just make sure you bring it back to me tomorrow."

"Thanks, you're an angel." She rubbed my face with the palm of her hand before she left. Oh, she is good, playing me like a fiddle and I keep giving her the sheet music. "An angel," she called me. Like an angel without wings is how I'm falling for Tonya. No, I'm in hell, just pure hell. I looked up at the clock. Oh no, the bus! I ran past Tonya and the herd of other students blocking the way in the hall.

"Scuze me! Sorry!" I hurtled past one student after another like an NFL football player, knocking over innocent bystanders in the process. I clung hard to my open book bag to make sure the books didn't fall out and busted through the front door of the school building.

I almost slipped when I got outside. The rain was pouring down so hard that my curly mini-Afro was soon slick and straight down on my head. I squinted to see if I could find my bus. But all I could see through the shower was the distant taillights driving off, and I could smell the exhaust trailing behind. I was gonna have to walk home. I zipped up my jacket to keep my sweater from getting any more soaked and pulled up my hood. I wiped my face with the sleeve of my jacket and tucked my hands within the sleeves like gloves.

"Dang it, Tonya . . ." I said to myself, wishing she wasn't so beautiful. I looked around to make sure no one heard me make that comment out loud. I thought to myself all too much, to the point where I wasn't sure if I was thinking or actually speaking at times. Here in the small town of Heaven, Texas (population 8,281), gossip spread around faster than e-mail, and the last thing I needed was people passing around that I liked Tonya. Not that it really mattered, but I just didn't want people in my business. Maybe a little gossip would help my popularity. It probably wouldn't be a surprise to many people though.

The rain was fierce. I thought maybe I should jog but it only made the rain hit me

harder.

"Okay, just walk and look down," I told myself. I could see that my light brown shoes went from a freckled look to a completely dark brown. Water was soaking the bottom of my pant legs, so I kneeled down real quick to roll them up. I was four blocks from home; I was going to be late for work again. Man, sometimes it's better to stay in bed. A passing car splashed a tidal wave onto my back while I was rolling my cuffs that caused me to launch a feminine screech, a screech I might have held in if I was still in the company of my friends. The water was cold and dirty and rolled down the back of my jacket and backpack. I flapped my arms to remove the excess water, which was a slightly redundant act since it was still raining. I growled slightly and crossed my arms, continuing my voyage through the streets. When I reached the intersection, I saw an old man standing in the rain and trying to collect money from cars passing by. This man must be really poor to endure such weather.

"Hey, old man, you need to find shelter," I said, touching his shoulder. He grimaced at me. His face was unshaven and his skin was dark and blotchy. His hair was dreaded in the most unusual fashion, locked with all types of lint and particles of dirt. His wrinkles told his age much like the rings of a tree tell theirs. But his eyes were most amazing. They seemed to be glazed over and appeared to have rings themselves. The whites were almost yellow. His eyes were dark brown but appeared to have a bluish haze like a glaze reflecting the sky, and if you didn't look closely you would think they were blue. For a minute I wondered if the man was blind, but he made eye contact with me. What type of life must one live to develop eyes like this man's?

"Help me out, brotha, anything you can spare, a dime . . . a nickel . . ." His voice was high and crackled. I told him I'd give him something and guided him out of the rain underneath the gas station covering.

"What's your name?"

"My name is Frank . . . I just need a little change, that's all, I ain't tryin' to hurt nobody," he continued.

"I know, I know, I want you out of this rain. No point on giving you anything if you get sick, now is it?" He laughed with me. I took off my backpack and jacket and wrapped him in my jacket. I went into my back pocket and removed a folded ten-dollar bill.

"Okay, Frank, promise me something."

"Okay, what? I just need a lil change . . ."

"I know." I smiled slightly, unsure if he was coherent.

I grabbed his hands and looked him in the eyes. "Promise me that you won't use this money for alcohol. Take this money and use it for the shelter and go there now."

His head looked left and then right and whined to me. "I ain't tryin' to hurt nobody . . . I just need some change . . ."

"Frank, promise me."

"Okay, brotha, I promise."

"Okay, Frank, God is our witness. I won't be able to see you but He can."

Frank looked down and looked away. "I'm trying . . . I'm trying to get my life right. I used to preach, I used to be a preacher. I know this. I don't know what happened. I need to pray, I know I do. I know I do." I looked at him and my heart almost stopped. For a minute I imagined that my dad was standing before me. What if my dad was on the street somewhere drowning his soul in alcohol? The rain got harder and the cold breeze was giving me chills. My heart felt for Frank. For an instant I saw what Frank was. *I saw him as a preacher, married.*

I grabbed his shoulder and directed his attention back to me. He looked at me with his sad glazed eyes. "Why don't you go home, Frank? Go back to church?"

"I can't go back . . . They wouldn't let me back in." *I figured that Frank came from a very conservative church. He wouldn't be allowed to return in his present state. But that wasn't the only thing, I could feel Frank's overwhelming pride. I was peeking into his soul like he was a book.*

"Well, Frank, you shouldn't care about those people, this is about you and God. I'm sure it's not His divine plan for you to live your days out here begging."

"I know . . . I need to get right," he repeated.

I looked him dead in the eyes and wanted to shoot the passion from within my heart into his. Suddenly I had an idea—it gripped me and I knew it was the right thing to do and the only thing I could really give him that mattered.

"Then get right, Frank. I'll pray with you if you like." He nodded, and I grabbed his dark, hard hands. His fingertips were the only rough part of his hands. The rest was smooth but plastic feeling, not soft. His hands were very dirty and long, and normally I would have been reluctant to touch them. But it wasn't about me; it was about helping Frank reconnect. As I prayed I looked up, and Frank began to cry. This was evidently a prayer that Frank needed, and connecting with God wasn't hard for him. I remembered that someone had told me those who seem farthest from God are the ones God wants the most. It touched my own heart and even increased my own faith watching Frank cry. He opened his eyes after my prayer and his eyes seemed a bit clearer and he stared me directly in the eyes. I smiled at him and hugged him.

"You're a good man. You have a good heart," Frank told me.

"You're good too, Frank, now go home." I watched as Frank pulled a bottle of whiskey from his pocket and poured it out. Not only had Frank connected with God in that instant; we had connected. I watched him walk off slowly down the street. The rain roared down in buckets, but all that didn't even matter to me. I continued to walk home and it seemed that all these things were part of a divine plan, even my missing that bus. Maybe I was meant to meet and connect with Frank. Now whatever else happened was up to Frank. I truly believed in God and that somehow I was part

of some bigger picture and experiences that only reinforced that belief. It may not be destined for me to ever see Frank again, but it encouraged me that my life—my bad day—was used to turn his bad day into a good one. Then at that moment, my bad day wasn't so bad after all.

The rain didn't seem to be easing up at all and I began to get really cold with the mixture of the wind and rain blowing against the direction I was walking. Running would only make things worse.

"Oh crap, I hope my books don't get wet." My backpack was soaked and I was sure the water was seeping through the material. I moved my backpack to the front and cradled it like a child, hoping to protect the probably already soaked books. I couldn't open my eyes entirely before a shower of water was hitting my entire face. If I looked up, I was sure that I might drown. Now that would be an interesting headline for the evening news . . . KID DROWNS IN RAIN. No, that would be embarrassing. Well I couldn't be real embarrassed if I were dead.

I was trying to avoid the cars that were passing by as they created tidal waves from the flooding streets. Some of these cars didn't know the meaning of slowing down when the rain got heavier. Another car passed by and slowed down; I could tell only because the brake lights glowed so brightly in the blinding veil of rain. Beaming-white lights joined the red brake lights. Was the car backing up? Yes! I stopped walking and squinted to see who was attempting to rescue me, or was this some cruel joke merely to tease me? Folks in school did that often. Some would see you walking and would honk at you and wave and keep driving. Others would even drive past, knowing that you would be going to the same place as them and when you got there they would be like, "Hey I saw you walking but I was in a rush, so you know . . ." and I would want to say no, I don't know. I don't understand how you can drive past a suffering person you knew was going in your direction. But not this person; no, this person was taking time to rescue me from this storm . . . I hoped.

"Andrew?" the voice inside the car yelled out. "Man, get in this car!" The car was close enough that I recognized it. It was a rusty, burgundy Cadillac. The windows were tinted. Inside, the voice was not only familiar, but also extremely ghetto.

"Big Mack?"

"Drew, if you don't get in this car, boy, I'm gonna pull off fo' real."

Big Mack was my best friend. We called him Big Mack not because he was big—he was only five feet four inches—but because his real name was Mackenzie. He had to be the most ghetto white boy I knew, but he was super cool. There was nothing Mackenzie wouldn't do for me. We had gone to school together since elementary. He kept his hair short in a buzz-cut style and always kept a nicely trimmed goatee. His ears were pierced, and this boy loved to sing. To me, he looked slightly Latino. Actually, most people questioned what color he was, because when he wore a baseball cap down on his head with his tanned skin he almost looked black. I laughed to myself at the thought.

"Boy, quit laughing and being goofy and get in this car, damn!" He rolled up his window. I ran to the other side of the car, splashing through the puddles in the

process. I grabbed the handle but it didn't give. Tried again, still didn't open. Okay, now I was getting impatient. I knocked on the window.

"Hold up!" a muffled voiced yelled from inside. I held my peace and looked around to make sure no oncoming cars were going to hit me. I was soaked and cold. I looked like I had just been swimming with all my clothes on. The door clicked and from the inside the door was pushed open.

"I forgot your car was raggedy," I laughed. Mackenzie threw some newspapers down on the seats.

"Just sit yo' raggedy a** down on those newspapers. I don't want you getting my seats all wet."

"Dude, why do you always gotta cuss me out?"

"Well *dude*," he mocked my slang, "I forgot you're Mr. Preacher boy." I sat down and threw my backpack in the backseat.

"Big Mack, I am not nor will I ever be a preacher. I know some stuff but that's about it. I'm not trying to end up like my dad. I just find life easier the closer I am to God."

"You believe what people say about your daddy is true? Man, come on! There's gotta be more to it than that. People used to say ya' daddy would freak out about demons being everywhere and angels . . ."

"Can we just . . . not talk about him. I know what people say. All I know is that he's insane and he's gone somewhere. My mom won't tell me any more."

"Yeah, well, life for me is fine without church, thank you very much. I'm not too sure if I believe all that demon stuff. Shoo', you talk so much about God to folks anyways, you might as well grow up and be a preacha'."

"What are you talking about?" I looked away. Did I really talk about God all the time? Was preaching based solely on ordination or was it something as genetic as singing? I had seen whole families who were gifted. Mackenzie, his mother, his father, and even his baby sister could sing like angels. Was the ability to understand and bring others closer to God a gift of mine? Was I, by some universal law or some cosmic cataclysm, chosen to be God's agent on earth to thwart the evil plan of Satan and bring people into the divine plan of God . . . had I been reading too many comic books?

Mackenzie swerved a little bit on the road.

"Maybe you should slow down." I clicked my seatbelt on, almost forgetting that my compadre was a crazy driver. He handled his car as if it were a horse trying to break loose from its reins. What was the DMV thinking when they gave this guy a license?

"You seem tense, Drew, relax, enjoy the ride."

"I would relax more if you learn to drive." Mackenzie turned his head and stared at me for a good two seconds. Three seconds, four, five, six.

"Hey, can you look at the road and not at me!" That was beginning to freak me out and he knew it.

"Apologize and admit that I can drive." Mackenzie definitely had the dice and wasn't going to give up till I gave in to his little game.

"Fine! *Okay!* You drive so wonderfully!" I stared at him as he continued to drive with his head pointed in my direction.

"And . . ."

"And . . . I'm sorry! Dang, Mackenzie! Look at the road." He slowly turned his head back toward the road and continued to drive, smirking a bit and even speeding up some. I'm sure he thought it was cool to freak me out.

"So uh, how's your mom doing?"

I froze. I didn't want to tell him. I knew he was my friend and was concerned, but my mother hadn't been herself lately for about a month.

"Why? Is your mother asking about her?" This time I looked away through the rainy glass window. Mackenzie bit his lip, holding back his own tongue.

"Naw, I'm just concerned, that's all. I'm ya' boy and gotta look out for ya." He patted my shoulder and I patted his hand to acknowledge his concern. Then a cold chill ran down my spine. And for that moment I imagined his mother coming over to our house. What could she have seen? *My mother opening the door, half dressed, eyes all red. What would my mother say? I couldn't hear these things. But I know Big Mack's mom would have thought my mother was crazy. That would make her think my mother was taking drugs or something. But she wasn't; no, not at all, she was just sick.*

"Your mom thinks my mom is crazy doesn't she?" I asked, still looking out the window. He looked shocked—I could faintly see his reflection in the window.

"Well, she went to your house the other day because she was worried because she hadn't seen her in some time. Your mom has locked herself away, man, is that cool? I'm just checking to see if you all right, ya' know." He confirmed everything that had just hit my mind. It scared me a bit. It was almost like *déjà vu*. I looked at him with a straight face.

"I'm cool, if me or my mom need help, you'll know. I'll come to you, Mack."

"Well, man, I'm here if you need a brotha." I laughed at his "brotha" comment but, to me, Mack was a brother—the brother I never had. Being an only child was probably the hardest thing for me. Some kids get used to it but that wasn't my case. I was the type of kid who always wanted somebody else there. I mean it seems that every game is made for at least two people. The only solo game I could think of was

solitaire, and I didn't even know how to play that. I remember asking my mom when she was going to remarry and have another child. She'd just smile and look at me with her sad eyes and tell me that I was all she needed. But I always wondered what it would be like to have a real brother, someone whom I could share secrets with, fight with, and laugh with. Mackenzie was the next best thing.

Mackenzie and I had met when we were in the fourth grade. He was way chubbier back then and definitely a girl repellent because of his overall attitude. But we all were. If there was a girl near she got her hair pulled or some dirt thrown in her face, just because.

"Wake up, man, and get out of my car." Mackenzie shoved my shoulder, bringing me out of my daydream. Lately, it seemed as if my imagination could take me into another realm. I took "my imagination carried me away" literally.

"Dang, I'm sorry I wasn't paying attention, I was . . ."

"Daydreaming—I know, I know. Who is it this time . . . or are you still sprung on Tonya?" I looked at Mackenzie and tried to pretend as if his comment did not faze me. Oh yeah—I wanted to blush and grin, but I didn't want him to know that. One way of being cool was never letting anyone see you sweat—or was that a deodorant commercial slogan? Whatever, that was my motto now.

"Whatever, dude." I grabbed my backpack from the backseat. "Hey, if it's raining in the morning, can you pick me up?"

"No problem. Matter of fact, check the weather report tonight, then call me so I'll know if I need to get up early."

"Cool, will do, peace out, Mack." I slammed the door shut and threw up the peace sign and watched him speed backward out the driveway. Mackenzie never slows down in the rain.

Here I am playing the game of Jeopardy:

Can I have greatest DMV bloopers for 500?

Answer: People get in accidents trying to avoid accidents with this person.

Question: Who is Mackenzie Larue?

Correct!

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