

FEAR

By Donna Jensen

Julie didn't like to use private cabs but she'd missed the last bus. Bob had called in sick and she'd stayed late at the mental health drop-in center seeing several of his more serious cases in addition to her own. Snow had been falling for an hour. She pulled the collar of her coat up around her face. At this hour, the dimly-lit, run-down area was pulsating with the troubled throng who lived there. Hailing the blue and white checkered cab she gave her home address and settled back with a sigh. The driver introduced himself as Ted and made some pleasant comments that made her feel at ease. She leaned her head back against the seat, closing her eyes for a while.

Ted glanced at the "victim" card from last night's game, laying on the seat beside him. As he ran his hand over it his excitement grew. This fare was to be the victim! When traffic permitted, his eyes lifted to his rear view mirror to study her.

As they pulled to the curb Ted came around to open her door. The sidewalk was slippery so it seemed natural that he take her arm and help her up the steps to her brownstone. Halfway up, Ted snapped open the switchblade in his pocket. Before she could voice her "thank you" and pay him, he reached around in front of her and slit her throat from ear to ear. Silently she slumped against the door. Ted hurried back to the cab and disappeared into the heavy traffic.

I was horrified as I viewed this scene in a theater in Hollywood where my aunt and uncle had brought me for a night out. The murders continued. All brutal. All without motive. All committed by four individuals who it turned out, met once a week to play a New Age Game of murder and destruction and decided to carry out the deeds on the cards they drew.

At that time I knew nothing of demonic spirits but now I know that a spirit of fear entered me that night as I witnessed four murders and realized it could happen to any of us without reason or warning.

I left the theater trembling. When I arrived home I quickly turned on all the lights, leaving the front door ajar while I searched through my entire little house: closets, laundry room, even under the bed. It was only then that I locked and bolted the front door.

A couple of weeks later on a Saturday morning I went in to the large insurance company where I worked to get in some overtime and found no one else there. I began to work, thinking others would drift in. About forty-five minutes later the security guard came through and said work had been canceled for that day. I told him I hadn't been notified.

"Yeah, one of your co-workers was murdered last night."

I looked at him in disbelief.

"You knew Tammy Summers. She was found dead in her apartment."

I shuddered. Murder had come way too close. I couldn't get out of that big empty building fast enough. For weeks, I dreaded the times I had to spend alone.

Then later that summer, I had the most amazing experience. I attended a revival meeting in East Los Angeles where I ran headlong into God, under the ministry of a Messianic Jew. There I received Jesus Christ as my Savior. Jesus took my disobedience, my failures, my loneliness, my sorrow, my anxiety and fears; and gave me His righteousness, His plans for my success, a place in the family of God, and healing for my sorrow, anxiety, and fear. That kind of trade merited all my devotion. I was twenty-nine then. In forty years, I've had no better offer.

I don't know just when my fear left but I noticed when it came back. Early in the fall there was a knock on my door at 2:00 AM. Throwing back the covers, I rose and went to see what was happening. "Who is it?" I called out.

"Taxi," the voice replied, with a thick foreign accent.

Fear gripped me with its icy tentacles again. "I didn't call a taxi," I managed to squeak out. *Oh, no*, I thought, *I should have said "we" didn't call a taxi, now he knows I'm alone*. A long silence followed. He didn't move. Neither did I. My fear had me glued to the spot. I began to tremble. That made me angry. I recalled something I had just read. This was my chance to try it. I stomped my foot like a little kid and said under my breath, "Satan, I'm a child of God, covered by the blood of Jesus, and I rebuke this fear in His name! And you mister, can stand there all night if you want to; I'm going back to bed." As soon as my head hit the pillow I was asleep. When I trusted God in my fear, He took it, and the person causing it, away.

One of the first Bible verses I memorized was Romans 8:28 "All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." To me that meant that since I belong to God and am living according to His will, nothing is going to happen

to me that is not part of His plan for me. And, since it is all part of His plan for me, whatever it is, it is for my good. That realization set me free from trying to control my life and the lives of others. Jesus lived the godly life we were to make our own. Doing things our way, or trying to improve on God's way, brings stress and fear and failure.

I left the meeting where I received my salvation, wanting more than anything, to be used by God to help others receive my experience. A few months later when I entered Bible school I chose "Skid Row" in Los Angeles as the place to begin my Christian Service training. Now that is one scary place. And, once in a while, fear still attacks me but I don't receive it. As I remember whose I am and that I am about His business, I become fearless.

One night as I parked my car in "Skid Row" to let out my passenger, we heard a gunshot and saw people scatter about fifty feet from us.

"He's been shot in the head!" someone yelled.

"Call an ambulance!"

Jim got out of my car, waved and took off down the street in the opposite direction. Locking my car, I too went in the opposite direction, crossing the street. The thought of viewing someone with part of his head blown away was more than I could stomach. I was looking for someone standing on his feet that I could minister to.

Thoughts tumbled through my mind like bits of colored glass in a kaleidoscope. Missions lined the streets in "Skid Row". As I walked past them I talked with God. "Here are all these missions, Lord, but there's no one out there on the streets ministering to people." God reminded me that I was there. *How could I criticize others for not doing what I wasn't willing to do?* With much trepidation, I turned around and retraced my steps.

The police were now on the scene. I explained to one of the officers in charge of crowd control that I was attending Bible school and working with people on the streets and asked if I could pray with the wounded man. He said, "That guy could use a prayer."

A Christian for just a few months, I had not yet prayed for *anyone*. Looking down at the man, I wondered where to begin. Thankfully, only a small wound was visible on the side of his head. Inaudibly, I breathed the words, "*Please God, don't let this man die without knowing Jesus as his savior.*" A small sigh escaped the man's lips as his body relaxed totally. When the

paramedics arrived a few minutes later and pronounced him dead, I had the peace that he was with Jesus.

Returning to my car, I laid my head on the steering wheel and had a good cry. Then I had another little talk with God. "Father, I'd like to be a light in all this darkness, but I don't want it to be just *me* having and *adventure*. If you want me to live here and share You with these lost, hopeless people, I will. I received my answer in three months and soon moved into the Jefferson Hotel.

I continued my Bible studies the first half of the day and then walked the fourteen blocks across downtown Los Angeles to my job at the insurance company in the late afternoon. At 10:00 PM I walked back home ministering to people as the opportunity presented itself. I carried my big study Bible as a type of "*identification*". Rarely did I initiate conversations. People came to me. I was usually out until the bars closed at 2:00 AM.

One afternoon I had an appointment before work so I ducked into an alley to take a short-cut to where my car was parked. There, I came across two black men sharing a bottle of wine from a brown paper bag. In the habit of looking people in the eye and greeting them, I nodded at them, smiled and said, "How are you?" I was past them though, before they had a chance to answer. Immediately I remembered someone having said, "If you ask someone how they are, care enough to get a sincere answer." I hadn't done that. Turning back to them I found their gaze had followed me. I took a few steps toward them and repeated my question. "How are you?"

They looked at the Bible I was carrying and back to their bottle and one of them said sheepishly, "Well, we aren't very good."

"Why is that?" I asked.

Again they looked at my Bible and back to their bottle. The taller of the two, continued to do the talking. "Well, we have a drinking problem."

Moving still closer to them, now face to face, I said, "I think I know how you feel. I haven't known the Lord very long but He really turned my life upside down!" Then smiling I added, "Or maybe I should say right side up! Let me give you something to read." I pulled a tract from my Bible that was titled, "What Must I Do to Be Saved?" and began writing my address on it.

"Aren't you afraid to be here in a place like this, talking to men like us?" queried the other man.

“No I’m not,” I replied. “I have nothing that you can take from me unless it would be my life, and ‘to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord,’ so what do I have to lose? It’s all right here,” I said, holding the tract out to him.

He took it and glanced at the title. Slipping it into his pocket he said, “Please, won’t you tell me, how do I get to feel like you do?”

I opened my Bible and read Romans 10:9-10 aloud to them, gave them a brief explanation, and asked if they wanted to receive Jesus as their Savior. They nodded their agreement. So, there in the alley, they bowed their heads and repeated the sinner’s prayer after me. Talk about elated! I was on cloud nine. They promised to contact me; and I hurried on my way.

The world is a pretty scary place today. When I awake in the morning, if I think of everything that could go wrong, I might even be afraid to get out of bed. Do you know that fear is faith that what you *don’t* want to happen *will* happen? Why not exercise faith in God’s promises and trust Him with your entire life?

Remember: “God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” 2 Tim 1:7 “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

As I was preparing to go out at 7:30 the next morning, there was a knock on my door. It was Frank, one of the men from the alley. I took him to a park where we sat on a bench while I gave him a new-converts class, sharing what I knew at that time about living a victorious Christian life. I offered to help him find a place to stay if he wanted to accompany me as I went about my plans for the day. It being a holiday weekend, the missions where he might have stayed were closed to drop-ins.

My first stop was at the City Jail. Frank waited in my car. Most of the people I worked with were probably “WANTED”. He and the man he was with earlier, had hoped a freight and come in from New Orleans.

Our next stop was the County Hospital. Frank came in with me. I was there to visit one of my neighbors who had been taken from his room by ambulance. I had climbed the stairs to his room to see if someone needed prayer. His door stood open. A terrible odor emanated from within. He was ill and had been lying in his own blood for three days.

Nothing was coming from our visit with him but I noticed a man across the room in the four-bed ward was listening to me. Moving on to him, I asked if we could talk. He welcomed us. Openly he shared with us that he had signed himself into a Methadone program to get free from his heroin habit. He was to be discharged the following day and was scared to death he'd fail again.

Frank had listened respectfully but he could no longer remain silent. "Listen buddy," he said. "I've been an alcoholic for years. Yesterday I prayed to Jesus to save my soul and set me free from my addiction and it's gone! I've had no more desire to drink!"

Al leaned forward and asked, "Would Jesus do that for me?"

Frank and I chorused, "Yes!"

I went on, "God is no respecter of persons. What He did for Frank, He will do for you."

Brokenly, Al reached out to God and experienced something I've never again seen. As the peace of God flowed into him his face began to shine. I mean, he glowed! Just then his wife and daughter came in. They could see something had happened to him. We left as he began to tell them about it.

That evening Frank shared his testimony at a mission I held services at once a week. Street-people come to listen to the message and get a free meal. I had not been able to find anyone to take Frank in for a couple of days. Embarrassed, I rented him a room for the night for \$3.00. That was half of my food money for the week. I ate one meal a day.

Frank came to church with me three times the following day. That night I got him a room again. As we parted he said, "You know, Donna, this is the first weekend in fifteen years that I've been sober. Thank you!"

I never saw Frank again. I wondered if he had returned to Louisiana. Every day that week, in different ways, the Lord provided a meal for me. And the adventures continued, day after day. Sound like something you'd like to do?