

THE PREQUEL TO "TAKEN FROM THE NIGHT"

BEFORE THE NIGHT

S. A. Tower

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To protect the privacy of individuals referred to, names of persons, places, and some other details have been changed.

INTRODUCTION

Many have asked what if any warning signs led to my occult involvement? I had a typical childhood. I cannot place blame on the era of television shows such as Bewitched and Dark Shadows, though admittedly I watched them. Neither can I point my finger at childhood games such as; Light as a Feather - stiff as a board, the Magic Eight Ball or even my naïve, and occasional crack at the Ouija board. The sources at work in my life were more sinister, more sophisticated and loomed in the shadows from the moment of my birth. These uninvited guests imposed upon my innocence. Even then in my ignorance, a war raged between dark and light. Yet, I was not alone and in fact, was under the protection of the Most High. I didn't know it at the time but God had a purpose for my life and the enemy was in pursuit to snatch it away. This short prequel reveals the events that tailored my way to a decade of witchcraft revealed in my book, "A Witch's Encounter with God".

~ S. A. Tower

CHAPTER I

It was a warm fall day with temperatures soaring above the norm, ushering in the official Indian summer. Thomas Tower may have had a small frame, but he was huge in compassion and one who all too often let worry get the best of him. This morning was no exception, as he paced the waiting room floor rubbing his hands together, with his eyes glued to his wrist. It seemed the hands on his watch barely moved while his thoughts raced a mile a minute. "Of all days, please not today," he pleaded.

Anna had been laboring throughout the night with their second child. His thoughts were torn between wife and baby, would it be a girl or boy? More importantly, was it a healthy child? By the time the light of dawn made its debut, it became obvious this birth would fall on the anniversary of his grandmother's death. At half past six in the morning it happened, the nurse walked in greeted by the wide eyes of anticipation of several waiting fathers-to-be. "Mr. Tower, congratulations you have a baby girl."

I was the second child born into a low-income family with a middle-class state of mind. After a week-long

hospital stay, I came home to my parents' inner-city duplex where my big sister, Melinda awaited. A few weeks later, my mom dressed me in a delicate satin and chiffon gown purchased by my godmother and brought to the Anglican Episcopal Church that my family considered their own, for my christening. It would be the same church where I later discovered my first Bible stories. Mom was the one who ruled the roost in the Tower household; but, it was my dad who was the driving force behind our weekly church attendance. I grew up believing God was somewhere far beyond the sky and it would take death to meet Him, so my young mind thought.

During my early childhood, my best friend, whom my parents called my imaginary friend, lived within my mom's vanity mirror in her bedroom. She was the complete opposite of the blond-haired, blue-eyed me. She had dark brown hair, brown eyes, and a dark countenance. I would slip through to the other side of the mirror... a portal where I'd get lost with my friend for hours. She made me promise not to tell anyone about our secret hiding place. At times, my mom would question why it was so quiet and begin looking for me. More than once, she couldn't understand

how she found me where she did, having just looked there minutes before and yet, hadn't seen me. My mom never knew about the paranormal "play" I engaged in nor the spirit guides that led me far from her room and sight.

It was 1963, when my first favorite song, "Puff the Magic Dragon" by Peter, Paul and Mary littered the airways and Mom bought me the 45 rpm record. I would swing for hours in the backyard shouting the chorus until my aunt Marie, who lived with us would try to coerce me into doing anything other than sing, questioning both my musical taste and attraction towards these so-called "beatniks." It would mark the start of my lifelong fascination with people and things off the beaten path.

I remember the phone call that started a domino effect on the health of my elderly grandpop. Grandpop Tower fell and was hospitalized with a fractured hip. But worst yet; the doctors believed his fall may have resulted from a stroke. The Towers were Catholic, all except for my grandma, though neither attended church in years. It was during this time I saw the power of prayer and had a hint that maybe God wasn't so far away. Feeling powerless to

help our grandpop, Melinda and I made our bedroom into a makeshift sanctuary. We used a long vanity chair as the improvised altar and covered it with a white tablecloth before adding the family Bible, prayer book, and a crucifix placed on top. To replicate church pews, we gathered a mix-match of chairs and stools from around the house, leaving an open aisle in the center. With hymn books in hand, we joined our choir procession, marching our way up to the altar. After reciting The Lord's Prayer, Melinda read a prayer for healing from the prayer book and we petitioned for our grandpop to get better. This daily ritual continued until we became pre-occupied with our dolls, friends, and cartoons, and before long we stopped praying altogether. It was a cold March day when my dad got the call that Grandpop had gone on to heaven. At that point, heaven looked far away and mysterious, yet amid my sadness, a hope emerged. "Melinda!" I ran to my sister's room eager to share my new revelation. "Did you notice when we prayed, Grandpop lived and when we stopped, he died?"

Despite my eagerness, Melinda didn't share my enthusiasm. Perhaps out of guilt she bounced back, "We had nothing to do with it!"

The thought of God hearing and answering our prayers was very disturbing to Melinda, but for me... it awakened a thirst to know more.

The Tower siblings all gathered over Grandma Tower's house to make funeral arrangements, while my sister and I were sent to my other grandparent's house that lived in a neighboring town. Neither were believers though my grandmother had limited exposure to the Christian faith. I lavished in my grandfather's attention, being his favorite, but this time the visit was bittersweet. I was always in the spotlight on their kitchen chair stage performing my grandfather's personal song of choice... "I've Written a Letter to Daddy" from the psychological thriller, "Whatever Happened to Baby Jane." But this time, I jumped down from the chair stage before his standing ovation, solemn and confused between the reality of prayer and death. I wondered about God and His answer to prayer but there was no one who could help me understand.

Except for my grandparents, we didn't associate much with mom's side of the family. In fact, while I'd learned about my great-grandmother, I never had met her. She was a mysterious woman, and while Grandpop tried to convince Mom to include his side of the family, she never did, but I was curious to know who my great-grandmother was. It took some coaxing from my grandfather but Mom agreed to let me go for a visit. The small ground-floor

apartment was dim and our arrival was far from the red carpet treatment. Great Grandmother had long fine white hair, pulled back in a ponytail but my ice-breaking compliment failed to move her. In fact, only her boyfriend acknowledged my presence with a hushed, "hello." Within a few short minutes, Grandfather left me in this eerie place with my estranged relatives despite my protest. It seemed as though I was an uninvited guest but tried to make the best of it. Great Grandmother barely uttered a word, but her talking caged bird made for a pleasant substitute and that's where I planted myself during my entire visit. It seemed my grandfather had left for hours, and I grew tired sitting in the stifling, stuffy apartment where there wasn't even a phone to call home. At last, Grandfather returned, and with great anticipation, I ran and jumped up latching my arms around his neck, but I came to an abrupt halt before kissing his cheek as I caught a whiff of his favorite drink. Finally, we were going home. Grandfather stumbled over the doorstep on the way out the door, then fish-tailed several times on the drive home. I never asked to go back again.

CHAPTER II

A few years had gone by before Mom would make another visit to our aloof and peculiar side of the family. I wasn't so eager to go this time but Mom insisted as my grandmother didn't drive and she had asked Mom to take her. In her younger days, Grandmother had been close friends with her sister-in-law, but it had been years since she had seen these particular relatives.

We drove to a street of carbon-copy brick row houses in the inner city and joined the other porch dwellers camped out front. The adults sat on folding or kitchen chairs while we kids played hop-scotch or jacks on the porch steps. Though family, they were no different from strangers. My grandfather's youngest half-sister, Lilly was there and offered to take us for a walk up the hill. Mom gave the okay but set limits saying we weren't allowed past the yellow street sign. I had only taken a few steps before I felt the uncomfortable grip of Lilly's hand, yet the others walked along without restraint. The walk up the hill seemed long... my hand was becoming sweaty, and I wiggled it in hopes to break free from my escort's hold. As we neared the yellow sign, my aunt and sister turned and headed back, except Lilly yanked me forward.

"I'm not allowed past the sign!" I protested. My pulse began pounding in my squished-together fingers and Lilly's voice sweetened.

"It's all right, your mom won't mind so long as you're with me."

I turned around if only Mom was standing there with her hands on her hips.

"Yes, she will!" I insisted and jerked my hand away from my prisoner. A second later, she had reclaimed her grip. "Ouch! You're hurting me!" I struggled to break free from her vice-like grip, "I want my Mom!"

I tried to pry her fingers away, but I was no match. I tried to yell, but she silenced me by covering my mouth with her other hand.

"Hold still and I'll take you to your Mother."

I looked in desperation to see if anyone was watching, but we had wandered all the way up the hill. "First, I have something to show you."

I tried to dig my feet onto the concrete sidewalk realizing she had no intention of taking me back to my mom. She pulled me towards a low concrete barrier on the overpass that stood between me and the road far below.

"Do you want to go down there?" Her voice sounded notorious while she pulled me closer.

"NO!" I struggled to get free.

"Don't you want to go down there?" My heart was pounding in my head yet I couldn't scream. The rough concrete surface scraped my thighs. It was a long way down, and there were cars zooming past.

At last, I heard them shout, "Ally!" Lilly let go of her hold.

I turned to see Melinda and Marie running up the hill. "You're in trouble!" Melinda mimicked. "You know you weren't supposed to go past the sign!" I was never so happy to hear my sister threaten me and to head back to Mom's scolding. I hurried down the hill, with Lilly following. Just before we reached safety, Lilly grabbed a hold of my hand again and with an evil grin whispered, "Wait till next time."

I pulled my hand away from her and ran fast to my mom's lap. Mom seemed embarrassed by my reaction but her reprimand was like music to my ears.

"You know better than to go beyond where I told you to go!" I came alongside her and attempted to whisper in her ear but she would not have it. "It's impolite to whisper in the company of others, Ally... what has gotten into you?"

I froze, all eyes were on me. "But Mom," I pleaded.

"Whatever you have to say can be said here." I looked into the glaring eyes of my perpetrator! "I wanna go home!"

Wrapping my arms around Mom's neck I clung on for dear life. "What's gotten into you? Get down and go

play," Mom was annoyed at my behavior but I was just glad to be alive!

I sat down on the pavement right next to Mom's feet for what seemed like hours. The grown-ups seemed to never to run out of things to say, and then my worst fear played out when Lilly asked my mom, "If it's okay, I'll take Ally for another walk?"

My heart sunk into my chest and I held my breath as I hoped against all odds that Mom would say no. "Sure, she can go".

My mind ran blank for a moment, and then I shook. I climbed back onto my mom's lap. Why couldn't she see through this madwoman and realize she wanted to murder me? I attempted to bury my head in her bosom. "Ally, where are your manners"! Mom instructed. I wanted to listen, and the last thing I wanted was my mom's backhand for putting on a scene, but I dared not move. I knew Mom worried over what the family thought of her parenting skills as it seemed I was being a bratty child.

Her face flushed with embarrassment as she apologized to Lilly, "I'm sorry, this isn't like her."

I knew I was likely to suffer the sting of the wooden paddle when I got home, but I didn't care. If I left with Lilly, the drop from the overpass would be my deathbed. When my grandmother was ready to leave, I rushed to the car and

jumped in. I slumped down in my seat, clenching my fist and held my breath until the car pulled away.

CHAPTER III

Moving to a new neighborhood was quite the culture shock for a 6th grader. For some odd reason, it seemed all my peers had previously lost their innocence and were pushing the boundaries of promiscuity. Their after-school activities took place in back alleys where discrete anatomy lessons were put to the test. In response, I stuck to hanging out with a few friends who were Catholic and spent a good bit of time with my family.

My grandmother often retold stories during Sunday dinner of my great aunt, Gracie, who was a reverend of a nearby Spiritualist Church. One particular story was of Gracie's early years reading the tarot. She told of a man who refused to believe neither the reading nor the warning Gracie had given him. The innocent victim was found hanging from an old iron fencepost several days later. He had died in a freak accident. I prodded Grandmother for more details, but she always took the oath of silence, leaving me both morbidly curious and intrigued.

The following winter, we had off from school because of several feet of fallen snow and I was outside playing with

my friends, Sherry and Jamie. We walked to the apartment rented by a few Englishmen who had come to America. They often toyed with us young girls, giving us a thrill from their interest. This day started no differently than any other, except one of our dear English friends was on edge. Jamie and I walked away, but Sherry, who at the time had a tendency in babbling in nonsense, stayed. Our English friend's behavior caused Jamie to realize that he was higher than a kite and experiencing a bad trip that might put Sherry in danger, thus we attempted to lure her away. I picked up a snowball and threw it at Sherry, hoping a snowball fight would distract her and we could head towards home. Instead, we got into a catfight and Sherry ran home with an injured face and pride. I was sorry for what happened but believed I had done my best to keep her out of a dangerous situation. Next thing I knew, there was a knock at my door and her college-aged sister was calling me out. Mom intervened and saved me from the wrath of an angered older sibling, but it made me mad. I was so enraged; I ran upstairs and sought solace and revenge in the back of my long narrow closet with a small dark-haired doll as my puppet. I was clueless as I positioned pins and wrapped the doll with string from waist to thigh to close her womb. The words that came from my lips were unbeknown and were not something picked up on television. After my

fit of anger and rage, I soon forgot about that bound doll in the back of my closet and, like many young girls, we restored our friendship. I had no clue I had just engaged in the practice of the dark arts, neither did I have knowledge of Scripture that would have warned me against doing so.

Growing up during the tail end of the "hippie culture," I dressed the part, donned in hippie-inspired faded bell-bottom jeans, with long straight hair held in place with a leather headband and fringed moccasins. In the midst of a peace, love, and flower power mindset, there was no room for a faraway God who restricted the youth's rebellious stance towards society. Joan Baez and Bob Dylan sang anthems of protest and social justice... everyone got stoned on pot. I jotted down my philosophy in poetry on the subject but met opposition from my 8th grade English teacher. Miss Jackson was a devout Christian who portrayed God as an interactive being who had an interest in people. I spent my lunch periods in her classroom hearing about Jesus in a way that I had never heard in Sunday school. It was here, she confronted my stoned poetry logic that God had created marijuana and it was there for my enjoyment. Miss Jackson didn't argue, rather advised, "If you want to

know the truth, then pray and ask Jesus to show you." She concluded with a word of caution, "Don't ask unless you want to know because He will answer your prayer." Miss Jackson even handed me a Christian tract as I walked out of class one afternoon.

That night I knelt by my bed and recited the sinner's prayer from the back of the tract and asked Jesus if marijuana use was wrong. The school year ended and soon after I received a surprise package in the mail. It was a Good News Bible from Miss Jackson but, try as I may, I couldn't understand what I read.

I forgot all about the questions and the prayer of salvation and continued on my chosen path until the next school year was well underway. My best friend and I had saved our money and bought a dime bag of weed. That high would come to haunt me for years.

We lit a joint behind the schoolyard that had become our favorite hangout and shared it with another friend we were turning on for the first time. I remember leaving the schoolyard and walking down the street. The first sign of trouble was a lit-up cross on a Deliverance Church. The sign's message blazed before me larger than life: "Jesus Saves and Jesus Heals." I felt convicted knowing what I was on. We continued walking... enjoying a good high until my

surroundings changed. Suddenly, I felt distant as if I was floating out of my body. I panicked and wanted to get back. It seemed I was losing ground and couldn't keep up with my friends, or my body. This was no normal high. I turned to Sherry and yelled, "Wait! Hold up!" but she looked puzzled, not missing a step. I was on a familiar street but something didn't look right. The twilight had an auburn ambiance that seemed surreal... as if I was becoming devoured by this prevailing darkness. Terrified, I felt separated and unconnected. I resisted from being pulled further into this reddened abyss and I wanted out! It was then I had this disturbing sensation I was fast approaching the gateway to hell. My chest tightened, and I found it difficult to breathe. I knew I had to do something quick, or I'd enter the place of no return! That's when I lost it! I screamed, "Help! Help me!" I kept screaming while standing in the middle of the street. Sherry grabbed my arms, "It's okay! It's alright." That was no solace to the cruel fate that beckoned me. I screamed louder pleading for help. A concerned driver stopped his car and asked if I was okay. Sherry told him it was a silly prank as she yanked me out of the street. I held my head between my hands, terrified until Sherry, at a loss for words remembered my conversations about God with my teacher. "God is with you!" Sherry repeated, "It's okay... God is with you!" In an instant, my fear subsided and the

dark auburn faded. I looked around; now realizing I was standing in front of a hospital. I still felt disconnected from my body, but that feeling of losing myself left, along with the pull into oblivion. Those words of reassurance echoed in my head: "It would be okay, God was with me." Sherry held onto my arm and hurried me away from the large glass hospital windows where waiting room patients and their loved ones looked on. We walked to her older sister's house close by, where they brought me inside and gave me a cup of tea to relax me.

I went home to go to bed only to face a restless night, trying to piece together what had happened? This was like a bad trip but everyone knows you didn't trip on pot. I couldn't shake the prayer I'd prayed over a year prior when I asked God to show me if smoking marijuana was wrong. How could God, who existed far out into the universe know me and meddle in my life? Had He answered my prayer? Overcome by fear and the thought God could interact with my world, I lay awake until morning. I tried convincing myself there must be a logical explanation for this paranormal experience.

I flipped the pages of the phone book and called every drug rehab place that existed and shared my experience. They all seemed convinced this episode was unrelated to marijuana use. But what was it? I even took a

bus to skid row because a man at this rehab center seemed hopeful to supply an answer. But when I got there, he insisted I was hiding something and had taken a hallucinogenic drug.

I walked out of the center disappointed and more afraid and bewildered than when I entered. I hurried across a small park just in time to catch the next bus. There was one last number in the phone book for me to call; one I was trying to avoid... it was a pastor that had a drug rehab ministry. I called and shared my story and he said the words I didn't want to hear... "Yes, God is real and could intervene in my life!"

You would think those words would reassure and I'd run into the arms of my Heavenly Father, but instead I turned further away, afraid that He had the power to influence my life. My guilty sinful lifestyle lay bare and I could no longer deny His spiritual existence. It was a reality I wasn't ready to face nor wanted to, so I hid away in the quiet of my room. Afraid to go out, I became reclusive and depressed. Mom did everything she could to force me out the door, even calling my friends for their help and encouragement. Approximately a year went by before I emerged from my self-imposed solitary confinement, all the while denying any spiritual interaction.

CHAPTER IV

A few years after high school graduation, my friend Sherry called to tell me her older sister, Marie had become a Christian, and we talked about how she was making a big mistake. Since I was out of work Marie asked me to go house-sit at her new home for a furniture delivery and electric hook-up. The house was empty except for a Bible, some tracts, and a battery operated tape player with nothing to play but sermon tapes. I browsed through some of this stuff as there was little else to do. When Marie arrived, out of the blue, she invited me to go with her church to a Jesus gathering at Giants Stadium. I thought this would be a good way to get out to a free music event, so I agreed to go.

Marie's fiancé parked his small compact car among church vans and Christian bumper stickers, and we headed into the stadium. There were over 40,000 people who came and I was bewildered why. We sat halfway up the bleachers for what they told me would be an afternoon of music and teaching, yet I didn't understand what to expect. After we entered, the entire stadium was singing praise to Jesus with, what seemed half of them singing in another language. I received a crash course of "tongues" that made little sense. This was an atypical church experience for me. Then an

amazing thing happened... as I looked up, the impending storm clouds rolled in and we had brought no rain gear or umbrellas! I was thinking of how drenched we would be by the time we reached the car. Ironically, you could see the rain pouring down everywhere except within the stadium. The clouds soon broke open to a blue sky, and the sun shone down on this gathering of Jesus people. I felt chills down my spine as my heart melted; remembering the Jesus my 8th teacher had spoken of long ago. The gathering ended, and the seed planted within me so long ago was nourished. A few days later, I walked to a local park and sat on a bench where I once again prayed the prayer for salvation but this time, I made a devout commitment to begin my daily walk with Christ.

At first, I went back to the church I grew up in and soon after, taught Sunday school and became one of the Youth Group advisors. Every Sunday and Wednesday evenings, I was a regular at a Pentecostal church to learn the Word of God and be filled with the Holy Spirit... using them as a spiritual catalyst for my teachings in my Sunday school class. I made a few new Christian girlfriends and became active in young adult events.

CHAPTER V

One of my new born-again friends invited me to a healing and deliverance church called New Zion Christian Fellowship. They were a discipleship church, where I developed a close relationship with the pastor, John and his wife Joan. Over time, they became my spiritual parents, and it was at their dining room table I first met my future husband, Michael. Joan and I went shopping for ingredients one day to make homemade lasagna. Joan had pre-arranged for my meeting with Michael that night, believing we might make a good couple. I set the table as Michael came in with a loaf of garlic bread. We hit it off... and the night ended with Michael inviting me to The Basic Youth Conflicts Seminar in Ocean Grove that was coming the following week.

Each day Michael would pick me up in his mini, yellow and black, pickup truck and we'd drive to The Great Auditorium just off the Jersey shore. At the end of the seminar each night we'd emerge in conversation as we walked the sandy beach. We both enjoyed nature and the roaring ocean waves added a romantic touch to the backdrop of a moonlit sky. After the conference, I did as I was told and rid myself of ungodly possessions. Michael helped me as we shattered all my rock albums and tore my

bohemian hedonistic poems into confetti/a multitude of tiny bits and pieces. I did this act of obedience unto the Lord believing it was what He would have wanted me to do.

We dated for a year before we planned our wedding day. It seemed a match made in heaven. The first year of our marriage was any girl's dream come true; Michael was a sensitive and caring husband. I believed we were blessed and wanted our marriage to glorify God in every situation. Within just a few short months we discovered that I had conceived our first child. Our whole focus changed as we embraced our new parental role. One of the first things we had to do was move from our bungalow to make room for our baby-to-be. A deacon in our church and his wife had a two-bedroom apartment connected to their home and their tenants had just moved out, so we went over to check it out. The apartment was nice, large, and even had a backyard for our dog. I had one big reservation; the rent. I addressed my concern with Michael, Deacon Dave and the couple's father, Brad who happened to be one of the church pastors. "We can just barely afford the rent now but what happens when I have the baby and am no longer working?" All three men reassured me that God would provide for our needs. In fact, they emphasized how God had opened the doors to providing for Deacon Dave and his growing family needs.

Besides, as Pastor Brad shared, it would be great fellowship for us to be right next door. I didn't think we could afford the increase in rent, but wanting to be the submissive wife, I agreed, trusting in the leadership that was over me.

While we were decorating the nursery in our new apartment, my mother-in-law seemed to have planned a pre-emptive strike and had set up Michael's baby crib waiting for our new arrival. She had seemed to have our baby's life all planned out, including the baby spending every weekend with her, even knowing I planned on nursing. Her obsession would become a permanent wedge in our relationship.

Michael gave up his construction job for a management position at a bakery franchise owned by a church elder. The elder promised Michael the same pay as his former job, including benefits after two weeks of training but neither ever materialized. Michael struggled to support us on minimum wage. To make matters worse, I stopped by one morning for a cup of coffee with our baby. I sat on the stool and overheard an unseemly conversation between my husband and the waitresses. Michael had become known as the shop “Don-Juan,” engaging in sexual innuendo with his female staff. Unamused, I questioned where had my sensitive husband gone?

That Christmas, Michael chose an enormous tree that filled our living room, yet we couldn't afford to put presents beneath it. To make matters worse, I received a gift in the form of a bank savings account statement in the mail to find a zero balance! Panicked, I called Michael.

"Our bank statement just arrived with a zero balance!" There was silence on the other end of the phone. "That's our house savings; did you empty our account?"

"I don't know anything about it," Michael responded followed by silence.

"Well... somebody took it out and I know it wasn't me!" I had hoped he would have an explanation but my gut feeling told me better. "I'll call the bank and find out what happened." I told him before ending the call.

I dialed the number for the bank, my heart pounding, as I inquired about our life savings. After the service representative verified the zero balance, I took a deep breath... "This can't be. We've got several thousand dollars in our account from our wedding!" The rep was sympathetic but further research came with the same results... an empty account. "Can you tell me whose name is on the withdrawal slip?" I asked, after a few minutes on hold, the rep returned the verdict... it was several withdrawals signed by Michael. I insisted it couldn't be since Michael had said he knew nothing about it. The bank

representative explained how to come in to file for a federal research into fraud. I hung up the phone furious because the evidence was irrefutable. I called Michael back, but he still denied it.

That night when he came home from work, I greeted him with a frown and a bank statement, but he seemed ill concerned over our missing money.

"Michael!" I demanded, "If you didn't withdraw this money then I'm going to the bank in the morning to file for fraud. The bank said it's a federal offense." Michael looked away, but I wasn't about to relent until I received his confession. It took a long time, but he admitted emptying the account. "And a Merry Christmas to you," I thought to myself.

"I had to pay bills!" Michael explained, but while there was no money left, I found out the bills were still past due.

It was more than I could bear. The rage I harbored burst from my lungs in a loud scream. Grabbing the trunk of our huge Christmas tree, I yelled, "You lied!" I pulled harder until the tree popped out the front door, then through the narrow landing on the front porch with a trail of tinsel and broken bulbs trailing. Michael stared in disbelief for a few moments before attempting to console

me as I burst into tears, but my pain wasn't in the loss of money but rather in his trust.

By now, we were living off our family and the church. Michael paid whatever he could for the rent and the church helped by paying the difference. My mom would drop off groceries and diapers by the box load. I questioned whether this all was a lesson in humility or an attack from the enemy. This was not what I had hoped for my son or the new baby that the pregnancy test I'd taken revealed I was carrying. My cries out to God became my daily prayer, not knowing where I had gone wrong.

It was early Saturday evening when we received a visit by Deacon Dave and Pastor Tom. Pastor shared how his own son, who was in a backslidden state, had just impregnated his girlfriend. They would get married (what I considered a "shot-gun" wedding) and needed a place to live with someone nearby to disciple them. Our friend and deacon, Dave explained that Michael hadn't kept up on our part of the rent and he was giving us notice to vacate the apartment so his brother-in-law could move in. I felt a tremendous rush of emotions and protested..., the church

was paying the rent we weren't able to pay. Pastor Tom advised us the church couldn't continue to pay our rent and Dave needed the money to make his own mortgage payment. This had nothing to do with the church's ability to help. The words my dad used to say smacked me right in my face, "Blood is thicker than water." I had argued that the Bible said my spiritual family was my family. My faith and theology were being tested to the core.

It got ugly as we faced eviction without the financial means for a move. Our spiritual family sided with their own flesh and blood. My dad proved to be right; blood was thicker as proven by our eviction. Amazingly, the deacon found an affordable apartment for us. Moving day came, and we found that Deacon Dave had carpeted our new apartment with our old apartment's carpet. It made no sense. Why go put all that work into a temporary fix? It seemed the soap opera continued till I let the cat out of the bag... as they hurried to make ready our old apartment to welcome their new baby; they had forced us, a toddler in tow along with our new baby on the way... out of ours. That first night, we lay in our bed with the aroma of pot seeping into our space. Our son awoke as a continual flow of footsteps trotted in the hall outside his bedroom door and as a storm broke above us, we hurried to rescue him from the leaking roof saturating his crib.

Our big break came when Michael's friend's dad offered him a permanent, decent -paying position where he worked. It seemed the hard times were behind us. The house next door to my sister became vacant, and we moved in. We now had a house with a yard and my flesh and blood living right next door for emotional support.

We continued going to New Zion Church with the love and support of our spiritual parents, John and Joan, despite the breach among our other spiritual brethren.

CHAPTER VI

It was a warm spring day. I had just put my son down for his afternoon nap and planned to take a shower while he slept. The hall closet had no clean towels, so I headed down the stairs to get one.

The next thing I remember I was looking down at my motionless body lying at the bottom of the stairs. Several voices engaged in deliberation though I couldn't see anyone. At first, I was a silent listener, until one voice asked me a question. I vaguely remember it's wording, but the answer I gave remains vivid: "No. I don't want to leave my children."

Another voice advised that there would be much suffering and pain in my life if I stayed, but my answer remained the same: "I don't want to leave my son. And what about the baby I'm carrying?"

I sensed that all would be well with the children, and was told that if I remained, I would go into the enemy's territory, although I wouldn't lose my salvation.

"I need to be here for my children," I insisted. "I don't want to go."

The phone rang. I lay there, semi-conscious. I wanted to get up, but my brain's signals weren't being transmitted and at first, my body didn't react.

Finally, my limbs succumbed to my will. Gaining control, I struggled to my hands and knees. The room spun, nauseating me, but determined I pulled myself up to stand.

It took all my energy to stumble into the kitchen and pick up the receiver. Only a dial tone. Feeling light-headed, I propped myself against the wall and dialed everyone who might have been trying to reach me. Only my dad answered, but he hadn't called.

I looked at the clock. Three p.m.

My stomach churned with nausea, but I needed to shower before my son awoke from his nap. I made my way to the stairs and clung to the handrail as I climbed what seemed like Mount Everest. Once in the bathroom, I undressed, turned on the water, and stepped into the shower. My fingers caught as I ran them through my hair, which strangely already felt wet and clumped together. I lowered one hand to find blood covering my fingers.

“I’m bleeding. Why am I bleeding?”

The water cascaded through my hair until it ran clean. I got out of the shower and stood in front of the mirror to examine my head for a wound. There wasn't one. Not even a scratch.

With my head throbbing, I got dressed and went to the staircase. I noticed blood on the carpet at the foot of the

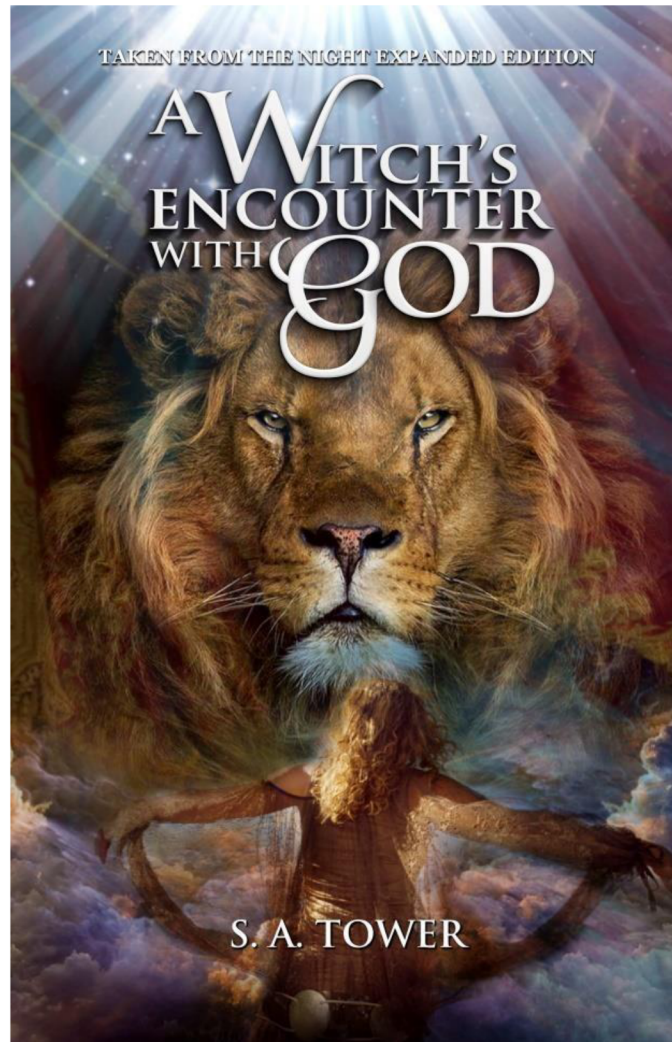
stairs. At first, I questioned it, but I remembered seeing myself lying on the floor and the mysterious conversation.

What does it mean—that I'll go into the enemy's territory? I wondered.

There was no way I would ever walk away from Jesus.

My story continues in, "A Witch's Encounter with God" available at Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble.com and all major e-book retailers.

"**A Witch's Encounter with God** engages the reader immediately and transports them to the battlefield of the soul. A young woman became entangled with a coven of white witchcraft and her ensuing journey to be delivered. This compelling narrative pulls no punches about church life, family struggles, and the darkness that often parades as light!" - **Dr. Ron Phillips** - Senior Pastor of Abba's House and Author of over 30 books.



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BIO

As a former initiated witch, Author S.A. Tower has experienced the unseen battles in the heavenlies firsthand. Being delivered and set-free, she is blessed with a keen gift of discernment and the ability to foresee spiritual warfare that simultaneously affects our earthly reality. An emerging fresh voice in the literary community with a deep spiritual background, Ms. Tower is the author of the highly acclaimed true story, *A Witch's Encounter with God*. Ms. Tower is the site author and blogger of *The Insightful Scribe* and maintains her well-liked S.A. Tower, Facebook Author page.