

the condition that he become an ordained minister before he finished the program. He graduated Princeton with a Doctorate of Divinity, one of the few men in the country, black or white, to earn this degree at such an early age.

The Reverend now stood in front of the dressing mirror in his bedroom. He pulled the wide end of his tie through the loop and slid the knot up to fit snugly under the collar of his crisply starched white shirt, careful to create a stylish dimple in the tie, just beneath the knot. He leaned into the mirror and brushed his full head of hair which was just starting to gray at the temples. Except for slight graying and the pound a year he had gained over the last twenty years, Rev. Nettles had not changed much since college. He was still a handsome, statuesque man who knew how to carry himself proudly, inspiring confidence in his followers.

The Reverend knew that he would be the center of local media attention today. He had already planted the seeds at the networks, letting them know that he would be making an “impromptu” address from the steps of city hall. He had picked one of his finest dark blue suits and a “power” tie to accent it. If his staff had done its usual good job, he might even be able to gain some national media coverage. He mentally reviewed his schedule and smiled at himself in the mirror.

“Every dog has his day, and a good one has two” he thought to himself. *“I must be awfully good cause I’ve had quite a few”*. Marty Nettles laughed out loud at the couplet he had just composed. He thought that he might have been a successful rapper if he were a few years younger. None of that negative stuff, sex and violence, drugs and hate that the rappers were doing. Maybe he could write some religious rap songs and let his youth choir sing them, maybe they could record

Clyde Harrison

them and sell the CDs. He could manage the group and take them national...

Marty's wife Cynthia walked in and delivered him from this vision. She carried a cup of coffee in one hand and a toasted bagel on a plate in the other. She smiled when she saw him standing in the mirror, immediately recognizing the look that he always had on his face whenever he tripped off.

"Where were you this time?" she said affectionately. Cynthia was deeply in love with Marty Nettles, had been since the first day they met in Grad school.

"Oh, just going over the possible flow of events for today" he responded.

"Sure you were Rev., and I was just talking to my girlfriend, the first lady, on the phone, planning a fifth avenue shopping trip for this afternoon" she joked.

"Well that may not be a far off scenario, my dear, stranger things have happened. Did the morning papers arrive yet?"

"They're downstairs on the dining table. I didn't see anything in the headlines about Saturday night's shooting...probably wasn't thought to be important enough to make the cut, or the Mayor's PR crew managed to get it buried."

"Well if they did, they won't be able to keep it buried, not after today. I'm taking this one national. This wasn't some gangbanger they shot this time, this was a prominent black businessman. Could you imagine the outrage if it had been Donald Trump or George Steinbrenner? That policeman would have been indicted already and the trial would be over before lunch." The veins in Marty's temple began to pulse, his brow wrinkled and his voice got louder.

“Just remember, Sugar, to not take it personally. You have to stay detached and deliberate. Don’t let your emotions come into play on this thing, it’s not about you personally, it’s all business.”

“Thanks honey,” he turned and smiled compassionately at his wife, “I see that the benefits of being married to a psychologist are ongoing.” He walked over and placed his arms around her. Cynthia Nettles was an extremely attractive woman. She was tall and lean like Marty’s mother, with silky, shoulder length hair. She had an oval shaped face with large brown eyes and full lips that opened to perfect white teeth when she smiled. She could have easily been a runway model in her youth.

“I just don’t want you running up your pressure and having a stroke. I don’t plan on growing old without you Sugar. And besides, since you’re counting this as a counseling session, your tab is running.” Cynthia liked the smell of the Reverend while he held her. He had been wearing the same fragrance for years, a mixture that he had custom made on the Upper East Side. “I will take in kind service, if you know what I mean.” She smiled alluringly and gently squeezed Marty’s butt.

“Girl you’re crazy.” He said as he grinned back at her. “I’m gonna show you ‘in kind’ service’ when I get home tonight, and that’s a promise.”

Marty put on the jacket to his suite and took a sip of coffee. He had already started mentally rehearsing the speech that he would make at City Hall today. Cynthia was amazed at how easily he could refocus and followed him down the stairs with half a toasted bagel in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other.
