

THE STEWARDSHIP PAPERS

Wakeup Calls

Monday morning I was up and wide awake at 4:00 A.M. It is not my usual habit to arise at such an early hour, but during the past weekend I had been inundated with a virulent flu bug, followed by more than 24 hours of sleep, so I was a bit off schedule.

I wasn't the only one that was awake at that hour. As I pulled onto a ramp entrance of the Washington D. C. Beltway (an eight lane highway around the nation's capitol), a woman jumped out in front of the car, then leaped out of the way as I swerved to miss her. She was frantically waving her hands, so I hit the breaks and skidded to a stop. She raced up to the car and opened the door, saying that she had been kidnapped, abducted and "He cut my hands! See the blood?!" as she held out her hands for inspection. It seemed a very small cut, but there was something about the woman...

"Get in the car...stopping here is dangerous," I said; and I drove off down the ramp with the woman beside me.

She kept repeating a license plate number intermixed with a tale that seem almost unreal.

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“What in heaven’s name were you doing out alone at this hour in the first place?!”

I asked in utter amazement, then quickly added an apologetic “Never mind. You don’t need to answer that. It really isn’t any of my business...Where would you like me to take you?”

“Are we near New Hampshire Ave.?”

“It’s the next exit.”

“I’m going to the police to report this, but first I want to go home. I want my husband to go with me to the police station...My child is sick. I was getting some medicine for her...”

“What’s your name?”

There was a hesitation in her answer: “Debbie...”

“Where do you live?”

“Just off University.”

“OK,” I said. “Just sit back and try to relax. I’ll take you home.” I took a closer look at her and saw a woman somewhere in her late twenties, with blond hair and a

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look of age on her face that had nothing to do with this one night's experience.

She was wearing a white tank top, no shoes; and her manner was understandably wary, but somehow a bit more than I would have expected. Was it because she wasn't used to getting any help from anyone? It was as if I had a wild creature, hurt and in need, sitting next to me. The truth is that I didn't exactly trust her any more than she trusted me, but I couldn't just leave her alone on the street.

I followed her directions to a cheap apartment building where a boisterous night crowd was weaving and reeling its way home.

"You can let me off at the end of the block," she said. "I can walk from there."

"If you don't mind, after what you've been through, I'd rather see you safely to your building," I said, and proceeded to do just that.

When she finally left the car, she tentatively reached out and touched me on the shoulder. "Thank you," she said. "You've been very kind." And she hurried away.

Was it a coincidence that we both awoke at such an ungodly hour? Perhaps, but if we have the courage to reach out, in whatever way that we can, then no matter when it happens, an awakening of the heart has occurred at a Godly hour of the day.

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