

Who is Mike Enlow?

by: Chelsea Hart



From dust to ashes
From ashes to stone
A simple man rises
To claim what he owns

From heartache to heartstrings
From cripple to strong
He walks with conviction
And sings a new song

ch for me

Our existence on this earth is a melange of lives touching lives, binding us together in the intricate and colorful fabric of our common human link. This link reminds us of who we are and why we are here.

When will your heart not ache for a hungry child or a homeless widow? When will you not cry for a generation aborted or a baby dying of AIDS?

In too many ways we have become desensitized to all of these things, simply because of the abundance of them. Things that shocked and terrified us years ago are common place, second page news stories now. The link is getting weaker, and so are we.

There should be no room on this earth, this on time paradise, for any of these atrocities. Yet they abound. But why? And who is to blame? We can talk politics and social defects all we want, but are those reasons or symptoms?

As little as two years ago I would have been right there in the arm chair quarterback arena, blaming everyone and everything for the escalating pitch of terror this country is heading toward. Now I know better.

This is the story of a man who helped bring me back to the human link. A man, who through his sensitivity, strength and courage, has taught me and many others the greatest lesson there is to be learned, and given the greatest gift there is to be given. In this world of uncertainty and often times profound despair, there is a light that shines perpetually. Mike brought that light to me, gave it to me freely and asked only one thing in return. That I share it with others.

Please allow me, through my own personal experience, to share that light with you. That one life be changed and renewed, so in turn may another. I love you, Mike.

Keep on...

Prologue

...and my mind was renewed with hope for the future. The darkness in my life seemed wholly dissipated, with light streaming through to my very inner core. I was flooded with the promise of new beginnings and restful days of content. I listened to him raptly as he told me of things I never knew. I found my heart, so scarred with threats of death, suddenly clinging to the echoes of life in his voice. There was nothing jaded or frightened in the way he spoke. There was only quiet conviction firmly planted in his words. He had found the gold that most of us spend our lives chasing rainbows to find. I knew that our paths had not crossed by chance, but by destiny. I handed over to him my will to survive and he took it gently, watered it with tears of gratitude, fed it with strength and humility and watched it grow. He found me weary of life and stripped naked of hope. He clothed within the circle of his arms and gave me a place to lay my head. I'd never known such love or warmth. I felt as if I'd been wrapped, as a child, in a blanket of security. The day I found myself on his doorstep was as stormy as my soul. He opened the door and took me in, not as a stranger but as a friend. Looking back now, I know I was meant for that moment, when the sun would break through the clouds and bathe me in the light that is intended for us all.

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The Interview

"I have unlimited vision," he said. "The things most people keep locked away are the things I set free." There was a strength in his voice and a determination in his stance.

He walked with a slight limp, but not in a way that made me feel pity. He seemed to have made friends with it, so I did too.

He told me to make myself comfortable; that he'd be with me in a minute. After a time he came out of his office, sat down in a chair across from me, picked up his guitar, and began singing a love song that brought tears to my eyes. I was confused by this, since I'd come there for a job interview, but I was so enthralled by his passionate lyrics and moody voice that I simply let myself fall into the music with him.

When he was done he said, "I wrote that a long time ago for someone I loved very much. I wanted to share it." I remember being speechless for a moment, as the last strains of the song drifted out of the room. He saw the tears and my embarrassment and told me it was okay to cry; that he had his own brand of soul music. He was right. I felt that song through every part of me.

I wiped my eyes and prayed my mascara wasn't somewhere around my neck. I fumbled around for my resume' and started to hand it to him when he stopped me and asked a question that still burns in my mind:

"Who are you?" he inquired, the same gentle eyes fixed on my blotchy face. I hesitated for a beat and answered, "I'm Chelsea Hart. Didn't they tell you my name when I made the appointment?"

"They told me your name, but that doesn't answer my question. Who are you?"

My mind began to race. Here I was, in a cabin in the middle of nowhere with this man I barely knew, praying for a job and scared out of my mind. Who was I? Uh, let's see. I'm Chelsea Hart the computer operator. I'm Chelsea Hart, divorced mother of two. I'm Chelsea Hart, wanna be writer. I'm...Chelsea Hart! What else was there?

"What do you mean 'who am I'? I have all of my job references right here. I run a computer, I'm a writer, I've got a couple of kids, I can play the piano, I'm not that great a cook but I do a great impression of Bob Dole..."

He laughed at that one and I felt relieved. Now maybe he would read my resume' and get down to the business at hand. I handed the resume' to him again and he took it this time, long enough to put it down in an empty chair. So much for my bought and paid for list of credentials.

At this point I began considering my options. There was always the door, which I knew how to use. But just before I opened my mouth to thank him for his time, I saw something in the corner that stopped me cold. There was a blanket it over it and a Soloflex weight machine dangerously close to it, but I could see the legs and the bench that the blanket didn't quite cover. The next thing I knew I was standing in front of it, tugging at the blanket. It was a keyboard. A very fine keyboard at that. My hands began to tremble as they always do in the presence of a piano of any kind. He never stopped watching me as I looked at the board with want in my eyes. He must have sensed my desire, or maybe even my need to sit down and play, because he asked me to do so.

Let me say right now that when introduced to a piano, my world becomes very small and weightless, as if I were drifting in some other place and time where I could taste the blue in the sky and the salt in the sea. Still, I never played in front of anyone. My music was my secret as well as my shelter. I never wanted to share it with anyone. But in spite of my

carefully constructed barriers, something made me sit down and play for him, hesitantly at first, very aware of his strong presence right behind me. As I played a piece I'd written a few weeks back, the music ran away with me and all was forgotten as I watched my fingers work their magic over the keys. I was somewhere near heaven right then, and it felt so fine.

When I finished, the room was totally silent. I turned around on the bench to find him staring at me and smiling. Then he said softly, "Oh, that's who you are. Now that we know each other, let's talk about your resume'."

I understood something in that moment that has shaped me into who I am today. Before he looked at a piece of paper, he wanted to see into a part of me, just as he had shown me a part of himself when he shared the love song with me. That brief moment of sharing between us wasn't the waste of time I'd perceived it to be. He was building a bridge to me so we could walk toward each other instead of having to jump over rivers or climb mountains. Lesson number one: Who are you? How can I connect with you? I remember loving him a little right then and there. When I realized the simple human connection he had taken the time to make with me instead of judging me by the contents of a piece of paper, you couldn't have dragged me out of there with all the kings' horses and all the kings' men. If this was the preview, I wanted to stay and see the show.

He briefed my resume' with respect and interest. His attention to detail made me feel important. His attention to me made me feel important. Every other job interview I'd been on was like being a piece of fruit on an inspector's conveyor belt. Keep, toss it, keep it, toss it, etc. I won't tell you how many times I was tossed, but I was a keeper here and there.

Just as he finished reading my resume', there was a sudden clap of thunder followed by a flash of lightning that made the lights in the cabin flicker momentarily. And just as if we were in a B horror flick he looked at me and said, "Go to my computer and juice up a newsletter I've been working on." I remember thinking it was very possible my intestines were crawling toward my throat at that moment. Yeah, I was a writer all right. A writer who had never been published and only read by sympathetic family members who'd run out of stuff to read in the bathroom. The phrase 'Roll Dem Bones' kept inexplicably running across the marquee in my brain.

But there he was, with that same gentle, expectant look on his face. I knew I was in between what my Uncle Vinnie used to call a hard and a hard place. I was hoping mightily that he would concentrate more on my computer experience than the hopeful writer inside me fighting hard to get out. But a writer was what he needed and a writer was what I'd always wanted to be, so I decided not to let my inexperience show and barreled into his office with all the determination of a last minute Wal Mart shopper on Christmas Eve.

He brought the newsletter up on the computer and I was instantly deflated. The subject matter was investigative technology (oh boy). I weakly tried to explain to him that I was going to take that in high school, but opted out for the Custodial Training Program for my extra credit instead. He seemed unsympathetic. So he said, "Have at it," and left the room. I scrolled through the pages, reading as much as I could as quickly as I could, hoping to find a few places where I could insert some not yet famous Chelsea Hart one liners. Thank God and Greyhound I found a few. When he came back in and read what I'd inserted here and there, he liked what he saw. He said he like my style, and did I want a job doing some ghostwriting? Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes, said I of the silly one liners and head full of dreams. If I'd only known then what (or who) I was really saying yes to. But as I learned in time from Michael, all things work together for good. I had many questions about my new job as well as my new part time boss. He told me simply to be patient, that my questions would be turned into answers in time.

After he hired me to write for him, we went back into the living room of the cabin where I began to collect my things. I was prepared for the usual 'Hey yeah, thanks, nice to meet you too, when do you want me to start, okay Monday, see ya then, bye.' I should have known better than that. He picked up his guitar once again and began to play. This time he sang of a love I'd heard of but never really knew. I sat down and listened with closed eyes and an open heart and when he was done, I realized I felt healed somehow. I couldn't have explained it at that moment if I'd tried, but something inside me that had died long ago was revived and wanted to live again. He played a few more songs, set the guitar aside, and thanked me for coming out. But before I left, I found myself needing to ask the same question he'd asked of me earlier.

"Mike, who are you?"

He looked at me and smiled the smile that I'd soon come to depend on and said simply, "Don't you know?"

I shouldered my purse, grabbed my coat and thanked him. Backing my way toward the door, I glanced out of the window and noticed the weather had gone from bad to worse. I was thinking about the long drive home, getting more nervous since I've always been afraid to drive through storms, so I was stunned when he said one last thing to me as I placed my hand on the door knob.

"Don't be afraid Chelsea, you're going to make it home just fine."

The Chair

I began going out to the cabin frequently. The office that housed his production staff was several miles away, and he explained that the cabin was where he escaped to write his newsletters and to think. I was one of the fortunate few who could go out there when he was working and I'm grateful for the times I spent with him there. I'd never seen one individual work so hard and so long in my entire life. For hours on end he would be glued to his computer, figuring things out, brainstorming till 3, sometimes 4 in the morning. There was a day bed in the living room for anyone out there who, out of sheer exhaustion, had to drop out of the Mike-a-thon. I seriously doubt I will ever again witness the drive and dedication I witnessed from him.

Mike had developed a genuine love for my music, which was a true honor for me, because I was learning to open up and play for him as I had never done for anyone before. I was beginning to blossom in ways I'd never dreamed I could. Often times during one of our late night brainstorm writing sessions, he would stop whatever he was doing and call out to me.

"Chelsea, go play the piano for a while, would you?" And I would happily crawl over to the now beloved keyboard and play the music I knew he wanted to hear. Gentle music to ease the mind and the soul. He always seemed happier and more relaxed when I played for him, and nothing in the world could have made me happier than his reaction to what was inside my heart. Looking back, I know now that he heard something in my music that I had yet to understand. We used to joke around and say that he would pay me a few hundred bucks a week to sit there and play for him while he worked. He may not have known this, but on my end it wasn't a joke.

One night while he was on a business call (and those lasted anywhere from five minutes to five hours) I was roaming around the cabin, looking at pictures of his daughter, his wife (at that time girlfriend) and just generally being a little bit nosy. I wandered into his bedroom, checking out his array of investigative equipment, his book shelf and the obligatory collection of gut junk. As I was about to turn off the light, I noticed there was a wheelchair folded between the foot of the bed and the wall. Immediately my mind took me back to the first day I met him and noticed the limp. I had never asked about it and hadn't planned on asking about it, but the wheelchair by the bed made me curiouser and curiouser. I knew he never used it, so why would he keep it in plain sight, next to the bed? There were no ramps to accommodate a wheelchair (for the elderly relatives I'd conjured up in my mind). It was time. I had to know.

He got off the phone some twenty minutes later and I took him a cup of coffee. He seemed to want to take a break, so I took my window of opportunity and threw it wide open.

"Mike, why is there a wheelchair by your bed? Do you ever have to use it?"

He looked at me for a moment and said, "I was wondering when you were going to ask about that." Then he turned back to his computer and began working again. Lesson Number Two: When Michael is on the computer, there is no room for discussion. So I went into the living room and continued working on what I was writing for him.

He came out of the office a few minutes later and called me into his bedroom. I found him standing directly in front of the wheelchair, caressing the handles as if it were an old friend. For a long time we just stood there looking at it when he suddenly said, almost inaudibly, "Two years."

"You've had it for two years?" Chelsea the genius asks.

"No," he said. "I was in it for two years."

It took a minute or two for what he'd said to sink in. Before I could ask anything else, he told me the most incredible story I'd ever heard. I wouldn't have believed it had I not seen the living proof of his presence standing right in front of me.

"I was working and living in Louisiana at the time. It was August 28, 1983, 4:50 p.m. I was on my Yamaha 400, burning up the back roads. I was heading home to get ready for a singing engagement when I rounded a curve and met a pickup truck heading straight for me in my lane. We hit head on. Then I died."

I could only listen in amazement to this man who was now standing before me, telling me of his death. You could have heard the proverbial MCI pin drop in that cabin.

"I was out of my body for a time. I saw the ambulance arrive, I saw the girl who was driving the pickup crying beside my body, and I heard everything the paramedics said as they began to revive me. Just as I was starting to realize I didn't want to return, I was flooded with excruciating pain as I rushed back into my body, which was smashed to pieces. The agony I felt was indescribable. I was barely conscious but I remember telling the girl driving the truck not to cry. I was rushed to the emergency room and my family was notified. Laura, my wife, and I were separated at this time, and she was out of town. I lay there and cried for my mother to bring me some Chapstick because my lips were dry and burning badly. The pain had escalated from indescribable to unbearable by this time, My brother was there beside me in ER, and when he asked me what he could do for me, I asked him to let me bite his finger to ease the pain. I had emergency surgery where six steel rods were put in my legs. I had neck and back fractures, the helmet I had on cracked and I had a concussion, abrasions, broken ribs, and my arm was crushed. On the whole, it just wasn't a real good day."

"The doctors told me I was in critical condition. No one could tell me whether or not I'd walk again or be more than minimally functional. I spent weeks in the hospital, fighting the pain and holding on to my will to survive. I asked one of the doctors if I'd ever be able to play my guitar again. He said no. So I asked a friend to bring my guitar to the hospital. He placed it in my hands and it hurt like nobody's business, but in a room full of nurses I played that guitar until they cried. One small victory already. I knew then that I was going to make it out of there. I think they did, too."

"In all I had seven surgeries. I'd suffered compression fractures and the doctors warned me I may never be able to work again. I finally made it out of the hospital, confined to a wheelchair, but determined to survive somehow. When I got home, I had a four year old daughter to care for, with no one there to care for me. I had no insurance, no income, no savings, absolutely nothing. Eventually the bank came and took everything. My car, my furniture, everything I had. I was left with nothing and totally helpless. My landlord was sympathetic and let me stay in the house I was living in."

"How did you eat?" I asked. "How did you care for your daughter?"

"There were two neighbors who lived on either side of me that brought us food every day. I found out later that these people hated each other, but each brought us food every day, not knowing the other was doing it too. And strangely enough, they never once showed up at the same time. I survived, and eight months later I moved back to Mississippi."

I sat in awe as he told me of his confinement to the chair for two years, his determination to get out of that chair after the doctors made no promises that he ever would, and the day he stood up, pushed the chair back and walked away from it. I

found myself in tears once again and this time my tears were mingled with his. I saw his pain in those tears, but I also saw his victory and for one brief moment in time, I felt that anything was possible.

When the story had been told and the tears had run their course, he asked me the question I'd wanted to ask him.

"You want to know why the chair is still here, don't you?"

I nodded my head, almost afraid of the answer, and he said, "It's here to remind me of what I nearly lost, all that I gained and all that I conquered. If I walked away from that chair, there's nothing I can't do."

I felt small then, thinking of all the petty things in my life I'd considered obstacles., like not enough money or not the right clothes or not the right connections. That chair reminded me what a real obstacle was, yet the one time occupant of that chair was now standing next to it and smiling. I felt his strength then, the strength of this man I still had much to learn about but was coming to respect and revere more and more each day. He'd said my questions would be turned into answers one day, and I was willing to wait.

He went on to tell me how he re-established his income by returning to selling specialty ads while still in the wheelchair, literally wheeling himself from door to door, often having to sit on the sidewalk and ask to be lifted up stairs by strangers on the street. He never gave up and he never stopped trying. There wasn't a day that went by when he wasn't planning for the time when he would be set free from his chains and go on to become who he is today. He told me he knew beyond the shadows of all doubt that he would walk again. He only had to wait until it was his time.

"Mike," I said, when I found my voice again. "That's absolutely incredible. But there's something else, isn't there? Something you're not telling me."

He looked at me as if I should be able to answer my own question. But instead I asked.

"Mike, how did you...how did you get up and walk away from that chair?"

He lifted my chin so that I was looking directly into his eyes and he said,

"Don't you know?"

The Sandbar

There is an incredible sandbar in the river that Mike loved to sit on and think. I joined him down there once or twice, simply for the experience. We bounced ideas and notions and philosophy off each other like rubber balls. I always walked away from those sessions feeling a little wiser. There were still things about him I couldn't put my finger on. He could be very elusive and would sometimes disappear for hours, explaining he had some reading to do. He came back from these reading sessions with an aura about him that eluded me completely. His mind seemed to be free from all concern, but his direction seemed to be renewed. I didn't know what he was reading, but I was glad for whatever it was. His marketing business had reached unbelievable proportions by the time I started working for him, so the stress was on. I was glad he had an outlet.

One particular day on the sandbar has been firmly planted in my mind and I know as I write this, it always will be. We had taken a break from a grueling newsletter deadline and decided to just sit for a while and clear away some of the rubble in our minds. We began talking about life and purpose. I loved these discussions with him. His insights were marvelous and intriguing and when he talked, even the water seemed to be still. During our conversation, he asked me if I knew of darkness and light. I think I mumbled something unintelligible and he began to tell me of things I'd never heard before.

"Darkness and light are states of being," he said. "You can only live in one or the other. There is no grey area and no fences to ride. I love the light and I take it with me where ever I go."

"You take it with you? How?" I asked, once again caught up in the web of intrigue.

"It's part of me. It's like a beacon that shows me where to go. I have to have it in abundance so I can give it to others."

Now here I was, sitting next to this man who was not only my boss, but who was becoming my teacher as well. I had come to know him well enough to understand the wealth of knowledge he possessed and I had come to respect that knowledge. But now he was speaking of darkness and light. Once again I found myself unsure of what was going on. So I listened.

"Chelsea, there are keys. Keys to life that not everyone knows about. I know about them because I was diligent in my search to find them. The few people who find those keys will have wealth, comfort success and peace for the rest of their lives. My business was turned by those keys and my life depends on those keys."

"Let me guess," I countered. "You read a lot of Zig Zeigler keys to success books, right?"

"No, but I do study a book that gives me all the answers."

"What book is that?" I asked.

"Don't you know?"

I thought about all the books I'd seen on the shelf in his office. There were so many I couldn't even recall the titles. I guessed that all of his knowledge came from years of reading and studying all of them. I was eager to learn how he'd come to be so successful in everything he did. I knew already that he'd mastered at least 32 occupations, from being a highly successful private investigator to published author and everything in between. I also knew that Enlow Enterprises was a highly diversified, intensely technical business that seemed to be growing by leaps and bounds. All of this interested me greatly, but I wanted to know the driving force behind his achievements.

"Mike, what is your inspiration? Where do you draw your energy from when you run out of ideas?"

He looked out over the river a long time before answering me and when he finally did, he took me quite by surprise.

"I'm merely an instrument. My business is a vehicle for a greater purpose in life."

"What greater purpose?" I asked. "Look at all you've already accomplished. You're set financially, you've got everything money can buy, and you're only 34 years old. What could be greater?"

"There's always a greater purpose, Chelsea. There's always a higher level. Remember, if it doesn't matter ten thousand years from now, it doesn't matter at all."

"But nothing is going to matter ten thousand years from now," I said matter of factly..

"Yeah, there are some things that will matter a lot, to a lot of people. That's what's important to me now. Not the money or the cars or the fame. That's just a flash in the pan. Look at the river, Chelsea. It's a river of life."

We both fell silent and continued to watch the water flow past on it's steady course. Then I remembered he hadn't answered my question.

"So what's your inspiration?"

"My father," he said. Then he got up and headed back toward the cabin.

The Vision

As I said, Michael was and is a very driven person. I began to slowly see that he'd had many setbacks in his life and much to overcome. He talked of his childhood only once, and very briefly. I knew that his mother left when he was very young and his father married a woman who was less than thrilled at the prospect of having to raise three kids. I could hear faint glimmers of pain in his voice when he spoke of those years, but unlike many people I knew who'd endured a less than charmed childhood, there seemed to be a loving forgiveness in his recollections of the past. I knew I'd never see him on Jenny Jones blaming his present on his past. Living in the midst of a generation looking to fix the blame and not the problem, I found his perspective refreshing.

As the days turned into weeks and the weeks into months, our working relationship progressed beyond that of boss and employee. Michael and I were becoming friends. His willingness to care for me unconditionally patiently chipped away at the walls I'd so carefully built around myself. The equation for me was simple and it factored out something like this: Trust + Love = Pain. Pain x Despair = Stone. Stone + Cement = Walls. Walls - Doors = Safety from Trust + Love, which still equaled Pain. It makes sense if you're me. Still, it was difficult to live in my hardened little shell when I was rubbing shoulders with someone who embraced people with open arms.

I saw the lives he touched and read the letters of gratitude that came pouring into his office every day. I mentioned to him how wonderful it must be to have so many people writing in and singing his praises.

"Those letters aren't for me. They're testimonials for my father," he said one day as he was going through the mail.

"I don't see your father's name on any of these. They're all addressed to you.."

"Yes, but they're for my father. I keep them all to show him."

He'd mentioned his father a lot since I'd met him. I assumed he must have a large part of stock in Mike's business. Probably helped him with the financing or something. But there was something about that I didn't understand. I did a little of Mike's bookkeeping along with the writing assignments he gave me, and I knew that his cash flow was pretty tremendous. His marketing business was in full swing by the time I went to work for him, so much so there was never enough time in one day to handle even half of the orders pumping through the office. Yet I stood by and watched as he just gave away practically every penny that came in. Sure he pumped a lot of it back into the business, but if there was someone, anyone, anywhere who needed financial aid, he was there with his checkbook. He didn't even know half of the people he was sending money to. I had to ask.

"Mike, how do you survive when you dish out money like that? Doesn't your father get angry with you?"

"My father is the one who told me to do it. He told me to always give to the needs of the pure of heart.

"And he tells you to give it away? I find that hard to believe. That can't be good for your business.

"This is also his business. I'm just following instructions."

"But how do you manage to do as well as you do. All the business people I've ever known sock it away in every type of CD or investment they can get their hands on. Do any of these people ever pay you back?"

"I never think about it. They can pay me back if they want to; if not, so what?"

I was in a near state of shock. My own father had a business, and he practically hired Guido the Killer Cash Collector to round up overdue payments on accounts. And once he got it in his hands, you can bet your buck that's where it stayed. But he still didn't have two Mercedes, two houses, and money to go on vacation any time and anywhere he wanted. It didn't make sense. I figured Mike's father was one of those people who had so much money it just didn't matter where it went. But I still couldn't get it through my head.

"Let me get this straight. Your father tells you to give money away to anyone who needs it, without concern over whether or not it's paid back."

"Yep. He always taught me never to turn away anyone in need."

"Will you call him and tell him I'm in need?" I asked jokingly.

"He already knows. That's one of the reasons you're here."

"What do you mean, he already knows? I've never even met him."

"He knows you," he said.

"I don't know him," I said.

"You will," he said. "You will."

I wondered again just what I was involved in here. I'd never worked for anyone like Mike. I'd watched his bank account go from a zillion dollars to dancing on the edge of the businessman's nightmare red in a week's time, and then skyrocketing back to twice the money he'd had before the very next week. I'm nobody's accountant, but I knew I'd never seen anything like it before. He saw my puzzled expression and said, "I told you once I have unlimited vision. I know that everything I give away will in some way be given back to me in even greater amounts. My father has never failed me in this way. He's always provided what I need. One day soon, everyone will know name"

I wanted to know more, but I let it go. This vision he kept talking about was beginning to scare me a little. At the time I thought he had a vision of wealth. I soon came to realize it was a vision of treasure.

The Dark Side

I came to Michael broken and lost. After many years of pain and suffering, I'd come to the coldest place I'd ever been in my life. My eyes no longer held the hopeful aspirations of youth, but instead harbored reflections of too many shattered dreams and promises unkept. I couldn't find anything to believe in anymore so I believed in nothing at all. I lived like most other people I knew, running fast toward nowhere. My collision course with my own fate seemed unimportant. If it felt good, I did it. If it didn't feel good, I did it anyway, but only once. There were my rules and regs, end of sentence.

To give you an idea of where I was in my life when I stumbled across Michael's path, let me paint the picture (rainbows and rose colored glasses aside). I was, in short, the typical hand-it-to-me-all-at-once-right-now-don't-care-who-I-hurt self absorbed jerk. This prize package included unlimited trips to the All-U-Can Eat self pity buffet and an all expense paid

vacation to Gimme-land. I was involved with a married man who was old enough to be my grandfather's grandfather, I smoked dope until my brain cells turned to bran flakes, and laughed at the notion that I was ruining my life. Who cared? I had all this stuff figured out. We're only here for a short time, so let's all live a Three Stooges kind of life: Eat, drink, and beat Larry. I was blissfully ignorant and fully intended to remain in that particular state of mind.

Because I was raised a devout Catholic, my life became a horrendous mixture of good times, altar wine, jaded confessions every Saturday, and random attendance of Mass on Sunday, hangover permitting. I figured I was doing as well as the next person, so why fix it if it wasn't broke? I was young, strong, and indestructible. Yet in the time that I now refer to as the peak of my rebellious years, I knew somewhere inside I was on the Amtrak Express train to Hell, no deposit, no return. Some disease that cropped up in the early eighties called AIDS made me go 'Huh?' But that was about it. My hormones were too busy fighting for physical custody to worry about it. The slowly dawning realization that I had a serious problem with drugs cost me little sleep. I knew lots of people who survived the sixties, hallucinogens and all, so once again any fear I may have felt was put to bed. Besides that, I knew I'd stop one day. But One Day was as far down the road as (gasp!) turning 40.

It was at the climax of my hey days that I found Mike. The essence of who I was hung in the air around me like early morning fog. He often pointed this out to me and I was actually pleased with myself for exuding the apathy that had become en vogue in this screwed up society. To care was inhuman; to forgive, unheard of. My grudges and vows to avenge every living soul who'd ever hurt me kept my fire burning hot and heavy. No one would get to me ever again. From now on, I would destroy before I could be destroyed.

We spent many nights talking, he and I. Sometimes into the wee hours of the morning, winding down our conversations as the sun found its way toward the sky. I found myself opening up to him as I never had before, and then one night a funny thing happened. I was talking to him about my relationship with the married man and my eyes that had long since become hardened to such irritating inconveniences as tears began to well up and spill over. I was suddenly crying helplessly in his arms, with years of locked away pain literally bursting the dam. I can't tell you now how long it lasted. I only know that when it was over I was spent. We were sitting on the floor of the cabin at God-only-knows 'o'clock in the morning, with his arms cradling me as if I were a small child. He soothed me and spoke to me with words of comfort.

"Let it go, just let it out. Your tears will wash you clean. Cry, Chelsea. Just cry."

And cry I did. I had never been in the presence of anyone who encouraged me to cry. It was always 'Don't cry, please don't cry.' We're sadly taught so young to hold in the hurt.

That morning, rivers poured from my heart. I realized I was crying over things that had happened ten years before.

When the last of the tears had turned to hitches and sniffles, he wiped my face with his hands and asked me if I wanted to be healed. In my weakened state, with years of torment still drying on my cheeks, I said yes. He put his hand on my head and said, "This morning, you are healed. In my father's name, Chelsea, you are healed of your pain." I stared at him in utter disbelief. In his father's name? His father's name? He understood in an instant that at last I knew who he'd been speaking of all the times he referred to his 'father.' Part of me wanted to run as far away as I could go. Another part of me wanted to spill my soul at his feet. The part of me that wanted to run was the victor, and I jumped off of the floor and fled.

The Promise

After that night, I began to change. Unwillingly at first, then helplessly in the end. Now that he'd revealed himself to me, his true inner spirit, I was drawn to him in a way I'd never been before. This man was a true follower of Jesus Christ. Not the kind you see on television, standing beneath chandeliers that cost more than most people make in a year, screaming morality from a pedestal. But a servant, a believer, and a beloved son of God. I finally understood the gentleness in his eyes. Whether

he was staring at a beautiful woman or a wrinkled, dying man, that same gentleness and love still lived there. I understood his words about the river of life, about man's greater purpose, and that he was an instrument put here to help others. Now I knew the Mike Enlow that had died, not just briefly in a motorcycle accident and come back to life, but who had died to himself and surrendered his life to the Lord.

The night I ran away from the cabin, I went home more conflicted than I'd ever been.

I wanted so badly to let him lead me in this new life giving direction, but the spirit of darkness that had bound me for so long had a tight grip on my soul. Then I knew, almost instantaneously what had happened to my life. I'd been living on the wrong side of the law. Not the man made laws, but the laws our Father made in the beginning. I thought of the darkness and light Mike had spoken of so often. I was truly in the blackest part of the darkness. The drugs, the adultery, the lies and the race toward certain death were all a part of the Great Deception. Satan had a price on my soul, and I'd been paying it in easy monthly installments for many years. I cannot express to you in words what these realizations did to me. Of course I was dying. Of course my life was a mess. I'd given it to someone who wanted it that way.

I returned to the cabin the next day, starving the drink the water of the well in me Mike had tapped into. Let me say here that I will never be able to thank him enough for spending the hours upon hours he spent with me, when he had so many other things to do. Now our relationship had turned in a direction that had not only caught me completely off guard, but had revived in me the death of a love I'd longed for so desperately all of my life.

Tell me, teach me, lead me, were my words to him. And he held out his hand to me and said, "Come with me."

The next few weeks were difficult ones. As I began to blossom in the light of God's love, I became aware of a tremendous spiritual warfare inside me. I talked to Mike about this, and he told me that I was literally being fought over. Fear began to blanket me.

"Chelsea, there are only two forces in this world. They are faith and fear. Satan binds you with fear. Jesus saves you with faith. Remember God's love for you. Remember Satan's hate for those who walk with the Lord. He will do whatever he can to steal your soul from salvation. The battle never ends. Walk in faith."

Walking toward the light with Mike was like finding fresh spring water in a desert. My heart was awakened to the call of God. My old self began to wither as leaves on a dying tree. I learned from Mike that unless we cling to the Vine of Life, we truly will wither and die. I wanted to know more. I wanted to feel more. My thoughts were still dark and full of shadows. It seemed with every step I took closer to God, there were invisible demons waiting to snatch me back. I clung to Mike with the fierceness of a frightened child. He held me near him always, but never allowed me to glorify him in any way.

"Chelsea, I'm not the one who gets the glory. It's God. He works through me, and I work for Him. Hold me as much as you need to; I promise you I'll never leave you. But don't forget, I'm a man. Flesh and blood, good and bad, weak and strong. God sent you to me because he knew your heart, your true heart. He has a season for everything. He put you here to show himself to you through me. So look through me to see Him. Don't look at me. I'm just a man."

I had a hard time with that one. Even though I'd been living like a hellion on the streets, I'd always believed in God. But I was taught to be terrified of Him. To me, he was this big shapeless thing in the sky who would strike you down in a heartbeat if he was disgusted with you and having a bad day. I never knew until I met Mike that God actually wants to dwell within us, so that we can all fulfill his greatest wish, which is to help each other find Him and love Him. Because Mike literally glowed with the presence of the Lord in his life, I wanted to stay near him, to touch him, to hold him, so that I could always feel that love. I found myself actually needing him to love me. I know now it was God's love I was seeking. I thought then it was Mike's love I needed.

Although I'd finally been introduced to Mike's beloved Father and had seen the outpouring of God's healing through one of his faithful servants, I was still leading a double life. I hadn't given up my affair, I was still getting high whenever the opportunity came along, and basically still holding to the dark side of my life. Mike knew this and was patient with my struggles. He never judged or chastised me or told me I was going to hell. He just kept telling me of the tremendous love God had for me, over and over again, no matter how I failed. My faith was fledgling at that point, but he had enough for both of us.

I watched Mike live his life as if each day was the last. He acknowledged the Lord every morning before he did anything else, and ministered to anyone he could. He showed me that through total surrender, there was peace and guidance from God. Not just the usual 'Sure I believe in God', but the complete giving over of one's life to service. I witnessed blessings enrich his life, and I witnessed Satan's constant attacks on his good works. Mike was the only person I'd ever seen who could look evil in the face and laugh. He told me there was no force on this earth that could compare to the power of God. You only had to profess it, acknowledge it, and live it.

I noticed that for all of Mike's love for the Lord, he never attended church. Since I was raised to believe you must sit in church every Sunday or you would sure be damned to hell, I was confused by this. I knew he sang at churches, and witnessed at churches, but there was no attendance on a regular basis. I asked him why, and he told me a story.

"I was going to sing at a Pentecostal church, and if you know anything about Pentecostals, you know their beliefs are strict. I was getting set up to sing when the pastor of the church pulled me over to the side and said, 'Son, we are of the belief that beards are not acceptable to God. Since I'm the leader of this church, it's my responsibility to see to my people and direct them appropriately.' I thought about it for a minute and asked him if he had a razor. He looked pretty surprised, but he said yes. Then he asked me one more thing. He asked me if I'd been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. I was confused by what he meant, so I asked him to repeat the question. He asked me again if I'd been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. I said I was baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Then he said 'But did they say the name Jesus Christ?'

And I said 'I was baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Isn't the Son Jesus?'" He said yes, but he still had a problem with the fact that I couldn't exactly remember if the preacher who baptized me when I was 5 years old actually said the name Jesus Christ.

"So I said 'Sir, I noticed a river in the back of the church. If you'll get your razor and walk with me to the river, I'll shave my beard and you can baptize me in the name of Jesus Christ if that'll make you happy. I'll abide by every doctrinal in your book. But let's get it done so I can go to work.'"

"So did you go to the river?" I asked.

"Nah," he said. "He chickened out because it was 30 degrees outside. I sang and witnessed, and when I was finished, that congregation of more than a hundred people came to the altar call weeping, including the preacher, ready to renew their hearts in the Lord. That's where so many people are missing the boat. God doesn't care if you have a beard. God doesn't care what you wear. It's what's in your heart that matters to him, and that's all that matters to Him. When the churches unite and there is no more division because of rules and regulations, and when they tear down their elaborate, decorated walls of grandeur, the true church can be reborn. I attend church every single day of my life in my heart, in my words, and in my actions.

I sat silent in the wake of his words. I thought of all the people who attended church every Sunday and whose souls were still so trapped in the world. I wondered what it all meant. I asked him.

He looked at me, laughed and said, "It don't mean nothin'".

"What?" I asked, genuinely surprised by his answer.

"Are churches that people spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to build while God's children are starving in the street going to matter ten thousand years from now? Is the fact that some people wore expensive dresses to church every Sunday while others had holes in their shoes going to matter ten thousand years from now?"

"No," I said.

"What will matter ten thousand years from now?"

"What?" I asked again.

"Their souls, Chelsea, and that's the only thing that will matter then. Not walls or benches or stained glass windows, but souls."

As much as my attachment to the rules of the world still had a hold on me, I knew he was right.

"Mike, promise me you'll never leave me."

"As long as I'm alive, I'll be here for you. But you have an even greater promise than mine, and that's God's promise that he'll never leave you. His name is 'I Am.' He was always there, and he always will be. He promised all of us that when he sacrificed his Son to save us. Don't ask man to promise you anything, when God promises everything. Go home and get some rest."

I left him that day believing anything was possible.

The Blood

I began to look at my life and try to somehow piece it all together. In the past I had talked with priests who'd frightened me so much I was sure I wasn't lovable in the eyes of anyone, much less in the eyes of God. I was too deeply immersed in sin to ever be cleansed. I've talked to a lot of people since then who felt the same way.

Going to church had almost become a punishment instead of the joyous experience it should have been. People simply felt too guilty about their everyday life to comfortably sit through a church service and find peace. I was one of those people. Mike taught me so many things about the love of Christ but one thing in particular will always keep me closest to Him, and that is my level of spiritual consciousness.

We have the choice to be sin-conscious or Son-conscious. Sin-conscious is saying to yourself every day 'Well, screwed up again, no way can I even think about God today. Look at what a mess I've made.' Son-consciousness is saying to yourself every day 'Gee, I assed up again, but praise God for forgiveness and lessons learned.'

Because I was a sinner on a daily basis, I believed I couldn't receive Christ in my heart. It took me many years to fully understand the differences between the flesh and the spirit. The flesh is going to sin, period. There is no way around this. The spirit, however, is the enabler Christ uses in which to heal. Mike taught me that our war is not of the flesh, but of the spirit. We don't fight each other, we fight the spirits that dwell inside us. It's up to each one of us to decide which spirit we are going to allow to control our lives. My spirit of choice was oppression. Heard of that? If you haven't, let me tell you it's no weenie roast, my friend. Mike spotted this in me almost from the beginning.

Oppression is another spirit born of darkness. Satan uses this almost like a cast iron weight around your neck. And it affects everyone around you, as I came to find out. Mike demonstrated this to me one night at the cabin (boy I wish those walls could speak).

We were talking of my spiritual battles, which were by now steadily becoming harder and harder to handle. I still didn't know why I had such a fight on my hands. Mike knew, but hadn't told me yet. He told me there was a spirit of oppression that had a tremendous hold on me.

"What's oppression?" I asked.

He got up from his chair and walked toward the kitchen, where the only light in the cabin was on. It was around midnight, so everything was pretty dark. Suddenly, without warning, he turned off the light. The cabin was pitch black. You couldn't see a thing, not even after your eyes adjusted. I was on the verge of being very afraid when he said,

"That's oppression," he said.

I could hear him moving around in the cabin, but I had no idea where he was. Then I heard a scratching sound, and a match came to life with its flame. I saw the Mike was standing about two feet in front of me, holding the match. As soon as he lit that one small match, the whole living room became illuminated by its light, splitting the darkness in two.

"That's God," he said.

I watched the match burn quickly toward his fingers. He blew it out and turned the lights back on. I understood more in that moment than I'd ever understood in all the years of my hard core Catholic training. And he was absolutely right. There was severe oppression in me, and it had become stronger than I was.

"How do I get rid of it?" I asked.

"That's easy. Believe you have the blood bought power to exercise who you are..." Before I knew what happened he reached tenderly, and with his fingers resting softly against my temples, said: "In the name of Jesus I rebuke the spirit of oppression that binds you. Be gone."

I had to bite my tongue... Who... What... Lay people can't rebuke anything. "You can't do that," Chelsea of the old Catholic school said. "You're not God. You're not even a priest or a preacher!"

Mike replied. "Jesus said, "That's strange... My Bible says - Jesus said: 'And even greater things than I do shall you do if you have faith.'" I was entitled to his every blood bought gift and promise the day I acknowledged him as my God and gave him my life. He's made a way, Chelsea." "He's given each of us the power to change things... So very few believe and have faith. God is with me. Do you understand the mystery of the blood?"

"What blood?"

"The blood Jesus shed for us."

"Of course I know about that. Everybody knows about that."

"But did you know it's been stolen?" he asked.

"Stolen? How?"

"The blood He shed for us was shed so that our sins would be forgiven, and man could be reinstated to his original Adamic relationship that Adam and Eve so much enjoyed. A life of peace, joy, happiness, prosperity and health, daily walking with God."

"But..."

"But there's much more Chelsea," he continued. "The blood that the power has been stolen by the church and doctrine -- by the rules of men. Will it matter ten thousand years from now how short or long your skirt was? What once wasn't sin is today, what's sin today will not be sin tomorrow. Imagine a lady smoking a cigarette in the 30's. She was rebuked for publicly smoking. Yet today we smoke, not that I condemn it, no one's perfect."

It was more than just the life draining from His body as he hung on the cross with a crown of thorns on his head, with spikes through His wrists and ankles and a sword in his side. The blood He shed had the power to heal, the power to give life, the power to bring forth joy, happiness, prosperity, to make marriages work and most importantly, the power to work through each and every one of us to help our fellow man.

It is most sad to see how it's been stolen as man chose the things of the earth over a life in The Spirit. Men set their traditional walls, barriers, and rules within each church doctrine. What is sin to one church is not to another.

How can we as human beings expect not to ever say a cuss word? To swear under frustrations or pain, like when you hit your thumb with a hammer. Yet although the word 'shit' is condemned and damned by the church, it's written in the Bible in Hebrew as the word 'dung'. Have we cursed? No. Cursing is saying 'May you be damned' to a soul. Cursing is speaking something to someone else when you should not, just like it says in The Book: "the tongue has the power of life and death..." Anything we say, if we say it enough becomes a part of us... Fear kills - faith heals... Professing anything that would cause harm, grief, or hurt to another is cursing."

"Recall from the many readings of the scripture when the elders of centuries ago would say 'Father, please give me your blessing... the tongue has the power of life and death. As it is also written: "As a man believeth in his heart and speak with his mouth, so shall it be." So many of my friends condemn themselves with their own spoken words. Be ever so careful.

The power of the blood is stolen by the lie, the lie referenced in The Book. (The Bible) We'll get to that one day. Be patient and pray.

We as human beings can't even begin to imagine the power we have... We're made in the image and likeness of a mysterious force called God... There's so much we don't know or understand. But I do know this... What I live is real!

The problem is: the desires of 'this life' (a temporal state before we enter eternity...) have robbed us of any kind of vision other than the traditional ones... There's so much more for those who'll look up and try to find the source of these many mysteries... If everyone would just look up and leave each other alone..."

"We see the power of evil every day. No one questions its existence. But we don't see the power in the blood. It's there, and it lives in those who believe and trust in the Lord."

"But how do you connect with that power?" I asked.

"It's simple... All you do is take a walk and have a talk... Look up and speak to the mystery called God, and explain you are seeking him... Speak from your heart and turn your life over to Him and never, ever look back. Take every step from that moment on in faith. Listen carefully as you read the scriptures and you'll discover 5,000 year old stories are jumping off the page at you with specific direction - and you'll feel it deep inside... You'll soon discover this new force will guide your life and

the world will become putty in your hand... You'll take control of every aspect of your life in a more abundant way than ever imagined."

There was an electricity in the room just then that left an indelible mark on my soul. I knew this man who spent much of his life hidden from view and working diligently to help his fellow man was one of the chosen ones. Whatever you do in your life, don't let anyone tell you that appointed servants of God are not alive and walking the earth in this lifetime. You may never knowingly come across one of them, but they are right here among us. I always believed that true men of God wore collars and crosses. I know now that true men of God will carry crosses, suffer in the desert, and sacrifice everything they have to follow him. This isn't radical. This is Biblical.

Mike knew his God since being a small child. One of my favorite stories he told me was when he was a young child the church he and his family attended was taking bids to have the lawn around the building mowed. He said it was a huge lot, and pretty warm outside. The person who bid the least would get to mow the lawn. Mike told me even at six years old he was appalled that anyone would expect money to mow God's grass.

Everyone turned in their bid, and so did he. What no one knew was he bid \$0.00. He would do it for free. Much to everyone's disgust he got the job. He recalled with a chuckle how his father was pretty disgusted with him also because he didn't even have a lawn mower. He rounded one up somehow and got the job done in two days, cemetery and all. Already somewhat of an entrepreneur, selling greeting cards and Grit papers, he managed to save enough money to buy a lawn mower, and 'mowed God's grass for nothing.' Even through the eyes of a child, he saw his lot in life, and accepted it freely.

I'd begun to accept him freely also, until he told me I too "had a reason for being" and would soon be shown. Once again, I fled...

The Music

I've always loved music, since my earliest memory of childhood. It came from a place inside me I loved to go. My song writing began around the age of twenty or so. Typical 'I love-you-so-much-why-did-you-leave-with-my-heart-and-your-dog' type of songs. Until I met Michael, I had no idea what was truly hiding in my heart, waiting to be born. His love for my music sparked my desire to play more and more. He'd managed to open me up and get me to play for him almost all the time. As I grew in my love for the Lord, my music changed. Suddenly I was writing about that love, and it came so naturally it scared me.

Mike and I began singing in his cabin, songs we would make up on the spur of the moment, but always moved by the Spirit. I learned from him that music was the one thing that could break down all walls and get through to the very core of a person, no matter how hardened to life they'd become. I'll never forget the music we shared and the mutual exchange of love that echoed through those songs every time we sang them. Mike is gifted in so many ways, and he was certainly gifted musically. One of our strongest ties to each other was born of the music we played.

I soon began writing songs left and right. I had no idea I had such feelings in my heart. I had no idea that one day, a life might be touched and a heart might be changed because of just one of those songs. But Mike knew, and he told me often.

"Chelsea, the Lord is smiling right now," he would say after I'd played for him the latest song I'd written. "There will be a piano waiting for you in heaven with golden keys, and you'll play for Him."

I wanted to believe his words. I knew for a fact that if someone had told me even three years before I would be writing Christian music, I would have laughed myself silly. I had never even listened to Christian music. I was still stuck in the early to mid seventies, somewhere between The Rolling Stones and Aerosmith. But here I was, singing songs of praise and thanks. I wanted to take this chapter to thank Mike for waking the sleeping beauty that was resting in my heart. He showed me how

to let go and let God guide my hands across the keys, while putting His words into my heart. Once the river began to flow, it became an ocean.

"It's the river of life," he said, as we sat and talked about the music. "God has given you much, and to whom much is given, much is expected. You have to share this with everyone. Your music has something. It has the Lord all over it. Don't box it up and put it on a shelf. Please."

"But don't you get it?" I asked. I never play for anyone. It would almost be like taking my clothes off in front of the entire world if I played in front of anyone but you. This part of myself is my secret."

"But God wants to use you through your music," he said.

"Let God use someone else," I said.

"It's too late kiddo. He wants you, and there's more, but not right now. Just keep writing and playing."

"What more is there?" I asked.

"His call, remember?"

The Anointing

Michael had told me before there was a call on my life. This didn't disturb me so much. I believed everyone had some sort of call on their life, that we were all put here for some reason or another, even if it was just to have a good time. In fact, I thought for a long time that was my call. But when he told me I was chosen I blew a gasket. Me? Chosen for what? I didn't get it, and didn't want to.

"Your music," he said.

"Huh?" I responded.

"Your music is truly a gift from God. Don't you know the lyrics you write aren't your own? He's speaking through you so that others can be led to Him."

"Mike, I write music because it's all I really know. The songs I write are just expressions."

"Expressions of what?"

"Of me, I guess."

"No, the songs you write are expressions of what lives in your heart. I know you love the Lord, Chelsea. I think you always have. If you didn't, if your heart wasn't pure, He couldn't speak through you like that. I knew it the first time you played for me. God's anointing is all over your music, and many people will hear it one day."

He was verbalizing a dream I'd always had, actually. But I was a fact facer about my music. I lived in Southwest Mississippi, I was a nobody, and there were a million other people in the world much more talented than I was who'd been trying to make it in the music industry for years. Yeah buddy, millions of people were going to hear me, all right.

"He's channeling His word through you, Gena. Don't you know what that means?"

"Nope."

"It means you're one of the chosen ones He wants to go forth and spread the message to the people. If you throw that away, you'll be throwing away a gift sent to you straight from heaven. Don't do it."

"But look at me! Why would God choose someone like me? I've done everything under the sun, and then some. I've been as wild as the wind and as disobedient to His commandments as anyone could be. He wants people who act right. I just never learned how."

"No. He wants people who can witness and testify. He wants people who have been in the dark and been through the fire to stand up and say 'The Lord has done this for me, and he can do it for you too.' You've been in the dark, and you're in the fire right now. Look at me and tell me you've never felt His hands on you before. Tell me that when you were getting loaded or committing adultery that your heart wasn't pulled. Tell me that."

I couldn't. As hard as I'd tried to be 90's and carefree, there was never time when I didn't feel pulled in another direction. I passed it off as a guilty conscience, never once stopping to think that just maybe someone called God was trying to get my attention.

As if reading my thoughts Mike said, "He'll do whatever he has to do to get your attention, you know. I was literally forced to my knees before he got mine when I ran wild. He's going to get you somehow. You may as well wave your little white flag and go with Him."

"But my music isn't professional. I don't have any instrumentation except for my piano. I've never had a singing lesson in my life. People don't buy things that aren't perfect."

"God don't want perfect. He wants heart, and you've got it. Play for me, right now."

"I don't feel like it."

"Then play for God, and don't tell Him you don't feel like it, okay? Play."

I went to the keyboard and played a song I'd written just recently. I want to give you the lyrics, because I didn't know it at the time, but this song not only brought me closer to God, but would one day soon bring others there too.

The music flowed like the beauty of the nearby river...

I asked my Lord
to give me a sign
something that would let me know
that he is really mine
and when he came to me to ease my cares away
I listened to his gentle voice
and I know I heard him say

Look in the face
of someone who really loves you
Look in the eyes
of someone who thinks you're beautiful
Look in the heart
of someone who believes in you
and you will find me there
You will find me there

My Lord asked me
to give him a sign
something that would let him know
that he is really mine
and when I went to him
to ease my cares away
I spoke to him with gentle words
and I know he heard me say

This is the face
of someone who really loves you
These are the eyes
of someone who
thinks you're beautiful
This is the heart
of someone who believes and you and
You will find me there
You will find me there

Looking back on that song, which was written in 1993, I know that it says exactly what Mike had been telling me all along. If we let Christ live within us, others will find him there. He is alive, but He needs us. Who would hear him if we didn't speak of him? Who could feel him if he didn't live in our touch? Who could see him if didn't live in our eyes?

But sadly enough, at that time I was too caught up in the competitive rat race to understand what I'd been given. When I finished the song, Mike said, "Can't you hear the anointing? Christ is knocking...Let Him have control."

I wanted to. I really did. In some ways I felt I had, but I knew I hadn't surrendered fully. I didn't want to let go of the things I thought I needed in order to survive this life. I wasn't ready, and Mike knew it. I think we actually got some work done that day, but before I left the cabin that evening, he told me something that upset me. He told me that one day soon I'd leave him. I told him he was wrong.

"You've taught me so much, and you've given me so much. I wouldn't leave you now for anything."

"But you will," he said. "Soon."

I left the cabin feeling empty, confused, but most of all I felt ashamed. I knew deep down inside that once again, he was right.

The Last Day

This part of my story is difficult to write. But it has to be told just the way it happened. Michael was right. I did leave him. As I write this and reflect over the events that led up to my exodus, it's hard for me not to feel a sense of sadness. I know it had to happen the way it did, for my own growth and understanding. But once I was gone, once he was no longer there to dry my tears and tell me of this man Jesus who I was just learning to love, the emptiness in my life returned bigger and deeper than it had ever been before.

Through all of Mike's testimony to me, through all the joys, pain and sorrow we shared together, I still couldn't let go of the darkness. Maybe it had become too familiar and I didn't want to step out of my comfort zone. Maybe I still didn't believe

that I was good enough to be loved by such a wonderful and merciful God. Or maybe the evil had won the battle through my own weaknesses and lack of faith. Whatever the reasons were, they really didn't matter.

As I said before, Mike was very well aware of the fact that I was still dabbling on the other side. My affair was still in full force. The world and all of its lovely lies still had me in its clutches. The spirit of oppression that had been driven from me in the name of Christ returned because I allowed it to. I was hurting myself and those who loved me and were trying to help me. Whatever thread that had been keeping me bound to Christ through Mike was severed the day I walked out of the door for the last time.

Things got rough between us when my rebellion turned to disrespect for him and all that he was trying to do. Satan, who knew I would be a powerful advocate for whichever sides I was on, didn't want me near this man. I literally woke up one day and a voice inside my head was telling me to leave Michael's presence and never return. He's a fake, that voice said. He's a fake.

Mike told me many times while we were sitting in his cabin that one day soon he would retire. He said that he would have a beautiful home on a bluff overlooking the river. He said the time was drawing near that he would be able to reach all the people he could reach and lead them to God. He'd told me so many things before that had come to pass, I believed all of it. I knew in my heart that his footsteps were directed by God, but in my mind the demons were hard at work, tearing him down in my rationale.

There were no earth shattering arguments or double edged recriminations between us. I simply shut down and lost my will to be led toward the light. Our last day together was spent at his cabin, and he told me many things before I left. He told me that I would go through much hardship and discipline through the will of God. He told me the hand of God was on me, and that I would never find happiness until I submitted myself to Him totally.

"You can run around like a fool the rest of your days, but without God you can do nothing. With God, all is possible. You can walk away from me if you want, but don't turn your back on Him. He loves you so much."

I remember wondering what made him so sure I was leaving. I was still technically working for him. I hadn't been fired (to my knowledge) and I hadn't quit. But somehow we both knew that day that I wouldn't be back. I felt fear in every pore of my body as I looked at him sitting there so close to me. I wanted to fight the urge to run away from him so badly. But even I in my infancy in the love of Christ knew this was to be. Mike told me he loved me, and that if I ever needed anything from him that he was a phone call away. I'd never believed anyone who said that to me, but I believed him.

I remember looking out over the river and seeing the sandbar. I remembered the first time I went down there with him, and when he said the words 'river of life' to me. Even though it had only been a few short months, it seemed an eternity ago. I knew I'd never be the same again. I couldn't be the same again, because now I knew. My blissful ignorance was no longer an excuse for my life. I knew the truth, and for a brief moment in time, it had set me free. But I had chosen to turn away.

It was noon when I decided to leave. He was in his office in the cabin working and I went in to tell him good-bye. I never said 'I quit', and I never said I wasn't coming back. I didn't have to. He looked at me with loving sadness in his eyes and told me to be careful on my way home. As I pulled away from the cabin and headed down the long driveway back to the main road, I looked into my rear view mirror and began to cry.

I didn't see him again for a year and a half, and when I found him again, the music played on...

The Lie

My world had taken on new meaning. Everything around me was living and breathing. My soul had been so starved for the life I'd chosen not to live, but to ignore. Every pearl of wisdom I learned brought me closer and closer. The glory of his voice was contagious and I found myself becoming joyful. I had discovered the keys of life and finally, for the first time, I really wanted to live.

The world is a prisoner, captured by the beautiful side of evil. It has seeped into the corners of our consciousness so subtly we don't even realize it's happened. The war goes on; the planet is ravaged. Don't be fooled... you deserve the best...

Be Son-Conscious... A King's Kid!
Be The Prince or Princess You Are To Be!
The Son/Daughter of a King!

God Bless.

The End