

MISGUIDED REVENGE

COVERED BY GRACE

Christian Fiction

MARILYN STRONG

READY TO SAY GOODBYE

Grandma had to be ready in two hours to bury her 35-year-old daughter, Madison. Her baby was gone, and she had to go to that darn church and put her most personal emotions on exhibit. It would feel like being a zoo animal while a volcano of feelings was erupting inside her chest and head. She would not wish this pain on her worst enemy.

After a fresh shower, she put on a bath robe which was a Christmas gift from Madison. She was in a daze, walking around the house in circles wondering what to do next. It was an out-of-body experience. She was moving in slow motion watching herself from another room. She kept asking: how did my child feel before the car accident on I-94 mangled her beautiful body? How much pain did she feel before God took her? How long did she wait for someone to rescue her? Did she call out to her mother? Did she expect her mother to find her? "Oh, Maddie, I cannot hold your hand, but I will always hold you in my heart."

The phone had an eerie silence. She was glad people were being respectful. The house was as noiseless as death itself. It was her choice not to have any out-of-town relatives stay there. Too much drama! She didn't want to be bothered with gossip about other family members. She sure didn't want to be responsible for feeding and entertaining them. The out-of-towners wanted to go shopping like

this was a mini vacation. She would be glad when all the pretending was over. She needed time to collect herself.

It was difficult, but she made peace with God for taking her little girl. She may not have understood why God did what He did or why He allowed certain things to happen, but she had learned to trust Him and to rest in the trust.

As she felt tears starting to well up, she decided to move faster so she could be ready on time.

“OK, get a grip on yourself girl; no more tears, get ready.”

She masterfully applied her foundation after watching a few online tutorials. She selected a lipstick that would not come off when eating at the repast. She usually wore glossy plum but today wore a mat plum. Eyeshadow was always a pain. The MizLadieRee online makeup tutorials had great tips. It was a lot of work, but she finished the bronze waterproof eye shadow. Her reflection in the mirror was flawless, and yet she knew she was going to be emotional and far from flawless.

The last thing to apply was waterproof mascara.

The loud pounding on the front door took her by surprise. The mascara smudged from the lower eyelid and toward her nose as she turned her head. She tried to rub it off before answering the door. Now it looked like she had a black eye.

She mumbled while walking to the door. “Why didn’t they ring the doorbell? What the heck! The Butler Funeral Home is too early. Maybe they are bringing the cake to the house. I don’t understand why they are here and pounding on the door like the police when they are too early.”

She opened the door to find two guns pointing at her face. She quickly raised her arms as seen in so many movies. One gun was held by a black officer who looked like a seasoned bodybuilder who lived in the gym. The other was an Asian officer who seemed to love donuts.

In a trembling voice, she asked, "What is going on, officers?"

The black officer responded, "I will ask the questions here, Ma'am. Now keep your hands up and walk out of the house slowly."

The other officer asked, "What happened to your eye?"

"Nothing."

"Come on, I can see the bruise."

She laughed, "I was putting on make-up and the pounding on my door scared me and then it smudged. Please, tell me what is going on. My daughter's funeral is in an hour. I am mentally and physically preparing myself."

Their demeanor changed and they told her to put her arms down.

Mr. Muscle man said, "We are aware of the funeral today and are sorry we have to intrude at this time."

The Asian officer took over. "We will get to the point; your former son-in-law has a criminal record and listed this as one of his addresses. We need to talk to him for several reasons. One reason is that we are investigating to see if he had anything to do with Madison's car accident."

She gasped. "What are you telling me?" She fell back and Mr. Bodybuilder caught her before she hit the porch floor.

"We know your daughter had ties to Drake. He has several warrants. We will respect your daughter's funeral service. If he is there, we won't arrest him inside the church."

She was shocked. "If that's not enough, what else do you think Drake did?"

"We are not at liberty to say. But if he shows up here, please give us a call. Ma'am, here is a search warrant. We are going to search your home now. Please, wait on the front porch. By the way, that is a beautiful robe."

She sat on the porch in quiet distress. "Why did they have to do this today?"

Her son Jacob drove up with his triplets. The three grandbabies were in their teens and were incredibly cute. He parked and started walking to the porch. She motioned for him to get back in the car. The most rambunctious granddaughter, Kimberly, opened the door and started walking briskly toward her. She told Jacob to put her back in the car. Jacob was confused. "Ma, why are the police here? Did they hit you in the eye? I will kick their...."

"No, calm down, I was putting on my makeup when they knocked, and it smudged. They are looking for Drake. He is in some kind of trouble with the law."

"Why do they think he is here?"

"Boy, I don't know?"

Her stress came out in silent tears.

Jacob became concerned. "Ma, don't cry."

"I will be alright. Today is a rough day anyway and all of this commotion is working on my one last good nerve. You go ahead and do what you need to do so you can make it to the funeral on time."

"Ma, if you tell me you're fine then I will go. I don't want to leave you alone with the police if you are in trouble."

“I am fine. I am not in trouble, but they will be if they don’t get out of my house. Now, you get going.”

“We are making a quick trip to pick up some girly things before the funeral. Are you sure you’re OK? I will stay if you want me to, but you know the police are not my favorite people.”

“I will see you at the funeral son. Kiss my grandkids for me.”
Grandma waved at the kids in the car.

Jacob had been in a lot of trouble growing up. She was surprised he did not end up dead or in jail. He had many fights in school, outside of school, and wherever he went. He was cursing out the teachers, skipping school, and smoking before he was thirteen. He even tried to sell drugs. Once, he had been smoking dope, got high, and stole her car. He went joyriding, not in the street, but on everyone's lawn. The only thing that stopped him was a big tree. It broke her heart when Jacob had a fistfight with his sick father while he was going through chemo for the lung cancer that took his life.

That son of hers had been stopped by the police many times. She understood why the police were not his favorite people. Jacob had a beautiful dark complexion, long hair, and a beard. He wore one dangly cross earring. He was a big guy about six feet five and 250 pounds. To strangers, he looked intimidating, which is probably why he was stopped. When he was sixteen, his father had *the talk* with him about being stopped by the police, either while walking or in a vehicle: *Do whatever is necessary so you can get back home. Keep your mouth closed, no smart-talking; answer yes sir, no sir; or yes Ma’am, no Ma’am; no sudden moves; cooperate; show your hands with your fingers spread apart. Even if you are innocent, don’t resist, let them take you to the station and I will take care of it when I get*

there. Above all for God's sake, don't ever run. It does not matter if you are guilty or innocent, do not run.

Having the triplets made Jacob think about his future. She was proud of the man he had become. He was her only child left on this earth.

There were police cars parked on both sides of the street to the corner.

The neighbors come out one by one. They sat on their porches, nodded, and waved. They thought Jacob was in trouble again. After about 15 minutes, the police came out. The neighbors went back in and peeked out of the curtains.

The Asian officer added base to his voice and said, "We need to ask you a few questions."

"Go ahead but make it quick."

"When was the last time you saw Drake?"

"I have not seen him since he married my daughter and moved her to California many years ago."

"When was the last time you talked to him?"

She became aggravated because she was not ready for the funeral. "It's been years."

The Asian officer took a deep breath and inflated his chest then stepped toward her in an attempt to intimidate her. "So, are you telling us that when your daughter died, you did not call her ex-husband to inform him?"

She counted to three to calm herself. "Yes, that is exactly what I am telling you. Why would I call him? My wish for him is that he rots in Hell. I will offer my assistance in getting him to Hell. He abused my baby girl. He took her away from her family. He became

a mean and demanding devil. I was glad she finally left him.” She took another deep breath and stepped back. “Now, I have to get ready. I am done answering your questions.” She raised her voice “Am I clear?”

The Asian officer looked surprised; “Yes, you are clear. We will be in touch.”

The black officer walked toward the stairs and turned around to ask. “Who was that driving the dark-colored SUV when we were in the house?”

“That was my son, Jacob.”

“Does he know Drake?”

She had reached her limit of patience with the questions. “Of course, he knows Drake, he was married to his sister. That is enough, I’m finished answering questions. Now get off my property,” she yelled, “Now!”

The neighbor’s curtains opened wider when she yelled at the officer.

The Asian officer said, “I got the license plate number and will follow up.”

She waved her hand as if to say “whatever.” She went into the house and slammed the door.

The house was a mess; they were looking for something or someone. The sofa cushions were on the floor. They pulled out the dining room chairs and they were upside down. The towels and sheets from the linen closet were in the hall. They overturned the mattress. The content in the dresser drawers was on the floor. She checked her office. The papers were not disturbed, but the closet door was open. She tidied up the living room and dining room making

them acceptable for the company that was sure to come by after the funeral. She knew the police had a job to do, but this was not the day. She could hear Madison saying “Ain’t nobody got time for that.” She smiled at the thought of her smart mouth.

Grandma allocated two hours to get dressed and apply makeup, but only had 30 minutes remaining. Her hands were shaking, and she was a nervous wreck. She lay across the bed to calm her nerves and said a prayer.

*Dear Lord, I don't know what's going on with Drake,
but I want Madison's service to be representative
of her beautiful life.*

I want to remember saying goodbye to her.

Please give me strength, peace, and clarity of mind.

Lord, you said you would be a present help in the time of trouble.

I need your help in this present time of my troubled mind.

Please steady my thoughts.

Lord, please guide my tongue and my actions.

*I am so drained and need you to keep me lifted
so I can survive this day.*

I want people to see you when they see me.

Give me strength please Lord. Amen.

Peace and calmness came over her like a cool mist on a scorching day. She felt relaxed and calm. She looked in the mirror at her pitiful makeup job, washed her face, and started over.

KEN/IVY

Ken realized Ivy was taking a long time in the bathroom. “Babe, hurry up or you will miss the funeral.”

“I can be a little late, but I will talk to Madison’s Mom, Mrs. Michelle, during the repast.”

“Make sure you play nice. You need to get invited to her house. We’ve gone over the plan to steal this lady’s identity for what Madison did to us. First, you do your part, and then I will do the rest.”

“Yes Ken, I know the plan, we’ve discussed it a million times. Chill out and let me do my part.”

Ivy was easily aggravated with Ken and wanted him to shut up so she could have some peace. His nagging and need for validation were wearing her down. She knew she is a great catch for any man but has been in this relationship for five years and feels stuck.

Ken continued to push her buttons. “Get it in gear girl. It does not take that long to get ready. I am glad you watched that online video from MizLadieRee. She will show you how you should look in makeup. Your hair is alright, it is so short you don’t have to do anything to it.”

Ivy bites her tongue and continues to get dressed. She knew if she responded it would result in an argument.

Ken was getting enjoyment out of seeing her flustered. He felt less than a man because he was fired. He was being passive-

aggressive and took his feelings out on her. “Babe, that dress is too tight. Are you putting on weight? Those shoes don’t match that dress and are too high; you will probably trip and fall.”

“Ken, if you don’t shut up...”

“If I don’t shut up, then what? What are you going to do? I was trying to be a courteous boyfriend and help you get dressed. You don’t appreciate anything. Don’t forget to bring me a plate from the repast.”