

REALITY QUEST

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A POOR FOOL FOR A CLIENT

(How I Lost My Children To An Abusive Court System)

NOTE: I am finishing up this book to send to the publisher; and since it explains in detail how I lost Brittany and Joshua to the Ladenburgs, I thought it important to include it in *Reality Quest*. Needless to say, the following experience in my life did more to further my desire to search for reality than any other incident. Therefore, I am glad, in a way, that the American legal system, though the best in the world, is as corrupt as it is. (Boy, that's not saying much for the rest of the world!)

CHAPTER ONE

THE LOVE OF A PARENT

"It shouldn't be too much longer before this spray runs out," I said to myself as I neared the end of a barley field I was spraying with herbicide.

I was working for Shane Morris, a farmer in the small town of Corvallis, Montana. It was a warm day in the late spring of 1991. I was thinking how wonderful it was to have a beautiful wife and four wonderful children who shared a five acre parcel of land with me near the Snoqualmie river in Eastern Montana.

The week before, I had brought my oldest daughter, Brittany Nicole, with me to the Morris farm where she helped watch Shane's young boy, as his father and I herded the cattle to pasture in the low hills just above Corvallis.

Shane was a single father who had custody of his young son whose mother had left him in pursuit of the wilder things of life that Shane couldn't provide for her on his Montana cattle farm.

Shane noticed the care which Brittany took in watching out for his son; and mentioned what a wonderful little girl I had and hoped that someday his boy's mother would come back and care for her family, as my little girl cared for his son.

Brittany loved being with me at work. She would fight with her kid brother, Joshua, as to whose turn it was to go with Dad to the farm. Shane preferred that Brittany came, because she was able to keep an eye on his boy.

Brittany loved to ride with me on the motorcycles we used to chase the cattle and herd them to pasture. I loved my little Brittany and was proud that I received compliments on her demeanor and personality.

I was proud, because I had raised her and Joshua from two years old and six months respectively. My ex-wife, Paula Rae Blades, left me in 1986, and gave me custody of the kids after she decided they would be better off with me than with her, a decision she would later regret.

As I was nearing the middle of the forty acres I was spraying that spring day, I noticed Shane's speeding 4x4 truck, which ironically carried license plates that said "L8AGAIN" coming towards me. (What ever he was coming to the field for, it was apparent he did not intend to be late again.)

Shane didn't stop at the steep dikes which surrounded the barley field, but bounced his truck over the dikes without slowing down.

"What in the world is wrong?" I thought. Shane drove towards me through the barley field never letting up on his gas pedal. "Did someone get hurt?" I wondered. I shut down the sprayers and idled the

throttle on the tractor, so that I could find out what my boss, who leaped from his truck in a dead sprint, had to say.

"Your x-wife and her husband just kidnapped your kids," he yelled to me. "Your neighbor called me and sent me to get you," he continued, gasping for the air he had lost in his anxiety to help me.

When he had caught his breath, Shane explained that Brittany and Joshua had been kidnapped by Paula and her husband, Carl Ladenburg; that Jackie, my wife, and our neighbors had chased the fleeing Ladenburgs down the highway where they were finally stopped by Ravalli County Sheriff Deputies 20 miles from the Idaho/Montana border. Shane informed me that I was suppose to go the Ravalli County Sheriff's office as soon as possible.

"Well, they blew it this time," I said. "I am not worried," I told Shane. "I'll finish this load of spray and go down and see what's going on."

Shane told me to leave the tractor and he would drive me to Hamilton, where the Sheriff's office was located. "No need to worry," I assured him, "I have full custody of the children, and Paula has got herself into a mess this time!"

I knew that Paula and Carl had taken the children the previous day on a set visitation, and that they were suppose to pick the children up this morning at 8:00 am. I had to be to work at seven, so I knew Jackie would get the children up and ready to go by 8:00. I figured that Paula and Carl had let their hate for me and my lifestyle overcome them to the point that they didn't want Brittany and Joshua to be with me any more, and therefore, decided to make a run with them.

I thought about Brittany's long, beautiful, blonde hair blowing in the oncoming wind and whipping against my face, as she sat in front of me on the motorcycle. I thought about the times she would hold my hand and ask me about life and all the other things which made no sense to the innocence of a child's mind. Little did I imagine, as I proceeded to the Sheriff's office in Hamilton, that I would never again feel the tender hand of my little girl's in mine, hear her inquisitive questions, or feel her soft hair blow against my whiskered cheek.

CHAPTER TWO

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

"Behold there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations; and she is the whore of all the earth." (The Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi, chapter one, verse 10)

"Yes!" I exclaimed in my heart, "The world has fallen into corruption caused by the devil and his followers. Thank God, I belong to the church of the Lamb of God."

In 1984, I went to work for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (the Mormons). I was employed as a security officer assigned to the headquarters and the surrounding buildings owned by the Mormon church in Salt Lake City, Utah. It was with this kind of employment that I thought I had found the ultimate way to dedicate my life to God and what I thought at the time was his only true church. I would serve God every day for the rest of my life, as I protected the property of His church.

Previous to 1984, I was stationed at the Military Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California. It was at this base where a normal, well adjusted, young Mormon boy made an extraordinary transformation.

I was very popular during my school years, and found myself predestined to succeed in life. I was Senior Class President, Ricks College Dorm President, Stake Youth Leader, and held many other coveted positions which made many believe I was a born leader.

Paula and I were very poor living on a military E-3 wage in an expensive area near Monterey. It was here that Paula and I first experienced the problems that would eventually end our marriage.

I was a star on our Company's basketball team and acted the part. During a practice, I got mad at my best friend, Gary Yarn. (Paula and I shared an apartment with Gary and his wife, so that we could save some money.) Having lost my temper, I ended up punching my friend in the face. The incident devastated me. I had never felt like hurting someone like I felt like hurting my dear friend. I felt terrible and couldn't imagine what had happened to me. I cried most of the day; and that night, got on my knees and prayed that the Lord would forgive me for striking one of my brothers.

After this prayer, my life changed forever. During the prayer, I felt a calmness and serenity that I had never felt before. I thought it was God cleansing my soul and giving me a second chance. Many people have this same sort of religious experience when they encounter a situation in their life that has brought them to an emotional low and a high level of humidity. I woke up the next morning a different man.

Because of this feeling of spiritual enlightenment which I had experienced, I wanted to be perfect, as I had been taught the Lord wanted of us all. I told Paula that from that time forward, we would serve the Lord with all of our heart, might, mind, and strength.

I set up our week with service project after service project, and dragged my stunned wife along on my journey to perfection. I figured that if I belonged to *the only true church of God*, then I was going to obey **all** of his commandments.

"You don't need that makeup to be beautiful," I told Paula. "If the Lord wanted you to wear makeup, he would have put it on your face when you were born." Paula quit wearing make-up for a time, until she asked me if it would be okay if she wore make-up "*just to feel better about myself*". I reluctantly acquiesced.

Paula was barely seventeen years old when we got married. At the time, she hated her mother, and wanted desperately to get away from her mother's dominance. I provided the escape.

She was a popular cheerleader in her high school, but left it all for what she thought would be a handsome, destined to be successful, husband.

It wasn't long into our marriage that little Brittany showed up. Paula found being stuck in a small apartment with a baby and no friends something she could not get used to very easily at her age. She missed her family and friends in Montana, (we lived in Salt Lake City), to the point that she even wrote a letter to an old boyfriend.

I was the head of the household. This is what our religion taught and it was verified and reinforced in the *Holy Scriptures*.

I had led Paula to California where we lived in a very economically tight situation for a full year before we returned to Salt Lake City where Paula felt a little more comfortable.

It wasn't long after we returned to Salt Lake from California, that Paula got pregnant with little Joshua. I convinced Paula that the Lord would have us deliver the child at home with a mid-wife who shared our faith. We soon found one, and Paula went through an extremely hard delivery without the aid of modern anesthesia.

Paula did love me and I loved her. She followed me in my desires to live a more "perfect" life. I was too concerned about pleasing God to see what effect my zealotry was having on my young wife. Nevertheless it all came to a head one day when we were sitting at the kitchen table.

"What's wrong?" I asked. Paula began to cry and said she was not happy. She explained that she had been unhappy for a long time. "You're the best husband and father in the world!" she cried. "But I am not happy living the way we do."

I felt very sorry for her at this time and told her to go back to her family, if that was what she wanted.

Paula hugged me and kissed me goodbye before I left for work. I came home from work that night, and Paula, my kids and most of our things were gone. I cried the whole night.

I had never abused Paula. I thought I was doing what I was suppose to be doing in the Lord's church, i.e., becoming perfect. What went wrong?

I came to the conclusion that it was Paula who had rejected the church of the Lamb of God and joined the church of the devil. This made me even more determined to improve my life and be the best member of God's church that I could be.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DIVORCE

My uncle is a practicing attorney in Salt Lake City, and would handle our divorce for free. I contacted him and he filed the appropriated papers in court. It would take about 90 days before the petition could be heard by a judge, so Paula took the kids to her parent's house in Montana.

Paula left me in May of 1986. In August of the same year, just three months after she left me, she called me up to tell me that she could not handle the kids, and that they would have a better life with me. She agreed to turn the children over to me and sign over custody.

I cannot, nor will I attempt to speculate, as to why she didn't want to be the children's mother at that time, but I knew it had something to do with her not being able to do the things that she wanted to. I believe she had a nervous breakdown, but this is only a speculation.

I had arranged with my father to have him go to Montana and get the kids and have Paula sign the custody papers. He went and met with Paula at her parent's home.

Alvin and Dora Mae Blade sat at their own table; and in the presence of my father, Michael J. Nemelka, my step-mother, Gloria, and my sister, Paulette, watched their daughter sign over custody of Brittany and Joshua to me. My father later told me that Paula's parents protested and told her not to sign the papers. At that time, Paula wasn't listening to anyone but Paula, so she did not hesitate to sign the papers. (See appendix A for the decree of divorce and the affidavit Paula signed, along with the affidavits from my mother, father, and uncle attesting to how the custody of the children was transferred.)

(Some spurious individuals in my family have spread the rumor that I made Paula sign the papers while she was in the hospital almost ready to die. How they came up with this ridiculous fable is a mystery to me. However, it will be revealed later how Paula herself lied about the transference of custody in order to win favor in the eyes of a judge.)

Our divorce was finalized on October 9, 1986. I was the legal custodial parent and Paula was awarded visitation.

From the time that Paula gave me custody of the children in August of 1986, to the time that I remarried in April of 1987, Paula saw the children only a few times. At one point I begged Paula to please come back to me so that the children wouldn't suffer. I told Paula, "...that if I get married again, I will not allow you to interfere in the lives of the children, if you do not respect my right to raise the children how I want to raise them." I let her know that if she caused problems with me and my new wife, I would move away and make it hard for her to see the children.

Paula called me on the day of my wedding to Jackie Stoll, April 7, 1987, and said, "This is the worst day of my life. Knowing that my children have another mother besides me, really hurts."

Paula would visit the kids periodically, but every time she did, the children would come home confused and upset.

At this time, my journey to religious perfection was preceding at a good pace. Jackie was a wonderful woman who had the same desires to serve God as I did. We were a good match for religious fanaticism.

In my position as a security officer for the Mormon church, I got into places and things that I was not suppose to. Needless to say, I quite my job and left the general membership of the LDS Church. Upon alienating myself from the Church, I could not alienate myself from some of the things which I held dear to my heart for so many years.

Even though I had plenty of evidence to think otherwise, Joseph Smith and *The Book of Mormon* were too real to me for too long to just let them go like that. At this point I entered the unrealistic world of fanaticism.

Everyone who I had trusted from the day I was born had let me down. I trusted no one. I became an independent thinker. I didn't need the church, the government, family, friends, or the laws of society to tell me what to do. I began to convince myself that if God had something to tell me, he would tell me himself. With this attitude, I began to receive "revelation" from God.

Revelation can best be described as communication with God. How God does it, who knows? Since there are millions who claim access to a communication line with God, I suppose there are millions of opinions of what revelation really is and how one receives it.

Nevertheless, I began to be enlightened by what I thought to be the workings of God inside me. Convincing myself that I had this ability to communicate with God, I became a prophet. I became invincible; and I no longer needed to obey the laws of men; I made my own laws.

There is a story about a man named Nephi In *The Book of Mormon*, which I still held on to and accepted as the "word of God" at this time. In this story, Nephi is commanded through revelation to kill a helpless, drunk man, steal his possessions, and run. If Nephi could openly defy the laws of society because God told him to, then so could I.

(To be continued...)