



*Vickie*



M I K E S I M S



*Vickie*



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M I K E   S I M S

**M**  
Mazzaroth

*Vickie*

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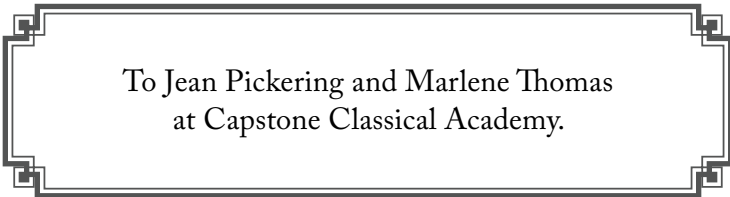
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To Jean Pickering and Marlene Thomas  
at Capstone Classical Academy.





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## *In the Beginning...*

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**I**T IS A hot summer day on a long endless stretch of road. The Newsome family are on their way to moving near some of their family to start again. Tom and Mary as well as eight-year-old Vickie are enduring the long journey to a hopeful destination of Tom's brother Dan. Times had driven them from their home as they made their escape with what money they have and their few possessions dragging behind them in a trailer. Like a modern-covered wagon, they head west to find a new life and new start. Tom Newsome knows he should be heading elsewhere but has managed to lose his way. His wife tells him to pull out the interstate and see if they can find a map or directions. This violates his sense of manhood but eventually realizes it is a lost cause. He drives down a lonely road away from the interstate and sees a crossroad and a small rundown gas station.

As he pulls into a gas station, the attendant begins to walk up to the car.

“Howdy,” says the attendant.

“Hi yourself,” Tom replies. “Say do you know how to get to Hemdale? We are not far, I know, but not sure which way to go.”

Attendant responds, “You want to take the road to the right, follow it to Sands and then left on 88. That will take you straight to Hemdale.”

Tom says, “Thank you, sir.”

The attendant looks at the young girl in the back and asks, “Why, who might you be?”

The girl looks away shy and blushing while her mom Mary responds, “Vickie, answer the nice man.”

The attendant responds, “Vickie, what a nice name for a pretty girl. You know I have a feeling you’re going to grow up to be a very important person.”

Vickie looks at the man as he intently stares back and quietly says, “Yes, indeed, you will make a huge difference in many.” A silence creeps in as only the sound of desert wind blows.

Mary looked at the attendant then Vickie and then to Tom. “Well, honey, don’t you think we should be going?” She turns to the attendant, “Thank you, sir, for your guidance.”

The attendant slowly looks back at the parents and says, “No problem, ma’am, you people have a safe trip.” The attendant backs away as the Newsomes begin to move their car forward.

Vickie stares at the man as he nods his head yes at her. Vickie looks confused but curious as the man never stops staring the whole time they drive away. She stares back as far as she can.

Vickie asked, "Mom, who is that man?"

Mary answered, "Just a man who runs a gas station."

"He looks like I have seen him before."

"You just remember seeing someone like him, we have never been around here before."

"What was he telling me?"

"I think he was trying to be nice to you."

Tom interrupts, "You two need to shut up. I am trying to concentrate on the road and don't need a lot of chitchat."

A silence befalls them for a while and Mary asks, "Honey, would you like the radio on?"

Tom says, "If it would shut that trap of yours."

Mary says, "Do you have to talk like that to me?"

"Look, I'm trying to keep us alive and fed which is a bit hard when you bitches won't leave me alone."

"Tom, do you have to use such language in front of our child?"

"You bring it out me. I can't wait to get to my brother's house and have a drink."

"Please, Tom, do you have to drink? Hasn't it done enough damage?"

"Listen up, you two drive me to drink. That is the reason I lost my job and our home."

“Don’t put that on me and especially your daughter!”

Tom is getting more and more upset, and as soon as his wife begins to utter something else, he slaps her in the face. Mary grabs her face with her hand and quietly stares out the window whimpering. Vickie is sitting there with her mouth open as the tears build in her eyes. She knows not to cry or say anything as this will just draw her dad’s anger to her. She is young but can sense the pain in her mom. The emotional tether is like an invisible connection of energy, a conduit of empathy flowing to and from them both. Hours pass and silence is king as the air is thick with control from Tom. He is on edge, unsure of what their future holds. He knows his older brother has always been there for him. Dan has always tried to take care of Tom growing up. Dan, in poor health, himself is happy to try to help especially since the death of his wife and son Derek moved out. Dan’s home is quiet and inviting. Tom knows it is his safety net and a new start that may solve his problems. However, Tom does not know how to quiet the rage in him and can’t even remember when it started. He sometimes thinks and wonders why he is so rough on Mary. It bothers him sometimes but the rage blinds him the other times. He is jittery, wanting his liquid courage.

Mary stares out the car window acting as if she has fallen asleep. But she can’t sleep not knowing when the next rage or hit will come from Tom. Her instincts are to care for Vickie, and take the brunt of Tom’s rage is her job now. Like



a movie repeating itself, she thinks back to when Tom was so nice and caring when they dated. He was so handsome and a pure gentleman. The envy of her friends and she was so proud. Their marriage was beautiful and first year so perfect. She was pregnant after the first year and Tom was such a proud daddy. After the death of his dad and mom in a home invasion, it left him cold and troubled. Mary tried and tried to bring back the peace and caring of days past but Tom was stuck in a loop of self-pity and remorse. He never quite forgave himself for things he did growing up. His parents went through a lot to bring him around. He was always in trouble as a youth. It seemed like after they were gone, the restraint was broken on him. Mary has analyzed a million times trying to find the solution. None seem to be found, especially when she is hitting a brick wall with Tom. He is impenetrable and not interested in anymore kids. She has suggested before maybe he would be happier without her and Vickie but that was not an option for Tom. Maybe they are his only tie to bind him to normalcy but the struggle remains. His soul tormented by life and his traps. Mary just opens her eyes once in a while to make sure they are going the right way but does not dare to get Tom's attention. Her ears intently listen to Vickie playing quietly in the backseat. Vickie knows to stay quiet.

Vickie lives in her own little world far away from the harshness of her dad. She loves him so much and can even remember times he made her feel like a princess of a

wonderful kingdom. He read to her and took her to parks constantly. She was the center of his universe. She does not understand what changed but only understands as her mom explained that daddy is sick. She prays every night that God will make him better. Vickie's emotional tie to Tom is severed now unlike with her mom. She can't afford to share the emotions of her dad. Like an instinct to protect children programmed genetically that protects little Vickie. Vickie is oblivious to the dynamics; she just knows her imagination is her refuge where she can build on the good memories to create fake ones. It is her fuel to keep going. She knows that someday her dad will come back to being healthy. That happy day will come soon. She patiently waits for the world to become happy again so she can pretend other things like about space. She loves anything to do with space and wants to grow up to be an astronomer. But that dream is on hold while she concentrates her focus on dad's health. Maybe when he is better, he will buy her another telescope to replace the one he broke in anger. She hopes and she dreams.

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## *Home Away From Home*

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**T**OM, MARY, AND Vickie arrive at Dan's house, and he comes out to greet them with open arms. "Tom, my little brother, it is so good to see you," Dan states. Dan turns to Mary. "Mary, so beautiful as before." He notices the red side of her face where she was struck earlier and asks, "Are you okay?"

Mary replies, "I am fine, I slept on it most of the way, what long trip."

Dan has a strange look and looks at Tom as Tom is unloading the car. Vickie runs up and Dan says, "Hey, pumpkin, you are getting so big!"

Vickie said, "Hi uncle."

Dan asked, "Are you hungry, Vickie?"

She nods yes, and he says, "Well, go in the kitchen and make yourself at home. I bought some snacks sitting on the counter just for you."

Vickie's eyes light up and she turns to her mom as Mary says, "Go ahead, Vickie."

She runs into the house in anticipation of the bounty. Mary looks at Dan and says, "Thank you, brother, I think you just won her over. All this has been so hard on her."

Dan said, "Not just her, I suspect."

Mary replies, "All that matters is her."

"Right."

Mary smiles and says, "I better help Tom."

"Right again," as Dan and Mary start unloading the car with Tom.

Later that evening, they are all moved in as there was not much really to move. Tom takes the trailer to a local branch that he had rented it from. While away and Vickie watching TV, Dan asked Mary, "Everything is going to get better now you are all here. I will take care of you guys and help Tom be a good man again."

Mary said, "Tom means well, we just need to get back on our feet."

Dan replied, "It is more than that. Tom is not the same since our parents were killed. He needs to forgive himself."

"I know but hell if he will listen to me."

"I think between us, we can reach him."

Mary begins to weep. "I hope so because I don't know how much more I can take."

Dan reaches out to her. "Listen, it will get better."

Mary nods her head yes and smiles wiping her tears away. She squeezes Dan's hand in thanks and walks to Vickie to watch TV and hold her. Tom returns and as the car door slams, Mary turns the TV off and she and Vickie come to attention. Dan stares in horror realizing things are much worse than he even realized. Tom comes in the house and says, "We're all done. Hey, Dan, do you have any beers?"

Dan replies, "Sure, Tom, in the fridge."

Mary says, "Tom, everything is put away."

Tom replied, "I am sure it is. You are always good about getting things done." Tom gets a beer and sits on the couch.

Mary tells Vickie, "C'mon, sweetie, let's get you cleaned up and ready for bed."

As they walk by, Dan says, "Good night, little princess."

Vickie smiles back at Dan as Dan looks at Tom. Tom is busy drinking and not even paying attention to Mary or Vickie. Dan grabs a beer and sits down in his favorite easy chair. It is quiet as the guys stare at their beer, and Tom wanders his eyes around the room of pictures.

Tom started, "Hey, I remember that bike you have."

Dan smiles. "Had, is more like it."

"What happened to that hog?"

"Had to sell it to pay for Susan's medical costs."

"I am sorry I could not make it to her funeral."

"That is all right, you had your own things to contend with."

“Hey, maybe tomorrow we can visit her grave.”

Dan smiles. “That would be nice. She would appreciate that.”

“She is still here with you, isn’t she?”

“Always, she was my whole life. It was my honor to live with her and enjoy every day with her.”

“Yea, that is nice. What was it like, you know, her with her illness?”

Dan stares at the ground. “It was nice and pleasant before her illness. Seem like life was perfect. Then one day, she paid a bill twice. I was concerned but we just shrugged it off as a senior moment even though we were not seniors. Then she got lost coming home and I had to go find her. Before we knew it, she could not remember simple things. Then she began to ask about wanting to see friends we have not known for years. She even mentioned wanting to watch you play basketball in high school.”

Tom says, “Oh, brother, that is rough.”

Dan looks up. “Yea, yea it was. I refused to put her in an Alzheimer’s unit even though sometimes she did not recognize me. One time she thought I was our dad. Then all the sudden one morning I turned over to wake her and she was gone. She had a heart attack in her sleep. She looked so peaceful, you know. At peace finally, not agitated by her condition.”

“How did Derek take it?”

“He was in college and kept coming back and forth to help. He was really good, a rock, solid. After his mom passed, he was more a comfort to me than I was to him. He is definitely his mother. She was always taking care of me, now he does.”

“Where is he now?”

Dan replies, “Oh, does not live far from here. He should be stopping by tomorrow to see you guys. He is married to a woman named Sherry, and they have a son, thirteen months old.”

“Wow, I have been gone too long.”

“Well, you are here now and I think this is a blessing for all of us.”

Tom replies sarcastically, “Yea, blessing.”

“You know, Tom, you need to use the bad as much as the good. It is what makes us what we are.”

“I know what you are saying but I don’t need a sermon right now.”

“Right, you just relax and focus on that wonderful wife and kid of yours. Your daughter is so beautiful.”

Tom puts his beer on the table and asks, “Did you ever feel like your wife and kid were doing things to drive you crazy?”

Dan laughs. “I think we all go through that. I know hard times can skew our perception. What I have learned is that your spouse and kid are cogs in the machine. They move

in the direction you do because they love you. Sometimes they trip over themselves trying too hard to please you. Remember, the tighter you grip sand, the more it slips out your grasp. You have to learn to cup your hands and gently hold the sand to keep all of it. Let them live and empower them to do what they know to do. You will find things happen automatically, and your life is so less stressful in the process.”

Tom stares for a while at Dan and picks up his beer to drink. “If it only worked that way for me.” Dan smirks as Tom finishes his beer and stands up. “Thank you, brother, for taking us in. I will find a job and be out of your hair as soon as possible.”

Dan stands up and hugs Tom. “Tom, no rush, just relax. We have plenty of food and money here. Get better and get your family whole. You guys are welcome here for as long as you want or even permanently.”

Tom smiles and goes to the bedroom to shower up. Mary and Vickie are already asleep. Tom stares at them both and with a troubled look goes to prepare for sleep.