

## *EVICTION*

**D**r. Reginald Franks, grandfatherly dean and CEO of Redeemer Christian College, would never kick David Singer out. At least David hoped not. Not after David graduated with highest marks. Not after David and his grandmother had given the college all their money. Not after his grandmother died and David took out student loans to continue his studies. And certainly not after all that talk of Redeemer College being a family. David had done everything they'd asked of him, and he'd believed every promise they made to him: that he was being prepared for a fruitful career in ministry. Yet, despite all that, he'd applied to over a hundred churches over the last six months and no one had offered him a job. At least not a paying job. Some churches had offered to take him on without pay, with a vague promise that the role would eventually become a paid position. But working for free was a luxury well beyond David's means. Although he was certainly a gifted musician, no church was willing to take a chance on hiring him, not when they had people of their own who could do an adequate job, and do it for free.

And so, after his graduation, when his classmates moved on, David simply stayed at Redeemer College. A few of his fellow graduates found jobs in ministry, but most had either moved back home or moved on to further their studies and their debt load. At first, David thought he would stay for a few days, until he came up with a plan or until one of those churches offered him a job. But days turned into weeks. He almost left when the college turned off his internet access, but he still had nowhere to go. So he stayed, reading, playing his guitar, singing, praying and hoping he wouldn't be kicked out. But it was now August. New students would be arriving soon, and the dorms would be filled with actual students.

GEOFF DRESSER

Paying students.

David's phone buzzed with an incoming text message.

"This is your final notice."

It was from his cellular service. He'd stopped paying the bill in May, when the student loan money was gone. David was wondering where he'd find the money for his phone when he heard the knock on his door.

"David?" said Mitch, through the door, "Dr. Franks wants to see you."

Mitch was the campus caretaker and handyman. David had been helping him out over the summer. He was a patient and soft-spoken man, perpetually clad in his olive-green work pants and shirt.

David opened the door.

"Mitch, I know. I tried to stop by his office yesterday, but he wasn't there. Thanks for letting me know. I'll go see him today."

"David, I'm sorry. Actually, I'm supposed to take you to see him right now."

"Why?"

"Dr. Franks told me I'm to come get you and bring you back with me to his office. We have to go, both of us, to his office. Right now."

"What's so urgent?"

Mitch shrugged and looked away.

"OK. Well, let's go."

Neither spoke as they walked down the stairs, through the doors, and across the quad to the admin building. They both knew what this was about. David had been avoiding this meeting for two weeks.

They reached the door to Dr. Franks' office. Mitch stopped, reached up to knock, hesitated, and then turned to David.

"David, thank you for all your help this summer. It was nice having someone to work with. And, I'm sorry."

"Don't be sorry, Mitch. Nothing you could do about it," said David.

Mitch knocked on the door and opened it a crack. "Here he is."

"Thank you, Mitch. Come in, David. Mitch, you'll be carrying on, will you?" Dr. Franks looked over David's shoulder at Mitch.

"Yes, sir." Mitch looked nervously between David and Dr. Franks.

"Thanks, Mitch. David, please sit down."

## MOUNTAINTOP

David sat in a worn leather chair opposite Dr. Franks. Between them was a shabby antique oak desk, bare except for two envelopes. Dr. Franks folded his hands and placed them on the edge of the desk and exhaled. Then he looked David in the eye.

“David, it’s time.”

“Time?”

“You know exactly what I’m talking about. It is time for you to move on. You need to leave campus.”

David shifted his feet. “Well, I was wondering if I could enroll in some extra courses for the fall semester.”

“David, you’ve already graduated top of the class from our music ministry program. There’s nothing more we can teach you.”

“I was thinking some of the churches I applied to wanted someone who could do music *and* youth, so I should probably take some youth ministry classes. Dr. Franks, you know all I’ve ever wanted to do is serve in a church. I think some youth courses could help me realize my dream. I mean, God’s calling on my life.”

“David, you’d be better off volunteering in a church youth ministry. It wouldn’t cost anything and you’d probably learn just as much. Besides, how would you propose paying for another semester?”

“Is there any unclaimed scholarship money?”

“No. Well, I mean yes there is, but not for you. It is time for you to move on.” The dean let out a sigh. “David, you must understand this is really for the best. I hope you know I want the best for you. I care about you, you’re part of the Redeemer College family. I hope you won’t be angry with us.”

“Dr. Franks, how could I ever be angry with you? You’ve been like a father to me. Especially after my grandmother died.”

Dr. Franks’ shoulders sagged. David saw his opening and pressed his advantage.

“I mean, you know my situation. And when Nan died... I had nowhere to turn. Redeemer was my family. You know, the rest of the class, well, they all either found jobs or went back home to their families. Redeemer College is the closest thing I have to a home and a family.” David looked out the window behind Dr. Franks’ desk, then up the ceiling and threw up his hands. “I mean, if I had somewhere else to go, I would. But, well, what option do I have? And it’s not like I haven’t tried to earn my keep. Mitch has really appreciated my help. He’s told me so, many times. It all makes me

think that maybe God wants me to stay here.”

Dr. Franks shook his head slowly, unfolded his hands and slowly drummed his fingers on the desktop. “David, I appreciate the help you’ve given Mitch over the summer. I really do, and yes, so does Mitch. However, I am informed by our board of directors that we have likely broken several labour code regulations by allowing you to do that. I shudder to think about the situation we’d be in if you’d fallen off a ladder or some such thing and injured yourself.” He folded his hands again. “When you didn’t leave after graduation, I thought it would be OK for me to look the other way. I don’t regret that, but it has been three months and you’re still here. Regardless, the board has also instructed me in no uncertain terms to resolve this situation, no later than today. David, my hands are tied.”

“So you’re kicking me out?”

“David, don’t make this any harder than it has to be, please. Look at it from my point of view.”

“From the point of view of someone who has a job and a place to live?”

Dr. Franks’ hands slowly closed into fists. He took a breath, relaxed his hands and looked back at David.

“I happen to have a job and a place to live because forty years ago when I graduated from college I took responsibility for my life, started working and haven’t stopped since. It’s time you did the same. But lest you think I am completely heartless, I have some good news. I am giving you a choice in how this plays out.”

“A choice?”

“As I was agonizing about this yesterday, I received a phone call from a former student, Rick Avery. He pastors a small church in Lachance, about three hours north of here. They need a worship pastor, and Rick is highly motivated to hire one as soon as possible. It’s an entry level position, full time. I told him about you. I told him you are the most gifted music student we’ve had here at Redeemer College in a long time. They’re very interested in you. If you’re interested, they’ll send someone to pick you up. Today. Are you interested?”

“Well, yeah. Of course I’m interested.”

Dr. Franks slid one of the envelopes across the desk toward David. “Here’s the job posting and some information about the church that my assistant printed off their web site. Have a look at it.”

## MOUNTAINTOP

David took the envelope and began to open it.

Dr Franks continued, “The deal is, David, that if you say yes, once they pick you up and take you away, you can’t come back here. Regardless of whether or not you get the job. Understand?”

“Oh, I see. It’s a way to get rid of me. Dr. Franks, I appreciate you setting this up, but I’ve applied to about a hundred churches all across the country and not one of them wanted to hire me. What makes you think this will be any different?”

“David, I know Rick. Their situation is unique. I think you stand a very good chance. And I sense the Lord’s hand in this.”

David had sensed the Lord’s hand before, but the Lord’s hand always turned out to be wishful thinking.

“So, I could end up stranded there if they don’t hire me? In a strange city where I don’t know anyone? I don’t really like my chances. What’s the other choice?”

“The other choice is that Mitch drives you into town and drops you off at the homeless shelter with this envelope which contains fifty dollars cash.”

“What? I can’t believe that! You wouldn’t do that to me, Dr. Franks. You just couldn’t! Just give me another week. I’ll go out to this church, but chances are they’ll turn me down like every other church has.”

“David, you head to Lachance or to the homeless shelter. Which is it?”

“You would seriously throw out an orphan?”

“David, you’re twenty-one years old. You’re a grown man, orphan or not.”

“Can I have some time to think about it?”

“No. I need an answer now.”

“What if I refuse? Are you going to drag me away?”

“The board informs me that if you refuse, then you are trespassing and it becomes a legal matter.”

“A legal matter? What does that mean?”

“It means we call the police, they arrest you for trespassing, you probably pay a fine and end up at the homeless shelter. Without the fifty dollars.”

David sighed and looked across at Dr. Franks. “I’m sorry I’ve been difficult. Thanks for letting me stay here over the summer. I guess I’ll take my chances with the job.”

“Very good, David. I think you’ve made a wise choice. Pastor

GEOFF DRESSER

Rick is a good man and he'll teach you a lot."

"If I get the job."

"Yes, but it sounds to me like you'd be a perfect fit. I'm hopeful. I'll call them and let them know. You can go start packing up your room, but before you go, I'd like to pray for you."

"Sure. I need it." David felt the tension in his neck and shoulders as he bowed his head and closed his eyes.

"Dear Lord, I thank you for David and that you have a perfect plan for his life. I thank you that you care for him and will be with him. Lord, if it is your will, I pray that he would find favor with the folks at Lachance Community Church, that this would be the beginning of a long and fruitful ministry. Amen."

"Amen. Thanks Dr. Franks." David got up and shook the dean's hand across the table. "Dr. Franks, can I ask you one more thing?"

"Of course, what is it, David?"

"Can I still have that fifty bucks?"