

Book Excerpt I: Indentured Scholars

As if on cue, the unmistakable sound of distant gunfire made its way into the living room. It would be another fifteen minutes before police sirens were heard.

Mr. Kinder saw Mrs. Sanford flinch. He first thought it was from the urge to lie on the floor, to be beneath window level. He quickly realized that it was her mental search for her son that gave her skin frozen tremors. He pondered the gross inequality of an American Mother's Day. Just having children gives all concerned parents a protective pause. Worries include marginal grades, unknown friends, or the propensity to try something, just once. Why should some mothers have to experience the heartache of a knock on the door with a municipal official asking questions regarding the clothes that their child might have worn? How many places are there for one's heart to leap when asked if their child has any distinguishable features? Mr. Kinder wet his lips.

"The magic question, of course, is do we like the odds? Truly, just what are the chances, his chances? What if the odds against your LeDain were somehow changed from being monumentally against him into magnificently for him? That's why I'm here, Mrs. Sanford, to realign the odds...with your permission, of course."

Nora gave no response but her body language revealed the turmoil that was playing in her head. She loved LeDain. She loved both her sons and was joyful when she could wrap her arms around them as night became morning. It was unfair that her love had to be tried in such a way. While part of her wished that Mr. Kinder had never found out about her or LeDain, the other part understood that her prayers were merely being addressed. How often had she implored God to make things better for her family? But why would God answer in such a cruel way? If only her husband were still alive. But then again, *Malcolm, did you send this man my way?*