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Call on me in the day of trouble

by Vera Gajic

Rachel was sitting with her parents, as she did every Sunday, in the second row of the wooden chairs in the miserable rusting corrugated metal church at the edge of town. At 14 she no longer felt she should be made to go to church if she didn't want to, and she really didn't want to, she hated every minute of it but her father was a devout Baptist who had rarely missed a day of church in his life. Even on rare family holidays they could only leave to go camping for a week in a windy part of England after the church service and had to return on Saturday night so as not to miss a single service.

Rachel had grown up engulfed in her father's faith. As well as Sunday church every evening he led prayers before bedtime in front of the little religious shrine in the corner of the living room. A few months ago she'd refused to join them for prayers and her mother was given the task to find out why. Rachel was going to tell her that she lost her faith (as her father used to describe people who left the church) because the vicar, Father Joseph as he liked to be known, was evil, that he had groomed her for years, long before she even knew the term, and the private bible teachings he'd offered to give her when she'd expressed an interest in becoming a nun at the age of nine were a sham.

How clever he had been to make her believe she was special and it was their secret, how he loved her more than his wife or children, but even though they were destined to be apart they could have special time together. At first she didn't mind him stroking her hair and holding her hand as they read the bible, it seemed to make him so happy, but it soon moved on from there and when she started realising it was wrong she felt she couldn't tell anyone because everyone loved him.

When she was 11 she declared she didn't want to be nun anymore and so didn't need to study the bible. Father Joseph was disappointed and asked her if she didn't love him anymore; she was sure she'd never said she loved him so she said nothing.

It was now more than 3 years since she'd last had to touch Father Joseph but the feeling of disgust was getting worse and she couldn't bare to look at him in church anymore, she was determined never to go again. She nearly told Mum but could see the fear on Mum's face when she mentioned that Father Joseph was not a good man. Mum didn't want to know, she cut across her and said "don't tell your Father," so Rachel spared her mother the knowledge she could tell she didn't want.

Sitting listening to Father Joseph tell the worshippers that Jesus said "Call on me in the day of trouble" she felt rage rise up in her.

As Father Joseph concluded his sermon gazing over his flock with a pride he let his eyes settle on Rachel, she had her head bowed down with her pretty little hands that had given him so much pleasure resting in her lap. She was one of his favourites; it was a shame she had stopped their sessions so early but he would have stopped them soon anyway, must'nt risk still being involved when puberty and the hormones hit the girls, much harder to control as he'd found out in his previous parish. Rachel was a good girl and he was sure she would never say anything.

With his last words "Call on me in the day of trouble," Rachel raised her eyes and met his and he saw the hatred in them as she roared "no, he does not answer!".