

A Son of Ham

Under the Covenant

*The untold reason the People of African lineage
did not have the Priesthood before 1978*

Luckner Huggins

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Some of the stories shared in this book are true, others are fiction. Some of the names, places and other identifying specifics used in this book have been changed to protect the individual's privacy.

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The cover portrait was a generous gift from the artist S. McKean to the author's father, Diacoste Huggins. Mr. Huggins and his wife were baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by his son Luckner in 1996.

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to over thirty thousand Africans who have been killed through genocide, and through ethnic cleansing in the Sudan. Also to another 1.5 million threatened with the sword of famine over their heads. It is dedicated to thousands of Haitians and a few other people from the Caribbean islands—children of God who have died in the multiple disasters caused by four successive hurricanes in the year of 2004 alone.

Other children of God from different ethnic backgrounds as well as all walks of life throughout the world are also affected by natural and human-made disasters. Why then is this book dedicated to these people of African lineage specifically? The answer will be found in the subject of the book. Every chapter will try to answer the question in a different way, and through a different story. A succeeding ‘**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ON WHY THIS BOOK IS WRITTEN**’, specifying more clearly its reasons and purposes will hopefully prepare our minds for this reading. But first, let us not miss the following **NOTE TO THE READER**:

NOTE TO THE READER

I salute all my prospective readers who firmly supported the idea of this book. While I struggled to find the right way to address their authentic questions about the people of my African lineage in the Priesthood, they waited patiently for years, struggling with the issues of the subject in their own life. But, this book does not claim a prophetic revelation, in addition to what God has given in the Holy Scriptures or will provide in the future through His designated latter-day Prophets. Neither is it authorized to do so. I have not been coached by any churches' ecclesiastical leaders, nor did I sympathize unfairly with any specific religious group more than another, while personally gathering the material for this book. Due to the sensitive character of the subject and the conflict its discussion has brought among people of opposite views, this book is presented as a combination of both personal and other people's experiences with a twist of fiction. One may wonder, "Why intertwine fiction in the fabric of such a sacred subject?" Personal experiences are no longer sacred once they are plainly exposed to the public, and friends' confidentiality is violated as soon as their names are mentioned in a book, especially when their hush-hush are not told the way they would have done it themselves. In providing dark secrets about the nature of voodoo that were sealed to the rest of the world for centuries, I took the great risk of providing tools for further discrimination against my own ethnic heritage. But in my views, important truths are often discovered with a price. This book may not change the hearts of those who are too deeply engaged in degrading their fellow men because of cultural and ethnic heritage. In fact, it may seem to open a can of worms. But, let the worms be used as fresh bait by those trying to catch great fish unto the kingdom of God, and not as a means to criticize 'he' who opened the can of worms! Therefore, there is no hide and seek in this book. My intention is clear that the readers make up their own minds about what is fiction and what is based on real experiences in my writing, for the purpose of possibly inspiring each one of them toward a personal quest for the truth through reading the Holy Scriptures, and constant earnest prayer to Heavenly Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. What does praying and reading the Holy Scriptures have to do in reading this book? Well, the Scriptures abound in evidences concerning the past history of the people of African lineage, and only God can really help us understand their meaning without prejudice. If this book may be considered a testimony, it is also an invitation to the reader to experience his or her own through personal efforts. Now, why not mix truth and fiction in this book? In the New Testament, the Lord Himself often taught some of the greatest principles of truth leading to the eternal salvation of His listeners through parables and similar stories. Furthermore, the story of voodoo in this book reflects some of my personal experiences-experiences that come in handy while I pondered for years over the question of why the people of my African lineage did not have access to the Priesthood. Haiti, my native country, is very far from reflecting the complete and perfect image of the vast African culture. If a reader has already received answers to the ethnic and cultural questions found in this book, he or she is kindly invited to reconcile the book's answers with his or hers carefully. I openly decline all responsibility for any reader's further speculations concerning the sensitive subject of this book! This book is originally written in the American English language, which is my third language. All questions and suggestions concerning errors found in this book should be submitted to me only. In order to help my stories flow and to enhance my freedom of communication, I spoke through a character named Luke, symbolically chosen after the Luke in the New Testament. Enjoy.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ON WHY THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN

For years, critics from different walks of life have condemned the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for not extending its Priesthood to the people of African lineage sooner. The Church was organized in 1830. One hundred and forty eight years later, in 1978, a prophetic revelation extended the Priesthood to 'all worthy male members.' It was only then that the people of African lineage were able to access the Priesthood. Why?

There have been many speculations about why the people of African lineage only received access to the Priesthood 148 years later. Some critics believe the LDS Church Prophets were racists. "Why not?" they say. "These Prophets are also human." The speculators say political organizations had influenced the Church to finally give in and allow the people of African lineage into the Church. "The Church was threatened to lose its million dollar tax exempt status unless it allowed the black people into the Priesthood," they say.

Other people believe the Church waited for a time when its members were ready to live and work together with other ethnic groups. Since the Church was restored with families and individuals of the Anglo-Saxon background, some people believe the Lord was buying time to prepare the first Church members so they would accept the rest of the world, especially the people of African lineage.

In the LDS Church, the Priesthood represents the same symbol of leadership and responsibility it did in the Old and New Testaments. Since the members of the Church consider human spirits as literal offspring of Deity, and the human race as embryos capable of full godly potential in the eternities, they also understand the Priesthood as the rudiment of God's very power allowing each person to reach such divine potential. Thus, the Priesthood is a guide showing God's children how to develop their intelligence to its full potential. It falls strictly upon the shoulders of the 'worthy male members' of the Church. In turn, the 'worthy male members', guided by inspiration, distribute ecclesiastical and temporal stewardship to each member of the Church. Essentially, the Priesthood guides members of the Church to be able to better lead their families and to advance in their ecclesiastical callings. It also oversees teaching programs enabling children to know the living God of heaven, to become better citizens in their respective societies and to better serve their fellow men.

From its time of restoration in 1830, the Church was set to provide services and leadership training so its members would be ready to serve the world spiritually and temporally. However, from the Church's inception, the age-old issue of slavery between the millions of people of African lineage and the Anglo-Saxons often came to the surface when the critics talked about the Priesthood. In some people's minds there had been some psychological conflict as to whether black and white men were yet ready to serve together as leaders in the same Church.

Other people speculated that only the people of African lineage were not yet ready. "A people who were not allowed to be educated for so many years needed more time to recapture their dignity and to learn how to become leaders in the Priesthood," they reasoned. Is the question of black people in the Priesthood doomed to eternal speculations, or are there answers waiting to be discovered, like the hidden treasures of a precious mine? Do the Holy Scriptures have answers, and can Luke's story in this book bring them out in the open?

Another reason this book was written is that, even today, during many gatherings between Anglo LDS Church descendants and their friends of the African lineage, this sensitive issue continues to be brought up. The ‘poor me’ attitude goes on. Ironically, it occurs that these ‘victims’ are sometimes more educated and socially advanced than those who are feeling bad for them, and sometimes this down and negative attitude is more felt than spoken. Other times, brothers of European lineage who sympathize with brothers of African lineage openly accuse the former Church leaders of being racists. At these times critics even explore and suggest ways ‘Anglo leaders’ could work harder in order to better welcome the people of African lineage into the Priesthood. When it comes to racial issues, these compassionate critics feel they might even have a more effective approach than the Prophets themselves. After these gatherings, both groups embrace each other as a token of truce, as if to say ‘Now things have changed and we will always be there for each other’.

This support system seems to be gratifying for now. It has helped many people of African lineage who might have difficulties evolving freely in a predominantly Anglo society. However, in a small way, it also encourages divided opinions in the Church of the Lord. Participating members take small steps away from the head that is set to lead them. They are like army personnel who are disconnected from their commanding headquarters. Innocently, they may soon begin to walk in shoes not fit for them. They may become like a new generation of citizens wanting to expose their own country to the sanctions of their enemies.

This book’s purpose is to remind everyone that the Prophets of God are their spiritual leaders no matter their racial background. The Lord’s mother was Mary, a very fair skinned, fourth generation daughter of King David. The Lord inherited the skin tone of his mother’s lineage. His mother was from the house of Judah, a descendant of Shem, one of Noah’s sons, who was what is now known as a white man. Yet He is the Savior of all Noah’s ethnic children ever born on planet earth! If the Lord were born from a different ethnic mother, absolutely nothing would have changed as far as His calling is concerned. And for those who suppose that the color of the skin could be an enemy or a better friend to the God of Israel, this book is also written to help them identify who the true enemy is. Only by pointing every person to the Lord Himself or to His Apostles and Prophets will the fellowship of the members of the LDS Church bring them to unity. If the critics are to help the members as well as non-members of the Church they must identify and target the Church’s true enemy.

In his physical absence, the Lord has sent the Holy Ghost to be a constant companion to his children as seen in Acts 2:1-4 in the Holy Bible. He has left the affairs of His Church in the hands of His Prophets. Amos 3:7 tells us that the Lord reveals even His secrets to His Prophets for the benefit of all His children on earth. Could such Prophets discriminate between the children of God? Possibly. Did they? That’s the question this book will try to answer with integrity and soberness.

‘A Son of Ham Under the Covenant’ is written with a special hope in mind—to help refocus the minds of the critics and to change this historical pattern among the members of the LDS Church, as well as the non-members. Why is this necessary? The critics’ old patterns of racist criticism are based on pure speculation concerning leaders of the LDS Church. And these perceptions seem to be based on circumstantial evidence thus far. One should not call a physician a lawyer just because the physician lives in a community full of lawyers. No one has been able to prove these perceptions to be true. Also, the people perceived as ‘poor me’ have had access to the Priesthood for many years now. Shouldn’t

the ‘poor me’ attitude be left to those who died many years ago and without the opportunity to be part of the Priesthood? Even resurrected from the dead, none of my African ancestors would have a valid excuse to be a ‘poor me’ person today! Upon resurrection from his grave, my revived ancestor could walk straight up to the Church and solicit free membership in the Priesthood. Who knows? I might even be delegated with the privilege to personally extend the Priesthood to him! He would only need to declare his true identity and honest desire. Whether he shows up as a resurrected ancestor or simply a spirit disincarnated, the Church would be happy to enroll him in the Priesthood! And all the necessary elements of preparation would be willingly provided for him.

The LDS Church provides free education and certification. Its non-paid ministry and instructors then provide their service free of charge in the form of LDS Missionaries. In their friendly ‘We’ll come to you’ program, LDS Missionaries usually pay for their own transportation. They have flexible schedules, and baptismal water is found almost anywhere. They don’t seem to have any ‘poor me’ excuses at all when it comes to inviting every person on planet earth to come unto Christ!

In this book, Luke is a young missionary born in a Caribbean Island, who joined the LDS Church in 1978 long after the Priesthood was extended to the people of his lineage. Luke’s story dissipates any and all psychological doubts as to whether a black and a white man can serve happily together in the same ecclesiastical calling. It gives hope for a better world where all children of God will live together peacefully. It shows that racial differences among LDS Church members can become an old story of the past—a dead horse needing to be buried, and points directly to doors of spiritual and temporal opportunities open right now to every child of God on earth.

Luke’s experiences and his testimony of the Lord’s Prophets attest that they have never been racists—though humans, they have always been more righteous than the people they are called to serve. And to Luke it is a solemn mockery to even suppose a most righteous God would raise a wicked Prophet to call His beloved children to repentance. In telling his story, the Divine Intelligence seems to have whispered to Luke’s conscience that humans become more civilized as they seek to understand the reasons for the calamities of the past in order to improve the realities of the present. Today, if the racism of a few people exists in the Lord’s Church, it is simply a test. It may also be a stumbling block to prevent millions of children of God from seeing the light found in the Church’s grand ecclesiastical structure. Racism should be rightly seen as a human weakness, being used by the adversary as a dangerous pitfall. It is a snare that traps those not paying attention to the Lord’s true beacon of light—His gospel and His prophets. In this case, discrimination is a false alarm that goes off without the evidence of a real fire.

The discrimination of a few weak people separates millions of new converts from the true standard of the gospel. It prevents them from seeing the whole picture, the real picture of the Church. Unfortunately, many critics still flash the subject of discrimination to distract some members of the Church. Only those who are not in touch with the gospel’s reality will pay any attention to what is not part of the gospel.

This book will suggest a separation between the gospel’s reality and the general perception of the critics concerning racial segregation. It acknowledges the calamities of the past while offering a specific solution for any discrimination in our time. Rather than siding up with the critics and the speculators, Luke found a different source of information to settle his mind concerning the issue of blacks and the Priesthood. Through scriptural searching, fasting, and daily prayer, he learns that every child of God can know

the truth, receiving personal revelations unto his or her own salvation. And were every person able to see with the eyes of a Prophet of God, racism would cease on the face of the earth.

Coincidentally, many of the same critics finding faults in the LDS Church and crying “lo here! lo there!” have somehow also blamed the Israelites for the death of the Lord and the falling away of His apostolic Church. Luke’s adventures in this book show that the whole world had a level of responsibility for the Lord’s death. If the world were perfect, the Lord would have no need to die for it!

The sins of the Old Israel against her God are visible because of the Holy Bible, which accounts for the blessings as well as for the curses Israel brought unto itself. The Bible also shows Israel’s human as well as its divine nature. Israel’s lineage is comprised of people like each one of us—people having the capacity to rise or fall. But because the sins of our generation are seemingly not written in the Bible does that mean we don’t have any? God is so loving, that in our weaknesses, He veils us even from ourselves. If our individual sins and the sins of some of our ancestors became visible to us today, millions of us would want to run away from ourselves. We would not want their names identified with ours. We would see the abominations of Sodom and Gomorrah creeping around us and in some cases inside our very homes. We would identify the spirit that caused the first segregation of humankind a long time ago, even the spirit that raged in humanity’s heart at the Tower of Babel. We would see things we don’t want our children to know about. Hopefully, we would also see the many opportunities we have to choose the right, and our compassion for the Israelites would help us identify their stumbling blocks as we deal with ours today. Possibly we would even repent. We would run to the latter-day Prophets and ask them to pray for us! This book acknowledges that all people on earth need to repent and come to the Lord.

After the Lord and His Apostles were persecuted and removed from the earth, there was no one authorized to administer the Lord’s Priesthood. The disconnection of the Lord and His chosen leaders from us was like sending a legally appointed government to unjustified exile. The executives of its administrations become scattered. The whole nation lived in chaos until a new administration came to function again.

Every human being was deprived of divine guidance through the dark-ages, the time the Prophets were absent from the earth. No wonder the whole earth was on probation and had to wait until 1830, the year of the restoration of the Priesthood, to bail out of it! Without the Priesthood, entire families were left to drive through their lives on broken and bumpy roads. The Apostles were detached. The gospel panels and the apostolic signs leading to men’s divine destiny had been taken away. There was very little spiritual guidance. Through translations, the Holy Scriptures had lost some original meanings. The Roman Empire had also burned many precious pages of Papyrus during the great persecution of the Apostolic Church. The old Latin kingdom got rid of any doctrine not fitting its personal view of the nature of the Lord. What was left of the Holy Scriptures is now known as the Holy Bible. Many scriptural books were lost. Everyone was left to interpret the Holy Bible alone or under the direction of self-proclaimed ministers. The people of African lineage were slaves for many years in the flesh, yet they were not the only victims of ignorance and spiritual darkness. Those who enslaved them as well as the whole world also lived in spiritual slavery throughout the dark-ages, the gloomy period mostly responsible for the corporal slavery of the people from the African lineage. Can anyone feel true compassion for the African slaves while denying pity to the rest of the world living in the dark-ages? The colonists expressing hatred against the people of

African background acted under the influence of spiritual darkness. The environment and the period they lived in provoked them to mental retardation as well as spiritual weakness. They breathed the air of the dark-ages and their souls absorbed foods that were spiritually impotent. An analysis of the circumstances of the dark-ages suggests that the devil probably raged among the children of God during that time with the same madness provoking the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in the past.

Is it rational to suppose that the people of African lineage were perfect in the middle of all that chaos? Obviously they are also human beings having the capacity to be affected by the circumstances of their lives. Apparently they were also spiritually weak. Else how would they fall under slavery? Evidently, perfect people don't fall. Perfection provides spiritual wings to any human being—wings to fly above all given circumstances. The simple law of gravity suggests that the heavier and the higher an object is, the greater its fall can be. History proposes that the first civilization on earth started among the people of African lineage. If the records are true, these children of God must have been blessed with wisdom and great intelligence at one time. In all reality, they probably fostered the civilization that has influenced life on earth for a very long time, even in ways that are not perceivable. The Holy Bible describes the choice blessings of the Israelites in the past and why they apostatized. Modern history also tells us about the European nations and what made them fall. Our modern history books don't spare the privacy of the European kings, their riches, their cruelty and their decrease. In essence, all the civilizations of time have fallen because of wickedness. Why do the critics exclude the people of African lineage from the category of those who have fallen because of wickedness? Are the critics ignorant of these people's past or are they deliberate in hiding the truth? Why did the nations of the African people fall? Would a glimpse back into their history also tell us, or are the Europeans the only ones to blame for the crash of the people of African lineage? Will anyone tell us why none of the African nations had a Bible at all until the Europeans came to their land? What scriptural guidance did they have and what gods did the people of African heritage worship for centuries before that time? Rather than following the pattern of the critics, this book will unfold its own version of who the descendants of Ham really were after Noah's Flood subsided, and why they became slaves during the dark-ages; as well as the reasons why they waited until 1978 to inherit the Priesthood that God entrusted into Noah's hands for them.

Knowing that all the different ethnic children of God on earth are humans having some dark images in their ancestral line, this book will talk about a specific dark image that was hidden among the forefathers of the African lineage. It will unveil what really might have caused their offspring to be withheld from the Priesthood until 1978. Will Luke's simple quest for the truth bring a break-through in the history of all the people of African lineage on planet earth?

- CHAPTER ONE -

Luke's African Heritage: 200 Years on a Voodoo Foundation

Unbeknownst to Luke, he was in for the quest of a lifetime. While he thought he was only trying to find out about a simple question occupying the minds of his people, he went digging for answers to deep secrets that had been speculated upon for years. Luke's interest was simply to know why the Priesthood was extended to the people of African lineage 148 years after it was restored on earth. He needed to gather the pieces to his puzzle, the material that would help him find the answer to his question. "You don't look for the snake in the lion's den, neither do you harvest apples from an orange tree," his maternal grandfather often told him. In Luke's mind, that's exactly what most of the critics seemed to have done. They recycled and reanalyzed the same political material available to them since 1830. In order to find the kind of evidences Luke needed, he had to begin investigating the roots of the plants—even the origin of humankind's ethnic groups and how they became divided. "What's the best place to start?" he wondered. He was born in the Caribbean island of Haiti. The majority of people in his country are of African lineage. It was best that he begins his research there, even in his own backyard. The more he earnestly studied and pondered over the issue in his mind, searching for clues and seeking divine guidance to help him recognize them, the more amazing evidences, both secular and scriptural found themselves at his door step.

Like all other young boys growing up in the environment of his birth, Luke experienced the laid-back lifestyle of his Caribbean island. It was an atmosphere full of natural beauty from the different sands on the beaches to the magnificence of the mountains. The variety of wild fruit trees, of flying birds, as well as of fishes in the ocean seemed to have made life a paradise. When Christopher Columbus discovered that island in 1492, he called it 'the pearl of all the other islands' he had discovered. In recent years however, Luke experienced as well the challenges of a third world country that has been constantly shaken by political unrest. Especially during such times of political unrest, a secret combination seemed to sneak up among many people on the island.

For years the government of Haiti has governed the nation by laws that were found in no other modern constitutions. Luke wondered whether these laws were invented for his country's unique circumstances or whether they were inherited through an unknown ancestral lineage. The arrogance of his nation's leaders was such as the Pharaohs of Egypt, and of the Canaanite nations who showed no mercy for the children of Israel many times in the Old Testament times. A strong and invisible hand seemed to have kept the government leaders glued to political power. It appeared to have been a hand from the dark side, and it squeezed all sense of justice out of the leaders' hearts. Peace prevailed over the land as long as no citizens sought new political elections. The dictatorial government made everything appear smooth as they led the entire nation back into the age of darkness. Citizens who disagreed with government policies often paid the price by their life. They paid in secret and without a trial. In order to find and destroy their victims, some government secret police ruled with a satanic fist. They ruled with blood under their sleeves and horror in their heart. They defended the cause of the government as if it were their own. They went beyond the conventional tracking methods of military and of police investigation. They consulted voodoo priests and peeping tongue priestesses who in turn called on evil spirits to help them in their pursuit of political vengeance. In return for help, these politicians made vows and offered the blood of their political victims in sacrifice to the voodoo spirits. Rather than being 'keepers' of the nation, government officers secretly sold its people's blood to voodoo spirits. As exemplified in John 3:19 and 21, these political leaders in the island sought any possible way to hide their actions from the light. Knowing they were wrong, they seemed to have been afraid

to be reproved by God or by their fellow human beings. They openly shut out the light and acted in darkness. They spilled innocent blood and satisfied the thirst of the voodoo gods. They violated the commandment 'Thou shall not kill' found in Exodus 20:13 as well as the laws of their own land. They brought condemnation and curses to the land. In order to cover the true identity of their evil, they casually called it 'black magic'. They celebrated it as an official religion so that the new generations of children would believe in it. They said, the nation inherited voodoo as a culture from African Ancestors. Luke was a native of the island. He knew of these evil doings of his government. A close and trustworthy relative working in the Haitian National Palace told Luke's family of these dark secrets. The secrets were superstitiously taboo. For the sake of his own survival and in order to share his own testimony in due time, Luke was made to vow not to speak. For years, he kept the secrets of the curse of a whole nation. He kept them deep inside. The curse pestered his human soul like an oath he had to make against his will. Luke felt he carried the spell of the curse more than those who actually labored for it. Is it finally time for these secrets to be spilled so the curse can be removed? This book is hopefully written in due time. But one question is yet to be answered: How did such secret combinations enter the minds of these political leaders? Luke's nation is made up of nice people who had been blessed for years. They left the Land of Africa as slaves and gained freedom by the providence of God! Entire families such as Luke's in the country had adopted Christianity. Yet the spell of their political leaders haunts them still. Is Luke's story about to unveil the secrets of an old abomination? Will the descendants of Ham in Haiti learn about a curse they inherited from a faraway land? Can they be unbound from the spirits of voodoo and find spiritual freedom?

Luke was sleeping inside his little family house when the noise of gunshots awakened him. Such a brutal awakening was familiar to him. This time, however, something was different. It was not a single gunshot sending one soul to the life after death. It was not the wild beats of a midnight drum, a drum calling on voodoo spirits to enter the souls of fortune-tellers. Like a major storm of hailstones from a tropical cyclone, the repetition and duration of the blows vibrated the very walls of his two-car garage size residence. Before he realized what was happening, multiple rounds of bullets came in a rapid succession. And in similitude to a shark's teeth, they ripped apart a large portion of his little home's roof. Suddenly, he found himself lying on his back and staring at a very smoky sky.

The pounding of the bullets against his corrugated and rusty metallic roof had caused him to become deaf to any other sound around the house. And lying motionless like a zombie, he thought his family's cry of distress was only the distant nightmare of a dark dream. In order to accommodate sleeping arrangements for six of his eight siblings, two metallic bunk beds stood along one side of his small room. Each of the beds had three bunks. He was lying on the top bunk of his bed and five of his brothers occupied the other bunks. His mom, his two sisters, and his youngest brother slept in the other room. Screams and what sounded like a stampede added to the panic reaching Luke's very door. The door was not locked. His friend Hervey rushed in unannounced, grabbed him by the arm, and pulled him away from his collapsing world. "Thank God, you are safe!" Hervey exclaimed, as if one flash-look at his best friend could determine a total examination of his safety.

"What is going on, Hervey? Who is in town this time?" asked Luke, wiping the dust fallen from the roof out of his sleepy eyes.

Under normal circumstances, Luke would not have asked this question. But it was obvious he was quite startled by the sudden blow and his recollection left him totally for the moment. Otherwise, he would have known even in his dream, once again, it was elected President Jean Bertrand Aristide the gunmen were after. Dead or alive, Mr. Aristide was going to tread the path of the majority of Haiti's top political leaders. Continuing its two hundred year old policy, President Aristide's own military betrayed and ousted him successfully in the beginning of his presidency in 1991. By a miracle he was left alive. He found refuge in the United States, where he begged the American Congress and lobbied to anyone of influence who could help provide financial and military support to his cause. Mr. Clinton, the U.S. President, had compassion. In 1994, after a few years of negotiation had passed, he sent U.S. military troops to put President Aristide back in power to finish his term. The U.S. military provided peace. The hardworking Haitian people returned to their daily activities and to rebuilding their broken nation. But it was like throwing a few stones into a very deep river. No passage could be made from poverty-stricken to prosperity. Corruption reigned. The economy was too far collapsed during Aristide's regime. He encouraged civil insurrections that left too many structures burned. President Clinton's term was over and the U.S. troops were called out of the island. The Haitian military that President Aristide had vengefully dismantled remained at large, heavily armed and jobless. Except for his voodoo priests and his mad populace, President Aristide had no more guardian angels even among the hopeful citizens who helped re-elect him in 2000. Once again, his life was similar to an old wooden boat with many holes in it. He was sailing in the middle of the deep ocean and would soon sink. His breath of life was in the hands of his enemies. His was the security of a boat rocked by the blows of the ocean's waves.

Having regained consciousness and being aware of his own situation, Luke suddenly pushed Hervey aside. It was as if to part a curtain that had been blocking his view of his real world. He looked around at a glance and noticed everyone in his room was gone. "Mother!" he said, with all the emotions of a loving son. "Are you all right?" No one answered. He forgot his mother would have been in the other room. "Screaming louder would probably not help the situation," thought Luke. "I better prepare for the worst." Busting his way into the other room, he stumbled over fallen debris from the roof and other household objects scattered all over the floor. Were it not for the heavy dust still unsettled in the room, the moonlight would have penetrated in and Luke would have been able to see more clearly.

He crashed into a moving creature and fell backwards. "Ouch!" they both shouted. A pile of dirty laundry lay on the rugged cement floor. That pile of laundry saved Luke's back by cushioning it from a probable broken bone injury. "They have taken my family away. Now they are here to get me also," thought Luke desperately. It took him less than a fraction of a second to realize the fragility of his life, the life of an innocent civilian in this chaotic corner of the world.

Luke was not just paranoid. Since 1957 the infamous dictator, Francois Duvalier, instituted the practice of stealing people right out of their homes in the middle of the night. In most cases they were never allowed to return to their families for fear that Duvalier's secret combinations would be discovered. An old superstitious belief covered that assassin's back. Many children were made to believe that Loogaroo carried their relatives away. In the voodoo mythology, Loogaroo is a human-devil, an actual sorcerer that is mostly cannibal. The concept of Loogaroo was often proven to be false. Years after they were kidnapped, good people were found disfigured in street corners, begging,

or wasted in remote areas of the island. Those who were allowed to live were practically turned into zombies. Zombification is a satanic process in which certain indigenous drugs are administered to the subjects. The drugs erase the detainees' recollection and sense of judgment. The government's secret police deleted their sense of memory and their power of communication. They were shut down. In that way, the secret chambers and the questioning tactics of President Duvalier remained unknown to the general public. All this evil was done in the name of voodoo, an inheritance that came from the African ancestors. No one blamed themselves for the criminal acts committed. They did not seem to think they could change their ways. Luke wondered if indeed the ancestors were the only ones to blame. He felt that human beings were born with spiritual power to rise above life's circumstances. "A forefather's tradition is an inheritance only to the children who choose to accept such inheritance and I am not a child to accept every inheritance my ancestors left me," Luke firmly decided in his mind.

Duvalier amended Haiti's constitution several times in order to satisfy his governmental ambitions. He was called president for life and was feared more than a voodoo god. When he died in 1971, Luke lived in Port-au-Prince, on the south side of 'Rue de L'enterrement'. Rue de L'enterrement ran from west to east toward the national cemetery of the city. It means 'Funeral Street' in the French language, and obtained its name because most funeral convoys went through it on their way to the cemetery. During Duvalier's funeral procession, a hurricane came suddenly and traveled speedily from the beginning to the end of the procession, throwing many of the people walking on foot to and fro like in a whirlwind. As though legions of the evil spirits Duvalier had bound to his voodoo services were unleashed at his death, every guest testified of the blowing of the wind and the shaking of the ground. People ran to safety, leaving their shoes and many purses in the middle of the narrow road. Even the military flanking the funeral cars dropped their guns behind. One man dressed in his military clothing jumped and fell within the walls separating Luke's little house from the street. Another one followed. He was wearing the regular blue jeans of the secret police that had spread terror all over the country. Luke stood watching everything that was happening at the second floor balcony of the tall Methodist Church. Until today, no scientific explanation is given for an instant hurricane traveling west/east strictly in the space of one street crowded with people attending a funeral. Every spectator standing on a porch or a front yard watching the event felt the tremendous power of the passing wind, and saw the chaos it caused among the crowd. But no witness spoke publicly of what happened for fear of what might befall them personally. Before Duvalier died of cancer in 1971, he amended Haiti's constitution one more time in order to legalize passing on the presidency to his son, Baby Doc, who was barely eighteen years old at the time. Any citizen who disagreed could only do so privately.

At first, Baby Doc was kind and somewhat considerate. But through the help of his father's voodoo priests and secret police, he learned fast. He followed in his father's footsteps. The practice of people's disappearance continued in the country until Aristide came to power. With his blessing, Aristide's followers replaced the disappearance combination into burning tires over his enemies' necks.

Luke was nineteen years old. He was a whole year older than Baby Doc was when Baby Doc's perverted father put him in power. Under the Duvalier regime, men who were much younger than Luke were known to qualify for death execution. They were first taken in for questioning and in a makeshift of voodoo ritual, they were forced to confess to political plots against Duvalier before being put to death.

In the midst of all these somber memories, “Help!” Luke cried, as loud as he could. He was still on the floor. “Don’t shoot!” Without a word, what appeared to be a man pointing a short revolver at him, stood tall and motionless. Even amid desperation, Luke believed negotiation could save his life.

“Come here Hervey and tell him he has the wrong guy!” Luke also thought Hervey was far from him. He had forgotten that the two bedrooms were only a few steps away from each other. Hervey had followed right behind him. Had he been one step closer, Hervey also would have been knocked down in the chain reaction. Hervey’s eyes were not as affected by the dust. “I am right here,” Hervey responded, “and your brother cannot talk because your head hit his mouth very hard.”

It was Luke’s older brother, Wilner. He had come to see if anything had happened to him. Wilner tried to mumble an explanation for the accident, but his mouth was already full of fluid. His lips were badly cut from inside his mouth due to a serious bump against Luke’s teeth. His tongue was also bleeding. What appeared to be the short revolver pointing at Luke in the dark was Wilner’s pointed hand—a helping hand Wilner was trying to give to his younger brother.

Wilner was the oldest of their parents’ nine children and Wilner’s mother had taught him to share the responsibility of his younger siblings. Wilner had been helping since her separation from his father, and even though he was hurt, he had been trained to be concerned about Luke’s condition rather than his own. Remembering his stewardship, he tried again to inquire about Luke’s safety. As Wilner opened his mouth, Luke heard another mumbling and felt a warm and gooey fluid dripping on his face. Being very sore and still confused, Luke thought he was the one bleeding. He got off the floor without help. With the spirit of helping an injured companion in the line of duty, both Luke and Hervey held Wilner and they walked outside together, headed toward the outside kitchen where they hoped to find salt and water.

It was common for people even in the city to have an outside kitchen. Wood-charcoal burning was the cheapest and most efficient way to cook in a country with poor electrical infrastructure and insufficient fuel program. The burning of such wood byproducts was also a constant nuisance to the walls and ceilings of a house. Black smoke usually redecorated the painted walls. And as sweet as it was, the evening breeze often filtered through the door cracks, picked up ashes from the kitchen, and powdered every object in the house.

Mother had ordered the whole family to run outside for fear the walls of their topless house might fall and hurt the children. She had raised her voice asking the children to follow her and thought everyone did. Everything had happened so quickly she had not noticed that Luke was missing. They were now together, bunched up in a corner of the outside kitchen, taking refuge against any other eventual assault. Most assailants would not expect to find a family in the outside kitchen at such a time. The ten cent candle was burning low but Luke knew exactly what to do in the dusk. His family never called on the voodoo gods for help in time of distress. He did not look for any graven image to ask for help. He found a second for meditation and for prayer in his heart while he was searching. He also found the bag of whole grain salt and the container of fresh water. He mixed a half handful of salt in a bowl of water. Using a piece of kitchen cloth as a compress, his mother administered the liquid to Wilner’s lips. The water was drinkable and the salt was extracted out of pure ocean water. The composition of sweet water and salt was commonly used to temper swelling and bleeding.

Now, although everyone was accounted for, no one could sleep. The small kitchen was not designed as a place of rest. Besides, there was too much fear to contaminate each other with, and too much excitement to share. Entertained by their conversations, like typical Haitians do, they had already forgotten about the mess the gunmen had caused. The entire northern part of the main island of Haiti had been under siege for only two weeks and it was already in the hands of the rebels. Luke had heard Aristide's opponents say they hoped to see Aristide getting his neck out of his own noose some day. "That day is at an end," thought Luke sadly and out loud.

Without any question, Hervey knew what Luke was referring to. "He who preaches violence may raise the very dog that will bite him someday," said Hervey, referring to President Aristide's behavior. Like everyone else living in that troubled island both Hervey and Luke knew of President Aristide's practice when he first came to power over the impoverished nation.

"How in the name of any civilization could the president of a nation incite his allies to throw burning tires over the neck of those who disagree with his political views?" said Luke. "And how in the world does he get away with such barbaric acts?"

Hervey was about to open his mouth to answer, but Luke continued speaking as if his questions were only rhetorical. "President Bush is now helping the people of Iraq, Afghanistan, Israel, the Palestinians, and many other people in distant lands. We are here in the Western Hemisphere with him and the policy is allowing him to turn his back on us. Most Americans don't even know we exist."

"They know we exist, buddy," and President Aristide never got away with his crimes!" said Hervey with a defensive demeanor, and as if Luke's very question was intended to provide a way for President Aristide to get away with his cruelty.

"If he did not get away with his crimes, what is he still doing in power?" asked Luke.

"Our country is a democracy now. Since he won the vote from the majority of the people, he had to stay in power in order to satisfy the law," explained Hervey. "The international community withdrew all the funds allocated to help our poor country in order to prove they disagreed with Aristide," he added.

"That is exactly my point," said Luke, with a teasing look on his face. "Everyone in the island is now swimming to stay afloat while their leader stands tall on their backs, using them as a barge to get away with his crime."

"We may all pay the consequences of his actions and he may have enjoyed a Caribbean splash on our back for a while, but he is surely sailing out of the country," said Hervey, with a tone of victory in his voice.

For Luke, there was no victory to celebrate. In paying the consequences of the leaders' actions Luke saw the consequences of a law of cause and effect that keeps going and coming back around nonstop.

"We'll see what goes on next," he said, rubbing his eyes once more and trying to remove more dust, avoiding putting more fire into the burning discussion.

Unlike some other nineteen-year old men living on the island at the time, Luke did not get angry. Neither did he go out looting in order to justify a payback for the roof of his family home. His mother made it clear to her children that only people without dignity would justify stealing. Besides, human life always had a greater value to Luke than anything else. He was happy all his family members were together and safe with him.

"Somehow, there will be a way to build this roof again," he said, displaying an expression of faith.

The general coolness that people love about the Caribbean island was often expressed in Luke's relaxed attitude. He found a positive side to every challenge in life. "At least," he said to Hervey, "the shooters left us alive and the whole incident is behind us now." "What about the mess that is left for us to clean?" said Hervey. "We are not yet dead today and that gives us perhaps one more day to look to the future," reassured Luke.