

Exerpt from the book The Last Merlin by David R Hughes

Another club we really enjoyed playing was Diamond Lil's at a hotel in Houston. This club was large enough for all of our friends and fans to come see us, and they helped to fill it up many times. It was at Diamond Lil's that Bob met and fell in love with a Houston girl named Peggy who was working as a single musical act playing banjo and singing in the restaurant. Peggy was a slender, pretty, petite and friendly girl with loads of musical talent and a warm smile. Love was in the air and I met and fell in love with a friend of Peggy's named Elsa, a beautiful Hispanic girl who worked in the same restaurant as a hostess. Claude and Linda also entered into a love relationship around that time. My relationship with Elsa grew deeper and led to another totally different kind of spiritual encounter. Many of our discussions included my past spiritual experiences and limited Biblical knowledge. Elsa seemed interested so I babbled on and on saying much more than she probably wanted to know. After dating for a few months, I began to question the sincerity and depth of our relationship. I knew I cared for her very much and really enjoyed all the time we spent together. It seemed that she cared for me too but I was reluctant to make a permanent commitment to her and I didn't understand why. So, while Merlin was playing a two-week engagement at the Sheraton Hotel in New Orleans I prayed and fasted for several days about this dilemma asking God for truth and understanding concerning what was in my heart, our relationship, and what His will was for us. Then suddenly on Friday evening of the second week it seemed as if a veil was lifted from my eyes and I knew that my love for her was genuine and true and I wanted us to be together always. It felt like my life would be empty and meaningless without her and I was ready to make a commitment so without delay I called her apartment in Houston to tell her that I loved her and ask her to marry me if she felt the same way. It was the last Friday of the engagement about 8:30 P.M. before we started playing that evening that I called but there was no answer. After we finished playing that night I called her again but there was still no answer. Since it was about 2:00 A.M. I was worried about where she might be and if she was all right.

After falling asleep that night I had a dream about Elsa. In the dream, I went to visit her and she wasn't home so I went looking for her. I came to a large house and walked in but no one was in sight. There was a hallway with several doors on each side so I started to open the doors to see if she was in one of the rooms. As I opened a door on the left of the hallway I encountered a chubby and partially bald man who was sitting naked in a bathtub. He was embarrassed because I had seen him naked so I apologized and closed the door. I then walked over to a door on the right side of the hallway and started to open it. Before opening the door, I realized that I was afraid of finding Elsa in the room with another man. I did open the door and Elsa was in that room where she was talking with a young man and woman. I told her that I loved her and asked her to leave with me but she said that these people were her brother and sister and she wanted to stay with them. So, I left the house and started walking back home when I realized that I should go back and try again to persuade her to leave with me. I walked back toward the house where I had originally found her but then my legs became so weak I couldn't walk any more. I started crawling and pulling myself across the ground trying to get back to her but I could not. Then I suddenly awoke from the dream and was very fearful that something had happened to her or that she was with another man. It was about four in the morning and I called her apartment but there was still no answer. I called again about nine o'clock A.M. and there was still no answer. So, I called her parents who lived in the house in front of Elsa's garage apartment. Her younger sister answered the phone and I asked if she knew where Elsa was. She said that Elsa had left Friday evening in a van with several other people and Elsa said they were taking her to a place to find God. Apparently, I had just missed her by a few minutes when I called on that same Friday evening.

Time passed slowly while waiting to finish the job Saturday night because I was so anxious to get back to Houston and see Elsa. I packed up that night after the job and headed back to Houston immediately. Driving straight to Elsa's apartment I arrived early Sunday morning to find she had still not returned. I spoke with her parents and they told me she had been seeing the Moonies who she had left with Friday night and they were worried also. That morning the first cold front of Autumn blew in to Houston from the north along with a dreary rain as I waited anxiously at Elsa's parents' house hoping that she would call on the phone and say she was coming home. I didn't know what a Moonie was so I started researching the term and found that it refers to a member of the Unification Church headed by Reverend Sun Myung Moon. More research led me to a large wood-frame house in Houston housing a local group of Moonies, which looked very much like the one in my dream. I walked up to the door and knocked. A friendly young man opened the door and invited me in. There were several young people in the living room and they all greeted me. Then I noticed a portrait of a man on the wall and it was the man I had seen in the bathtub in my dream. I asked the young man, who seemed to be a spokesman for the group, who the man in the portrait was and he told me it was Reverend Moon. I introduced myself and said that I was looking for Elsa. The young man stated that he was the leader of their group and that Elsa was currently at their spiritual retreat. He also explained that she would not be allowed to see any of her family or previous friends without at least one of their church members present. We engaged

in a short and friendly conversation about their church. There was a piano in the room and they sang a song for me and explained how happy they were and how wonderful the Unification Church was. They referred to each other as brother or sister and it was obvious the leader was in total control of them. I thanked them for the song and left.

It didn't take long to find out that the spiritual retreat where Elsa went to was located in Nacogdoches, Texas and I obtained the directions to get there. When I arrived in Nacogdoches I drove down several long dirt roads ending up at an ordinary brick house isolated in the East Texas forest. I walked around and saw there was a large garden behind the house and a nice-looking barn located on the property but no one was in sight. So, I knocked on the door and a young girl opened it and invited me in. I could see an acoustic guitar sitting in the living room, which I had given to Elsa so I knew she had been there. The young girl evidently thought I was a Moonie so I talked with her trying to get some inside information. The group Elsa was in had already left to go back to Houston but the girl showed me around the place and the barn which had been converted into a training room for Unification Church initiates. Seeing there was no other useful information to gather, I thanked her for showing me around and returned to Houston.

I had obtained the phone number at the Moonie house in Houston so one day I decided to call with hopes that Elsa would be there. She actually was there and they let me talk to her on the phone. When I asked to see her, she invited me over to the Moonie house for dinner the next day. I accepted and to let her know my feelings about her I spent the rest of that day and the next morning writing a song to sing to her. I drove to the Moonie house the next evening with high hopes of winning her love with a song and taking her back with me. When I arrived, there were about ten or twelve Moonies and we all had a nice Mexican food dinner. They would not let me talk to her alone so I asked if I could sing a song I had written for her to all of them. The song was titled Please Tell Me Now and the lyrics were about my experiences related to Elsa's disappearance and my worries about what had happened to her. The lyrics also pleaded with her to say what was in her heart so I would know how she felt about me. After singing the song I told her that I loved her and asked her to leave with me but she politely said no because this was now her family. The other members explained to me that their church was like John the Baptist preceding the second coming of Christ who they believed was Reverend Moon. They gave me one of their church books titled The Divine Principle and I left in disappointment but was glad that I got to see her. What I had thought was a dream turned out to be a vision of these events.

One day when I was visiting Elsa's parents I went into her garage apartment to see if I could find more information about the Moonies and why she had joined the Unification Church. However, what I found was a box full of letters that I had mailed to her over the past months when I was on the road with the band. When I read the letters, it opened my eyes to why I couldn't commit to her and how she became confused about our relationship. The letters went back and forth between loving her and maybe getting back into a relationship with Linda. I didn't believe that Linda and I would be able to have a good relationship together because of our past difficulties but I wasn't able to completely let go of her. Then I realized that God had answered my prayer to show me what was in my heart.

After more research, I learned that Reverend Moon performs the marriages for most of the people who join the Unification Church in mass weddings after he personally selects who will be paired together. His preference is to mix races and nationalities. After marrying them he tends to keep them apart on separate missions so their loyalties will remain focused on himself and not their spouse. His church teaches that Korea is the biblical New Jerusalem and that the Messiah would be born in Korea as Moon was. The primary mission of the church is to unite all of Christianity, hence the name Unification Church.

I tried several times to contact Elsa and eventually I did talk to her on the phone and she agreed to meet with me alone at a local park. At the park, we walked around and talked as she told me about the Unification Church and its mission. When I told her again that I loved her and asked her to marry me she again said no because she wanted to be a missionary in the church and did not know for how long. Since we were alone without the influence of her brother and sister Moonies and she seemed happy, contented and even excited to stay I decided it was time to let go. Others advised that I take her away from the Moonies by force and have her deprogrammed but I didn't believe it was the right thing to do because she chose to accept their doctrine of her own free will even after I warned her of the prophecies in the Bible of false prophets and false Christs at the end of the age. That was the last time I saw or talked to Elsa.