



ALANA'S MYSTERY

"Gary Sellstrum was killed"

last night. I didn't know him that well, but he was real popular in school and everyone was freaked out. People were crying in the halls, the school called in counselors. The funeral is in a couple of days, and the school is going to let anyone who wants to attend. Why would anyone want to go to a funeral? I think people are going just to get out of school or because it's the cool thing to do. They didn't really care about Gary when he was alive, and they won't care a couple of days after the funeral, either. What a joke."

Teresa

By the Book...

Now we see but a poor reflection; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

1 Corinthians 13:12

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Revelation 21:1-4

Anybody in Jacksonville knew that Alana was an incredible girl, Rob thought. Here she was, her senior year—valedictorian, homecoming queen, president of the district youth council at church, member of the award-winning school madrigal choir, cheerleader, and one of the top distance runners in the state. Her faith was vibrant, active, and courageous. Alana spearheaded the "See You at the Pole" day at her school and actively talked about her faith every opportunity she had. And she left no doubt in anyone's mind that it was God who made all her accomplishments possible.

Rob believed her. He and Alana had been dating their entire senior year, and she was truly the most amazing girl he had ever met. Never mind that Alana was black, that she had never known her father, that she had grown up with a single mom who raised Alana and four other children by working two jobs. Never mind that when her mom died, Alana and her brothers and sisters were placed in foster homes. Alana had a picture of her mother on her desk and every day before she did anything else she'd kiss the picture of her mother. "For you and Jesus, Mom," she say. God had great things ahead for Alana.

Two weeks before graduation on a bright, sunny afternoon, Rob and Alana were out shopping for a graduation dress. Rob was turning left at a green light into the shopping center when he saw a red blur outside the passenger window. That was the last thing he remembered until he woke up in the hospital. A drunk driver had gone through the red light and slammed into the passenger door of Rob's car at 60 miles an hour. Rob had a slight concussion and a broken left arm. But Alana, Rob thought fuzzily...what happened to Alana?

There were 2,000 stunned people at Alana's funeral. The entire high school must have been there, plus every member from her church. Although everyone tried to make this a celebration of Alana's life and hope in God, no amount of ceremony could drown out the question in everyone's mind: "Why?" This was such a waste. Alana had overcome such odds. She loved God with all her heart. She had helped so many people. How could God allow this terrible thing to happen—while the alcoholic driver, who had been arrested on three separate occasions for drunk driving, had only minor injuries? More people at Alana's funeral were having big doubts about God's goodness than were willing to admit it.

It seemed to Rob that a lot of people changed after Alana's death. Sure, they acted like they were the same...but they really weren't. Rob could tell. It was as though they'd never trust God quite the same way again.

1. Where was God when Alana died?
2. Why do bad people live and good people die?
3. Respond to this statement: Life is not fair
4. In light of what happened to Alana, read and respond to Psalm 73:4-12 and Job 21:7-15

