

"No Man Can Stop You"

By Terry Stanley

Synopsis

A family struggles to cope with the hardships of being poor and black in the rural southern town in the 1940s. A daughter is faced with the reality of not being able to attend a local white college. A father is faced with disappointment of being denied a promotion. A neighbor tries to cope with the sudden death of her children, as the mother prays to keep the family together.

Scripture: Romans 8:37, *"Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."*

Ministry Focus: Faith, Black History Month

Time: 60 minutes

Ministry Lesson

As I sat down to write a script for Black History Month, I pondered the question, "why do we celebrate Black History Month?" It's not only about the great accomplishments a handful of well-known leaders, but it's also about how the average black family lived through hard times and made it...by hard work and faith in God. That's what we should celebrate! So I asked my mother, grandmother, and aunt...what was it like back in the 1930s and 1940s? What struggles did you have? Why did you move from the south to Baltimore, Maryland in the early 1950s? Their answers serve as the basis for this frictional story.

I dedicate this script to my grandmother
The Late Annie Mae (Hughley) Davis

CAST

Pat (Mother)

Pat is a very religious and family oriented woman. Very supported of her husband and sensitive to the needs of her daughter.

James (Father)

Strong, dominate father. Works hard to support his family but tired of struggling.

Ann (Daughter)

Late teens. A dreamer; looking for a better life.

Wilma (Neighbor)

Close friend of the family

SETTINGS

- Family Room
- Kitchen Area

PROPS

- Table, Chairs
- Baby clothes (pajamas)
- Man shirts (quantity 5-7)
- Mail (letters)
- Plate of food
- Cups, coffee
- Lunch box
- Newspaper
- Pie
- Old iron, table cover
- Notebook, paper
- Packing boxes, bed sheet

Act I

THE STORY TAKES PLACE IN A SMALL SOUTHERN TOWN DURING THE 1940S. THE HOME OF JAMES AND PAT WILLIAMS IS VERY SMALL WITH USED OLD FURNITURE. PAT IS SITTING IN THE DINING ROOM SEWING. SHE HUMS HER FAVORITE SONG 'AMAZING GRACE'.

ANN ENTERS THE HOUSE, CARRYING MAIL.

Ann: *(kisses mother)* Hi Mama. You singin' that same old song again? Don't you know any other songs?

Pat: Yes and No! Yes my mind knows other songs, but no, my lips won't sing them. I sing what the Lord puts on my heart. Come tomorrow morning, you might be hearing the same song again.

ANN THROWS MAIL DOWN ON THE TABLE AND SLUMPS DOWN ON THE SOFA

Ann: What are you sewing?

Pat: Well I just finished fixin' some pocket holes in your father's britches. Now, I'm makin' a few things for Wilma's chillins'.

Ann: When is she due?

Pat: Child she done gave birth last week. She wasn't due for another month. Now she got two boys.

Ann: What do you mean, two boys?

Pat: Wilma done had twins. Lord knows times are hard enough with one child. She's gonna need all the help she can get with two. Some of us at the church are makin' a few clothes for the babies. *(hold up little pajama suit)* You like it?

Ann: *(with an awkward look)* Oh how nice. It's really something. Mama, ain't one leg longer than the other?

Pat: *(glowing with pride)* Oh don't mind that, the baby will grow into it. I wanted to do something special, being that it's for Wilma.

Ann: *(contemplating)* I bet it feels wonderful to have a baby.

Pat: *(stares at Ann)* Baby, you don't know the half of it.

Ann: *(in disbelief)* It can't be that bad. I mean, I was reading about it in school...

Pat *(interrupts)* Books don't let you feel the pain. I had to lie in that bed for 2 days birthin' you. That's been 16 years ago and my back still hurts *(stand and rub back, limps over to the table)*.

Ann: When I get married I want to have 10 children.

Pat: *(in her defense)* As long as you got your own house. *(Begins to murmur how crazy that is. Once at the table, she skims the mail for the day. Notices a letter from Ann's school.)* Here's a letter from your school.

Ann: *(excited)* I'll bet it's my grade report. *(Grabs letter and fumble around with it)*

Pat: Hurry and open the thing. What cha' waitin' on...the Second Comin'?

Ann: *(Hesitant)* I don't know Mama, supposed I failed. Remember last year when everyone thought Eleanor Wilson passed. She failed and had to repeat the entire year. Supposed I...

Pat: Stop talkin' foolish child. You worked hard on your schoolin', so you ain't got nothin' to worry 'bout. Now stop fiddlin' around and open that letter.

Ann: *(with nervous tension)* May 25, 1943. Miss Ann Williams, 34 West Crossan Street...

Pat: *(Grabs letter)* Girl don't waste time reading the address...*(reading)* "you have successfully completed the requirements to graduate from Central High School" *(Pat and Ann jump with excitement)*

JAMES ENTERS. HE'S RETURNING FROM WORK, CARRYING HIS EMPTY LUNCH CONTAINER.

James: Now what in the world is all this noise? What's goin' on in here?

Ann: Daddy guess what? I graduated from high school. Look I just got the letter today.

James: Well I'll be. My little girl got a high school ed-jama-cation. That's good, real good. Now we can get somewhere. *(Excited)* I've been struggling to support this family for 16 years. Now that my baby graduated from high school, she can get a decent job and bring in some extra money. *(Ann excitement diminishes)*. This calls for a celebration. *(Looks around the room)* Pat where's my liquor? Now I know I left it right there on the shelf.

Pat: *(Passionately)* Now James, you know I don't like you to drink that stuff, and in front of Ann.

James: *(still searching)* Ann is grown now, she got a high school ed-jama-cation.

Pat: What if Revenue Brown walks in and see you drinking?

James: Revenue Brown needs to learn to knock before coming into people homes. I know our door is on welcome hinges, but we need to put a lock on it.

Pat: I won't here of any locking. This is a God-fearing Christian home. We ain't got nothin' to hide.

James: *(stops searching)* Well, you sure did a good job hiding my liquor.

Pat: Let me fix you something to eat. **(EXITS TO KITCHEN)**

James: You know Ann; you can get a job anywhere now. Maybe you can work in one of those fancy hotels as a maid, or a cook in one of those expensive restaurants. I hear they pay \$20 a week.

Ann: *(Hesitant)* That sounds good daddy, but I don't want to work... at least not right away.

James: *(Stern)* Girl, you ain't fixin' to bring no chillins in this house are you?

Ann: No daddy. I was hoping that I could go to college and...

James: (Laughing) You young folks think you can do anything. You got yourself a good high school edjamacation .

Ann: But a college education would...

James: Now your mama and me had to quit school and help support our families when we were a lot younger than you. Times were hard back then so all the chillins had to work to help out. You're all grown up, so it's time for you to be working.

Ann: I do want a job, but not no cleanin' or cookin' job. I want a job doing something for people. I think I want to be a doctor.

James: Doctor! Now where in the world did you get a foolish idea like that?

Ann: It's not a foolish idea. (*Grabs paper from school notebook*) Look at this letter. It explains everything.

James: (Ignores letter) What school is it for?

Ann: (Hesitantly) Uh... Stanfield College.

James: STANFIELD COLLEGE! How do you think you're gonna get in Stanfield College?

Ann: (Pleading) But daddy this letter don't say nothin' about whites only.

James: It ain't got to! 'Cause ain't no colored person in their right mind gonna try to get in a white college, less they be the cook or janitor.

PAT RETURN CARRYING A PLATE OF FOOD. SHE SENSES SOMETHING IS WRONG.

Pat: James, I got your plate on the table... what's wrong?

James: Ain't nothin'. Ann just talkin' foolish.

Ann: It's not foolish daddy. Mama, I want to go to Stanfield and be a doctor.

James: *(To Ann-sternly)* I ain't gonna to say it again.

ANN RUNS OFF UPSET

Pat John, you're too hard on Ann. She's still just a young girl.

James: It's time she grew up.

Pat: Maybe she can go to a colored college?

James: The closet colored college is in Atlanta. That's 200 miles away. What you gonna do, move to Atlanta? And where in the world are we gonna get the money to send Ann to college. I'm already working 14 hours a day just to keep food on the table.

Pat: We'll work something out. Maybe we can...

James: Look, I ain't workin' nothin' out. I don't want to hear anymore talk about college. Ann needs to get a job and help support this family. Maybe then we can move out of this dump and get a decent house.

JAMES STORMS OUT.

Pat: *(Shouting after James)* James, you gonna eat. *(Softly)* I got your plate all ready.

PAT SLOWLY TAKES PLATE BACK TO THE KITCHEN.

END - ACT I

- End of Preview -

This play consists of four ACTS

There's a wonderful ministry message of faith at the end.

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