The book cover features a stylized illustration. The top half has an orange background with a white circle (sun or moon) and a black bird silhouette. The bottom half has a blue background with a white silhouette of a person in a green shirt and blue shorts, holding onto a black rectangular shape representing a person's leg. The person's shadow is cast on the blue background. Small blue fish are scattered at the bottom left.

**The Story of
a Rape Survival
in Light of
God's Grace.**

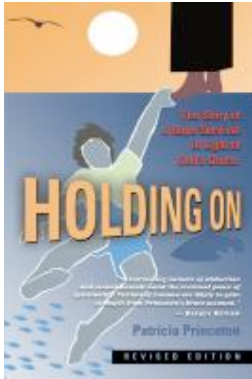
HOLDING ON

"A harrowing memoir of abduction and sexual assault—and the eventual peace of spirituality. Victims of trauma are likely to gain strength from Princeton's brave account."

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Patricia Princeton

REVISED EDITION



In her debut book, author Patricia Princeton describes how a chance encounter in 1983 forever changed her life. When a man in line at the drugstore struck up a conversation with her, she thought it was just the innocent flirtation of a harmless stranger. Then, he showed up at her door and what followed was the worst experience of Princeton's life. The man captured and held her prisoner in her home, repeatedly raping her over a 24-hour period.

Holding On

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Holding On

The Story of a Rape Survival
In light of God's Grace

Patricia Princeton

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It recalls the events of nearly three decades ago and Patricia's survival in light of *God's Grace*.

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Chapter 1

The Meeting

Psalm 37:32 The wicked lie in wait for the righteous, intent on putting them to death.

What do you do when your world is abruptly shattered by a stranger intent on controlling or destroying you? How do you wrap your mind around being the focus of such extreme unexplainable cruelty? Do you ask yourself why me, or what did I do? When those close to you treat you unfairly or hurt your feelings you accept, reject, adjust, endure and move on. But when a total stranger bursts into your comfortable relatively secure world destroying all that is important to you, how do you adjust? How and when do you find the strength to go on? Knowing that there is good and evil in the world is only slightly comforting in the middle of such horror. You have to refuse to allow someone else's actions to destroy you, denying them the final victory.

Early in November 1983, I was on my way home from work. Teaching was difficult, challenging, fulfilling, energizing and tiring all at the same time. Seeing kids realize their own hidden talents and efforts recognized in school and in local art contests was really gratifying for me especially when I saw how much pleasure it gave them when they won an award. I was proud of them

I had planned to stop at a neighborhood drugstore to buy a lottery ticket since that week's jackpot was a big one. For some reason, I was late leaving school that day. It was about 5 p.m. and already dark so I knew that if I went straight home I would not be coming back out. Although I was a grown woman, thirty-nine years old and away from home for years, I still had that home-before-dark and don't-go-back-out-once-you-get-there mentality deeply ingrained in my behavior. I ignored that conditioning as well as my reservation and decided to stand in line to buy a lottery ticket.

By ignoring my gut feeling and forgetting that willfulness had consequences was the beginning. The young man in front of me struck up a conversation and I thought I was being polite by just listening and

responding occasionally. He was a little taller than me with brown skin, a long narrow head and appeared to be muscular. This stranger was chatty and talked about being a karate expert who took part in competitions around the state. He kept shifting from one leg to the other. At some point I must have told him that I lived nearby innocently revealing too much information. In retrospect what seemed like a casual conversation I realized that I gave up a lot of personal information without realizing that this stranger might have been a predator. In further thinking about this encounter, I asked myself what do you do, be perpetually paranoid, defensive, unfriendly and challenging, timid and fearful or polite and venerable. People up to no good can get a lot of seemingly harmless information from you before you realize it. Then it's too late.

I lived in a two-towered high-rise building that shared a common basement. The stranger said he lived in one of those towers about two blocks away. After buying his ticket this stranger waited around, followed me to my car and asked me to give him a ride home. I wasn't comfortable and refused. Some years before, I'd gotten lost going to a faculty party. Being generally trusting, I let a helpful stranger (male) get into my car to direct me to the party. I was read the riot act by my friends for doing that and given all kinds of what-if scenarios. Looking back, I get queasy thinking about how badly that could have turned out.

Although I'd already given up some personal information to this *stranger*, I wasn't about to let him into my car even if he did supposedly live in my building. It was a little awkward but I still said no and drove home. This probably infuriated him but the reservation about letting a persistent stranger into my car outweighed the awkwardness.

I lived on the 17th floor of one of the towers in that controlled entry building. Each tower had its own doorman and shared a roving security guard. Each floor also had a very long straight hallway with elevators in the middle. Only the end apartments had recessed doorways, *a perfect place for somebody to hide*. There was a stairway door at each end of this long hallway. The entry to my apartment was two doors away from the elevator.

For a couple of weeks after that meeting when I'd come home, I would hear the stairway door slam. It always startled me but I dismissed

it as wind suction. I also knew that if the door were cracked even a little bit the suction would make it slam. The stairway was like a giant wind tunnel if there was even the slightest kind of draft. But, I had an uneasy feeling about the slamming door as though someone was there. But dear God, I wasn't listening to that uneasy feeling.

The Monday before Thanksgiving I got off the elevator, as usual, and no one else was around on the floor. Most people were still at work. There was no one in the hallway. I had just stepped into my apartment and shut the door. Almost immediately there was a knock on the door. I looked through the peephole. The stranger was standing there looking a bit nervous. This was curious and too much of a coincidence. How did he get to my door so quickly when I had seen *no one* in the hallway? *Thinking back, he must have been hiding in the recessed doorway to the apartment at the end of the hall near the stairway door. Had I told him what floor I lived on? Did information given up in a supposedly innocent, and polite conversation now going to present a possible danger?* With some reservation, I opened the door just enough to talk to him.

We are taught as children, to be polite and not rude to people, even strangers. Talking through the door didn't even enter my mind even if I did have *an* uneasy feeling. This uneasy conditioning can work against you, especially in an urban setting when you are still functioning in a southern mentality. I don't think I ever acclimated to the northern way of thinking and doing things. Walking that straight line so as not to garner disapproval can cause you not to stand up for yourself. I don't remember what he said but he went away after I said that I had company. He came back the next day again, just minutes after I got home from school. ***1 Peter 5:8 be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.***

Chapter 2

The First Hours (First Assault)

Psalm 11:2 For look, the wicked bend their bows; they set their arrows against the strings to shoot from the shadows at the upright in heart.

People who are intent on doing bad things find a way to accomplish their goals. They sneak, they hide, they pounce and they capture. If we are not aware, not listening to what is going on around us and not in touch with our gut feelings the predators succeed. But, how do you do that without living a totally paranoid existence. After writing this statement I realized that I was describing a jungle with the strong and cunning overpowering the weak and defenseless. Listen to that still small voice in your gut and your head. It will help you to recognize the predators. If you think you need to be polite to someone who is making you uncomfortable, think again. Don't worry about their feelings because they have no concern for yours. They're only intent on achieving their goal.

I got home from work the next day, the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, at about 2:15 p.m. the same time as the day before. It would generally take about thirty minutes to get home from school if I didn't stop to run an errand. I was tired so I came straight home. Since I was very excited about Christmas that year, I had already put up my tree complete with decorations. I heaved a great sign of relief, put my tote down, hung my coat in the hall closet and stepped out of my shoes on the foyer floor. It had been a hard and tiring day and I was looking forward to the Thanksgiving break. Usually, I went to visit my brother in New England for the holidays but this year I decided not to travel. I was exhausted and looking forward to a long quiet weekend.

There was a knock on the door. I looked through the peephole. I saw that it was *that guy* again. I remember thinking something like 'oh good grief'. I asked myself, how did he get here so fast? I'd just gotten off of the elevator and, just like the day before, nobody had been in the hallway. The day before when he knocked, I told him that I had company and he went away with a funny sheepish guilty look.

Holding On

Today I was tired, frazzled and with no patience for someone I wasn't interested in. I saw him as an intrusive nuisance. The knock came almost immediately after I stepped inside. He had to have been watching, possibly from the stairway door or the recessed doorway of the end apartment, in order to get to my door so quickly after I'd gotten home. I opened the door about five inches and said to him "Look, I just got home. I'm tired and don't feel like company right now." I realize now that I virtually telegraphed to him that no one else was in the apartment. Inadvertently I had given damaging information to the enemy that I was too tired to recognize. If he had been watching then he knew that nobody else was inside.

He moved toward the door so quickly I was startled and I automatically stepped back as I tried to shut the door. It was an unexpected and aggressive move and I knew he was going to try to push his way in. I tried again to slam the door. Before I knew what was happening I could not shut the door in time and he pushed his way in. I stepped further back saying No repeatedly, loudly and at the same time trying to push him back.

Everything happened so fast. Once inside, he slammed the door behind him. We struggled and he tried to subdue me while I continued to fight him off. He wrestled me to the floor right there in the front hallway, pinning me down with my face smashed against the carpet. Then he took a pair of handcuffs out of one of his pockets. My heart started to beat like a drum. I thought, *Oh my god, oh my god. This is serious! He's not kidding!* He put the handcuff on one of my wrists. I was still fighting. Pinned down with my head to the floor, I remember him saying he wouldn't hurt me if I stopped fighting him. I stopped and he cuffed both wrists together and pulled me up to my feet.

I had missed the cues. I hadn't listened to my gut feelings, the persistent interest, the slamming door, showing up at my door two days in a row and opening the door the second day in spite of the uneasiness and I was now in a dangerous, life-threatening situation that was the beginning of hours of horror. *If something doesn't feel right don't ignore it. Don't worry about hurting somebody's feelings when they are acting in unacceptable and un-welcomed ways.*

He pulled me into the living room, grabbed a chair from the dining room table, pulled it to the living room area and shoved me down. I tried to get him to talk and tell me why he was doing this. It was fruitless. You cannot reason with evil, especially when someone is intent on imposing his will on you. He said that he had nothing to lose and was tired of people saying 'no' to him. With a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach, I said to myself Oh my God, *I'm the no that sent him over the edge*. At this point I didn't see it as personal. I just happen to be a person he was sure he could overpower. This was a dangerously crazy and evil person who had come into my home and taken over. ***Psalm 71:12 Do not be far from me, my God, come quickly, God, to help me.***

After pacing around my apartment going through things, he picked up my purse and started going through it, taking what little cash I had and putting it in his pocket. He pulled out my checkbook and looked at how much money there was in the account. *Was this all about a robbery?* He then ordered me to write a check for all the money in the account but corrected himself. I was to write the check for all but twenty dollars. This *benevolent dictator* seemed to take pleasure in making a point of telling me that he was going to *let* me keep twenty dollars. *He was going to let me keep twenty dollars of my own money*. At some point during this period he asked for the title to my car. I told him where it was since clearly I didn't have a choice. He got it and told me to sign it. I did. He had all the power. Essentially, he was saying, "Everything you have is mine, I have total control over it and I'll *let you keep some of it*. I told him that I could write it out to cash but I'd have to go to the bank with him to cash it and show identification.

Thinking he was more interested in the money, I was looking for an opportunity to get out of the apartment. He didn't go for that because he said that I'd try to signal someone and try to get away. Then, he'd have to kill somebody. Already, he was making me responsible for what he *might* do. If he killed someone, it would be my fault. If he had to hurt me if I didn't do what he said it would be my fault. *How many times have you experienced someone doing or saying something crazy or abusing you and then getting mad at you because in his or her mind it was your fault?* He told me to make the check out to him. I honestly

don't remember if he gave me his name at the drugstore. It wasn't important to me. He gave me his name!

HE GAVE ME HIS NAME! Now I had a name for this person! I now knew who was doing this to me! Evil now had a name. I wrote out the check with my hands still cuffed in front, in my lap. After writing the check, he put it in his pocket. He pulled out a rope from one of the pockets on his pants and tied me to the chair around my torso. He re-cuffed my hands behind me in back of the chair and pulled out another rope. I hadn't seen where it came from. I thought it was from my utility closet and he used it to tie me more securely. He tied me in such a way that the rope was looped around my neck, down the back of the chair around to the cuffs where he yanked the rope really tight. He then looped it and tied it around my hands. What was left of the rope was separated with each section going down the back legs of the chair. Then he tied them to the front legs with more knots.

He got up, paced around some more, and then took the extension cords off of my Christmas tree. With these he tied my ankles to the front legs of the chair. I was told later that this is the method that guerillas used to securely tie up their prisoners.

I was trying not to panic but my breathing was getting short and fast. I could do *nothing*. He seemed beyond reason. This was *so bad*. When I was a child and bad things were happening I could shut my eyes, walk away or pull the covers over my head, not see what was going on and forget. Now I couldn't do it. This was real

Children are very resilient and are able to block out what they can't cope with. They can go to another place in their minds and focus on the minute to distract themselves. They lose that ability, as they grow older. Adults have to turn to other methods to help them forget or numb themselves to the unbearable and inescapable. I felt that I had so little control of my life and circumstances growing up that I refused to give up what 'little' control I did have to drugs and alcohol. Now, this stranger had taken that remaining control away.

He paced around me rubbing his hands together as though he was thinking, "So, what am I going to do next?" He came over to me began opening the front of my blouse. I tried to squirm away but I couldn't move. He started fondling me. No! *Fondle* is a nice word. What he did

was handle, tug and pull. I was tied so tightly that I couldn't move or even twist out of the way. I could do nothing to stop him. All I could do was squeeze my eyes shut tight. If I couldn't see what was happening, maybe it wasn't happening and maybe I could not be there. It didn't work.

I tried to detach myself from what was going on. Then I heard him unzip his pants and he told me what he wanted me to do. My eyes still shut tight, I peeped, shook my head and cried 'No! No!' The next time I peeped I saw him taking out a gun. He released the safety, pointed it at my forehead and said 'Do It!' I thought that a gunshot to the head would be quick. It didn't occur to me that this was about prolonging what was happening. He was taking pleasure in controlling and terrorizing me.

My eyes still shut tight, I said "Go ahead and shoot me, I'm not doing that!" This was bravado in the face of danger and I don't know where it came from. ***Psalm 64:1 Hear me, my God, as I voice my complaint; protect my life from the threat of the enemy.***

I peeped again and saw that he had put the gun away. He had taken out a knife and was slowly opening it. The blade seemed to be about six inches long. He put it to the side of my neck. He rubbed the blade back and forth on my throat. I don't know if it was his finger or the knife blade that I felt moving back and forth. All I could think about was the knife slicing through the side of my throat, feeling my life drain away and being conscious while it was happening knowing I was going to die. With my eyes still shut tight, I did what he wanted. He was threatening, had the power and was in control. I had to figure out how to survive.

He repeatedly said that he knew the only crime that would get more time than rape was murder so he had nothing to lose. He said he wouldn't hurt me as long as I did exactly what he wanted. When he was finished, he decided it was time for him to go to the bank. He opened the utility closet threw everything out of it and shoved me inside still tied to the chair facing the door. He put duct tape over my mouth, checked the ropes and shut the door before leaving. The bank was going to close at five o'clock. He was going to my bank to cash the check that was made out to him. The arrogance of stupidity is that if you're in control then everybody else is stupid and powerless and can't stop you

from doing whatever you want. **Psalm 53:4 Do all these evildoers know nothing? They devour my people as though eating bread.**

When he left, I realized that any attempt to tilt the chair forward would end up with me choking myself because of the way the ropes were tied. I wasn't going anywhere. I learned later that he had also jammed another chair outside of the closet door. At this point it had been more than two hours since he'd knocked on the door. This terrifying horror filled imprisonment would last for another twenty-two hours.

Chapter 3

While He Was Gone (In the Closet)

Psalm 81:7 In your distress, you called and I rescued you, I answered you out of a thundercloud

When you are alone and totally isolated and there is no one around who can help you, there is God. When you are distressed, overwhelmed by circumstances beyond your control and unable to think, there is God. Where there is peace that keeps you grounded in the face of unspeakable terror, there is God. Where there is God there is calm.

When he put me in the utility closet, bound and gagged with the door shut, the darkness and the reality of the situation became overwhelming. The way he had tied me up with the rope looped around my neck and down my back held me ramrod straight. This made it impossible to tilt forward and get my footing without choking myself. I couldn't get the tape off of my mouth so I couldn't even scream. It was pitch black in the closet. He'd told me too many times to count that the only crime to get more time than rape was murder. I thought he had already done all he could to me. With nothing to lose he made it clear that he would just as soon kill me as not, if I didn't do what he said. I couldn't move. I couldn't scream. I couldn't even raise a hand to fend off a blow. All I could do was sit there, think, and wait, and the terror closed in on me.

What was he going to do when he came back? He had all my cash, made me write a check for the money I had in the bank and made me sign over the title to my car. He had sexually abused me and made it clear that he could kill me at anytime, if he wanted to. These thoughts closed in on me and I was terrified!

I thought about my father and what would happen to him when he found out I was dead and how I died. I was his only daughter and his youngest child and I always knew that I was special to him. All those years ago when he left I never thought he left *me*. I knew that he had left my mother even before he told me, years later, about the exact moment he knew he had to leave. When I turned twenty-one and defied Mother,

We reconnected with more than just phone calls and letters and I visited him in regularly.

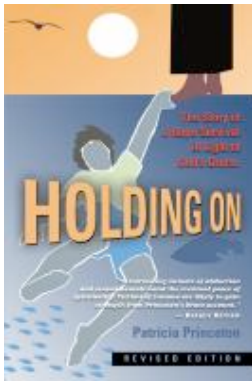
He had been in failing health the past few years and I visualized him having a heart attack and dying after hearing the news. I tried to stop thinking about that. I tried to pray. I tried to say The Lord's Prayer and I couldn't remember the words past "Our Father Who Art in Heaven." It was a prayer like the child's prayer, "Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep" that most children can rattle off without thinking and I couldn't get past "Our Father."

When I couldn't remember the words I knew just how terrified I was. I couldn't breathe and I couldn't block out the reality of what was happening! I was bound, gagged, tied to a chair in a closet and this person might kill me when he was finished. This was real! I couldn't remember how to say this prayer that used to be as easy as breathing! The closet was pitch black. I couldn't see! I couldn't move! I couldn't even scream!

Here and now and in this moment, in this closet, any second he could come back and kill me. He had everything. There was no reason left not to kill me. All I could do was think and the terror enveloped me so much that I could barely breath. He could kill me and nobody would know what happened, who did it or why. People could think anything, speculating about what had happened, and probably would. I had seen him walking around and wiping off anything he'd touched before he put me in the closet. My heart was pounding, knowing that he could rip the door open at any moment and kill me. Resigned, knowing that I could very likely die and hardly able to breath at all now, I stopped trying to say the Lord's Prayer or even "Please God, get me out of this. I simply prayed, *"Please God Don't Let Terror Be The Last Thing I feel."*

Almost instantly this calmness came over me in the horrible, isolated blackness when I was completely at the mercy of this monster. It had to be God's presence with me in that closet. A prayer in a time of desperate need was answered immediately. **Matthew 21:22 If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer. We know that God answers prayers but in His time not necessarily when you want something to happen. But, God, seeing your need, answers your prayer exactly on time.**

My breath started to come easier. Nothing else had changed. The reality was that I was still bound, gagged, trapped, held prisoner in a closet by this person who could do anything to me that he wanted and I could do nothing to stop him. He had ultimate power over me. I could do nothing but wait for him to come back and think about what had already happened and what he might still do. And I waited.



In her debut book, author Patricia Princeton describes how a chance encounter in 1983 forever changed her life. When a man in line at the drugstore struck up a conversation with her, she thought it was just the innocent flirtation of a harmless stranger. Then, he showed up at her door and what followed was the worst experience of Princeton's life. The man captured and held her prisoner in her home, repeatedly raping her over a 24-hour period.

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