

A STORY OF HONOR AND REMEMBRANCE

FOR
DR. JANE HAMILTON-MERRITT

My name is Kathleen Mcghee, I grew up in the tiny island of Tobago whose sister island is Trinidad West Indies. I now live in Elkins Park. I'm writing this little story because it has been an integral part of my life since I was a young girl. I am the second of nine siblings. I live in the tiny village of Bethlehem, Tobago. I worked as a maid at the Amoco Guest House in Tobago. This guest house hosted people from abroad, who came in groups. Ran by a lady named Miss Abdullah. It was located on a sloping hill surrounded by beautiful tropical flowers overlooking the sea with its lashing waves. This beautiful guest house was near the Mt. Irvine Hotel and golf course with its well-manicured green grass. The guests golfed there often.

My family was very poor, and I walked from my village to the guest house. It was a long walk, but I was surrounded by nature. The hills, valleys, the peaceful landscapes, chirping birds, and the smell and sounds of the sea. I drew my inspiration from the beauty around me. I wrote tons of stories. My desire was to become a writer, but in my naive way I didn't think it would ever happen. I didn't recall knowing a writer or how to become one. My father exposed me to lots of reading material, Shakespeare, Jane Eyre, V.S. Naipaul and others. I continued writing many stories and poems in copy books. These I would tell my brothers and sisters since I had no other outlet. Story telling was a living art in our culture. Frustrated, I prayed and asked God to let me meet a writer, it would be a sign for me to continue writing.

One day, a new group of guests arrived. Days later, a nice lady came up to me and we began talking. I was always anxious to meet people from a cross the seas to learn about places beyond my tiny island. She was a kind and gentle, I forgot my shyness. I told her of my desire to become a writer. She told me that she a writer. One of her books, ***Boomee and the Lucky white Elephant***, was used to teach English to children in Thailand I believe. She graciously gave me a signed copy of that beautiful book. I was very grateful. She was such an unassuming, sweet lady that I never forgot her. God had answered my prayers.

I was anxious to share my treasure with my friends and family. I would often boast that the book was given to me by a real writer. I used it to teach my younger siblings to read. It was kept in my family for many years. Years later, I moved to Trinidad. I still had the book but lost it during a move. But I never forgot the kind lady who took the time to talk to a scared person and offer me her book. I still remember to this day, the calmness of her spirit, how she spoke to me as if I really mattered. I felt that she saw me for who I was. I never forgot her or the name of that book. I always wanted to thank her for acknowledging me, for being so gracious. To let her know that because of her I stuck to a dream. That I was able to bring joy to people.

I moved to America, I kept writing. I wrote poems for funerals, retirements, weddings, graduations, anniversaries or any occasion. I wrote six books although they are not yet published. I'm now retired and have more time to write. One of my books is on Amazon books, ***Conversations with the Blessed Mother by I.V. Hector (pen name)***. I continue to write everyday because of a kind woman and a book. Dr. Jane, I scrolled through my phone last week searching for the book, ***Boomee and the Lucky white Elephant***. I saw you; memories came flooding back to me. Of that special day when you spoke to me and gave me your book. It will always be engraved upon my heart forever. I was also able to see your body of work, your contributions to the world. The lives you have touched, and I made the call to the Women's Hall of Fame. I received a call from a lovely lady. I trust and hope that I'm not intruding on your life in any way. I humbly ask for your forgiveness. If nothing comes of this, I will still believe. I will continue to hold you in my heart forever, and that day long ago when I stood in your quiet presence. That memorable day in the sun.



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