

To Tell The Truth Book Excerpt – by Faye M. Tollison

Oh God, I don't want to go in there. Please, please don't make me.

The wooden bench in the dimly lit hallway on which Anna Kayce sat was terribly uncomfortable. She felt lonely and scared. A tight squeezing knot in the pit of her stomach left her weak and nauseated. She looked up as heavy oak doors opened, revealing a large, high-ceilinged room. The light from the courtroom spread over the floor of the hallway and worked its way up her silky legs, but then a dark form filled the doorway, obliterating the light. She struggled to focus her eyes.

"Ms. Kayce, they're ready for you," the bailiff said in a stiff voice.

With jelly-like knees she rose from her seat, walked to the doorway, and stopped as the bailiff moved aside to allow her to enter. Efforts had been made to update the old courthouse, built in the 1950's. However, the original ceiling fans and lights hung from the ceiling. As she stood in the doorway, a slight breeze from the fans twirling above ruffled her long, dark hair. Eyes turn to look at her, scrutinizing her, making her feel ill at ease. With difficulty, she turned her attention toward one person in particular.

Prosecutor Thomas Dean Hawthorne maintained his position at the front of the courtroom, his back to her. He stood tall and straight with broad shoulders that drew attention away from his thinning hair. He only did not turn around at her entrance.

A low murmur drifted through the courtroom as Anna stepped inside the door. She hesitated as her gaze swept around the courtroom, coming to rest on the man in a black robe on the far side of the room.

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Judge Edward Cox resided over many court cases in the 27 years he served as a judge, but this was the most famous and exciting one yet. It did not thrill him because he did not like having media in the courtroom much less all these people. They were thrill seekers, most of them anyway. He hoped they would not be rowdy, but it was not looking hopeful. A stern scowl darkened his face.

"Silence! There'll be quiet in this courtroom!" He glared around the room until it became quiet and then nodded his approval. They obviously knew he meant business.

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Inquisitive eyes continued to stare at her, some curious, some with disdain. Most of the people in the room dressed casually; some were dressed in their Sunday best. A mixture of tobacco-scented clothes and sweet perfume permeated the air. Anna turned her gaze to the right side of the room where the jury sat, an even six men and six women. One juror, a young man, smiled at her, then quickly turned his head away, his smile faded as if he had done something he shouldn't. An older woman sat next to him. Her emotionless expression and cold eyes gave Anna an unsettled feeling so Anna quickly moved her gaze on to the next juror. The young woman sitting behind the older lady kept her eyes on the judge, but her glance, as if she were unable to control it, slid to Anna. Unsmiling, she gave a slight nod and turned her attention back to the judge.

They don't understand. They'll never understand...

"She's beautiful," someone whispered.

How insecure I felt then ... how insecure I am now.

"Yeah, the senator wouldn't have anything but beautiful," another commented. "Just a high-priced whore's all she is, beautiful or not."

The fear. Oh, God, the fear!

A burning red crawled up her neck and into her face. She had never felt as alone as she did at this moment. Anna took a deep breath, buttoned the jacket of her red suit and grasped a black glove in her other already gloved hand. It's a sign of breeding, the senator once told her. He always insisted she appear well-bred.

"Walk like a lady with your head held high. Someday it will benefit you." His words lingered in her mind. Despite his harsh words at times, he did teach her well.

I hope he's right. Though she felt inadequate to handle what she was about to face, she was able to lift her chin and square her shoulders, eyes held straight ahead of her. *I still do my best to please him — always to please him.*

Eyes and whispers followed her long walk to the witness stand. The gold embossed King James Version seemed to jump at her as she placed her right hand on the Bible held by the bailiff. She swore to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.