

# Castles in the Sand

## by Carolyn A. Greene

### Chapter by Chapter Synopsis

#### 1/ RUN

**March 2009:** College freshman, Tessa Dawson, is in trouble. The book begins at the end of the story, where Tessa is running to escape the darkness that has finally caught up with her. The slightly-built girl got more than she bargained for, and now she is fleeing the scene.

#### 2/ ANOTHER TERESA

**Spain, circa 1533:** Teresa of Avila was born in 1515. When she was eighteen, she laid ill in a convent boarding house. Her father comes to take her home. Delirious, her mind drifts back to a troubled youth and a scene where she is trying to escape with her younger brother.

#### 3/ BUS RIDE

**Early September 2008:** The story backtracks now to Tessa Dawson's bus ride to the college she has promised her foster grandparents to attend, much to her chagrin. Tessa has been living in a daydream world, hoping to find relief from the pain she bears deep inside. She resents the old couple for talking her into going, but now that she has waved good-bye to them, she misses them and feels guilty for her attitude. She daydreams of her horse on the farm and recalls some of her troubled past and ponders on her future at Flat Plains Bible College. Her faith is shaky, and she asks whether God is even there?

#### 4/A BOOK FROM UNCLE

**Castellanos, Spain, 1538:** Teresa of Avila, still ill and in her late teens, has been given a book called *The Third Spiritual Alphabet* from her uncle. Sick, with little else to do, the once vivacious, beautiful Teresa turns to this book of contemplative prayer practices .

#### 5/FIRST DAY OF COLLEGE

**September 2008:** It is only the first day of college, and Tessa Dawson is ready to call it quits. She learns that her roommate is a highly talkative, bubbly homeschool girl, who also happens to have lost her birth parents as Tessa has. All Tessa wants is some peace and quiet, and she realizes that isn't going to happen while rooming with Katy (Katrina) Buckler. "*I'd rather be back home mucking out Sassy's stall,*" she muses," as she follows the campus map and finally finds her way to her next class, Spiritual Formation 101.

#### 6/TERESA MEETS TERESA

In Tessa Dawson's spiritual formation class, she is introduced to the writings of 16<sup>th</sup> century Teresa of Avila, and instantly she takes an interest in this young woman of another time period. Tessa's new spiritual director at Flat Plains, a woman who goes by the name of Ms. Jasmine, sees Tessa's interest in the ancient nun, and *she* takes an interest in Tessa. It turns out that Teresa and Tessa have something in common—their hope to escape the pain within. When Tessa and Katy have a disagreement, Tessa is drawn into finding “the sacred space” she was told about in class.

## 7/THE FALL RETREAT AT QUIET WATERS LODGE

**November 2008:** Tessa and her spiritual formation class are at a retreat at the contemplative Quiet Waters Lodge. While there, on a walk in a nearby woods alone, Tessa meets a mysterious stranger on a bridge near the lodge. Later at the retreat, she manages to do a listening/imagination exercise in which she has a conversation with “Jesus” on the beach. She is excited to tell Ms. Jasmine about her success with the exercise, but her excitement is somewhat dampened as she remembers the woodsman’s words to her.

## 8/ GIFT OF TEARS

**Spain, mid-16<sup>th</sup> Century:** Teresa of Avila is in agony. She recalls, with tears, when she was on trial for six years and was judged severely by people because of her visions. “Oh! My soul is plunged into darkness!” she cries out. “How I long to be alone . . . oh, when will this life ever become more than a never-ending dark night for my soul! I hear them coming even now demanding answers to unanswerable questions.”

## 9/THE LECTURE

**Winter Term 2008:** During a lecture in Ms. Jasmine’s class, just before Christmas break, the students at Flat Plains learn some unusual things about the ancient mystics. Ms. Jasmine also warns the class that now that they are coming into an understanding of the “deeper” spiritual matters and have experienced God in a new way, their parents and family members back at home may look at them negatively and oddly. She assures them it is those with traditional views who have the problem, not them.

## 10/THE FARMHOUSE

**January 2009:** Back on the farm, Tessa’s foster grandfather, Jacob Brown, begins to worry about Tessa after he receives some peculiar text messages from her. Tessa keeps mentioning a name that “Gramps” had heard before. In an old wooden chest, he stumbles upon a biography by an ancient mystic, Teresa of Avila. The book had been left at the farm many years ago by another troubled foster girl. Gramps and Gran (Margaret) pray for Teresa.

## 11/MORTIFICATIONS

**Spain, circa 1555:** A glimpse into the life (mortifications and self-abuse) of an older St. Teresa of Avila through the eyes of her sisters at the convent. “Teresa had taken to inflicting tortures and mortifications upon herself. She was just one of many nuns who drew blood in self-flagellation.”

## 12/SPIRITUAL DIRECTION SESSION

**January 9, 2009:** The relationship between Tessa and Ms. Jasmine deepens as Tessa comes to see her professor as her spiritual mentor, but Tessa is feeling some apprehension regarding some of the experiences she is having during her contemplative sessions. Yet she trusts her professor and continues on this path. After all, it is a unique opportunity to be mentored by someone of Ms. Jasmine’s caliber.

## 13/ANGELS AND VOICES

**Spain, 1565:** Teresa of Avila has been ordered to write down her experiences and visions. Her inquisitioners are reviewing her case for possible heresy. But there were some things she could never tell them. They would never understand.

## 14/JACOB SEARCHES FOR ANSWERS

**February 2009–One Evening:** Back at the farmhouse, Jacob has a heated phone confrontation with the president, Frank Johnson, of Flat Plains Bible College regarding the spiritual formation practices being taught at the school. Later that evening, Jacob researches into the late hours of the night. The more he reads, the more he realizes Tessa is in trouble. And while he can’t pinpoint it, he feels certain that Frank Johnson is hiding something.

## 15 /SYMPTOMS

**March 12:** In a conversation with the knowledgeable Katy, Tessa is shocked to discover that the strange symptoms she has been having sound exactly like the rising of kundalini serpent power. Katy tells Tessa about an acquaintance named Nathan, who had gotten involved with New Age mysticism. After a frightening experience, Nathan repented and turned to the Lord. But Tessa grows angry at Katy and storms out of the room. Later that night, she has a terrible nightmare about a serpent that is strangling her.

16/TERESA WRITES *THE INTERIOR CASTLE*

**Spain, 1577:** Through much difficulty due to physical symptoms and head noise, St. Teresa has written *The Interior Castle* as ordered by her superiors. She writes about the seven interior castles of the soul, which can be accessed, she says through contemplative prayer.

17/A GROWING CONCERN

**March 14:** The Browns grow more concerned as they begin to put some pieces of the puzzle together. Margaret (Gran) has seen Jacob troubled before, such as when someone had stolen ten head of his prized cattle. But she had never seen him like this.

18/NEW YORK

**March 23:** On her way back from a missions trip to Argentina, Katy e-mails her parents from New York due to a flight mix up.

19/BAD COUNSEL

**March 23:** Without telling Ms. Jasmine, Tessa makes an appointment with one of the school's counselors. But she is shocked to learn that he is part of the effort to change the school into a contemplative college. In fact, his advice to her leaves her shaken. She leaves his office even more confused.

20/TERESA'S TRAVELS

**Spain 1579:** During one of St. Teresa's last difficult journeys to start another new convent, we learn more about her trances and her levitation experiences.

21/A DIFFICULT PHONE CALL

**March 23—Monday Night:** Tessa arranges to meet a contact of Katy's, Nathan, who can explain more to her about kundalini and the symptoms she and her friends in the spiritual formation class have been having.

22/THE LIGHT THAT WAS DARK

**March 24—Tuesday Afternoon:** During a conversation between Frank Johnson (the college president) and Ms. Jasmine, their plans to further develop the spiritual formation program at the school are discussed. However, Frank is unnerved at his colleague's brazen approach. Her role of usurper becomes evident to him. Meanwhile Tessa meets Nathan. He helps her into his jeep and speeds off. After buying her some hot chocolate (for it was a cold and blustery day in this northern region), Nathan takes Tessa to the local library. There he shows her some books and tells her that the practices she has become involved with are dangerous. Still, she is not convinced.

23/SEATTLE

**March 24:** Flat Plains missions team stops over in Seattle, and by *chance* Katy happens to see Ms. Jasmine being interviewed on television. Her New Age leanings are revealed not only to Katy, but to Jacob and Margaret who happen to see the same show at the farm. The truth is plain to see . . . But that's not the only thing Jacob and Margaret learn that day . . . suddenly they realize they have met Ms. Jasmine before, a long time ago.

24/DÉJÀ VU

**March 24:** Just before their spiritual direction session, Ms. Jasmine prevents Tessa from learning the truth by secretly tampering with her cell phone in a rage. Tessa attempts to share the concerns she has since her meeting Nathan earlier that afternoon, but Ms. Jasmine tries to convince her otherwise and calm her fears. Tessa tries to find her imaginary castle in the silence, but this time it isn't working.

25/THE DEBRIEFING

**March 26—Thursday Evening:** At their debriefing evening with other mission groups, Katy and her mission's team are shocked to find that they are about to be led in a contemplative prayer exercise. Katy and her teacher, Sam Goldsmith, boldly speak out before they are threatened with arrest and forced to leave. But the reaction of the students is not what the leaders had expected or wanted.

Later that evening, Sam Goldsmith has a very important question for Katy—if he can get her to stop talking long enough to ask it. When he does ask, for the first time in Katrina Buckler's life, she is left speechless.

26/FRIDAY MORNING

**March 27:** Margaret and her ladies group pray for Jacob who has just left for Flat Plains Bible College. He has two purposes for the trip: first to confront Frank Johnson and Ms. Jasmine head-on, second, to rescue Tessa and bring her home.

27/THE WOODSMAN

**March 27—Late Afternoon:** The story briefly returns to the woodsman whom Tessa met months earlier at the Quiet Waters retreat. He thinks about the pretty, but confused girl he met in the woods and wonders if she recognized him when he met her for a second time.

28 /EKSTASIS NIGHT

**March 27—Friday Evening:** While Margaret is praying back at the farm house, it is the night of the climactic Ekstasis worship night where Tessa fights her biggest spiritual storm and realizes her “castle” is crumbling. She has been dabbling with mystical practices that have brought a terrible darkness and oppression upon her. It is this night that she realizes she must escape its grip, but will she be able to do it with Ms. Jasmine watching her every move?

29/IN LIKE A LION, OUT LIKE A . . .

**March 27—Evening:** Unbeknownst to Tessa, Gramps is in Frank Johnson’s office during a violent thunder storm the evening of Ekstasis Night. He is demanding Frank to tell him where his granddaughter is. When Gramps gets an urgent text message from Tessa, he reminds her about the mysterious package he gave her the day she left for college. Open the package, he tells her—it is your lifeline.

30/THE ELDERS

The elders from Flat Plains church show up (as pre-arranged by Jacob) and are shocked to see what is going on at the Ekstasis Night. They had no idea. Jacob was right! But Ms. Jasmine is determined to protect her project.

31/RESCUED

Tessa is hiding in her dorm room, terrified at the presence she senses is in there with her. She feels she is going crazy. She realizes what she has been doing is wrong, so very wrong, but is it too late? And then—a frantic knock on the door.

32/SOAKED

Frank Johnson and Ms. Jasmine go on a tirade to find Tessa, blaming her for what has turned out to be a disastrous Ekstasis Night. When Ms. Jasmine finally finds her, and tries to physically stop her, she is in for the surprise of her life. Just when she is about to flail in on Tessa, someone from behind grabs her arm and stops her. She turns and looks up into steel-blue eyes she had never expected to see again.

33/FINDING HOME

**March 28:** Conclusion