



"A SUSPENSEFUL THRILLER . . . AND A SEARING
TESTAMENT TO HUMAN COURAGE."

Kirkus Reviews

SAVING
MY
ASSASSIN

A MEMOIR

VIRGINIA PRODAN

Saving My Assassin is gripping.

JERRY B. JENKINS

New York Times Bestselling Author

Saving My Assassin is a stirring account of valor under an oppressive regime and faith in the face of faithlessness. Prodan's heartbreaking, inspiring life journey will move readers of every background and serves as a call to action for a new generation of Americans. Through persecution, conversion, exile, and triumph, Virginia Prodan reminds us: there is always hope.

JIM DeMINT

Former Senator; President and CEO, The Heritage Foundation

Saving My Assassin is explosive! It is a celebration of awe-inspiring bravery filled with unforgettable moments! Virginia's courage to stand up for her beliefs and for others in the face of death serves as an encouragement to those of us who strive to do the same! She is a heroine of our time—a strong woman with a strong message. Virginia's memoir motivates you to discover not only the courage in you and the power of your voice, but also the purpose for your life! Everyone should read *Saving My Assassin*—a message that will stay with you long after the last chapter ends!

ED MARTIN

President, Eagle Forum

Virginia Prodan stood fearlessly against an oppressive Communist regime and the lawless leadership of Nicolai Ceaușescu. She chose to obey God rather than man and changed the course of history! Virginia mastered her fear of earthly consequences for the glory of God and now inspires her readers. Beyond inspiration, *Saving My Assassin* is a call to action: to live above fear—and to witness the miraculous. I believe this is the message for this generation of believers: we must rise above the fear of man to see a miraculous move of God.

TONY PERKINS

President, Family Research Council, Washington, DC

Saving My Assassin by Virginia Prodan is an amazing testimony of one woman's experience against oppression of faith and how she found the courage to stand strong in the face of insurmountable odds. More than that, there are lessons from Virginia's story on how we might lean on Jesus and his Word in the Scriptures to overcome our challenges . . . and potential dangers.

DAVID CURRY

CEO, Open Doors USA

Saving My Assassin is an extraordinary book! A truly courageous woman, Virginia Prodan—a lawyer and defender of the Christian faith who risked her life in one of the most brutal regimes of modern history. Her faith was forged in

the furnace; it brought regular arrests, beatings, and death threats. Yet she never lost her courage or faith in God. Her story is an encouragement for Christians everywhere, called to stand—and perhaps die—for their faith.

JOSEPH P. INFRANCO

Senior Counsel and Vice President, Alliance Defending Freedom

Virginia Prodan's electrifying true story—*Saving My Assassin*—reads like a well-crafted novel but burns with the power only truth can convey—and in a very personal way. America is not Ceaușescu's Romania, but too many of our countrymen treat liberty casually, and some have traded their liberties for a mess of pottage. May God use Virginia's story to stir Americans to take a stand for the liberty so many of our fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters have died to preserve.

REV. PIERRE BYNUM

Family Research Council Chaplain & National Prayer Director

Saving My Assassin is captivating, and you won't be able to put it down. Virginia Prodan has written an incredible book that every American will want to read. It's rare to find a book so well written and so emotionally powerful and yet teaching wonderful lessons about freedom and courage and the great moral principles to which we all need to aspire. This is a must-read.

KELLY SHACKELFORD, ESQ.

President, CEO, and Chief Counsel of Liberty Institute

Saving My Assassin is a riveting true story of a young woman standing for Christ in a government that would rather have her dead. It's not only entertaining, but Virginia's story provides the kind of inspiration and example that you may need as our world continues to darken.

DR. FRANK TUREK

Award-Winning Author and Coauthor;

President of CrossExamined.org

How would you respond to a man sent to murder you? Hopefully, most Americans will never face that challenge, but Virginia Prodan has and lived to tell about it. *Saving My Assassin* is the story of a woman, standing for freedom during Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime, who discovered that faith, hope, and love can overcome fear, bitterness, and hatred. Her real life so far has been a journey worthy of a Hollywood thriller. She has already proven that the American way of truth and justice can win. More important, though, she warns that our nation has stumbled onto a path destined for the darkness she escaped. Read Virginia's book to be inspired. Read this book to learn how to keep America free.

KEVIN D. FREEMAN, CFA

New York Times Bestselling Author of *Secret Weapon*

Saving My Assassin is an extraordinary, uplifting story of a human rights attorney who brought down the cruel dictator of Romania. Virginia Prodan is an inspiration to us and a reminder of the great promise of America.

MICHAEL A. NEEDHAM

Chief Executive Officer, Heritage Action for America

Saving My Assassin is a riveting, authoritative, and inspirational book! Virginia Prodan enlightens us not only about her fight under persecution but also about the real aspect of the infamous current war on Christians and how to win this war. *Saving My Assassin* will reach and define many generations. Everyone will treasure it. Virginia Prodan encourages us to find and to act upon the truth, the source of her incredible moral courage in the face of monstrous evil.

DR. JIM GARLOW

Senior Pastor, Skyline Wesleyan Church

Virginia Prodan's book, *Saving My Assassin*, is a relevant read: the story of a Christian attorney fighting for religious liberty against persecution. We are seeing growing persecution against the Judeo-Christian faith heritage and individual religious freedom here in America. Virginia's book tells her story—one of being strong and of good courage.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL ALLEN B. WEST (US ARMY, RETIRED)

President/CEO, National Center for Policy Analysis;

Member of 112th US Congress

Liberty and *freedom* are words that have lost some context in our American culture today. Virginia Prodan's life story encourages people to stand up for truth and their beliefs, despite the adversity and the cost. *Saving My Assassin* is a must-read for all as a reminder that freedom comes with a cost.

CHAD HENNINGS

Author; Former Defensive Tackle for the Air Force Academy Falcons and Dallas Cowboys; Winner of 3 Super Bowls

Virginia's riveting story of courage and faith is a great reminder of how precious freedom truly is and why it is so important to have those like Virginia willing to fight for that freedom in the courtroom and also the halls of our legislatures. *Saving My Assassin* also serves as a warning to all Americans that the brutality of tyranny often begins with the abuse of the judiciary, all while singing the praises of the rule of law.

RICK GREEN

Former Legislator; Author of *Constitution Alive!*

Reading Virginia Prodan's *Saving My Assassin* inspires faithful Christian witness in the face of systems of government and structures of power. Virginia offers real-life inspiration for intensifying obedience to our Lord Christ in today's public spaces. The One who transcends history and geography,

controls politics and economics, and creates all peoples and nations will provide courage for us to persevere, and he will turn potential defeats to providential victories.

RAMESH RICHARD, PHD, THD

Professor, Dallas Theological Seminary; President, RREACH

Intriguing and life-changing! *Saving My Assassin* is a story of faith and courage that will open your eyes to the real and widespread persecution Christians face around the world. It chronicles the life-journey of attorney Virginia Prodan as she bravely fought against the anti-Christian government system in Romania and now in her adopted country, America. Although it reads like a novel, it is a true account of her fascinating and risky work. Reading her story will encourage you to stand firm in your faith and live boldly for Christ.

KAROL LADD

Bestselling Author of *The Power of a Positive Woman*

Saving My Assassin is the inspirational read of 2016, studded with invaluable life lessons of faith and resilience garnered on Virginia Prodan's incredible, historic journey. Virginia sounds the clarion call for Christians today everywhere! A terrific page turner.

NICK ADAMS

Bestselling Author & Commentator

I have listened raptly many times to my friend Virginia Prodan tell bits and pieces of her life's journey from the repression of Communist Romania to the liberty of America. It's an extraordinary, harrowing, and uplifting story. I'm thrilled she has put the entire story together in *Saving My Assassin*. Beyond creating a compelling read, she offers readers a potent affirmation of the power of unwavering faith and a standard for the kind of bravery needed in the world today to face down the many forms of tyranny plaguing freedom-loving people around the world.

DEBBIE GEORGATOS

Author; Radio Host of *Ladies, Can We Talk?*

Only someone who has experienced the tyranny and oppression of Communism can fully embrace the liberating joy of democracy. Virginia Prodan knows such joy and lives it out daily. As an international human rights attorney, Virginia has become a consummate freedom fighter. Hers is the inspiring story of escaping Communist Romania, being granted political asylum by the United States, becoming an American citizen, and now advocating for immigrants who desire to come to the United States legally. I am humbled to be Virginia's friend and honored to be her pastor. Not only is her story riveting, but her dramatic and graphic writing style will capture your mind and heart and will not let you go. Just wait: from the introduction on, you'll be hooked.

DR. JEFF WARREN

Senior Pastor, Park Cities Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas

Saving My Assassin will grab your heart from the very start and pull you from a dark pit of hellish discouragement to the lofty ramparts of a hope fulfilled. This book is a lightning bolt of truth that sends out a thunderclap warning for all today. Not defeated by raw fear nor circumstances unimaginable, this brave woman survived it all to find her name forever etched in the halls of heroic accomplishment. A must-read that will definitely inspire all that take this incredible journey.

BOB CORNUKE

Author

Virginia Prodan's love for America is palpable. *Saving My Assassin* will convince you that preserving American superpower serves not only her citizens, but also impacts countless lives around the globe that are enslaved by Marxism.

CATHIE ADAMS

President, Texas Eagle Forum



SAVING MY ASSASSIN

A MEMOIR BY VIRGINIA PRODAN



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INTRODUCTION

Bucharest, Romania

1984

MIRUNA, MY LEGAL ASSISTANT, peeked into my office doorway. “A big man in the waiting room says he wants to discuss a case.” She shrugged. “That’s all he will tell me.”

My desk lamp shed light over open books and files covering every inch of my large, cherry desk. I still had a mountain of work to do on a case to defend young Christians arrested for transporting Bibles. Noticing how late it was, I told her, “Go home. I’ll see how I can help him.”

I followed her to the waiting area where a broad, muscular man wearing a dark, expensively cut coat was seated. I motioned for him to follow me into my office.

At the doorway, I turned and noticed he towered over me. He ran his enormous hand over the silver doorplate reading, *Virginia Prodan, Attorney*. Then he closed the door behind him.

I met his eyes. They radiated an unsettling mix of pain, suffering, and cruelty, like the eyes of a bloodthirsty yet wounded lion.

A much-wounded man, I thought. I hope I can help him.

The slam of the waiting room door sounded, followed by the click of the outer door. My assistant was gone.

“Sit down!” The man pointed to one of the two chairs in front of my desk. His bushy brows formed an angry V. I swallowed a scream.

My blood chilled, and rapid-fire thumping pounded in my ears. I lowered myself into the chair. On the side table, my daughters, Anca and Andreea, smiled from framed photos.

The man sat in the other chair, pulled back his coat, and reached into a shoulder holster, withdrawing a gun.

“You have failed to heed the warnings you’ve been given,” he said, pointing the gun toward me. My heart pounded against my chest like a courtroom gavel.

“I’ve come here to finish the matter once and for all.” He flexed his fingers, and I heard the distinctive click of a trigger cocking into place.

“I am here to kill you.”

CHAPTER 1

Techirghiol, Romania

1961

*You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every
experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face.
You are able to say to yourself, "I lived through this horror.
I can take the next thing that comes along."*

—ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

ON GOOD FRIDAY, it was customary for children to ask their parents for forgiveness and to kiss their parents' hands—a tradition that I always found awkward and strange. Then we would go to the Romanian Orthodox Church so the priest could offer us forgiveness. Sometimes I didn't even know what I was asking forgiveness for. But it was the rule. And in Techirghiol, you followed the rules or there were consequences.

That day, I walked to the church with four neighbor girls. As we entered the building, two tall men dressed in black and sporting dark glasses blocked the doorway. One of them opened a notebook. "Names! Ages!" he barked.

“*Securitate*,” my friend whispered. *Communist government agents.*

My friends offered their names.

When it was my turn, I croaked, “Virginia Basta, age six.”

One of the men stabbed his finger toward me. “You are now on the government’s black list as *church people*.”

My friends rushed into the sanctuary. I followed and knelt on a small rug on the wooden floor. I bowed my head and prayed that God would keep me safe from those men. When I opened my eyes, my friends were gone. *They must have run out the side door.* I shivered. The church was cold, quiet, and desolate. The walls were draped with hand-painted icons of Jesus and Mary, and a serious-looking statue of Jesus seemed to watch me. *I will be brave! I won’t run away because of those Securitate men.* I stayed on my knees for a long time, just to show those men I was not afraid. *Mother and Father always said we should be free in church.*

Two days later, during the Easter service, the priest sang in Latin outside the church. My stomach growled. We had fasted for a month. No meat, only vegetables. Easter was the only day my family attended church together. I wondered whether my parents were afraid of the *Securitate* men. I searched the crowd but didn’t see their dark coats and sunglasses. Finally the priest snuffed out the candles, and we went home for an Easter feast of lamb, stuffing, and lots of cakes and cookies.

After Easter passed, the days grew warmer, but the *Securitate*’s hate-soaked words, *church people*, rang in my head for a long time. And though my family did not attend church

on Sundays, sometimes on weekdays I'd slip through the doors and say a quick prayer on my way to school. Always, though, this came at great personal risk.

During the totalitarian regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu, the most brutal and repressive regime—even by Soviet bloc standards—Communist Romania was a land of lies. Religion was tolerated only to keep up outside appearances, and internal dissidence was not permitted. Ceaușescu's goal was to demolish the churches to make room for his palace—his earthly temple. Declaring himself a god, he decreed that he had brought about the “golden era,” and every citizen was required to agree with him. If you did not, you would face the full wrath of Ceaușescu's secret police, the *Securitate*, one of the most ubiquitous and brutal secret police forces in the world. Simply put, Ceaușescu turned my native country into a prison land.

Not only were we not free to confront the lies of the despotic regime, but we lived in a constant state of anxiety and mistrust, as anyone could easily and often arbitrarily denounce a neighbor, classmate, or family member for making “antigovernment” statements. The best way to avoid punishment, I learned early on, was to remain silent and blend in.

Unfortunately, I did not blend in. And for that, I was punished.

My mother always had plenty of chores for me to do inside, while my older sister, Alina, my younger sister, Oana, and my younger brother, George, were allowed to play

outside. In the beginning, I didn't pay any attention to this difference, nor to the fact that in the winter I had to wear a veil in public, and in the summer, a hat.

One afternoon while I was doing the dishes, I stood on my tiptoes to slide a plate into the cupboard, and through the open window, I could hear singing. "The sleeping bear is starving. We will feed him with milk or honey or coffee."

I leaned into the sink and tugged the curtain aside. Alina, Oana, George, and their friends were gathered in a circle playing *Ursual Doarme* (The Sleeping Bear). I loved that game.

My mother was asleep in the next room, and I knew that if I woke her to ask permission to play, she'd be as angry as a sleeping bear. But oh, how I wanted to join the fun!

I carefully cracked the back door open, then looked back toward the bedrooms. No sound. Quietly, I closed the door behind me and rushed to the outer edge of the circle in which Alina sat blindfolded. I bounced on my toes, hoping they'd let me play.

"See how her hair reflects the sun?" I turned toward the neighbor lady and her friend standing on the other side of the white wooden fence between our two yards.

"She's the only child in Techirghiol with red hair and freckles." She motioned toward me. "Come, Virginia."

I glanced at my sister—still blindfolded—and ran over to the fence.

The neighbor ran her fingers through my hair, then down my cheek. "Have you ever seen a child with so many freckles?" The other lady pulled a camera from her purse and

snapped a picture. The neighbor pointed toward the other kids. “That’s her sister in the center, her other sister over there, and her brother sitting at the edge of the circle.”

Alina, Oana, and George all had black hair and olive skin. I had red hair and white skin with lots of freckles. I didn’t know what to say in response to the neighbor’s comment, so I said nothing.

“She’s so tiny compared to them, even her younger brother.”

“Virginia!” My mother stood in the doorway, arms folded. My mouth went dry as my mind raced to think of an excuse about why I’d left the house. I was in trouble. She motioned me inside.

After she spanked me, she went outside and collected fresh nuts and leaves, boiled them in a big pot, then rubbed the mucky black solution in my hair.

Later that evening, a ghostly looking girl with black hair, a white face, and red-rimmed eyes stared at me from the bathroom mirror. I picked up the cream she’d made me rub all over my face. Mother said it would make my freckles disappear. The lady on the jar didn’t have one freckle on her face.

I was sorry I’d gone outside and made my mother mad. Now I’d have even more house chores for weeks to come. I looked into the mirror again at the new me. *Maybe if I looked normal like my sisters and brother, my family would love me more.* I twisted the cover tight on the cream, put it on the shelf, and ran to the kitchen for dinner.

“She still looks different.” Alina scowled, crossing her arms.

My father’s place sat empty. He worked in Constanta, four hours away, and was rarely at supper with the family, which was a shame for me. When he *was* home, Alina and my mother weren’t nearly as mean.

My mother set a platter of fish and fries on the table. “Maybe we should find a family to adopt her,” she said, looking at Alina.

My breath caught. I slid into the chair, blinking back tears. *What is wrong with me? Even with my red hair gone, my family doesn’t want me.* I bit my lip. One adopted girl I knew in my class always cried during school and rubbed bruises on her arms. She’d fallen asleep in class once, and when I tapped her awake, she said she had been scrubbing floors all night.

“Please, Mother, don’t send me away,” I begged.

She placed a bowl of watermelon on the table. “A few families from the city are looking for a child to adopt. What do you think?” She looked from Alina to Oana to George. “Should we give her up for adoption?” She was serious.

“Nooooo!” I cried. Tears flooded my vision. I set my fork down and sobbed into the crook of my elbow. A jerk on my arm landed me on the floor. I stood and put my hands on my behind, then quickly removed them before the crack of the belt hit me.

“Go to bed!” Mother ordered, shoving me toward my bedroom.

As always, I did as I was told.

I climbed into my bed, rubbing my backside. *Maybe I*

could run away, I thought. *But what if those people looking for a child find me and take me away? They might beat me too.* I flipped my pillow over because it was damp with tears. I buried my face in the fabric to muffle my sobs. Crying would only bring Mother back in with her belt.

*

I set the black hair dye packet on the sink's ledge. For two years, Mother had been purchasing the store packets. She still occasionally threatened to put me up for adoption, but it never happened. I rinsed the sink, then shut off the water. The house was quiet. My family had left early that morning for summer vacation in Bucharest, where they would stay with my Aunt Cassandra. I hoped to meet Aunt Cassandra someday, but they never let me go with them, and questions or complaints would only earn me a sore bottom. Yet in my mind it didn't matter. Mother must have had *some* confidence in me to leave me in charge of the house. None of my friends, at age ten, were given that much responsibility. Besides, I had to work and earn money for the family.

Our town, Techirghiol, was famous for the supposed therapeutic effects of its lake and mud. An Ottoman commander visited in the 1850s, took several mud baths, and noticed amazing improvement on his ailing arm. By the time of my childhood, the waters brought a flood of summer visitors to town.

My family, like many families in Techirghiol, would make

extra money by renting out rooms in our home to visitors who came to take treatments. Most of these visitors came without reservations. Instead, when they arrived, they'd come to Dragalina Square, near the town's monument to war heroes, and seek connections with families that had rooms to rent.

Families in town would hire temporary workers to recruit these boarders. Usually the hired workers couldn't hold jobs elsewhere because of alcohol abuse, criminal records, or a history of violence. As temporary workers, they received cash after each job. My family used them too—until I turned seven years old.

Once I turned seven, I became the family's recruiter in the square. Over time, my work was extended to recruiting for other families in town too. I had to compete for business alongside the rough and ruthless adults. Some made inappropriate jokes; some smelled strongly of alcohol—even in the morning—or became drunk as soon as they received their first payment of the day; others were violent. Over the years, I watched many bloody fights break out on the square.

Why my family felt the need to take in boarders at all, I could not say. They didn't need the money. I can only surmise that they simply didn't want me around, and I knew enough not to ask questions or complain. They wouldn't have listened anyway, and my life would only have become harder.

One morning when I arrived at Dragalina Square, two of my competitors were having a fight, so I seized the opportunity. As the bus full of tourists pulled up, I quickly rushed up

to the door, met the eyes of the first tourist to exit, and said, “Welcome to Techirghiol! My name is Virginia.” And then, grabbing his suitcase, “If you need a room I can take you to my house. My parents have a lovely room that you could use. Would you like to follow me?”

“Yes,” he responded, motioning to his wife behind him. “Thank you.”

Just then, one of the men who had previously been fighting rushed over, pushed me aside, and blurted out, “Can I help you find a room, sir?”

“No, thank you. Virginia has already offered us a room.”

“Well, I guess we can’t compete with her charm,” he said to his opponent, now standing behind me.

“*I’ll show her charm when she returns,*” the other man grumbled in response. Both men sneered at me angrily.

Walking away with my new clients, I tried to block out their angry words. *I’ll deal with that later,* I thought. *Right now, I have to make sure this couple will take the room in my parents’ house.*

Actually, I enjoyed getting to know these visitors and hearing their stories. Some of them almost became like friends. In fact, sometimes when they returned for future visits, they would stop by Dragalina Square to see me and ask how successful I had been that day.

Unfortunately, there were many days when I was not successful at all. Some days I stayed in Dragalina Square until ten at night hoping to find even one client. Eventually, hungry, sad, and exhausted, I would walk home, working on

excuses for my lack of success that day—my failure, as my family would call it. As soon as I arrived home, I would try to go straight to bed, but always I was called to report.

“Today I started my day around five thirty in the morning at Dragalina Square,” I would begin. “I took ten trips home with visitors, but none of them took a room. I also took them to the Popescu’s, Amanar’s, Enescu’s, and Zaituc’s houses, but none of them took their rooms either. And as you know, Popescu, Amanar, Enescu, and Zaituc all live far away from each other, so that took me some time also.”

Mother looked neither pleased nor convinced.

“In between,” I continued, “I stopped at the library and asked one of the workers, Maria, if she knew of any unhappy visitors who might be looking to change houses, and she assured me that she would send them directly to me if she heard anything.”

Still nothing.

“Also, today some of the buses had mechanical problems, and a few of them never even arrived in town.”

More silence.

I tried one last time.

“You know, I heard that many visitors prefer to stay in surrounding cities because of the strong, salty smell of Techirghiol Lake.”

Somehow all the arguments that sounded so good on the way home suddenly sounded lame. I knew what was coming. Mother would bring out her belt, and after a severe beating and no dinner, I would cry myself to sleep—silently into my

pillow, lest I disturb my siblings, who were exhausted from enjoying a day at the lake.

The morning after a failed day, I'd rise by five o'clock, grab a slice of bread and a piece of salami from the kitchen before anybody noticed me, and walk to the square hoping for a better day.

Walking down the quiet, deserted street, I would imagine the city belonged only to me. I would open my arms to greet the new day and the rising sun. The sun's warmth felt like the arms of a mother—not my mother perhaps, but what I always imagined a mother's warm embrace would feel like. My body and soul would be reenergized by mornings like those, and in my hardest hours, I would raise my head to the sky and imagine somebody was watching over me from above—somebody who loved me, red hair, pale skin, freckles, and all.

AFTERWORD

A Final Note from My Assassin

I GREW UP AS AN ENTHUSIASTIC youth Communist Party leader of my school and my small town. I distinguished myself by spying on and betraying many of my classmates, friends, relatives, and acquaintances and by secretly reporting them to the Communist Party headquarters.

Because of that, after graduation from high school, I was recruited to enter the police officer school in Bucharest. The government provided everything for me free of charge—a fully furnished house, clothes, luxurious vacations, money, women, and power.

After graduation from police school, I remained in Bucharest.

As a police officer, I was the best at spying and at placing false documents in people's homes or workplaces, then arresting and torturing them. While in my custody, they all either confessed or died.

Soon the *Securitate* recruited me, and after three years of

intense special training, I was truly a ferocious criminal and a vicious killer.

I was proud of my job, and with every assignment I accomplished, I received more rewards and promotions, the highest being promoted to the rank of Assassin, where my job was to kill political dissidents, including innocent Christians and, of course, Virginia.

I remember the day my boss took me to the Romanian Communist Party Palace on a special assignment. I was at the top of my career. After all, I had been granted the great honor of being in the same room with our leader, Nicolae Ceaușescu.

My boss told me that Ceaușescu was preparing to go on a long international trip that day, so I was overwhelmed that he still had time to meet with us. My boss approached Ceaușescu and spoke with him, while I stood a bit back. But I remember seeing the intense hate in Ceaușescu's eyes as my boss pronounced Virginia's name and the sinister smile on his lips as he imagined Virginia's death at my hands.

When Ceaușescu looked at me and nodded, I felt proud to be able to serve him. I knew that if I completed this assignment successfully, I might be promoted to Ceaușescu's chief headquarters officer. It would have been the greatest possible honor I could receive.

When I entered Virginia's office that afternoon, I felt alive—ready to kill her and ready to move up in my career. I was a man empowered to commit unthinkable atrocities upon people. But then God, in his amazing love, sent me

to her office. My intention was to kill Virginia, but God's intention was to breathe life into me through her.

As I followed Virginia into her office, I thought first about strangling her. But then I decided it would be more enjoyable to frighten her by showing her my gun. I watched Virginia's reaction ecstatically. She was scared; I could read it on her face. Then as Virginia calmly shared the gospel with me, *I* was the one who was frightened—frightened of the peace and the power that came from such a petite person, who could not have weighed more than one hundred pounds.

And before I knew what happened, I was overwhelmed by the love embedded in every word that Virginia said. I don't know how she did it, but she made me want *her* God to be *my* God. Then she prayed for me. Nobody had ever done that before, and I considered that a much undeserved "reward."

I realized that not only was I a cruel, dangerous, and irrational man, but I was also a dead man. I was a man without God, one who loved only himself and possibly the dictator and power.

After I left Virginia's office, I started crying and thanking God for loving me. I cried so hard, I could barely see. I lost control of my car and woke up in the hospital. Later, I realized my boss assumed that I had been unable to accomplish my mission of killing Virginia because of the accident. I didn't correct him.

After the revolution, I decided to enroll in seminary to become a pastor. Since I had left Virginia's office that day

after accepting Christ, it was all I thought about and all I wanted to do.

I heard about Virginia's emigration to America through a few pastor friends, and then I found Virginia's website. I searched her name every month, and eventually I realized that she was too important in my life not to go see her. Plus, I wanted Virginia to know that God used her to change my path and that I was indeed a new man who was now serving the God she introduced me to.

Recently, Romania has begun indicting former members of the secret police for atrocities committed against dissidents during Ceaușescu's reign, and I do not know when my own time will come. I know what I did, and I have to live daily with my past, but I also know that my future lies in Christ. God, in his mercy and love, forgives us. But when most people hear the name *Securitate*, they don't want to offer forgiveness. Virginia's forgiveness when I came to see her rejuvenated my soul.

The emotions that crossed Virginia's face when she recognized my *Securitate* ID made me realize what a monster I had been, but I had never forgotten her faith and her love for all people—even vicious killers like me. I wondered many times if I could live like Virginia—for Christ—no matter the circumstances. Before I went to see her in Dallas, I listened to Virginia's speeches on the Internet, and she always spoke about the day I came to her office in Bucharest without hate and without anger, but instead as God's way of bringing me to Christ.

When she recognized me and took me to lunch, I became convinced that I *am* Virginia's brother in Christ. No matter what happens to me, I will treasure that memory and extend to others—even those who may persecute me—the same love and forgiveness she has shown to me. It is hard to believe that one day Jesus will say to all of us, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

If I *am* indicted in Romania, I can only hope that by the grace of God, Virginia's testimony will save my life—once again.

Michael