

THE UNWAVERING LIGHT



Copyright © 2025 Lynda R. Edwards

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any form without written permission except for brief quotations in critical articles or reviews.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, organizations, places, events, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

For more information, contact Lynda R. Edwards

<http://www.lyndaredwards.com>.

1

The meeting had been going on for hours.

Through the thin plaster walls of the cramped Detroit hotel conference room, Amy Jacques Garvey could hear the sounds of a movement in crisis: the rise and fall of voices in argument, the scraping of chairs against the warped wooden floor, the occasional heavy thud that might have been a fist striking the table. She sat in the adjacent room because she had been told to, not by Marcus, but by the men who advised him, men who cloaked their decisions in the language of “strategy” and “pragmatism” but whose eyes had the dull, restless gleam of rats searching for the quickest path off a sinking ship.

The room where they'd banished her was little more than a box, high-ceilinged but suffocating all the same, the wallpaper yellowed and peeling in long strips. She paced its length, her heels clicking in a rhythm that matched her pulse. Outside the window, February in Detroit howled its winter warning, rattling the panes in their buckled frames. The air coming through the seams was as sharp as needles, with a faint smell of coal smoke from the factories.

Detroit in winter was a hard place. A city of steel, brick, and smoke, where the horizon was crowded with chimneys and the streets carried the heavy tread of men heading to and from the auto plants. It was not a city of dreams, but of endurance, and tonight, endurance was all that kept Amy Jacques Garvey standing.

She'd been Marcus Garvey's wife for three years, long enough to know the difference between the silences that filled a room. This was not the comfortable quiet of contemplation or the breathless

hush before applause. This was the sound of resignation creeping in. The silence of men who had run out of arguments and were now measuring the cost of loyalty against the lure of self-preservation.

Her thoughts drifted to Jamaica, not as a romantic longing, but as an anchor in her mind. She thought of warm trade winds and the smell of salt in the air, of the hills behind Kingston where her childhood home stood in green defiance of the sea's flat blue. She thought of the restless ambition that had carried her from that island to New York, a city as unyielding as it was full of possibility.

In those early days, she was simply Amy Jacques, a young journalist with fire in her pen and revolution in her heart. She'd first interviewed Marcus after hearing him speak, expecting the usual performance: grand promises from another silver-tongued man speaking to desperate crowds. But what she found was a vision that seemed too vast for one man to contain.

The Universal Negro Improvement Association, also known as the UNIA, was more than just an organization. For a time, it had been a kind of resurrection. Marcus stood before packed halls in Harlem, Chicago, Port of Spain, Cape Town, and Kingston, proclaiming that Black people were not the world's burden but the rightful heirs to a legacy of kings and queens. Through the UNIA's parades, uniforms, and the great dream of the Black Star Line, he had shown them a picture of themselves in dignity, not degradation.

In those days, the movement had swelled like a tide with people from Harlem to Haiti, from Detroit to Durban, lifting their heads and seeing themselves anew. The Black Star Line stock certificates had felt like passports to a new destiny. Ships would sail carrying passengers, goods, and hope between the Americas, the Caribbean, and Africa. For the first time in centuries, the path back to the mother continent seemed like

more than a dream.

But the dream had been battered. One by one, the Black Star Line's ships had fallen silent in the harbors, engines failing, costs piling up, sabotage suspected but never proven. Government eyes were constantly on Marcus from the very start; now, with charges of mail fraud, they wielded their weapon. He was tried in a courtroom where the verdict had been scripted before the first witness spoke. Amy sat there through it all, watching the prosecutors speak of law while practicing a slower, colder form of lynching, and a judge whose gavel sounded like a noose tightening.

A chair scraped loudly in the next room, pulling her back to the present. Voices rose again, sharper now. She pressed her ear to the wall, catching fragments.

“...an appeal is hopeless...”

“...save what we can before they take it all...”

“...maybe if he steps down...”

“...the wife should go back to Jamaica...”

Her blood froze at that last remark. She knew the voice. One of Marcus’s oldest allies, a man who had eaten at their table, who had once sworn eternal loyalty. His tone now wasn’t cruel, only matter-of-fact, as if her departure could be cataloged along with other necessary sacrifices.

Then came Marcus’s voice, lower, wearier than the rest. “Gentlemen, I understand your concerns, but...”

“Do you?” the same man cut in. “Do you understand that following you into prison will destroy what’s left of the UNIA? That your arrogance will take down every man, woman, and child who believed in you?”

Silence followed, but it was not the earlier quiet of calculation. This was the stillness of a man being stripped bare, his life’s work reduced to a flaw in his character.

Amy turned from the wall and walked

to the frost-laced window, resting her fingertips on the cold glass. Outside, the snow was falling in lazy spirals, but inside, the air had turned dense, frozen around her.

The murmurs in the conference room subsided. One by one, the men emerged. They moved past her like ghosts leaving a graveyard, some with awkward nods, others unable to meet her gaze. The last man paused at the door, delivering his parting shot toward Marcus inside:

“Think about what you’re doing to that girl, Marcus. She’s too young to waste her life visiting you in prison.”

When the door closed, the silence that remained was thick enough to touch.

Across the room, Marcus Garvey leaned against the wall, his broad frame hunched, head bowed. His overcoat hung open; he looked smaller inside it. The firebrand who had once filled Madison Square Garden with twenty-five thousand people was now a man cornered. The Marcus Garvey who had told millions that

they were made in God's image now carried himself like a man unsure God still looked his way.

He crossed the space between them slowly, as though the air itself resisted him. When he reached her, he took her hands. His hands were warm, calloused from the years before politics, before ships, before the mantle of leadership had replaced the printing press.

"Your hands are freezing," he murmured.

"It's Detroit in February," she said, her voice steady though her eyes searched his face.

He echoed her words, almost absently. "Detroit in February."

She waited. She knew the way he gathered himself before speaking hard truths. She had watched him do it before speeches, before courtroom appearances, before consoling parents who had lost their savings in the collapse of the Line.

"When we reach New York tomorrow," he said, "I'll be arrested."

They'll send me to Atlanta to serve my sentence."

She nodded. "I see."

"I don't know how long they'll keep me. Months, years. Maybe..." he exhaled. "...maybe forever. And if the devil has his way," his voice faltered. "I won't come out."

Still, she let the silence stand, giving him room.

"I've pledged my life to this cause," he said finally. "I should never have married you."

Her spine stiffened. "Your advisors told you that again today, didn't they?"

"They think you deserve more than this. I think... maybe they're right. Go back to Jamaica. I'll grant you a divorce. You're young. Beautiful. Brilliant. You could marry again, live free of all this."

The words struck her like blows. But she hadn't fought her way into journalism in a world that thought women should be silent, hadn't stood at Marcus's side as the most controversial Black man in America,

reviled as a public enemy, only to retreat now.

"I don't want another husband," she said, her voice iron. "I married the only man I'll ever want."

He looked away. "I have nothing to offer you from prison."

"You are everything I need."

"All I've done," he said bitterly, "is lead myself to prison and drag you with me. Maybe God has abandoned me."

The blasphemy of it! Marcus Garvey, who preached that God was black, who told millions of people that they were made in the divine image, was now questioning whether that same God had turned His face away. Amy felt something dangerous rise in her chest, something that had been building through hours of listening to weak men counsel surrender.

Amy pulled her hands from his and stepped back. Her voice was low, but fierce. "Is that it, then? You're giving up?"

He looked at her, anguish in his eyes, and for a moment she saw the full depth

of his despair. This was a man who had carried the hopes of an entire race on his shoulders, who had promised them ships and dignity and a return to greatness, only to watch it all crumble under the weight of government persecution and internal betrayal.

Her voice sharpened. "Where is the man who said, 'The day I forsake my people, may God say there shall be no more life for me'? Where is he, Marcus?"

"He died when I failed them."

"No," Amy said sharply. "He lives in you. You are not failing them; you are enduring for them."

He closed his eyes, and she could see the exhaustion in every line of his body. How long had he been carrying this burden alone? How many nights had he lain awake, tormented by the knowledge that thousands of people had invested their life savings in his dream, only to watch it sink beneath the waves of reality?

"They can shackle your arms, Marcus. They can cage your body. But they will

never conquer your mind. That is what makes you dangerous to them. And that is why I stand beside you now."

He didn't respond. He walked toward the door instead, steps heavy with shame, and Amy realized with a shock that he was actually going to leave. That, after everything they had been through together, he was going to walk out of this room and out of her life, convinced that he was protecting her from the consequences of his failure.

"Why did you marry me?" Amy demanded suddenly. She chased after him, clutching at his coat, forcing him to stop. Her fingers found the rough wool of the jacket she had sewn for him herself, back when they had believed the world was about to change. "Answer me, Marcus. Why me?"

He stopped, his hand on the doorknob, but didn't turn around. His voice was barely audible. "Because I needed you. I don't know all the reasons... I just knew I couldn't do this alone."

The honesty of it broke something open inside her chest. This was not the Marcus Garvey of the public speeches, the man who could command multitudes with his voice. This was the man who woke up at three in the morning, writing articles by lamplight, who carried the weight of every letter from supporters who had lost their savings, every newspaper headline that painted him as a charlatan or worse.

She reached up and grabbed his chin, forcing him to look at her. His eyes were wet with unshed tears, and she saw in them all the pain he had been carrying alone.

"Then don't push me away now. You chose me because you saw something in me that could match your fire. And you were right."

They stood in silence, breathing the same air, sharing the same space that had become both sanctuary and battlefield. Outside, the wind had died down, leaving only the whisper of snow against glass.

Amy could hear the distant sounds of the city, cars struggling through slush, the mournful wail of a train heading somewhere else, the lives of people who would never know how close they had come to witnessing the death of a dream.

Then, she kissed him! Not to comfort or distract, but to awaken him. To remind him who he was, who they were together. She poured everything into that kiss: her love, her faith, her absolute refusal to accept defeat. When she pulled back, he was staring at her with something new flickering behind his eyes.

“You and me?” he asked softly.

“That’s all we’ll ever need,” she said.
“Lean on me, Marcus. Just as I lean on you.”

“If I die in prison?”

“Then your work has only begun,” she cut in. “Because I’ll take your name, your mission, and carry it into every hall, every heart. I’ll wrap you in the red, black, and green and walk with you to glory.”

The transformation was visible, like

watching the sun rise after the longest night. Marcus Garvey, the man who was broken and defeated just moments before, began to remember who he was. Not just a husband facing separation, not just a leader facing imprisonment, but a symbol of something larger than himself.

"We have survived centuries of insult, of abuse, of chains and whips and exile," he said, a slow fire kindling in his chest. "This is just another trial."

"Like Job," Amy said, her voice rising with his, "you will lift your head and cry to the heavens: I am a man and demand a man's treatment!"

"I will not wither in that cell," he said, trembling with conviction. "I will write. I will dream. I will fight with my words until the bars fall away and the world hears me."

"This is not the end," Amy said, stepping closer to him, close enough to feel the heat radiating from his renewed passion. "A hundred years from now, your name will live. Your voice will be

needed again, and it will echo through time."

Marcus pulled her into his arms, and for the first time that night, there was peace in his expression. Not the peace of surrender, but the peace that comes from accepting a burden willingly, from choosing to bear a cross because the alternative is to abandon everything you believe in.

"They haven't seen the last of me," he said.

Amy kissed his cheek, whispering into his ear with the fervor of a prophet, "Nor have they seen the last of us."

In the morning, they would take the train to New York. The federal agents would be waiting, and Marcus would begin his journey to Atlanta Federal Penitentiary. But tonight, in this cold room in Detroit, two souls had recommitted themselves to something greater than comfort, greater than safety, greater than the small dreams that most people settle for.

THE UNWAVERING LIGHT

In the winter of 1925, as Marcus Garvey faced imprisonment and the potential collapse of his movement, his greatest source of strength came not from his advisors or followers but from the woman who stood beside him when all others wavered. This was Amy Jacques Garvey's unwavering support and Marcus's journey from despair back to determination—a testament to how Amy's strength and belief in Marcus helped him rediscover his purpose, even in his darkest hour. A partnership forged in the fires of adversity and tempered by an unshakeable faith in their shared mission.

Tonight, Marcus and Amy Jacques Garvey chose to believe in tomorrow, even when tomorrow looked like a prison cell. They had chosen love over fear, hope over despair, and in making that choice, they ensured their story would outlive them both.

The snow continued to fall outside, covering the city in pristine white,

making all things new. And inside, by the window where it had all begun, Amy and Marcus held each other close, planning not for defeat, but for victory. Not for the end, but for the continuation of a dream that would refuse to die.

Marcus released her from his embrace slowly, but he didn't move away. His hands remained on her shoulders, warm and steady now, as if anchoring himself to her.

"Then we begin tonight," he said.

Amy tilted her head. "Begin what?"

"The work that cannot wait for the prison gates to open."

He crossed to the small writing desk shoved into the corner, a hotel relic with uneven legs and an ink blotter gone stiff with age. The single lamp cast a yellow circle of light across its scarred surface. He opened the drawer, found the hotel stationery, thin and brittle, and took out his fountain pen.

"I'll need you to write," he said, pulling out the chair.

She joined him at the desk, brushing a few crumbs of old paper from the surface before sitting. "To whom?"

"To everyone who still believes."

He began pacing the room, words already coming in that familiar cadence that had once filled Madison Square Garden and made strangers weep.

"First, a letter to the Negro World," he said. "We must tell them the fight continues, that imprisonment is not defeat, that the cause is greater than the man."

Amy dipped the pen in ink, her fingers poised. She knew his rhythm well enough to keep up with him.

"Write this," Marcus said, his voice steady:

To my brothers and sisters across the globe: If they think to break our spirit by confining my body, they will find the spirit is a thing they cannot contain. The movement does not belong to me alone; it belongs to you, to Africa, to every man and woman who refuses to bow to

oppression. We are building something greater than a fleet of ships; we are building the mind and will of a people.

He paused, pacing again, his shadow stretching and shrinking across the wall.

“Next,” he said, “letters to every local branch: Harlem, Kingston, Montreal, Panama, London. They must organize rallies in my absence and read my words aloud to the people. Let them know this is not the time to scatter.”

Amy’s pen scratched across the paper, the words flowing like a current she had stepped into long ago. Her heart was steady now; her earlier anger transmuted into purpose.

“We’ll prepare a campaign,” Marcus continued, now speaking half to himself, half to her. “My statements from prison. I’ll need the Constitution of the UNIA with me, specifically my copy, the one with the margin notes. I will need my ammunition.”

Amy glanced up from the page. “They’ll search everything you take in

with you.”

“Then I’ll hide nothing,” he said, a smile ghosting across his face. “I have nothing to conceal. Let them see it all, especially the depth of my resolve.”

He stopped pacing, looking down at her. “You’ll visit me, and we’ll plan. You’ll carry messages between me and the UNIA divisions. The prison walls will be our headquarters.”

Her chest tightened, not from fear but from the recognition of what he was asking, what they were about to attempt. “It will be dangerous,” she whispered.

“Everything worth doing is,” Marcus replied.

For the next hours, they worked. Marcus dictated; Amy wrote, her handwriting small but legible to conserve the precious hotel stationery. They outlined speeches for her to deliver, editorials for her to sign in her name, and appeals to allies in the Caribbean and Africa.

When her fingers cramped, Marcus

took the pen and wrote a few lines himself; his script bold and deliberate, the strokes of a man refusing to let his hand shake, even now.

Outside, the snow thickened, the streetlamps casting soft halos in the white. Somewhere in the distance, a factory whistle blew, marking the change of shift.

Amy looked at him in that moment, really looked, and saw that the man before her was no longer the shadow who had slumped against the wall earlier. He was again the Marcus who had walked onto the stages of the world with nothing but a voice and a vision, daring people to believe in their greatness.

At last, when the ink bottle was nearly dry, Marcus capped the pen.

“Tomorrow,” he said, “we face them.”

“Tomorrow,” she agreed, “we begin again.”

They sat in the quiet for a while longer, side by side, watching the snow pile against the window ledge. The cold outside was unrelenting, but here, in the

THE UNWAVERING LIGHT

dim light of the little desk, warmth spread between them; the warmth of work undertaken together, of a battle plan forged in the midnight hours.

By the time they rose to sleep, the desk was a battlefield strewn with the first weapons of their campaign: letters, lists, speeches, and the unspoken vow that whatever happened in Atlanta, the UNIA would not die.

And in that frozen Detroit night, Marcus and Amy Jacques Garvey, husband and wife, leader and comrade, had already stepped past despair into history.

THE END

About the Author

Lynda R. Edwards's novels have garnered critical acclaim for their powerful storytelling, vivid imagery, and insightful exploration of Caribbean society and history.

Critics have praised her ability to weave intricate narratives that captivate readers from start to finish and her skill in delving into the complexities of human relationships and cultural identity, transporting readers to the heart of the Caribbean experience.

She is deeply committed to promoting the unique voices and stories of the Caribbean.

www.lyndaredwards.com



@lynda_r_edwards



Lynda R Edwards-Author

From the Author of:

Redemption Songs

Friendship Estate

I Am Cuba

