

Ashleigh & Megan *Book I: Friendship*



Saturday
September, 23

Pandora's Box
Shattered
Day Four of Book I
(3months and 22 Days Since Megan was
notified a wealthy neighbor was moving
into the marina)

Part One of Five

Authored By:
R. P. Voght

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I hope you enjoy this pioneering format I call, "A Story Cast."

What the term "Story Cast" means; is this story is designed to be read in small to medium intervals. This particular story is broken up into "days." These portions are broken up into part or all of a particular fictitious "day" of the story. Each day surrounds the characters lives, relationships, adventures, struggles, mishaps and triumphs. This story is very different from a Novel or conventional story in many ways. Again, THIS IS NOT A NOVEL AND IS NOT WRITTEN IN A CONVENTIONAL NOVEL FORMAT. Instead; as the reader you are following the characters thoughts and actions during the course of this "day." This fiction story is set up like a TV series and or a third person journal. It always starts with one or more character getting up and ends with one or more characters going to bed; while during the day you experience the Characters actions, feelings, and their thoughts.

On a large overview; there is a beginning, a middle, and an end to this "Story Cast"

R. P. Voght

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Saturday, September 23

(3 months and 22 Days Since Megan was notified a wealthy neighbor was moving into the marina)

Megan was staying at Krissy's ranch.

There were many reasons Megan wanted to stay at this ranch: it was a small vacation before her busy season, she was excited to see her best friend Marcy get married, all of her friends from college would be together, she looking forward to revisiting Krissy's Ranch, and she was looking forward to a fun get together the night before the wedding.

The red numbers flipped on the digital alarm clock radio and CD player.

In the silence of this guest bedroom she heard the echoes of the loud music and the screaming of the women. Megan felt she picked the most negative way to learn about sex. The spur of the moment decision to learn and conquer her fears of sex were obviously the wrong course of action. She felt the hour and a half in this underground club changed her and she was unsure if these changes were positive. She was feeling guilty and remorseful for entering an underground male strip club. She wished she could take back the hour and half she spent in this club. She felt guilty for watching: many of her friends get drunk, men strip out of costumes, observing sexual acts, and for entering a place she felt promoted male prostitution.

Megan found a positive. She now knew without a shadow of a doubt she was attracted to men and wanted to know how a guys cock worked. She wished with all her heart she would have made these discoveries with a man she loved. Until entering this club the only penis she ever caught a glimpse off was her brother Timmy's. Seeing these attractive and athletic looking men dressed in costumes and seeing their big and thick cocks bouncing around was both exciting and overwhelming. Observing men touching women was also arousing and traumatic. Before she entered this underground club she was interested in oral sex, after seeing oral sex performed in this club; she felt it was disgusting. She wished she was ignorant

of what sex looked like, but because of what she witnessed, she wanted to know what it was like to be on top of a man. Attached to this feeling of fascination was a mountain of guilt.

With Megan having a core value against gender bias; it was easy for her to admit these women were taking advantage of the male dancers. This was eye opening for Megan. She was always taught men were the ones who took sexual advantage of women. It never occurred to Megan this could happen in reverse. It was obvious many of the men were excited and received money for the things they were doing, but Megan noticed many of the men were disgusted by the behavior of the women in the underground male strip club.

An incident Megan wished would stop playing in her mind was: a woman handed money to a male dancer, this woman pushed the dancer onto the side of the stage, she aggressively pulled down the pants of his police costume, mounted him, and humped him right there. What surprised her were all of the women cheering this on. Megan was captivated by this position. While this was happening she witnessed a woman bring a man to an orgasm with her hand. Seeing the woman riding the guy, her desire to touch a strange mans member, and her willingness to spend money to find out; frightened Megan.

Megan thought about the incident which lead her out of the club. Megan mentioned to Krissy she was attracted to a man dressed as a fireman and wondered what his cock felt like. This comment would have stopped with Krissy. Breanne, one of Megan's least liked friends, tried to arrange a private dance with this male dancer. When Megan caught wind of Breanne's plot; Megan left the underground strip club.

She became uncomfortable with her own imagination. She wondered if the people managing the strip club were purposely picking men who were thicker and larger or if all men were this big. For the first time in her life she wanted to view photographs of naked men. Seeking out pornographic material was against everything she believed. She was fighting the desire to open her laptop. She had a list of concerns and questions about: the size of cocks, ejaculation, what it felt like, and for the first time really wondered what it would feel like inside of her.

She felt guilty for wanting a husband to dress up in a costume.

She blushed.

Her dimples flashed.

Laying in bed fighting all these images and thoughts she suddenly recognized how funny she felt. Being naive she was unaware of her own arousal. She was surprised when she reached down and she was clearly moist. She felt a jolt of pleasure. She quickly pulled her hand away. Due to Megan's: beliefs, fears, upbringing, and her own apprehensions about sex; this powerful arousal was filled with more negative feelings than positive ones. She hoped if she could get back to sleep everything she was going through would stop.

She suddenly felt awkward sleeping in the nude. She: turned on the light, slipped out of bed, stepped to her large duffel bag, and pulled out a pair of pajamas. These were a gift from Nicole. Megan liked these multicolored vertical stripped pajamas; she especially liked the light greens and the blues. She: set the pajamas on a chair, grabbed a pair of clean boyshort panties, slipped them on, put on the short sleeved pajama top, slipped her legs into the full length bottoms, tied the drawstring waist, made sure her duffel bag was back in order, went back to bed, and turned off the light.

Megan closed her eyes.

She purposefully focused on the conversation she had with Krissy. What helped push

the unwanted visions out of her mind, and stopped her arousal, was when she reviewed the memory of a drunk Crystal coming out of the club. Megan focused on how they made sure Crystal was okay after throwing up over the side of the pier, and recalled how sick Crystal was when she stepped onto the bus. A bus Breanne rented for this bachelorette party. It surprised Megan, Krissy never: drank, teased anyone, and showed compassion to a friend in need.

Megan fell back to sleep thinking about Krissy's change in personality and Marcy's wedding.

Megan's Pandora's Box was cracking. She started to slowly remove the protective layers of this box when she began to write in her journal and deal with her lifelong sexual fears. If she would have continued on the path she was on before entering the club, these bundled up sexual feelings would have drained out over time. Instead; her Pandora's Box was ready to explode.

*A*shleigh woke up in fear.

Her hand was over her chest, she was breathing heavy, and her long blond hair was soaked in sweat.

Immediately Nikita was by the side of her bed, she was sitting, and howled.

Ashleigh took a few more breaths and calmed herself.

She looked over at Nikita with a smile and stated, "I'm okay girl."

Ashleigh moved herself to the side of the bed and pet her Siberian husky.

When she stopped petting Nikita: she looked up at her digital alarm clock, in a gentle tone she commanded Nikita to go to her bed, and Ashleigh slipped herself under the covers. It had been years since she had a nightmare. The nightmare was of a shadowy man with antlers on his head. This man chased her to the top of a tall building. Once she reached the top, she backed away from him; she only made it so far before she fell off the building. She knew this shadowy man was a flashback to her Step Dad and a boyfriend of Ashley Vindavane. She suspected the falling off of the building was based upon her fears of moving to Florida. Ashleigh hated it when her past invaded her dreams, it was rare, but when her past invaded her dreams it was always traumatic.

She again sat up and took many deep breaths. She stood up, went to her kitchen, drank a glass of water, stepped into the bathroom, did her business, turned off all the lights, and went back to bed.

During this Nikita followed Best Friend around the apartment.

She sat on the edge of the bed and in prayer forgave: Ashley Vindavane's boyfriend, her Step Dad, and Ashley Vindavane.

She commanded Nikita to go to her spot.

Nikita reluctantly obeyed.

Ashleigh reminded herself what happened was far from her fault and focused on the people who loved and took care of her. Fifteen minutes later she said another prayer. After this prayer she: felt better, was more relaxed, laid down, pulled the covers over herself, and closed her eyes. She took the time to contemplate the falling off the building. The Thursday before labor day her brother took her into his office and had a very serious discussion. In this discussion he asked if she indeed wanted to move. She confessed her reservations and how she was sure she would miss her foster family. Being indecisive, she expressed how they were

a family too. The two of them were an odd family, but they were a family; family was very important to Ashleigh.

Bob gave her permission to resign, but requested she finish her project. She was in charge of making sure every employee and family member's move went smoothly. She felt her brother's request was fair; except she never did resign. What seemed to be the cause of the nightmare, was her continual involvement in the day to day operations of *Renewed Mastery*. This involvement included many details of how the company itself was to move, this was different from her main responsibility of moving the employees.

She took another deep calming breath.

She feared a mistake. She was aware, every decision she made effected all of her Brother's employees. The possibility of hurting her brother's employee's and their families only increased her fears. In addition; she felt responsible if the move went poorly. Her brother took her recommendation on moving the company to the *Eastbank Industrial Park*. Ashleigh sometimes wished Bob would have made fun of her choice and picked a different spot.

Her plan was: to move into her brother's yacht, after a couple months she would move into a luxurious condo, and after a couple years she would move back to Wisconsin; she assumed it would only take a couple years for her brother to be back to normal. With this plan in place she was ready to fall asleep.

She looked over at her best friend. Nikita's bright blue eyes were staring at her.

Ashleigh smiled.

Nikita wagged her tail and was about to jump on the bed.

Ashleigh not wanting to tease Nikita: slipped underneath the covers, turned her back on Nikita, put her head down, and went back to sleep.

Nikita put her head down but was ready if Best Friend woke up.

Megan opened her eyes when the bedroom door opened. The light from the hallway shown into the room, it was easy for Megan to recognize the silhouette of Krissy stepping into her room, Krissy shut the door just before it was closed, the room was dark except for the light shining in from around the door, she set three large paper shopping bags with handles onto the floor, she removed a helmet off of her head, and gently set this helmet on an antique dresser next to the door. Megan watched as Krissy grabbed the handles of these bags and stepped toward the bed.

It was easy for Megan to recognize Krissy. Megan always admired Krissy's figure; Megan felt she was proportionally perfect. Even though Krissy was tall she had a petite feel to her. Krissy was a quarter of an inch shorter than Megan. Krissy's breasts were slightly larger than average but they never seemed to hinder her athletic activity. Megan envied the fact both of Krissy's breasts were equal in size and wished her breasts were small like Krissy's.

Megan was unaware of her own arousal. This arousal was a holdover from being in the club and from the vivid sexual dreams she experienced before Krissy entered the room. Megan's conscience mind protected herself from remembering any of these disturbing dreams. With: the lingering arousal from her dreams, the visuals from the club, and the conversation Krissy and Megan had on the pier; her mind produced an intrusive vision. She was again showing with Krissy after softball practice, but instead of Krissy having a vagina, she had a cock. She recognized she was half asleep and half awake. Megan tightly closed her

eyes and in her mind told the vision to go away; to Megan's relief it vanished. With her eyes closed she forced herself to fully awake.

When Krissy reached Megan she gently pushed Megan and whispered, "Megan."

Krissy had the impulse to violently wake up Megan just like Megan woke her up in college; many times this involved Megan turning the mattress over. This would make up for all times Megan purposely woke her up to go "running". Krissy believed Megan purposefully choose to go running with her anytime Krissy partied the night before. With Krissy being dedicated to her sobriety she could appreciate what Megan was trying to do. The reason Krissy went on these runs with Megan, even when they were absolutely brutal; Krissy never wanted Megan to out do her in anything. It seemed to Krissy no matter how hard she trained, or practiced, or what sport they played; Megan was just a little better. What added to Krissy's frustration was how perfect Megan's life seemed. Megan: loved her family, was always studying, worked out harder than anybody, and no one ever witnessed Megan drunk or high. It was obvious to all of Megan's close friends Megan had sexual issues, what was annoying to Krissy and Breanne, Megan never acted out by sleeping around.

Krissy regretted how she treated Megan in college. After becoming sober Krissy felt Michelle was correct and Megan was struggling with her sexual identity. Before observing Megan at the underground club she believed Megan was a closeted lesbian. Megan confirmed she was straight during the conversation they had on the pier. While getting ready, Krissy admitted to herself she was a hindrance to Megan finding any peace with her sexual struggles.

Krissy gently pushed Megan and asked, "Megan are you awake?"

"Yes."

Megan reached up and turned on the light on the night stand. Megan suspected both these items were antiques.

Krissy's long blond hair was in a very tight bun in back of her upper neck. Krissy: had a classic diamond shaped face, her cheek bones were high and small, her thin lips seemed perfect for her long face, there were natural lines running from the bottom of her nose to the corner of her lips; her long nose could easily be classified as a beak nose. Megan was surprised Krissy never had plastic surgery to fix what Krissy felt was a major flaw in her appearance. Megan felt what changed, was how Krissy's bright blue eyes seemed to be full of life and caring for other people. Megan felt this was a welcomed change. Megan made a slight face at the fact Krissy wore just enough makeup to look good horseback riding.

Krissy was wearing a two toned short sleeved polo riding shirt; the shirts primary color was white and along the sides it was pink. It was obvious to Megan she was wearing a sports bra, which gave Krissy a modest look. Megan felt this was a welcomed change. Matching the shirt Krissy was wearing custom beige and black full seat breeches. Today she was wearing short paddock shoes with ties and matching chaps. Megan glanced at the bags on the floor. On one side was a picture of a horse head and above it was a name of a store.

Krissy asked very gently, "I was of the assumption you'd want to go riding. It is a fine morning to do so."

"Just us?"

"Indeed. It appears. Our friends are needing their rest."

Megan sat up in bed, "How's Marcy?"

Krissy crunched her face and shook her head.

Megan mentioned with a concerned tone, "Y'all are aware she never drank before

yesterday?"

"I believe this is why only three drinks affected her so dramatically."

Megan's dimples flashed.

Megan asked, "Why was she drinking?"

"I suspect it was an attempt to calm herself."

Based upon Krissy's look and tone Megan assumed Krissy was covering for Breanne.

"At the moment she's being taken care of by her Future Sister-in-law. These needs are being met in Ocala," Krissy added in an excited tone, "Yesterday morning I commented to Mother on how you've kept in such supreme shape."

Megan was shocked at Krissy's compliment.

"I want to apologize for my friends rude comments during and after our ride. I often times despise their attitudes. They are, unfortunately or fortunately, depending on how one was to observe their behavior. Were friends way before I met any of you at college. They are often disrespectful but they are loyal. This I've learned is an important trait."

It was obvious Krissy held in some emotion. She quickly recovered and became her proper self, "After our ride with my friends. I instructed one of my servants to select some equestrian attire."

This was the first time Krissy ever made such a gesture toward Megan. Megan knew this was a positive gesture on Krissy's part based upon her body language and tone. Megan felt very poor among her friends, but Megan understood this was far from Krissy's intention. The clothes Megan brought were the best she had. When Megan went riding with Krissy and her friends she wore: a brand new pair of jeans, a brand new western style button shirt, and a pair of cowboy boots she felt were great for riding.

"To make sure you were properly fitted I took the liberty of instructing my servant to check your clothing for your size. She instructed me there was very little invasion of your privacy. It's my understanding your clothes were laid out on a chair. The items in these bags are yours to keep."

Krissy gently set the bags on the end of the bed. Krissy instructed her servant to purchase six sets of outfits with extra tops. Krissy made sure her servant knew what Krissy was expecting. After Krissy took the time and choose what was in the three bags.

Megan crawled out of bed.

It was surprising to see Megan wearing pajamas.

Krissy: showed a smile, gently winked at Megan, waved her arm, and with a teasing tone commented, "In the future you should feel completely comfortable sleeping in a way I find to be brave. There is a person you might've known who tried to sleep in your preferred manner and due to her own fears and concerns slept very poorly. This person has never tried to sleep in the manner you prefer but admires her friend who is brave enough to do so."

Megan's dimples flashed.

Megan blushed.

Megan was about to respond to this comment but Krissy spoke first. "Some of our mutual friends have discussed why someone who seems to be conservative in manners attributing to sexuality and human nakedness would sleep in the nude." Krissy put her hand on her chest and commented, "I believe this is a sign she is braver than she is aware off. If you ever need someone to discuss manners of a sexual nature I'd love to hear them."

In the silence they studied one another.

This shocked Megan. Megan would have never believed Krissy, out of all the people she knew, would offer to hear Megan's sexual struggles. The reason Megan was receptive to Krissy's comment: was because of her own journal writing, the conversation they had the previous night, and Megan heard Krissy's gentle tone.

Krissy broke the awkward silence, "I realize you might feel uncomfortable discussing anything with me based upon my past behavior. I regret my actions during my dark days of college and the few years after. I hope you'd understand I'm not pressuring you to discuss anything with me."

Krissy produced a legitimate smile of friendship.

"It is my intention for you to accept all of the attire in these bags. If you feel uncomfortable accepting my generosity I completely understand. I just ask you'd choose one outfit for our ride today and for any time you ride with me in the future. I care little for how you dress. What disturbs me is my ignorant friends ridiculing one of my dearest friends."

This shocked Megan to the core.

"If there is an item you find unpleasant leave the item in the bag. If you leave the bag on the bed my servant will take care of the items." In a very encouraging tone, "I believe you will look splendid in the clothes I instructed my servant to pick out for you."

Megan took this well. She understood what her friend was saying.

Krissy simply turned around, and in the process of walking out grabbed her helmet and with her back turned, turned her head to the side, and sincerely spoke; "It is a pleasure of mine to be riding with one of my dearest friends today. I'll be waiting outside of this room. This doesn't imply I'm in a hurry. Take your time in selecting what outfit you'd like."

Krissy gently opened and shut the door.

It took Megan three seconds to recover.

Since the first time Megan rode with Krissy; Megan dreamed of wearing the same type equestrian gear Krissy wore. Megan glanced in all three bags. It was obvious Krissy spent a lot of money and gave her servant specific instructions. The bags contained: three different pairs of breeches, two different styles of boots, five different shirts, five belts, and there were two different helmets.

Megan laid out all these items on the bed with the intention of picking out one outfit. It was obvious to Megan; Krissy had two styles in mind. One of the styles was an athletic look and the other was a western look. Megan liked both of these styles. Megan quickly stepped over to her large duffel bag and took out: a sports bra, boyshort panties, and thick socks. She changed out of her pajamas and neatly placed them into a plastic bag she reserved for dirty clothes. She changed into her undergarments and quickly went to choose the outfit she would keep.

She first tried on all three breeches. She liked each, but each pair was tighter than any pair of pants she ever wore. Megan missed how these breeches gave her what she termed, her "uncomfortable feelings". She missed this feeling because: she was unable to recognize the level of her sexual arousal, how excited she was to receive this gear, and how excited she was to go riding.

She was torn between a khaki colored traditional pair of breeches and a pair of dark blue pair of rider jeans. She decided to go with the third pair. She picked out a full seat breech with knee pads. By the tag the color was titanium; but to Megan they appeared to be a dark gray on the front and sides, but on the seat and inside were a denim material. Krissy picked

this pair believing Megan would look attractive, but never suspected Megan would actually like this pair. Megan was torn between two tops. One was a red tweed western style shirt. The other was a blue polo shirt with white short sleeves; with a white and red strip down the left side. Megan felt both would match the pair of breeches she chose.

Megan opened the bedroom door slightly, "Would it be alright if I picked two shirts?"

Krissy smiled and answered, "You may select all of the items."

Megan answered, "I ain't needing everything."

"Y'all are under no obligation to leave anything behind."

Megan answered, "Thank-you."

Megan shut the door.

Krissy smiled to herself. Krissy was confident Megan would only take what she needed; if Megan selected every item Krissy would have felt she helped a friend.

Megan looked at the different styles boots. One was an expensive red and black pair of cowgirl boots and the other were Victorian leather boots. Megan inspected this same pair of cowgirl boots at a mall in Boca Roton. She was unsure if the black pair were as expensive, but because Megan knew how expensive the cowgirl boots were, she picked the black leather Victorian style boots. She was unaware the Victorian style were far more expensive. Megan was surprised on how much she liked the look and feel of the boots.

Megan grabbed a leather reversible belt. One she could wear anywhere and felt it went with her outfit today. She slipped this on and quickly grabbed a plain gray helmet. She: neatly folded up all the clothes, she placed the boots back into the box, as instructed she neatly placed them into the bags, she set the bags onto the bed, she placed the other helmet on top of one of the bags, and headed toward the bedroom door. When Megan opened the door Krissy was patiently waiting for her. Krissy was correct in believing it would be a short wait. Megan felt the twenty minutes getting ready was a long time.

"Like Y'all instructed I left the other clothes on the bed."

Krissy mentioned, "You are welcomed to keep them all?"

Megan already felt like she was taking advantage of Krissy and was unsure of how to reply.

Krissy smiled, "Don't fret. Whatever clothes you leave behind we'll give to my girls."

This comment puzzled Megan.

"Girls in trouble come to the ranch and ride our horses."

"Okay," Megan replied pleased the clothes were being given to young women in need. She was unable to contain her feeling, "It's a good thing helping others."

Krissy smiled and asked, "Lets go. Lets be quiet until we leave this floor."

Megan produced her big dimple smile.

She whispered back, "Your guests need their rest."

They smiled.

Megan followed Krissy.

Krissy's family called this place a ranch, but Megan felt this was a mansion. Krissy's parents wealth came from different sources: they were successful horse breeders, Krissy's dad was heavy into finance, Krissy's father's family originally acquired their wealth before the civil war, and Krissy's mother's family was from a southern aristocrat family from before the founding of the United States. Krissy's fathers family lost most of their fortune during the Civil War, and regained it after Krissy's Great, Great, Grandfather had taken one risk in finance

after the Civil War. This risk paid off; the Great, Great, Grandfather kept building upon the profits and assets of this one risky venture. This tradition of building upon assets continued with the Great Grandfather, Krissy's Grandfather, and increased with Krissy's father. Krissy's family was one of the most powerful in the state of Florida. He was very influential in the south, and when Krissy's father visited New York he was given special treatment.

Megan asked once they were walking down the stairs and away from the guest rooms, "Isn't it early?"

Krissy smiled, "I do recall a certain gal getting up early to exercise. I thought it was my turn to return the favor."

Megan smiled her big dimple smile.

She replied, "It seems fair to me."

Krissy glanced back with a smile. They stepped into a very large and fancy living room, Krissy stopped Megan and said; "Excuse me."

Megan watched Krissy step over to an assistant dusting the room. Megan watched closely. In the past there was an obvious tension between the staff and Krissy, but this tension was no longer there. When Krissy stepped next to this Latino servant: they smiled at one another, it was obvious this woman thanked Krissy, Krissy made a comment, they again smiled at one another, the Latino woman even touched Krissy on the arm, when Krissy stepped away from the servant, the servant went back to dusting; Megan noticed a legitimate smile on this servant's face.

Krissy walking toward Megan felt she looked attractive in the breeches. Krissy had always been jealous of Megan's athletic frame and her legs; it was easy for Krissy to notice Megan's toned backside. Krissy thought about the many hours she spent trying to get her flat butt into any sort of shape. Krissy was jealous of Megan's rear end.

Megan caught Krissy's odd look.

"Maybe I should change out of these?"

"You look wonderful."

Megan doubted her friend, "I ain't used to wearing clothes this tight. I should change."

Krissy reassured her, "You look attractive. I'm sure a guy would think so."

Megan's dimples flashed.

Blushing she said, "I catch both Guys and lesbians checking my backside."

They started to walk to the back of this large ranch.

"I'm sure they do."

Megan stopped, "I'm needing to change."

Krissy grabbed Megan, people never did this, "No. There ain't anything wrong with what you are wearing. It isn't inappropriate and you look attractive."

Megan yanked her arm away.

They stared at one another.

Firm but far from an angry tone Krissy stated, "You are confident in everything you try. Why are you so unconfident when it comes to your looks? You are an attractive woman."

Megan's dimples flashed.

Megan answered with a downtrodden tone, "I ain't pretty like Y'all are."

"Of course your not."

Megan's dimples flashed,

"I was feeling you'd changed."

Krissy stated sternly but with a touch of caring, "What I'm meaning. Is you are attractive all on your own. You can't be attractive like me. Or like Breanne or like a supermodel."

"I'm aware of how I look. Why are Y'all being so negative? It's hard enough trying to get a guy to like me."

Krissy said very gently, "It simply ain't true."

Megan crunched her jaw.

Her dimple's flashed.

"All they like is my rear end. Or they're wanting me to have sex."

"There were many guys in college who found you attractive but you didn't notice because you never believed you were attractive. I'm saying from my heart. You are an attractive gal."

Megan wanted to believe her but this was difficult for her to believe.

Her dimples flashed.

"Guys are always thinking about sex."

"I ain't looking for sex."

Krissy maintained her southern charm, "It ain't what I'm meaning. What I'm saying is every guy thinks about sex. But I'm sure there is a guy who will respect your boundaries. Every person thinks about sex. The question isn't if he will be thinking about sex will he be respectful or won't he be respectful."

Megan's dimples flashed.

She would think about this.

Krissy spoke before Megan would say anything, "Let's go riding? I ain't into fighting anymore. I will if necessary but I ain't one to start something."

Megan's dimples flashed.

Megan in a tone of sorrow commented, "You wonder what we could've accomplished if we'd worked together instead of fighting one another."

Krissy acknowledged, "I've felt we would've won more championships."

Both contemplated their actions as teammates. Both learned a great deal from what they felt were failures. In silence Megan followed Krissy out of the house. The sun was just making its way above the horizon. Megan loved how the sun glistened over the rolling hills, the corralled horses, and the structures supporting the horses. Krissy slowed up so the two could walk next to one another.

Krissy pointed to a small area where there was a mare and a colt, "You see the colt?"

"It's pretty."

"Father says it'll win the Kentucky Derby one day."

"I hope it wins."

Megan smiled when the colt started running around the mare for absolutely no reason.

Krissy remarked, "It's tough getting horses into the derby and losing."

"Before we won the softball tournament we lost twice in the playoffs and lost the championship." Megan added, "Y'all remember how it felt to win it?"

Krissy did remember.

They looked at one another and smiled.

Krissy pointed to her right, "They're waiting over there."

Megan just followed and felt compelled to say, "Nicole says the same thing."

"She's your Sister-in-law?"

"She's married to my brother Jimmy."

Krissy remembered Nicole being very protective of Jimmy when she met Megan's family on Thanksgiving.

"Is she getting on well?"

"Yes she is."

"How is your family getting on?"

Megan was shocked Krissy asked a question related to her family. In all the time Megan knew Krissy anytime the subject of family came up Krissy would become visibly upset. Megan told Krissy of recent family news, both positive and negative, and Megan was delighted Krissy listened. To Megan this was even a better conversation than the night before.

When they reached the stable a ranch hand, an older black gentleman, who had worked for the family as long as Krissy could remember approached these two women.

Megan produced a big dimple smile, she remembered Walter, "Howdy Walter."

"Howdy Ms. Megan."

He tipped his hat toward Megan.

Megan answered, "Y'all didn't forget me?"

"I ain't forgetting Krissy's truest friend. Ain't that so Ms. Krissy?"

Krissy blushed but spoke, "Megan is indeed a trusted friend."

"Ms. Megan. Y'all are a delightful child to see this morning." With this he turned to look at Krissy and became serious, "I sees the two horses are tied and saddled. I'm assuming it's Y'all riding this morning? Ms. Krissy I'd been more than happy to escort Y'all to the horses."

Krissy winked.

"I was under the assumption you retired."

This southern black man, who's skin had been touched by the sun, and felt he'd had a good life answered, "I've been working around here since your father was just a grasshopper. I ain't working like I did in my younger days." He looked over at Megan, "It ain't cause I'm a lazy. Y'all hear me?"

"I'm sure your not."

Megan shown her big dimple smile.

"It's just I ain't a youngin' anymore. But no body is telling me I ain't working."

Krissy smiled, "Did you check the horses?"

"Yes Ms. Krissy as always you saddled em' good. I knows' you don't like me checking on what Y'all are doing but we're not wanting any more scares around here."

Megan wondered what this was.

Krissy was embarrassed he mentioned anything but with confidence said, "I've changed and continue changing."

"This I knows," this seventy something year old man said. "I'm saying it for Ms. Megan here. She cared about you more than any of the others. You knows' how I knew?"

Megan and Krissy looked puzzled.

"Ms. Krissy," he glanced at the two of them with love and seriousness, "Ms. Megan was the only one to give Y'all a hard time a'bout the way Y'all were living. It ain't living to be drinking and carousing. It took you from being a girl with promise to something awful. You knows this cause I've told you this before."

"I was awful before I started to drink."

In a serious tone he answered, "When a child is treated like a princess and gets everything she's asking for sometimes a child ain't knowing' any better. But you've grown up. Y'all are becoming the woman who'll run this here place. I'm betting Y'all run this place better than anyone else who's ever run it before. That's what I'm thinking. Ms. Krissy Y'all understanding what I'm telling Y'all?"

Krissy looked at him and she didn't know what to say.

Megan in an encouraging way spoke, "I ain't the only friend who cared for her."

"You have it wrong Ms. Megan. You were her friend not for all the things she has. Nor did you ever ask her or her folks for anything. You were her friend 'cause you just were trying to be her friend. Yes Ms. Megan. This is what old Walter thanks."

Krissy and Megan looked at one another.

He smiled, then became serious again, "You ladies be safe now. You hearing me? I'm certain you two gals are wanting to push them horses. I ain't wanting to see any of you gals getting hurt."

Krissy answered, "We'll be okay."

Walter tipped his hat toward Megan and said, "It's been a pleasure talking to Y'all. I'm seeing Y'all are growing to be a fine woman." He put his hat on straight, "I guess I've been keeping Y'all from riding. I'm needing to move on along. I have work to do. You two ladies keep on the trails."

He started to whistle as he headed over to where the mare and colt were.

As the two ladies walked toward their horses they both were admiring the morning and both were thinking about Walter's comments. Krissy admired how Megan treated people of different races. Their friend Crystal could testify to this; as well as many of the minority students who were acquainted with Megan. More than a few Caucasian people ended up with Megan in their face for being prejudice. Krissy witnessed a time when Megan even backed down a group of three intense rednecks. Megan taught Krissy a lot about her own personnel attitudes toward other races and the servants the family hired. Her family never considered themselves prejudice, but because of Megan, Krissy's eyes were open to how her family needed some enlightenment. Because of Megan, she herself changed her attitude to all of the workers on the ranch; this included the Caucasian ones as well.

Krissy suggested, "Lets get some water."

Megan agreed, "I could use a drink."

Krissy took Megan to the end of one of the longer stables. Megan spotted an attractive ranch hand pulling a horse out of a stable. He acknowledged Krissy and Krissy acknowledged him. Megan found herself looking at his private area; she wondered what it looked like. She felt guilty for this.

Krissy led them in front of two vending machines, one was an old nineteen fifties Coke machine. Megan loved how it served the old fashioned glass bottles. Next to this antique machine was a modern vending machine. Krissy hit a button on this new machine and a bottled water dropped out.

Megan mentioned, "I've always loved the antiques your Daddy buys."

"Father sure enjoyed it when you asked him where he acquired them," Krissy commented, "We're sick of hearing about antiques and auctions. Mother no longer accompanies Father on his excursions." Krissy made a face, "I'd be lying if I didn't tell. She does look at the antiques being listed and if she's interested she'll be right in there with him."

Megan's dimples flashed.

Megan would have given anything to attend an auction where the auction was filled with priceless art and antiques worth millions of dollars. Megan was sure she would never be able to afford an auction like this, but she learned a lot about auctions and antiques talking to Krissy's Daddy.

"Let's get riding."

Megan asked, "Is three enough?"

"It's a good trail. We'll be back before it gets to hot. If you'd like a couple more take them."

Megan selected a couple more. Watching Megan, Krissy decided to take a few more as well. The bottles thudded when they hit the bottom of the machine.

Krissy led Megan toward the two horses she saddled before anyone was awake.

Megan spotted the two mares tied to the corral. There was a beautiful brown horse with a white nose. The other horse was white with small black spots and had a black nose. Krissy was a very experienced rider and could easily ride fast and aggressive. Krissy's plan was to spend a leisurely time riding with a friend who gave her forgiveness the night before. Krissy felt Megan was one of the few friends she could confide in. The only friends from college who knew what happened to Krissy was Marcy and Breanne. The only reason Marcy knew about what happened to Krissy was because Marcy and her boyfriend from college moved to Ocala. This boyfriend moved back to Orlando, soon after Marcy met a local; this was the man she was marrying later in the day.

When they reached the horses Krissy turned to Megan. Megan was balancing most of the bottled waters. Krissy appreciated this. Very gently Krissy greeted each horse. She spoke to Megan, "You have a fine horse. She's good for beginners and intermediate riders."

Megan smiled. "I like riding. I ain't as good at riding horses as I'm good at sailing vessels. Until yesterday it was a long time since I went riding."

Krissy recognized how Megan changed, in the past Megan would have acted over confident.

Krissy stepped in front of Megan and grabbed a few of the bottles. In a serious tone asked, "You have any questions? Do you remember everything?"

"We went riding yesterday so I remember some, but I like walking em' first."

Krissy agreed, "It ain't a bad idea."

Megan watched Krissy place the water bottles in a pouch on the saddle. Megan: drank the water out of one of her bottles and then placed the rest in a pouch attached to her own saddle. After this Megan watched how Krissy untied the horse and watched how Krissy walked it. Megan knew she needed to be confident with her spotted horse, so she continued to duplicate everything Krissy was doing; this helped Megan's confidence. Krissy stopped both of them, she took out a water bottle, and then continued to lead them.

Krissy instructed after taking a drink, "We're headed on a trail we take my girls on."

"Y'all were saying they're girls in trouble?"

Megan was behind Krissy, both horses were to their right, and they walked single file.

"They're at risk teenage girls or girls staying at the juvenile hall in Ocala."

Megan was impressed.

Krissy commanded both horses to stop. Krissy padded her horse. Very seriously she told Megan. "I convinced Father to bring em' here. I'm preparing a few horses we can't be

racing for therapeutic riding.”

“Who would be riding?”

“There's a group home for mentally challenged kids in Ocala.”

Megan smiled her big dimple smile.

Krissy looked down, padded her horse, and gave both horses the command to walk. Krissy and Megan walked in silence for a short distance. The horses on the other hand made horse noises. During this walk Megan started to feel a little flush and slightly agitated. She was unsure of exactly why.

Krissy commanded the horses to stop.

She turned and looked at Megan, “Are you feeling comfortable enough to start riding?”

With confidence Megan answered, “Of course.”

Megan mounted her horse exactly like Krissy did.

Krissy turned and asked Megan, “Y'all ready?”

“I'm ready.”

Krissy smiled as they started to move forward. They were single file moving at a safe pace. This was the perfect horse for Megan. The horse knew the path well. Megan loved riding. This particular time, for whatever reason, she felt an extra heightened awareness as they headed along the trail.

To Megan, central Florida was far different from living on the coast: the land seemed to roll, there seemed to be open space every where, the vegetation was different, and the wildlife was different. Megan enjoyed visiting central Florida, and had an appreciation for this part of the state, but she would never consider moving away from the ocean.

Megan was completely enjoying the ride. It seemed to her the horse was gliding and she felt as though she was on an adventure. She imagined herself a woman sheriff in the old west. She pictured herself wearing jeans, a cowgirl shirt, a scarf, a hat, and cowgirl boots. She was reminded of the old western movies her Daddy would watch. She imagined being the most feared woman in the west, able to shoot, track, fight, and even tie up a criminal. The idea of being a hero in the old west seemed very exciting to her. It had been years since she allowed herself to imagine such things. She started to imagine herself being the Sheriff leading a posse.

Krissy interrupted Megan's imagination, “Father was impressed with how well you handled the charter. He wanted me to inform you he's interested in scheduling another.”

Megan had to focus, “Would it be professional or private?”

“I'm unsure. Father never disclosed this.”

Megan with confidence informed Krissy, “I'll look up your father's number and give him a call.”

“Are able to handle Father's friends?”

Megan feeling a little bold, answered; “Just remind your father I'm a bad ass woman who's a crack shot.”

Krissy made a quick glance back.

This was the first time she ever heard Megan swear.

Krissy yelled, quickly looking forward, “Are Y'all feeling okay?”

Megan answered honestly, “I'm feeling a little flush. But I'm feeling great.”

“Are you feeling you are coming down with something?”

“I ain't believing so.”

Megan's dimples flashed.

Krissy turned around to look at her.

Megan answered, "Don't Y'all worry. I'm really enjoying the ride."

Megan: felt she might be getting a little dehydrated, she was feeling flush, and she was feeling what she could only term as funny. She grabbed a water bottle and took a drink and put the water bottle back. With this movement her whole body tingled in a way it never had before.

"Y'all still own your collection of guns?"

Megan needed to concentrate on the question. "I have guns hiding in my charter in case anyone is thinking of boarding my charter. I feel it's my responsibility to protect my passengers and crew."

Krissy teased, "Two is a collection," before Megan could respond she added, "Father would be pleased if you asked him about his antique guns."

Megan imagined Krissy's father trying to seduce her. Megan secretly found older gentleman appealing. This was the first time in her life she imagined an older man such as Krissy's father seducing her; this idea was very uncomfortable for Megan.

Megan commented, "Don't Y'all remember?"

"What should I be recalling?"

"Your Daddy cornered me for a whole afternoon."

"I don't seem to remember."

"It was on one of those weeks I was up here. He kept testing my knowledge off weapons."

Krissy glanced back due to Megan's odd tone, Krissy thought Megan looked odd but shrugged it off, and again looked ahead on the trail.

"I'm surprised you ain't remembering your Daddies reaction to how well I could shoot."

Krissy remembered and laughed, "Its your fault he cornered you."

"How's it my fault?"

"You complimented Father on the antiques and you decided to observe my father and brother skeet shoot."

Megan pictured herself as the cowgirl; but this time she was wearing an all black outfit. Based upon how rude her Brother acted she'd tie him up. This thought added to the enjoyment of the ride.

Megan's dimples flashed.

She felt so flush.

Megan with passion stated, "Your brother was bragging on how great a shot he was."

Krissy smiled, "I'm told my Brother is a most excellent shot. I've witnessed him bringing home trophies. He goes to many skeet shooting competitions."

Megan took a very serious tone, "He ridiculed me when I mentioned I was interested in shooting with them."

Krissy replied in a playful tone, "How would have he known you're an expert."

In a tone Megan answered, "I told em'."

Krissy smiled at Megan's quick reply and yelled back to Megan, "He was interested in dating Y'all. Until you made a spectacle out of him."

Megan felt embolden, "I was liking' him until he became angry I was shooting' better. He was the one sending them disks out faster."

Krissy asked with a smile, "You could've lost on purpose?"

"Why would anyone lose on purpose?"

"So a guy will like Y'all."

"A gentleman takes losing well. I'm understanding being frustrated at losing but a gentleman doesn't get angry and act foolish."

Megan believed this statement with all of her heart.

"Up ahead let's stop and talk a bit."

Megan never felt the way she was feeling, she wanted to press on, but she stopped without complaint. Krissy's horse was accustomed to stopping at this particular clearing. Megan led the horse next to Krissy. Once there Megan could understand why her friend stopped here. In front of them was a flat beautiful meadow. In the distance was the fence line of another ranch. Once stopped the horses made typical horse noises and ate the grass in front of them. Both Krissy and Megan took out their water bottles and enjoyed the water.

Megan was feeling odd: she felt warm and flush.

They enjoyed a couple more drinks.

Krissy broke the silence by saying, "I was impressed when you left the club."

Megan studied her friends facial expression.

"Why?"

"Leaving the club took courage."

"I'm believing I shouldn't have stepped into the place."

Krissy replied, "Our friends really were pressuring you to go in. I apologize I didn't stop them."

"I'm the one who decided to go in. It ain't right to blame someone else."

The horses moved a little, made noses, stomped their feet; and they continued to eat the grass in front of them. Megan felt an odd tingling go through her body. When the horse went back to standing still the tingling stopped.

Megan asked, "May I ask Y'all something?"

"Sure."

"Y'all won't make fun of me?"

Krissy answered in a serious tone, "I ain't finding it fun ridiculing people."

Megan heard the honest tone.

Megan took a deep breath and admitted, "I wanted to see what a penis looked like."

Krissy took the tone of a counselor and mentioned, "With you being a straight gal wanting to see what men look like nude is normal. It's shocking seeing one for the first time."

Megan blushed, "Was it obvious?"

It was impossible for Krissy to refrain from smiling, "Yes."

Megan felt awkward.

Krissy comforting her friend spoke from her heart, "I think about the different men I slept with."

Krissy paused and looked out over the field.

Megan could hear the pain and wisdom in her friends voice.

"I regret sleeping around. I'm a lady who likes sex but I'd give anything to have my virginity back."

Megan's dimples flashed

Megan asked sincerely, "Am I a prude for wishing I never went in? If asked again I'd

say no?"

"I was happy when you left. Sex for me is now only for the man I love."

Megan's dimples flashed.

Krissy studied her friends look.

Krissy guessed at the question her friend was afraid to ask, "There are big ones and small ones. Some gals like big ones. Most won't be as big as the ones we were seeing last night."

Megan's dimples flashed.

She blushed.

Krissy gently continued, "I've been with both big ones and small ones. I'll confess I ain't a fan of real small ones. No matter what the size it ain't fun when they're trying to jam it in when you ain't ready."

Megan's dimples flashed.

There was a moment of silence.

It took some bravery but Megan asked, "What's small?"

Right after the question Megan blushed.

Krissy answered, "An average cock is about five to six inches hard."

This concerned Megan. The guys from the previous night were all larger than the average. Megan felt her mental picture of what a man's ideal size was tainted by what she witnessed the night before. She felt this was no different to when a guy looked at pornographic material and came to the conclusion all women should have big breasts.

Megan stated, "I ain't liking the place."

Krissy understood why Megan was feeling guilty.

"I enjoy looking at an attractive naked man. This ain't meaning I should have went into the place either. To be honest I wanted to see. Once in I was questing why I went in."

This time they both blushed. They took another drink of their water and looked out over the field.

The horses again made noise and moved slightly, but continued to eat the grass around them.

Krissy felt the need to clarify, "The difference is I only want to see Ralph's cock. I no longer have any interest in watching' porn."

Megan could see Krissy turn red with embarrassment, Krissy warned Megan, "No matter how curious you get don't start viewing' it. It's just as addicting as drinking'."

Megan was unsure of how to answer this comment.

"I'm grateful you never said anything to anyone," Krissy recalling an incident when Megan entered their apartment without knocking. "I'm a different person now. I feel compelled to thank a friend for shaking me out of bed when I was on hangovers and ask me to go work out."

"It ain't nothing."

"Without you pushing me I'd never graduated."

"I wasn't pushing Y'all. Y'all were pushing yourself. You were just thinking it was me."

Krissy smiled and gave Megan a look of respect.

Megan returned this look with a big dimple smile.

Megan broke the silence, "It sure is peaceful."

"It's my place when I'm feeling the world is crashing in on me. I've found I like praying

when I come out here.”

The only reason Krissy mentioned prayer was because she was talking to Megan.

“God's always listening no matter where Y'all are praying.” Megan added, “I feel the same peace when I'm standing on my charter during sunrise or sunset. Many times I find myself praying there too.”

Megan could feel Krissy was about to tell her something very personal.

Megan pet the horse when it made noise and stomped it's hoof. It went back to eating grass.

Krissy gained her courage and spoke from the heart, “I'm not the same person I was in college.”

Megan mentioned, “I'm seeing Y'all have made some positive changes.”

Megan's dimples flashed.

Krissy thought for a bit, took a deep breath and said, “I'm an alcoholic and I have to watch myself so I don't turn into a sex addict. I went to treatment and I'd take everything back.”

Krissy prepared for Megan to reject her.

“Y'all are a better person because of it. It takes courage to change. I admire Y'all for going to treatment. I'm assuming it took courage to admit Y'all had a problem. Just you stay sober now. Here?”

Krissy smiled, “One day at a time.”

Megan respected this statement and was sincerely happy for her friend.

With Megan being so positive Krissy decided to tell Megan the lowest point in her life. “I've been sober for two years. I was arrested for drunk driving twice. The second time I was so drunk I couldn't stop and hit a car.”

Krissy looked down at the grass and patted her horse. What Krissy liked most about her horses, was they loved her for loving them, and they were never worried about her past mistakes.

“Luckily no one was killed.”

Megan recognized this was an unpleasant memory.

Krissy shifted in her saddle, the leather made noise; “I'm on probation. If I brake probation I'll get five years at Mid-state”

Mid-state was the name of one of four woman's correctional institutions in Florida, Mid-state was in the town of Ocala.

“I didn't decide to become clean and sober because of the probation. I'm clean and sober because I just about killed a five year old little girl and a three year old boy.” She wiped away tears from her cheek. “The little girl ain't the same. If it wasn't for Fathers money I'd be living in Mid-State. But no amount of money will fix the little girl. I'm making sure she's being provided for.”

She no longer could hold back her tears.

“There ain't a day.”

She paused.

Heavy tears.

She managed to say, “I don't think about how I'm able to walk and ride and the little girl is...”

Tears.

Megan could feel they were real tears of remorse.

"I'm grateful the family is still alive."

Megan could see the pain in Krissy's eyes, "Y'all are taking responsibility for what happened and turning this into a positive. Many would be blaming others."

"I could've killed them," Krissy stated removing the tear tracks from her face. "The little girl forgave me. But it ain't fixing her legs."

More tears.

Through tears Krissy asked, "Are Y'all still my friend?"

Megan's dimples flashed.

"Why wouldn't I be your friend?"

"I lost many when I was in county for six months. Father said I needed to learn. In my circles I'm an outcast. Many won't even talk to me. I'm grateful for the ones who've been loyal."

"Look at what Y'all are doing for them gals. I like you better now. I ain't saying it's good the little girl was hurt. It pains my heart when things like this happen but Y'all have learned. Many people, even after something like this happens never learn. I'm glad I ain't having this conversation with you in the visiting center at Mid-State."

"You'd have visited me?"

"If Y'all would have wrote me I'd have visited Y'all. Y'all are my friend. I know we ain't always getting along but that ain't meaning I ain't calling Y'all a friend."

This meant a great deal to Krissy and more tears fell. She again tried to wipe away the evidence of her tears.

With some regret and some relief, "Father made sure the accident was never reported in the media."

Megan wondered how much he paid to keep them quiet.

Krissy all at once asked, "You see the fence?"

Megan answered, "Yes."

"I bet I get there first!"

Krissy: yelled a command, kicked her horse, and the horse took off.

Megan looked at Krissy's horse run straight ahead. Megan would do her best to win. Megan loved running horses at a full gallop. She remembered doing so at her Best Friends Ranch when she was a kid. This was an exhilarating experience. She kicked her horse, gave the same command as Krissy; and Megan was now in the race.

Krissy easily could have out ran Megan's horse, but this was far from Krissy's intention. She just wanted Megan to feel the adrenaline of a full gallop. In the past Krissy resented Megan for treating her the same as everyone else; this was now an immense blessing. The worst six months of her life were the six months she served in county jail; county jail was a completely different world from the one she was accustomed too. With the memories of prison always on the surface, it felt good to run the horse with someone she considered a faithful and true friend.

Megan never felt such exhilaration in all her life. She loved the feel and power of this horse. Her: body was tensing up, she felt her breasts tighten, she felt herself becoming flush, and she felt as though she was on fire.

Krissy let Megan get ahead of her. Krissy wanted to make sure their speeds were safe for Megan's riding experience. Krissy was impressed with how well Megan was riding her

horse.

Megan's: athletic ability, her stamina, and strength were helping her ride her horse with grace and agility.

Krissy smiled when she saw the fence line. Krissy was about to pass Megan, but she caught the glimpse of Megan's body start to twitch and shake; this concerned Krissy.

Megan never felt so alive. Megan could feel how her whole body was in tune with itself. The breeches felt awesome against her skin. Megan could see the fence line approaching. Due to the fact she was riding on the horse, instead of being by herself, this caused her body to reach a point of no return.

It Hit!

Pandora's Box Shattered.

The first wave shook her body violently. Luckily for Megan she was athletic and could handle multiple physical reactions at once. Megan was fortunate Krissy chose one of the best riding horses on the ranch; otherwise Megan would have been thrown off. Megan's natural balance kept her on the horse. Out of pure athleticism she was able to slow the horse down, get it's head back into a safe position, the horse yelled in protest; with it being an excellent horse it maintained it's balanced and slowly came to a stop. When the horse stopped Megan fell upon the horse.

Falling upon the horse caused another wave to hit. Megan: tensed her body, she stood up, her legs squeezed the horse, Megan was again lucky she was on a good horse, and again she shook violently.

Krissy was already slowing her horse as she passed her. The horse easily stopped. Krissy turned it around and approached Megan. While Krissy approached Megan she recognized what happened to her friend. This was far from the first time she witnessed a woman have an orgasm while riding a horse. Krissy suspected this was Megan's first orgasm.

When the pulsating stopped. Megan felt a relief she never experienced before and again collapsed on the horse.

It was never Megan's intent to have an orgasm this way. Having an orgasm on her own would have been difficult for Megan because of a misunderstanding of what a true orgasm was. She was fortunate to have this experience. This orgasm happened due to a series of accidental influences: the first influence was the healthy decision to start writing in her journal, the second influence was the lifelong feelings she received from wearing certain clothes, the third influence was Krissy's generosity in buying Megan the clothes she wore riding, a large influence was when Megan picked out the tightest pair of breeches, and the final influence was riding on the horse. The one negative influence was the male strip club. Because of the positive influences she was destined to have an orgasm while riding this horse on this particular day. The strip clubs influenced forced her Pandora's box of sexual tension to crack and ooze out. It was true these issues were starting to leak out, but Megan would have slowly dealt with each issue in a healthy pace. Instead: her Pandora's box of sexual emotions and desires exploded.

As Krissy approached Megan she was grateful neither rider or horse were hurt.

Megan exclaimed, "Oh My!"

Krissy smiled.

It was obvious Megan was a disheveled mess.

A rush of conflicting emotions filled Megan's soul. She: wanted to do it again, felt

guilty, felt strange for having an orgasm on a horse, recognized part of the pleasure was her breeches, all of those “odd” feelings she received wearing clothes were sexual in nature, again wanted another orgasm, felt embarrassed in having one in front of Krissy, was grateful she was still on top of the horse, wondered if she could somehow repeat this feeling by herself, felt terribly guilty for wanting to produce this feeling herself, had the desire of mounting a guy, reminded herself she would remain a virgin, her mind flashed images of what she witnessed the night before, felt guilty for having this images, recognized why her college friends talked about masturbation, understood why Krissy did so often; overall she felt overwhelmed by all of these emotions.

Megan's dimples flashed.

She was still breathing heavy, and again exclaimed; “Oh my!”

Megan looked up as Krissy maneuvered her horse next to hers. Megan was fortunate to have this happen in front of the changed Krissy instead of the immature drunk Krissy.

Megan was suddenly afraid Krissy would tease her.

“I...”

Megan was unable to finish the sentence.

Krissy somehow kept herself from laughing. It was so obvious this was her first orgasm. Krissy in a gentle tone said, “It appears you had your first orgasm.”

Megan was grateful for this confirmation but was still feeling a lot of conflicting emotions.

“When the waves stop and you’ll get back to normal.”

As Megan's body and breathing went back to normal she was able to slow down her racing mind and managed to say; “I’m a freak.”

In a calming tone Krissy stated, “Y’all ain’t a freak.”

Megan’s dark blue eyes, that sometimes appeared plum were wide eyed. “I had an orgasm.”

“Yes you did.”

Still with the same wide eyed look, “But on a horse??!”

“Yes, You’ve just had an orgasm while riding a horse.”

“I’m a freak.”

“Your fine. You ain’t the first gal to have an orgasm riding a horse.”

“I ain’t.”

“Nope.”

“Oh no.”

Krissy watched in confusion as Megan jumped off the horse and went running behind a tree.

Megan yelled, “Stay there.”

Krissy yelled, “Watch for snakes!”

Megan was grateful for this reminder.

Krissy imagined racing Megan to the ranch because she was bitten by a poisonous snake.

Krissy stepped off her horse and checked on Megan's horse. She: pet Megan's horse, talked to it gently, and gave the horse a treat for adapting to Megan's sudden change in riding style.

Megan came out from behind the tree feeling guilty and embarrassed.

Krissy smiled as Megan approached her.

"I apologize."

Krissy answered, "There isn't anything you need to apologize for. You ain't the first woman to have an orgasm while riding a horse and you won't be the last."

Again her eyes went large, "I had an orgasm."

Krissy smiled, "Be glad you can have em'. There are women who never learn to take it over the hump."

Megan blushed.

Still in an odd voice, "I thought I did. I tried it. It was boring. I just had my first orgasm?"

Krissy was laughing on the inside but maintained her southern dignity, "Before we have a real one sometimes we believe we had one either by ourselves or with a partner. Many times we're stopping before we take it over the edge. I'm sure masturbating was boring for you?"

Megan blushed.

Her dimples flashed.

Krissy whispered, "It's because you were stopping to soon."

Megan wanted to ask a bunch of questions but the questions became tied up in her mind.

"But..."

Krissy smiled, "It'd be normal if right now you want to give yourself another one. It's normal if you repeat what happened to you on your own. There's different ways of reaching an orgasm. Again. You should be happy you are able to have em'."

Megan's dimples flashed.

Megan could feel Krissy was trying to help her.

Krissy suggested, "Lets go back."

Megan gave Krissy a look.

Krissy smiled.

She touched her friend on the arm and promised, "I won't tell a soul."

Krissy purposefully changed subjects, "I'd like you to visit when my girls are working and riding. I feel Y'all would be a good influence. I believe it be rewarding if you volunteered with me."

Megan watched Krissy casually walk to her horse; Megan meekly followed.

Krissy mentioned, "There's a gal who's improved since she's started working here."

Megan recognized what Krissy was doing.

Megan's dimples flashed.

She asked, "How has she improved?"

The two woman smiled at one another, nodded their heads, climbed on their horses, and started back toward the ranch. Megan found Krissy to be very comforting. Riding back to the ranch Megan pinpointed the cause of her arousal; this arousal was caused by her tight breeches rubbing on the saddle and her womanhood. It took great effort on Megan's part to keep this arousal in check. Megan appreciated the fact Krissy never mentioned anything sexual.

*A*shleigh glanced over at Haley's two sons. Jack was five years old and Lance was three years

old. She watched and listened to them as they drove their Hot Wheels cars around the Hot Wheels police station, the Hot Wheels bank, and were using file folder boxes as buildings. Ashleigh was happy they were enjoying their new toys. Toys Ashleigh bought them on the way home from work the night before.

Haley, Gracie Gessler, and Ashleigh believed going over employee records on a Saturday morning was the perfect time.

Ashleigh decided to wear a brand new pair of dark blue V-cut flared jeans with stitching detail on the back pockets. She matched the V-cut jeans with a cherry colored, lightweight crewneck sweater with necklace jeweled detail. The sleeves were rolled up. Her pink summer-weight chino jacket and her purse were hanging on the back of the chair next to her. Underneath the table her brand new Nike tennis shoes were laying on the floor; exposing her pink socks.

She was delighted she could afford the outfit she was wearing. While getting ready for work she recognized: all of her old clothes were replaced, her wardrobe consisted of an array of colors and styles, she purchased these new items while keeping a budget, there were a few items she bought out of impulse; overall she was happy with her choices. At first she was annoyed at having a clothes budget. She chose a dollar amount between the amount the accountant suggested and Victoria's suggestion. Ashleigh quickly figured out this dollar amount ended her days of shopping at lower end department stores. She owned a few select items from these lower end department stores, but they were purchased on her terms, not because she had too.

Ashleigh turned away from the two boys. Behind Haley and stacked against the wall were old file folder boxes; these were the boxes they were working on. Against the wall behind Ashleigh were: new marked file folder boxes (these were slowly being filled up), a stack of unfolded file folder boxes, and a couple cases of file folders. Ashleigh glanced at the massive amount of files still piled on the long conference table. One section of stacked files were all the employees they needed to go over. The second section of stacked files were those employees who were let go or had quit since her brother took sole ownership of the company. The third pile of stacked files were those employees who were working for them until their departments moved. Another stack of files were those employees who were in the undecided category; they only had a few days left to decide. The last stack of employee files were those employees who were already hired in Florida. Just beyond these massive amount of files were: an assortment of labels, a bunch of highlighters, a bag of pens, computer paper, a printer, and a pile of markers.

Ashleigh was most concerned about those employees who decided to stay with the company. These included employees who were moving to Florida or were excluded from the move. The groups excluded from the move included: most of the trucking employees, the lumber mill employees, an advertising firm in Minneapolis, and the six employees who ran *The Renewed Mastery Art Studio* in New York. Bob personally promised the owner of the advertising firm he would keep the office open. Her brother felt having advertisers in the mid-west helped give a different perspective from the firms out on the coasts.

To Ashleigh's left was Haley and across from her was Gracie. In front of each woman were their laptops supplied by *Renewed Mastery*. These laptops were the best on the market and were maintained by the *Renewed Mastery* IT department. This department was run by a woman named Terri Green. Ashleigh felt Terri was the oddest woman she ever met. It was

obvious she was very loyal to her brother, Ms. Green made it clear she despised the corporate world, but could find it in her conscience to be loyal to Mr. Waller. What was odd about this loyalty was Bob and Ms. Green disliked one another. Ashleigh guessed the reason Ms. Green was loyal was because her brother was the only executive who would appoint her as the head of IT. This odd bond was reaffirmed when Bob completely took back his company. He gave Ms. Green a substantial raise and personally thanked her for fighting for the principles he built the company on; instead of agreeing with the group who wanted to take the company from Ashleigh's brother. No matter what the history between Bob and Ms. Green had, or how odd Ashleigh felt Ms. Green was, Ms. Green was an excellent employee.

Ashleigh's companions were reading files and comparing the files with their laptops.

Ashleigh studied the new Human Resource Manager Gracie Gessler. Gracie was a few years older than Ashleigh, she grew up in a small farming community in the north eastern corner of the State of Minnesota. Gracie: had a diamond shaped face, her long cupid lips gave her a beautiful smile, a smile Gracie was more than willing to share, her roman style nose seemed to fit her face, she had high but small cheekbones, and her rounded chin only added to her Midwestern country charm. This was the first time Gracie ever wore glasses around Ashleigh. Even behind these glasses her green eyes seemed to shine. Ashleigh was somewhat envious on how Gracie was able to take the wave out of her brunette hair and still looked attractive.

Ashleigh suspected Gracie learned how to dress while working for their advertising firm in Minneapolis. Gracie was wearing a dark blue, relaxed fit, flared tweed jean. The jean came with zipper front pockets, with matching chain link detail, and a gray outside seam. Ashleigh felt these jeans were perfect for Gracie's long legs and obvious rear end; Ashleigh was convinced Gracie focused on her butt when she worked out. Ashleigh felt Gracie's black studded boots were cute and matched her jeans. Matching these jeans and boots she was wearing a plain long sleeved, regal blue tee, with a light weight gray Henley sweater. It astounded Ashleigh on how Gracie could make her small breasts stand out while still being modest. Gracie accessorized her outfit by adding a gray and black striped scarf. Ashleigh assumed in Gracie's large purse, that hung over her chair, next to her gray cargo vest; she had a different set of tops to put on when they were done.

When Bob introduced Gracie Gessler to Ashleigh and Haley they were concerned she was being chosen because of her looks or was a secret friend of Bob. Ashleigh felt this way because he always liked a butt that had just enough padding, without being large, to fill a pair of jeans or shorts. In addition to her buttock she had the type of long athletic legs her brother admired. What was different about Gracie was her small breasts and her overall shape. Ashleigh was unable to stop herself from comparing Gracie with Patty and Shelly. When Bob and Patty were engaged Patty had a voluptuous figure. When Bob dated Shelly, she had larger breasts like Patty, but with a model type of figure. What Ashleigh suspected was a woman's breast size were of little importance to her brother or he always liked smaller breasts. Both Ashleigh and Haley were concerned Gracie was a love interest because of her: looks, age, and intelligence.

This worry was a big part of the reason these two women drilled Gracie in her interview. What made the two women feel guilty was it became clear during the interview Gracie had no interest in dating Bob. She was the type of woman they requested Bob find for a human resource manager. What Ashleigh and Haley learned during the interview was: at the

time of the interview she was an executive secretary for one of the vice presidents at the advertising company in Minneapolis, she had a business degree with an emphasis on human resources from the University of Minnesota, she had grown up on a farm, she had a large family, she was very friendly, seemed intelligent, was tough, Gracie met Bob several times when he visited the advertising firm, and he encouraged her to apply for a human resource position. Three days after the interview Ashleigh and Haley informed Gracie she was hired as the Human Resource Director of *Renewed Mastery*. It was obvious to Ashleigh and Haley, Gracie was shocked to be given this title, then she became ecstatic and promised, "You won't regret hiring me."

Ashleigh felt guilty she mistrusted her brother. Ashleigh found out during the three days before her hire: Gracie had indeed grown up on a farm, her grade point was average as she mentioned, she graduated, she never once was a director at a job, she worked her way through college, and the reason Bob wanted to hire her was based upon what he observed during his visits to the advertising firm. He would have hired her on the spot but wanted Haley and Ashleigh to interview her before he hired her. What Ashleigh learned after Gracie was hired: Gracie had trouble adjusting to the big college and city life the first two years of college, she struggled through these first two years because she wanted to inspire her four younger brothers and three younger sisters to go to college.

Bob wanted to hire Gracie based upon her character over her pedigree, and he believed she had what he called "life smarts." Life smarts was Bob's term for a person who: knew how to work, had overall life experience, and had a great deal of common sense. What Bob liked about Gracie was how she cared about people and at the same time could be very stern. To an outside observer she appeared to be overly friendly and seemed to be a person you could fool; but this was far from the truth. Haley and Ashleigh witnessed her skills in spotting a con artist several times since her hire. Since her hire she impressed Bob by her efficiency and her proactive approach; work traits he personally admired. Gracie never showed signs of being a workaholic, and she never kissed Bob's ass (as he phrased it); these were traits Bob despised.

At this moment Ashleigh was dealing with doubt and insecurity. She was with two women she felt were far more qualified than her. She felt Gracie was: attractive, friendly, smart, organized, and popular. Ashleigh felt Haley was an inspiration to all working women. Haley was: a single mother of two boys, she seemed to balance both her work life and private life, she was aware of everyone and everything going on in the company, and was a powerful influence within the company. Ashleigh recognized this by watching Bob and Haley's daily interactions. The reason Ashleigh respected this influence was because of a private chastisement Haley gave Ashleigh. Haley felt compelled to chastise Ashleigh after Haley heard Ashleigh suggested to Bob; "Haley was better qualified to overseeing the move." What Ashleigh learned was: Haley felt she had the perfect balance between work and being a mom, she liked being Bob's executive secretary, the least thing Haley wanted was a title, she felt she was paid a great wage for the work she did, she liked her job, and she acknowledged to Ashleigh she was a very powerful influence in the company. Haley believed her influence was less important the longer Ashleigh stayed on as an employee; Ashleigh was having trouble believing Haley's assessment.

At the present moment Ashleigh wished she could tap into the great reserve of confidence her brother seemed to ooze out of himself. Ashleigh witnessed her brother: in his early twenties try to get custody of her, he maintained a visitation schedule with her, he was

instrumental in getting Ashleigh moved to the Anderson household, from early on he was comfortable handling his wealth, he won a bowling tournament, he started and ran a successful club, with a partner he started his current company *Renewed Mastery*, wrote novels under an assumed name, she observed him get involved in politics, he picked himself up from what Ashleigh considered a breakdown, he then bought out the partner, while he was preparing to buy out the partner he expanded his company, and was in command of the reorganization of his company. Ashleigh was astounded on how her brother was currently handling the company and his writing.

She was thinking about her brother's actions since taking back the company. What still amazed her was how he secretly bought out his partner while expanding the company. She would never forget the day: he announced he was the soul owner of *Renewed Mastery*. Immediately after this announcement, he began to weed out of the company what he termed the "traditionalist" and "lack of vision group". Ashleigh felt her brother used wisdom, vengeance, and fairness in removing these employees. These employee's were determined to make the company a more traditional run organization. This traditional management style was one of the great irritants of her brother. He felt this traditional style of management was a byproduct of Milwaukee business culture; something her brother had very little respect for. He eventually released: the partner, four Vice presidents, a large number of middle managers, and those employees who were loyal to these middle managers. Bob felt these managers were trying to protect their jobs by: purposefully creating problems, then solving the very problems they created, they hid certain problems, they started to make overtime necessary, they were superficially making the company look more profitable, they were creating endless procedures to make certain managers appeared more important than they were, and were trying to make Bob's way of running a company ineffective. Their goal was to sell the company to a financial group funding the partner. Ashleigh was unsure of how Bob knew of this plot but was overjoyed her brother caused it to backfire.

As he was removing this group of employees from his company he systematically reinstated those policies Mr. Cooper and his middle management group removed.

What impressed Ashleigh. After her brother took complete control of the company he apologized to all of his employees for allowing a partner to even believe he could take over the company. Bob held a company wide meeting and reassured everyone what his vision and intentions were for the company. He explained his past actions in an honest and open forum. After the meeting, all employees still working for the company were given three extra days of vacation and were given a financial bonus from the company. He gave all the employees in the Wisconsin location and a few selected work sites a bonus he paid out of his own pocket. He accomplished this by giving each employee a list of gift cards. This caused Haley and Ashleigh to have a full day of: collecting, sending, and distributing these gift cards.

Ashleigh became angry anytime she thought of Mr. Cooper and how he tried to steal her brother's company. She would forgive him. This took some effort on her part, but she would never forget what he tried to do.

Not only was her brother handling the move from Milwaukee to Florida; He was ready to publish his new book in November, called, "*What was that?*" Only Ashleigh was privy to the knowledge he cranked out this book in six to seven months, a book Ashleigh felt was filled with sarcasm about the business world and people's bad intentions. What Ashleigh never told Bob was eighty percent of her decisions were the same decisions his last agent would have

made. The person Ashleigh ignored was his editor. The advantage Ashleigh had over any of Bob's past editors: she previously read all of Bob's books before Bob ever sent them to either his editor or agent, she personally knew her brother better than anyone else, Ashleigh understood what her brother meant when he wrote something unclear, she was able to correct sections in ways Bob would like, other editors become frustrated with Bob's stubbornness, Ashleigh was strong enough to challenge her brother, and most important he trusted Ashleigh. The fact Bob trusted Ashleigh made her feel special, the flip side of this, she often worried she'd disappoint him.

Her biggest fear and insecurity was not the book; it was all the secret day to day decisions she was making related to the companies move. Only Haley understood how decisions were being made. Ashleigh was given override power over the operations manager. The employees were under the impression the day to day decisions were being handled by Bob who was living in Florida and the operations manager in Wisconsin. The operations manager was bitter and angry. He was one of the few employees who were excluded from the move to Florida. In his anger he was purposely trying to slow up the moving process. What the operations manager failed to recognize was he was being over ruled not by Bob; but by Ashleigh. Ashleigh only over ruled him when she was confident all the facts about a situation or decision were given to her, and when Haley and herself were absolutely sure their solution was better. These were the times Ashleigh felt nervous and at the same time felt most appreciated. Bob himself would call the operations manager in Wisconsin and redirect the operations managers plan.

Bob hated this. The reason Bob and Haley decided to work in this secretive manner was due to their concern the operations manager would have given Ashleigh a difficult time. More important; Bob believed he should have never hired the guy. He suspected this operations manager was working with Mr. Cooper. If he could have proved it he would have fired him. He would have been let go if the company was staying in Wisconsin. Based upon Haley and Ashleigh's recommendation, Bob decided this operations manager was good enough until the company as a whole moved to Florida. Bob believed it was in his companies best interest, and the people of Eastbank, to find an operations manager who lived in or around Eastbank.

Ashleigh was worried she had picked the wrong place for her brother to live and work. Ashleigh was concerned about her brother's gypsy heart. She felt if he disliked Eastbank he would move everything again. With all of her heart, she felt if she wanted to have her brother back to the way he was, he needed to like where he lived and worked. She was overjoyed on the reports she was receiving from Eastbank: the empty building in the Eastbank industrial park Haley and herself picked out was now under reconstruction, the company purchased a total of three empty acres around this lot, they were now making three buildings into one giant complex, the company was about to purchase a small back pack internet company in a business strip mall, and the remodel of the yacht went well. What made it difficult for Ashleigh to have confidence in the reports, which included photo's, was she wanted to physically see what was happening in Florida. She often felt her brother was leaving out information related to the yacht.

Sitting at the long meeting table she again debated if she should ask Bob to come back to Wisconsin for a while. She was counting on his promised he would come up to Wisconsin if she needed anything. She would have been completely overwhelmed if it was not for: Haley, Gracie, George the transportation manager, Ralph the warehouse manager, Leah the Art

Director, and her conversations with employees. She took to heart the employees needs and concerns. The difficult part for Ashleigh was none of the *Renewed Mastery* employees knew the full extent of her decision power. The employees were under the impression she was Bob's little sister helping out Haley.

Ashleigh was staring at her laptop contemplating her next task.

Ashleigh's thoughts were broken up by Lance's quivering loud voice, "That's mine."

Haley's long bleach blond hair, which was styled very nice, bounced to the side with her quick head jerk. Her round face was very serious. Her bright blueish green eyes focused on her two children and her blond eye lashes were raised. Her Greek shaped nose flared, and her normally angelic shaped lips were contorted with frustration. She was wearing a contrast trim, white with Black trim V-neck bra top; this top supported and highlighted her round larger breasts. She matched this with a multi stripped flare legged pair of slacks; with a nice skinny belt, and black platform sandals. Haley had attractive legs and due to the type of pants she was wearing her rear end was being supported to look more full. Ashleigh felt Haley, who was in her early thirties was trying to compete with Gracie.

Haley demanded, "You two share."

Jack protested, "He always takes my cars."

Lance protested, "No I don't."

"He just wants to play with you."

Stated a mother tired of this argument.

"There is other cars he can play with."

Haley answered Jack, "He is littler. He just wants to be like his big brother."

"Yeah."

Haley responded with a, "SHH."

Brief silence.

"He should play with his own cars."

"It's my car!"

Lance tried to pull it out of his brothers hand. Jack moved the car out of his brothers reach. Lance started to cry.

With authority Haley stated, "Knock it off. If you two don't share they will all be my cars."

Lance in protest, "Ash-wee gave us cars."

"You better start to share right now or they will be my cars. When you get home Jack's cars will go into his box and Lance your cars will go into your box."

The two boys looked at her. Jack gave Lance the car in question. Getting a toy taken away from their mom was a traumatic event for both of them.

Ashleigh and Gracie glanced over at the two boys. Ashleigh wanted children some day. She promised herself she would be a better mommy than Ashley Vindavane was to her.

When Gracie looked at these two boys it reminded Gracie of her ten and eight year old brothers. They were two of the three youngest children. The youngest was a little sister. She was the oldest out of all the siblings, she had a brother one year younger, and one sister in the middle. At this moment in her life, she was glad to be away from the large family and the small town she grew up in. She worked hard to finish college and was now looking forward to an adventure in Florida.

Haley mentioned, "It's because of behavior like this that you two are no longer allowed

to play with Nikita.”

When Nikita heard her name she woke up, sat up on her rug, her chain jangled, and looked around.

Gracie waved at Nikita.

Nikita wagged her tail and ran over to the young woman. Nikita could sense Gracie was gentle. Nikita sensed Gracie's pets. Her pets included: two dogs, a cat, a bird, and rodent type of animals. Gracie was delighted to stop for a moment and pet Nikita.

Jack observing Gracie pet Nikita announced, “I want to pet Nikita.”

“Yea,” added Lance, “Me pet.”

“Maybe later.”

Haley glanced over at Ashleigh to make sure it was okay if her boys could pet Nikita. Ashleigh gave Haley a wink of yes. Ashleigh knew it was just as much Nikita's fault for how loud and wild the boys became when they first played with one another.

The two boys looked at one another and were unsure of what to do next.

Ashleigh suggested, “How about if we take a break.”

Haley reminded everyone, “Bob wants us to finish by one.”

Ashleigh in a frustrated tone proclaimed, “I wish he'd understand how much work is involved.”

Haley answered, “He's aware of how much needs to get done. In spite of what all needs to get done he hates overtime.”

Ashleigh made a face and spoke, “The only reason we're here is because I told him we needed this time to ourselves. We're interrupted all the time.”

Haley made a face, “Lets take his suggestion. If we don't get done today we lock ourselves in this room on Monday and work until it's done.”

Gracie and Ashleigh gave one another looks.

Haley commented, “He told us to delegate everything else.”

Ashleigh responded with, “Who's going to do what the three of us do?”

Haley made a face, and answered, “Lets show him by doing exactly what he says.”

“I don't feel that is exactly what he wants.”

Gracie stopping a discussion by suggesting, “Don't you know we're all getting a little stressed out? We should all get along. Let's all take a needed brake. Fighting isn't going to get us any where.”

The three ladies gave one another looks and decided this was a good idea.

Ashleigh smiled and stated, “Boys you want a snack?”

They stood up in excitement and shouted at the same time, “Yeah!”

Nikita looked over at the two boys.

Lance said, “Me thirsty.”

Gracie smiled from ear to ear.

“No soda,” like a mother Haley looked at the two younger women, “We have a lot of work to do.”

Gracie stated with a happy tone, “You betcha'. We're making progress and we're already on the W's.”

Haley reminded her co workers, “There's a couple steps after this one. We've already been here to long.”

Ashleigh answered, “We haven't forgotten.”

Jack asked, "I want a snack?"

Lance with the most pitiful face added, "I'm starving."

Haley gave her two blond haired boys a look, and gently used her hand to brush Lances blond hair up onto his head, "You two aren't starving."

Ashleigh was stretching her five foot one self, a sleeve fell, she pushed it back up when she was done. Ashleigh's long blond hair was set into a wave. With only the three of them in the building she already removed her pink socks. She felt safe walking around the company because she was staying away from the production area of the building.

Haley opened her purse and grabbed her female wallet.

Gracie grabbed her purse and flung it over her shoulder and across her chest.

While Gracie was grabbing her purse.

Ashleigh: focused her dark green eyes on her purse, she opened it, grabbed two five dollar bills, quickly handed these five dollar bills to both Jack and Lance, and told them they could use it in the cafeteria and keep the change.

Haley asked, "Why do you always pay? They're my children."

Ashleigh: used her heart shaped face, her rounded jawline, her somewhat pointed chin, and her cupid lips to sarcastically answer, "Because I can."

Haley: rolled her eyes, put her five back into her purse, and smiled.

Gracie was grateful everyone came to a quick agreement.

Ashleigh commanded, "Nikita come."

Nikita followed Ashleigh.

Lance asked, "Can I pet the dogie?"

"Later."

Haley answered with a smile.

Nikita was excited she was going for a "walk."

The five of them left the meeting room and headed to the brake room. The whole time the two little boys were talking to Ashleigh and Gracie about things important to little boys; both ladies encouraged this talk. When they reached the brake room the two boys pleaded to drink soda. Gracie out of habit: suggested milk and cookies, the boys liked this idea, she helped them put the five into a vending machine where they could get a small bottle of milk, she helped them with the change, she showed them what change they needed to buy the type of cookies they wanted from the vending machine, she prevented them from buying a candy bar, she set the boys at a table, she poured this milk into two coffee cups, she placed the two coffee cups in front of them, she gave them paper towels, she encouraged them to dip the cookies into this cup, she helped Lance put the change he had left in his front pocket, and she encouraged them by telling them they were good boys. After this Gracie selected an espresso coffee from a machine; instead of making a free cup of coffee the company provided. She stepped over to an employee refrigerator and took an apple out from her lunch bag.

Ashleigh watched this while standing in front of the vending machines. Gracie's actions reminded Ashleigh of Victoria. Nikita was being obedient by sitting next to Ashleigh. Nikita wanted the pups to drop the food she could see and smell.

Gracie holding the apple came up behind Ashleigh and gently tugged on her shirt.

Nikita stopped wagging her tail and watched this woman.

Gracie commented, "You have a very well behaved dog."

Ashleigh answered matter of fact, "We love each other."

"That's obvious to me."

Ashleigh smiled.

Nikita relaxed sensing this woman meant her master no harm.

Very sincerely Gracie mentioned, "I wanted to thank you for hiring me."

"Bob was the one who brought you in for the interview."

Gracie stated very sweetly in her Minnesota accent, "Don't you know? If you hadn't liked me Bob wouldn't have hired me."

Ashleigh never considered this.

"I'm glad I'm working here. There isn't many who'd given me the chance."

"Are you liking the job so far?"

"You betcha'," Gracie answered with a genuine smile. "I'm grateful for what you've done for me. I like your company and how you treat people."

"It's really my brothers company."

Gracie looked at her, "I thought the two of you ran it together?"

"I work for my brother."

"Oh."

Ashleigh asked curious, "Why would you think that?"

"It's seems like your making a lot of decisions. Bob likes us to be somewhat independent and gives us freedom to do what we're needing to do. What's different is he's letting you make a lot of decisions he wouldn't let others make."

Ashleigh was astounded at Gracie's observation.

Gracie smiled, "I was just letting you know I'm thankful. I'm hoping I'm doing a good job?"

Ashleigh answered honestly, "You're doing great."

Gracie's facial expression went from worry to honest joy.

The boys were talking and playing, Gracie looked over, she turned to Ashleigh and winked, "Boys will be boys."

Ashleigh responded with a smile.

Gracie turned and asked the two boys, "Are you two done?"

Jack answered for both, "Yes."

"Lets get back to your Mom."

Ashleigh stood there still trying to process everything Gracie just told her.

Gracie asked, "Are you going back?"

"I'll be right there. I have to take Nikita outside."

With the word "outside" Nikita became agitated and looked up at Best Friend.

"Don't be to long. I was gonna run some questions by ya."

Ashleigh smiled.

Gracie answered Ashleigh's smile, "I was feeling I could tell you about an idea I had and wanted to run it past Haley and you."

Gracie said this as she placed the coffee cups into the break room dishwasher.

Ashleigh instructed Lance, "Be nice to Nikita."

Jack again answered for both, "We're being nice."

Nikita enjoyed the attention from these two pups.

Ashleigh as a good pet owner watched closely.

Gracie walked up to the two boys, "You boys have been good. Lets get going. Your mom

will be waiting.”

“I’ll be in there to hear your idea.”

“You betcha.” Gracie instructed the two boys, “Let’s get to your Mom.”

Lance asked, “You like puppies?”

“Don’t you know? I have two doggies and a birdie.”

Jack answered, “Really.”

Gracie stopped and said, “I meant it. I know others wouldn’t have given me the chance your giving me.”

Ashleigh smiled back and nodded.

Jack asked, “Does your birdie talk?”

Lance quickly answered, “Nana’s talks.”

Gracie began to answer their questions and led the two boys out of the company cafeteria and back to the meeting room.

Ashleigh and Nikita stepped out of the cafeteria. They walked to the front of the building where the two of them stepped out of the building. Ashleigh was grateful it was a sunny day, it was a little cool, but overall it was a nice September day. Ashleigh watched Nikita mark a small evergreen tree growing in front of her brother’s company.

Ashleigh was taking to heart what Gracie spoke to her.

Ashleigh was feeling confident as she led Nikita back into the cafeteria.

She asked Nikita, “What should we get?”

Nikita howled.

Ashleigh bent down and pet her. Ashleigh stood up and picked out: sour cream and onion potato chips, and a soda.

“Nikita it’s a Pop.”

Nikita looked up at Best Friend. She barely recognized her fake Minnesota accent.

She would have never mocked Gracie if Gracie was there. Ashleigh felt guilty for making fun of somebody; especially someone who just helped her.

Feeling confident she headed back to the meeting room. She decided she would trust her abilities and tackle the task at hand.

End of Part One of Five

September 23, Pandora's Box Shattered

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Ashleigh & Megan *Book I: Friendship*



Saturday
September, 23

Pandora's Box
Shattered
Day Four of Book I
(3months and 22 Days Since Megan was
notified a wealthy neighbor was moving
into the marina)

Part Two of Five

Authored By:
R. P. Voght

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I hope you enjoy this pioneering format I call, "A Story Cast."

What the term "Story Cast" means; is this story is designed to be read in small to medium intervals. This particular story is broken up into "days." These portions are broken up into part or all of a particular fictitious "day" of the story. Each day surrounds the characters lives, relationships, adventures, struggles, mishaps and triumphs. This story is very different from a Novel or conventional story in many ways. Again, THIS IS NOT A NOVEL AND IS NOT WRITTEN IN A CONVENTIONAL NOVEL FORMAT. Instead; as the reader you are following the characters thoughts and actions during the course of this "day." This fiction story is set up like a TV series and or a third person journal. It always starts with one or more character getting up and ends with one or more characters going to bed; while during the day you experience the Characters actions, feelings, and their thoughts.

On a large overview; there is a beginning, a middle, and an end to this "Story Cast"

R. P. Voght

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Saturday, September 23

(3 months and 22 Days Since Megan was notified she was going to have wealthy neighbors)

Megan was taking a shower.

The plan for the rest of the day was: getting ready for the wedding, attending a brunch Krissy was hosting for everyone who stayed overnight at the ranch, the group would follow one another to the wedding, they would attend the wedding, between the wedding and the reception they would spend the time at a BBQ restaurant, after the restaurant they would attend the reception, her plan was to leave the reception early so she could get some rest before her scheduled charter the following day.

She was feeling terribly guilty.

This shower was miserable for her. This misery started the minute she took off her clothes and for the first time in her life felt the urge to masturbate; she found this impulse unnerving. Anytime she attempted masturbating in the past she felt uncomfortable. One of the reasons she felt so uncomfortable was a fear of being caught. She would have been horrified if one of her older brothers caught her. Even more frightening, was the possibility her mother would have caught her, her mother believed good girls never explored themselves. The fear of being caught followed her into college. Megan was to self conscience to masturbate after her roommates went to bed. When she tried self exploration she found the activity boring. The curiosity of why her friends talked about masturbation ended this morning when she experienced her first orgasm.

During the shower she briefly contemplated fulfilling the urge. The only way she knew how to achieve an orgasm was by repeating what happened to her while riding the horse. She was unaware of the term humping, and having a real naive conception of sex, she felt she was the only woman who desired to rub herself against an object to achieve an orgasm. She had the fleeting thought of directly touching herself. She was unsure of how to achieve an orgasm

this way and was concerned the water pressure from the shower could hurt her in some way. Instead of masturbating she lived with her misery and finished the shower. The guilt of doing it at Krissy's ranch would have plagued her the rest of the day.

Megan: turned off the water, stepped out of the shower, again admired the elegant bathroom, focused, accomplished her normal morning routine, slipped on her undergarments, stepped out of the bathroom, stepped over to her bag of clothes, spotted the breeches she wore during the horse ride, she wished she would have put this pair into her bag of dirty clothes, contemplated putting the breeches on, felt guilty for purposely wanting to feel those "odd feelings", in frustration shoved the pair into the bag of dirty clothes, folded over the plastic bag, stood up, closed her eyes, took a long deep breath, reminded herself how important this day was for Marcy, focused on the time she would spend with her friends, opened her eyes, hoped her sexual feelings were behind her; focus on getting ready by grabbing her garment bag. Inside of this bag was the dress Nicole bought her.

She stopped before opening the garment bag. What was bothering her was an idea she thought of since stepping out of the shower. It took some effort to resist the plan of repeating the sensations she felt while riding the horse.

Her dimples flashed and she blushed.

She quickly zipped the garment bag open. With this she was able to focus on: putting on the dress, applying her makeup, and setting her hair. When she was done she sat on the edge of the antique bed. She admired the antiques in the room.

She was nervous.

She questioned if she looked attractive. In all the years she attended college the only time she dressed up was for award ceremonies and for church events. Megan felt these events were nothing compared to Marcy's wedding. The day before she left for Krissy's Ranch, it was the second time in her life she went with Nicole and Diana to a spa. For the second time in her life she felt going to the spa was close to being tortured. She suffered through a facial. Megan felt a prison sentence would have seemed shorter than getting her dark blond hair styled. The reason she ended up sitting there was due to the advice Nicole and Diana were giving the beautician. Megan reluctantly took her sister-in-laws advice and put up with an extended bikini wax, Megan shaved her area on a regular basis because of wearing swimsuits, but this extended bikini wax was just as embarrassing as visiting a doctor. When the beautician suggested a Brazilian wax, and after all three ladies explained to her what it was; Megan answered no by threatening the beautician with a self defense move. Megan reluctantly admitted: her long dark blond was styled very nice, she actually enjoyed the massage, and as always she enjoyed the time she spent with Nicole and Diana.

It was obvious to Megan her sister-in-laws were overjoyed when Megan asked about attending a spa. They immediately scheduled a day at the spa close to the wedding date. Megan assumed their zealousness had to do with the fact she usually turned down their request to go and it was the first time she asked about going to one. Megan shrugged off her sister-in-laws curiosity; Megan assumed they were hopeful she had a date or she would find a boyfriend at the wedding.

Megan: took a deep breath, slipped on her shoes, stood up, pulled on her dress, grabbed a matching purse Diana bought her, walked across the bedroom, and stood in front of a full length mirror. She looked feminine and beautiful in her dress. She was wearing a full length sleeved purple ruched detailed Jersey wrap dress. She added to her beauty with: a

simple silver cross necklace, a silver bracelet with purple dolphin charms on them, a small purple purse with silver trim, and she was wearing short healed silver shoes. Her long dark blond hair was set and pinned with simple elegance. She knew enough about makeup to make her cheekbones and lips stand out. She applied just enough eye shadow and liner to make her dark blue eyes (in certain lighting they looked plum) look wonderful.

She felt very uncomfortable as she studied and twisted herself in front of the mirror. She felt the dress focused on her breasts, she preferred to have hid them, she reminded herself Nicole felt the dress enhanced them. Megan was certain her athletic rear end looked too big. She was frustrated this full length dress covered her legs. She always felt her legs were her best feature. At the store she felt this dress was perfect for her long frame, but now she doubted the selection of this dress. No matter how the dress looked, she was forever grateful Nicole purchased this dress.

She was astute when it came to etiquette. Rich or poor, her Momma taught her Brothers and herself manners. With this training she knew how to walk like a proper southern lady. Megan: stepped over to the bedroom door, took another deep breath, with bravery opened the door, stepped out of the bedroom, gently shut the door, slowly walked down the hallway, admired the horse paintings hung on the wall, stopped at the stairs, made her way down the stairs, when she reached the bottom of the stairs she stopped, and again took a deep calming breath. With no one around: she pushed what she considered positive thoughts to the front of her thinking, blocked out any sexual thoughts, and said a silent prayer. When she was done with the prayer she headed toward the dining room. Approaching the dining room she could hear the sounds of her friends and their partners talking. It was disappointing to be the only one without a partner.

Megan worried.

She was ready for looks of disappointment and fake compliments.

In a quiet timid approach she stepped into the dining room. Megan quickly panned the very large dining room. She liked the long wooden dining room table and its elegant chairs. She found it fitting the table was in the center of the room. She reasoned this table sat generations of southern aristocrats. She felt privileged Krissy would allow them to have a brunch in this room on this historic table. On the left side of the room just behind the table was a restaurant style buffet. Everyone of her friends who stayed overnight at Kristy's ranch, except Breanne and her boyfriend, were attending this brunch. Megan was grateful Breanne and her boyfriend were absent. Everyone was dressed for the wedding and she felt every woman was dressed better than she was; this included Michelle's partner who was wearing a fashionable woman's suit.

Crystal's dark eyes became wide when she noticed Megan. She was surprised on how beautiful Megan looked. Crystal quickly leaned over to Annie and pointed to where Megan was standing. Megan became nervous when everyone looked up or turned around.

Megan put on a smile as Crystal and Krissy approached her. Megan felt nervous when it was obvious everyone sitting at the table or standing at the breakfast line were talking about her. Megan assumed she looked horrendous. Her impulse was to go back to her room, change into her regular clothes, and find some excuse to leave. The fear of coming up with a believable excuse and how she felt about her friends kept her from fleeing.

Crystal was two inches taller than Megan and one year younger. She loved playing volleyball even though everyone expected her to play basketball. She was fortunate to have

parents who worked their butts off to move from the inner city to a poorer suburb of Miami. In this suburb she received the chance to play volleyball and basketball. She received a scholarship for volleyball and in her sophomore year of college became a key member in winning the NCAA Women's Volleyball Tournament.

Her long dark curly hair was set with care. She had an inverted shaped face, a flat wide nose, her lips were large and luscious, her cheekbones were high, and her pointy chin fit the shape of her face. Her smile was just right for her face shape and length. Her dark shiny eyes held a caring intensity to them. This intensity made her: a fierce competitor on the volleyball court, helped her conquer the cultural change of college, and pushed her to get into medical school with honors. She was close to graduating, and was looking forward to becoming a pediatrician. During college Crystal attracted men of all races and ages; but she was very selective on whom she dated and never took a man over her goals.

Megan felt Crystal looked beautiful. She was wearing a very dark red matte satin dress and it ended between her ankles and knee. Megan felt this dress seemed to be perfect for her athletic frame and her dark skin tone. Megan felt Crystal's black sash and the black woven necklace were great accessories.

Krissy and Crystal, stepped up to Megan.

Krissy stated, "You look simply wonderful."

Megan's dimples flashed and she gave Krissy a look of disbelief, "Y'all are the one who's looking wonderful."

Krissy was dressed in a designer rose colored charmeuse faux-wrap dress with a flower detail on her right waist. She added: a very beautiful crystal necklace, diamond earrings, and three inch healed ankle-strap sandals with rhinestone vine detail.

"Y'all are looking terrific yourself."

Crystal spoke kindly and touched Megan's arm in support of Krissy's opinion.

Megan was grateful her friends were being nice and replied, "Thank-you."

Crystal and Krissy glanced at one another.

Krissy spoke, "I'm honored you've come to eat with us. As you see it's buffet style Louis will cook your eggs anyway you'd like."

"The grits are delicious," Crystal mentioned with a wink, "Your Sister-in-law Nicole made the best I've ever had."

Megan acknowledged, "Nobody makes grits like her."

All three ladies smiled.

Crystal in an encouraging tone stated, "Why not get yourself something to eat and sit by Lewis and I."

Krissy winked, "He's an attractive man."

Crystal commented with a serious smile, "He's my man,"

Krissy and Megan politely smiled back but understood the many layers of Crystal's comment.

Krissy commented, "We've never heard you call a man. Your man before."

Crystal winked and touched Krissy on the arm, "Sometimes. Y'all just know."

Megan was happy for her friend but wished she had a man to feel this way about.

Krissy gently mentioned, "We have enough time to enjoy the meal but if we'd like to arrive on time we'll need to proceed."

"Girl," Crystal made a face, "Since when have you been on time?"

Megan jumped in, "There isn't a one of us who can't start changing."

"We sure can." At this moment Crystal nodded her head toward the doorway of the large dinning room and with a face of disgust commented, "But some of us ain't changing at all."

In walked Breanne and her date.

It was obvious Breanne was on a hangover. She was wearing a pair of tight jeans and a red woman's tank top. These clothes would have looked attractive on her in college, but now these clothes seemed out of place. Her long brunette hair was in a pony tail and even at this distance it was obvious her bright green eyes were bloodshot. In college she had a cute heart shaped face, beautiful bright green eyes, a cute celestial type of nose, and thin cupid lips. Her body was the envy of just about every woman on the team. Her breasts were noticeable but not in the way. She had a perfect waist size and worked hard to stay in shape. This was no longer the case. Her breasts were growing larger due to the weight she was gaining, it was obvious her tight jeans were one size to small, she was at least two sizes larger around the waist, and it was obvious her years of parting were taking a toll on her face.

Crystal asked, "What happened to her?"

Megan whispered, "This is what happens when Mommy and Daddy keep bailing you out and you keep thinking parting gets you somewhere."

Krissy with hope whispered, "I've been trying to get her to go to treatment."

"Girl. Some people ain't ever changing. She's never liked change."

Breanne recognized by how everyone else was dressed she was running very late, she wrongly and loudly called out her boyfriend, "You told me you set the alarm clock correctly?"

He was about to say something but her look stopped him.

Annie stood up and stepped over to Breanne and her boyfriend.

Krissy was worried, frustrated, and annoyed with Breanne. Krissy mentioned to Megan and Crystal, "Lets enjoy the brunch."

Crystal asked, "You haven't eaten'?"

"I ate some fruit earlier."

They headed into line. In front of them was Crystal's boyfriend Lewis and Annie's boyfriend Arthur.

Megan was happy to see Crystal and Lewis were together. He was a star college football player drafted by the Giants; where he played for one year. Playing one year was disappointing to both. But, this led to Lewis meeting someone how worked at a national hotel chain. As a regional director he dreamed of opening his own chain of hotels.

Megan felt guilty for being attracted to this: athletic, tall, muscular, black man; who she felt looked awesome in his very expensive dark blue suit.

Annie's boyfriend Arthur was standing in front of Louise waiting for his eggs to cook. Annie and Arthur started dating in college. Megan felt he looked the same as he did in college. Arthur was shorter than Annie, was skinny, and had muscles on his arms and calves. These were created by his rock climbing and consistent biking. Normally he only wore shorts and t-shirt, but today he looked handsome in his blue suit coat, nice red button shirt, and khaki pants. She found it interesting he was wearing simple brown shoes. Megan wondered when Arthur would finally ask Annie to marry him. Megan felt they lived together far to long. While she thought about their wedding, she heard Krissy ask Arthur the very question Megan just contemplated. While this was being discussed Megan was having a casual conversation with

Crystal and Lewis.

This whole time Megan was glancing over at her friend Michelle and her partner Judy.

During college Megan felt Michelle was a very beautiful athletic woman with larger breasts. Michelle was half Caucasian and half Hispanic. Michelle had: an oblong shaped face, long black hair, very dark eyes, an aquiline type of nose, Rubina type of lips, and a round chin. All during college she was very feminine and a very gentle manner. She wore dresses in which she neither hid nor exaggerated her very large breasts and was an expert at hiding her larger hips.

In the four years Michelle played on the volleyball team she was never a starter, she was a walk on, and worked harder than anyone else to stay on the team. This hard work and her attitude lead her to win the spirit award three of the four years she played. Michelle's shinning moment was the year the team won the tournament. In the semi-final round Michelle had four exceptional defensive plays to keep the team in the match. After the round Michelle thanked Megan for working with her during the three years they were teammates. Megan felt Michelle was over exaggerating; Megan told Michelle it was her own efforts and preparation that led to Michelle's grand performance. Michelle appreciated Megan's humility but knew better. Michelle strongly believed without Megan's help she would have never stayed on the team nor would have made those plays.

Megan felt Michelle was a very beautiful curvy woman. With Michelle being a mixed raced woman she had an attractive exotic look, her black hair was now shoulder length, she was wearing a very nice full length light blue dress, her matching purse was next to her, she wore a plain necklace, she was wearing the right amount of makeup, and she maintained her feminine mannerisms. Megan liked Michelle's dress and felt it helped her friend look attractive and confident. Megan wished she felt as confident and relaxed in her dress as her friend appeared in hers.

What was currently bothering Megan about Michelle, was Michelle was being her sweet self to everyone else, but was avoiding her. Megan recalled the awkwardness the two felt between the time Michelle tried to seduce her and the couple months before Michelle graduated from college. It was awkward but they remained friends. Megan wished she would have behaved better during this time; being older and wiser Megan now understood how well Michelle treated her. The biggest regret Megan felt was how the two lost contact after Michelle's graduation. Megan made the assumption, Michelle told Judy about Michelle's attempt to seduce her, and this was the reason Michelle was avoiding a deep conversation with her.

It was obvious to Megan, Judy had a similar shaped face and body type as herself. Judy: was tall like Megan, she had an inverted triangle shaped face, a pointy chin, bright blue eyes, shoulder length blond hair, was very athletic, had smaller breasts, she was wearing nice dress slacks, a new white button shirt, and a woman's suit coat. Megan believed by how the two talked to one another and behaved they had been a couple for a while. Megan felt Judy was intense and was sure she met Judy somewhere else. What seemed strange to Megan was Michelle was being shy and evasive but Judy was more than willing to talk to her. The day before Megan, Judy, and Lewis had an in depth and fun discussion about NFL football.

Megan quickly blocked out any thought about the yacht docked next to her. This was the wrong time to talk about how her neighbor painted Green Bay Packer symbols on what was suppose to be her yacht. She again reminded herself it was not her yacht.

Krissy asked Megan, "What type of eggs are you wanting?"

Megan smiled, "I'll have a small omelet."

Crystal asked surprised, "Y'all ain't having eggs Benedict?"

Megan flashed her big dimple smile, "If Nicole was making them."

"How's your family getting along?"

"They're good."

Crystal leaned over, "They've got good hearts."

This meant a lot coming from Crystal.

When Crystal mentioned eggs Benedict, Krissy decided this sounded good and ordered this for her breakfast. Megan, Crystal, and Krissy were all enjoying small talk as Louise was making their eggs. As Louise was putting the omelet onto Megan's plate, this was the time Breanne and her red neck boyfriend joined the line. Up close it was obvious she was on a hangover.

Krissy was brave enough to ask, "How are you feeling this morning?"

"Fine," snapped an unpleasant looking Breanne.

Crystal and Megan gave one another looks and Crystal motioned with her head to follow her to the table.

Megan was more than happy to sit near Annie and Crystal's boyfriend. Megan was sitting at one end of the table and Michelle was on the other with most of the group in between them.

At this time everyone was in different stages of eating but all were enjoying light conversation. The enjoyment of this late breakfast was challenged the moment: Krissy sat next to her boyfriend, Breanne sat directly across from Megan, and Breanne's unimpressive boyfriend chose to sit next to Megan. Megan wished Breanne would sit next to Annie's boyfriend. Breanne and Megan's friendship had always been filled with tension; this tension was renewed when Breanne sat across from Megan.

From the very moment Megan and Breanne met one another there was an ever growing tension; this tension was always a few moments from an explosion. Before Megan arrived on the volleyball team Breanne felt she was the leader and assumed everyone should obey Breanne's wishes. The idea Breanne was the best player on the team was immediately challenged the day Megan arrived as a freshman. What infuriated Breanne was: the girls on the team naturally following Megan, Megan for the most part ignored Breanne, and as this happened the girls on the team started to ignore Breanne. The tension between Megan and Breanne rose to criminal levels when Breanne was disqualified from play; this was Megan's Sophomore year and Breanne's Senior year. Breanne was disqualified due to poor grades and her continual antics on the team. Breanne became enraged when the team won the NCAA volleyball tournament the following year. Breanne claimed the team winning the tournament was of little interest to her; even though being disqualified was one of many reasons she lost her chance to play for the US Indoor Olympic volleyball team. The off the court tension started as soon as Breanne suggested everyone should party, and Megan openly suggested a more positive activity; it deeply annoyed Breanne when four women took Megan's suggestion. The tension increased when Megan suggested to a bunch of Freshman girls to avoid going to a party Breanne was having and was blunt in stating Breanne was a bad influence. Megan and Breanne almost came to blows when Megan showed up at a "party" Breanne was holding and rescued a group of freshman girls from being hazed by Breanne and her sorority. Annie and

Krissy stopped Breanne from attacking Megan. At the time Krissy was annoyed with Megan but knew it was extremely unwise to fight Megan.

This fight would have changed their lives forever. Breanne in her arrogance felt she could take on everybody. With Megan's speed, strength, and skills; Megan would have maimed or even killed a persistent Breanne. Breanne was so furious at Megan she was prepared to go into the kitchen, grab a knife, and stab Megan. What Breanne was unable to recognize was the fact Megan was able to protect her roommate and herself from a violent rapist.

The present day Breanne produced a loud sigh.

Most ignored the sigh.

Megan ignored the sigh but prepared herself for a verbal confrontation. Megan tried to enjoy the conversation with everyone at the table, she hoped Breanne would be smart enough to observe everyone was trying to ignore her.

The table just started to talk about the wedding when Breanne blurted out loud, "Who was feeling the night ended a little abruptly?"

Breanne flipped her hair back with her hand and glared at Megan.

The whole table tried to ignore Breanne; except for Krissy who shook her head and glared at Breanne. This look should have caused Breanne to behave, but Breanne was too involved with Breanne to notice Krissy's communication.

"Yes you," Breanne mentioned sarcastically, "Why are you always messing with everyone's fun?"

Everyone wondered why Marcy invited Breanne.

Megan spoke as calmly as she could, "You stayed in the club for two hours after Krissy and I left."

Breanne felt the pounding of a self-induced headache. What annoyed Breanne, she would have to believe Megan's time frame. Breanne was disturbed by the fact she was being left on an island and none of her friends were speaking up.

"Ain't it special? It's bad enough you can't handle anything. Do you have to ruin it for others? Y'all are always making people feel they have to follow you? I haven't figured out why they'd want to."

Krissy defended Megan, "She didn't make me follow her."

Krissy defending Megan was shocking to everyone sitting at the table.

Breanne hated the fact Krissy was sober.

"I wasn't having a lot of fun either."

Crystal mentioned with a perturbed tone.

Lewis knew how Crystal truly felt about Breanne and calmly grabbed her hand. Crystal was grateful her boyfriend reminded her of the social situation.

Breanne snarled back, "It appeared to me Y'all were having a great time."

"Until I was realizing I was acting a fool," was Crystal's reply. "My head is paying the price for last night. If I'd known what type of place it was I'd never have gone in."

This statement made Megan feel better, but Megan reminded herself they all could have chosen to stay on the bus.

"I was helping Marcy enjoy her last day of freedom."

Megan interrupted with sincerity, "By getting her drunk the day before her wedding?"

"Ms. Righteous speaks," snipped Breanne. "It appeared to me Y'all were having fun last

night?" Breanne added with a domineering tone and an obnoxious facial expression, "To tell you the truth I was shocked you even went in."

Megan blushed.

Annie who was the classic girl next door reminded everyone, "It's Marcy's wedding' day?"

Annie had a round cute face, dark brown eyes, long blond eyebrows, simple cheeks, with a nice rounded chin. When she smiled she was the picture of cute. Annie: was wearing a light green A-line dress, she had small breasts, a skinny frame, long legs, she matched this dress with light blue suede dress sandals, her natural blond hair with it's natural blond highlights was pinned up, she added a flower in her hair, but she was showing frustration on her face.

The women were surprised Annie spoke up in such a public manner. In times past she always avoided open conflict, she was known as the quiet peacemaker. In college she never said anything until after an argument was over and somehow was a master at getting everyone to be friends again.

Breanne being snippy mentioned, "You were finally loosening up a little."

Michelle defending Megan jumped down Breanne's throat with a simple comment and a forceful tone, "She's fun."

Breanne glared at Michelle. Breanne was about to mention something about the rumored night of sex between them; but Megan interrupted Breanne.

Megan felt Michelle's statement was positive, and felt encouraged, "I enjoyed yesterday. It was fun when we were all arriving and getting' acquainted again. I loved riding horses. I enjoyed playing pool and swimming. The restaurant we went to was great."

Being sarcastic Breanne mentioned, "Annie didn't play or swim."

Everyone gave Breanne a look; looks Breanne missed.

Megan flashed her dimples.

"She still was having fun."

"Yes I was."

Annie said supporting Megan.

Megan continued, "We'all enjoyed having fun hanging around. I had fun when we went bowling. The whole time we were at the bowling alley we had fun. What I didn't need was to go and watch cocks bouncing around and women acting crazy."

The table was shocked into silence.

Megan blushed but was determined to finish. "If I'd known what type of place it was I'd stayed in the bus."

Breanne snipped, "Y'all went in?"

"I wish I hadn't."

"You hypocrite..."

Krissy butted in, "You were to busy having your own fun to notice how uncomfortable she was."

A hush fell upon the room.

Breanne became angry at the silence. So she broke it by pointing at Megan and stating, "Y'all need to learn to be a little more loose."

Megan repeated herself. This time she had an angry but controlled tone, "I went in? Didn't I? I was loose enough to step in. I wish I'd never seen cocks bouncing around and ladies

paying for sex.”

Megan blushed.

Her dimples flashed.

The shock of hearing Megan talk like this was as if a semi truck just plowed through the side of the dinning room. This statement so shocked Crystal she touched Megan's arm to see if she was okay.

Megan pressed on, “I was smart for leaving. If I'd stayed I'd have changed as a person.”

In a mocking tone Breanne asked, “What do Y'all mean?”

“For me,” Megan was still trying to be nice, “The place wasn't positive. It was changing me.”

Breanne with a face and an arm gesture snipped, “Maybe Y'all are needing some changing. Maybe if you weren't so pent up you'd have a man by now.”

Megan crunched her teeth together, and spoke with intensity, “When I'm with a man it'll be with a Man who appreciates me for me.”

This discussion was getting louder. Everyone was still reeling from Megan saying something sexual they were missing what was happening between Breanne and Megan. Annie was beginning to recognizing what could take place in any minute.

“You've been saying this for years.” Breanne changed the direction of what she was saying when her hurting mind grasped what Megan implied. In an angry tone Breanne asked, “What are Y'all trying to say?”

“I'm a lady and I have standards.”

“Are Y'all saying I ain't have standards,” Breanne slapped her hand on the table, stood up, and shouted, “Just because I have fun this doesn't mean I lack standards.”

“I had fun yesterday,” Megan added, “I certainly don't need to be drinking and acting foolish to have fun.”

“Are you saying I'm a drunk? So what if I have a few drinks?”

Megan's blue eyes looked plum, her inverted triangle face was intense, she peered into Breanne's eyes, “How's being on a hangover feeling today? How much fun are Y'all having now?”

Breanne crunched her jaws together and was about to threaten Megan.

Krissy turned toward her staff, who had stopped cleaning up and was now watching this loud discussion, Krissy snapped her fingers and pointed.

Crystal became stern, “It's Marcy's wedding day.”

Arthur asked, “Why are we fighting?”

Breanne verbally bashed Arthur by saying, “It ain't like we'd ever cared for what you've ever said.”

Michelle mentioned, “Then why are Y'all acting the way you are?”

Breanne waved her arms, “I'm sick of Y'all belittling me.”

“I disagree on how you live,” stated Megan with some control, but felt the need to point out, “I've never belittled you for it.”

“You are a liar. All Y'all have ever done was criticize me.”

Megan controlled herself, but said, “I ain't a liar. I suggest Y'all sit down and be quiet.”

“Don't be telling me what I should be doing. Maybe if you'd not be such a chicken shit and open your legs maybe you'd be more...”

Judy stood up and yelled, “Hey!”

Michelle calmly grabbed Judy's arm. They looked at one another. Judy shacking sat back down. The whole table noticed this except for Breanne.

Krissy and all the servants in the room were waiting for a couple ranch hands to arrive. These men were the ranch's unofficial security.

Megan mentioned pounding her fender on the table, "I'm not a party gal. I ain't the type of gal men like very much. I might never find a man but I'm hoping one will like me. When we're married I'm hoping we'd have a great sex life."

All those who knew Megan were again astonished. In the last few moments they heard Megan communicate more about sex than all the years they knew her.

Megan continued, "I'm waiting for a man I love and care about. I decided to go into the place to learn. I left because it wasn't for me. I want to experience what I was feeling with a husband. A man I love. I stayed sitting there was because of my friends. I'm including you as one of my friends. I stayed because I enjoyed seeing guys naked. Okay? I did like seeing cocks for the first time. It was just the wrong type of guys and the wrong place. I never liked the fact you and Krissy would get drunk. I clearly remember Marcy and I helping both of you. Maybe we should've left Y'all drunk and falling all over. How many times did we stop Y'all from ending up at a guys place? How many times did Y'all thank Marcy and myself the next day? I'll find a man. When I do." Megan pointed at herself and repeated, "He'll love me for who I am. I'm a fun person. Did you hear me? I'm a fun gal who has lots to offer a good man."

Megan held back her tears.

Judy was surprised to hear Megan liked men. Judy doubted Michelle when Michelle told her Megan was straight. Judy never believed Michelle would cheat on her, but Judy was sure they were a couple in college. Judy liked Megan. What disappointed Judy was her idea of setting Megan up with one of their friends.

Megan continued, "I might be pent up but I'm wanting to be less pent up so I'd be a blessing to my husband. I ain't wanting to be with anyone else."

"What are Y'all saying!" screamed an irate Breanne. "You better not be accusing me of being what I think Y'all are? So I like men. I ain't liking them all?"

"It ain't like you've ever been selective!"

"Missy. I might suggest you keep your little trap shut. You ain't knowing your place."

"What's my place? I was part of a championship team. I'm a leader in my community. What do you lead? Did Y'all even get your degree?"

This last comment was like shoving a knife into Breanne's body and turning it just to make sure. Megan knew this was a personal stab. Part of Megan felt guilty for this comment but Megan was tired of Breanne trying to manipulate everyone. One of Megan's motives was to get Breanne to wake up and change her ways. In the back of Megan's mind she knew she was going about it the wrong way; but she was too angry to stop.

"Maybe we should finish what was started when you were acting like a hero."

Breanne in her stupidity: walked around the table, Megan quickly stood up, and went into a defensive stance; her plan was to put her to sleep.

Crystal and Lewis stepped in front of Breanne.

Crystal mentioned, "We ain't fighting today! You better be growing up in the next few seconds."

"Y'all are always defending her. Y'all were having a great time until she left."

Crystal asked with a tone, "Why are you thinking?"

Annie came running around the table, "Stop this! It's Marcy's wedding day."

This was very demanding for Annie.

This was when the ranch hands reached the dining room. Krissy went to them and stopped them, she was counting on Annie to patch this up.

"What's a shame we've been friends for years and we're all fighting. Breanne it's not right of you to criticize Megan. Megan you should've known what to be expecting in the club. Megan didn't ruin our time when she left. Breanne you and I had a great time after Megan and Krissy left. We're all were having a great time even after the others left. Y'all ain't feeling well." Annie was known to repeat things, "We're friends. Let's not ruin it on Marcy's wedding day. Imagine how hurt she'd feel when she finds out Y'all have been fighting. She's wanting us to be friends." Annie crinkled her nose. "Marcy is feeling guilty about the club too. Y'all; I know this because she was telling me last night on the bus. She didn't like getting drunk for the first time. Imagine how she'll feel if we all stopped being friends? Breanne she wasn't sure we all should have gone. Let's all be ladies and have a nice breakfast. We're all friends now?"

It was obvious to everyone, everything changed since the last time they were all together. After this day it was highly probable they would never be together as a group again; but today because of Annie and their friend Marcy they would remain friends. In the case of Breanne, they would act civil to her for one more day, and Breanne was forced to be civil toward Megan for one last time.

Megan took the high road. She calmed herself down and stated, "I'm sorry for cutting Y'all down." Megan added sincerely toward everyone in the room, "I'm sorry for yelling and ruining this wonderful breakfast."

"Apology accepted," Annie was speaking for the group as a whole. She assumed everyone would accept Megan's apology.

Breanne made a face and left the room. She left her food on the table and her inept boyfriend followed after her carrying his plate of food. To withhold forgiveness was very hurtful to Megan. Megan already forgave Breanne and would treat her like a person should be treated, but in all intense and purposes this ended their friendship. Megan questioned why Breanne withheld forgiveness this time. When they had disagreements before forgiveness was always exchanged. Megan Being honest with herself was grateful her relationship with Breanne was over.

Everyone watched Breanne leave. There were many who were thankful she left.

The atmosphere of the breakfast was never the same but everyone understood the cause of this unfortunate circumstance. They pressed on by finishing their breakfast. Every person in the room accepted Megan's forgiveness. What made Megan feel better was many of the people in the room expressed their frustration with Breanne and encouraged Megan. She was relieved and grateful to have retained these friends. After finishing their breakfast they all left couple by couple. They all discussed what happened as they headed out of the ranch and drove themselves to the church.

The ranch hands left when they realized Krissy was safe.

The servants started to clear the tables when they noticed the guests were no longer eating.

Krissy waited until: Lewis, Crystal, and Megan left the dining room and were headed toward their guest bedrooms.

Krissy went to see how her boyfriend Ralph was doing; he needed to finish some work

before the wedding.

Crystal could tell Megan was still upset by the argument she had with Breanne.

Crystal encouraged Megan. "Let me explain a secret I learned a long time ago. When Y'all are trying to be a better person this sometimes upsets the people around you. Especially those who find it comfortable being who they are."

Megan answered, "She's acting like we're in college."

Crystal raised an eyebrow and answered, "This is where she stopped growing."

Lewis added, "It's obvious it isn't a good thing. You upset her on many levels."

Crystal added, "She's angry we've all changed and she has not. She's taking this anger out on you. I don't believe she has the courage or interest to change."

Megan flashed her dimples.

The two ladies looked at one another with sadness.

Crystal mentioned again, "It took courage to leave the club yesterday."

"I was..."

"We'll make mistakes. Y'all are a straight gal?"

Megan answered Crystal with a smile, "Yes."

"It ain't a wonder why Y'all would be curious to see what a man looks like?"

Megan blushed.

Lewis smiled, "I'll collect our things."

Crystal nodded her head and they gently kissed one another.

Lewis mentioned, "I'll meet you upstairs."

Megan nodded her head.

He left them to talk at the bottom of the stairs.

They watched him walk up the stairs.

Crystal in a whisper said the same thing Krissy said, "It's alright wanting to see a guys thing. No need for blushing," Crystal said smiling. She gently grabbed Megan's hand. "Y'all are right about one thing. It wasn't the best way to see one for the first time."

Crystal and Megan nodded their heads in agreement.

"Megan Y'all will find the type of guy you are looking for. Girl; you better enjoy making love to him for how long you've been waiting'."

Megan looked at her friend with concern, "What happens if it's terrible?"

"Girl; with the right guy it'll be just fine," she smiled then added, "If you have any questions about anything I'm here for Y'all. Just call me."

Megan's dimples flashed.

"Maybe I'll take you up on the offer."

They smiled at one another.

Crystal whispered, "Being afraid ain't helping any. It ain't always great but when you get a guy who's willing to take his time. Girl. It's when it's wonderful."

Her dimples flashed.

She became timid, and Megan admitted, "But I'm afraid."

Crystal never witnessed Megan act this way before. As encouraging as she could be, "Since when is the mighty Megan afraid. With the right guy Y'all won't be afraid."

"How will I know if I'm with the right guy?"

With confidence Crystal said, "With the right guy Y'all be able to tell him how you feel. He'll understand how you feel and will be patient with Y'all. You need to find a guy who'll

listen to Y'all. Communication is a key. Especially with Y'all being a virgin."

Megan recognized this wisdom.

"With the right guy it won't be frightening."

Megan's dimples flashed.

Crystal could tell this was all Megan could handle. Crystal touched Megan's arm and whispered, "Call me any time. But all enjoy Marcy's wedding."

Megan with her big dimple smile answered, "Thank-you."

They hugged.

Then headed up to their rooms.

Krissy, Ralph, Megan, Crystal, and Lewis all left the ranch at the same time, after having a full conversation about everything and a little bit about nothing.

When Megan set her things on the passenger side seat of her pick up she gazed at the huge ranch. She imagined herself having the money for something this large. Then she imagined all of the responsibility a place like this would entail.

Her dimples flashed.

She reminded herself how good her life really was.

Very ladylike Megan stepped into her pick-up-truck and followed Krissy and Ralph to the Church.

Nicole was standing in front of the dinning room table working on her houseplants. When she worked on her houseplants: she placed newspaper over the table, she set all the plants she wanted to work on the left side of the table, next to the plants were all of the items she needed, and on the right end was the plant she was currently working on; she was currently trimming her *Ficus Alli*.

She was wearing an old pair of khaki colored cargo capri shorts, with an orange button up sleeveless halter top, and an old pair of white tennis shoes. All three of these items were stained from working with her houseplants. She was without makeup, her hands were dirty, and her long brunette hair was pinned up haphazardly. If anyone showed up at her house she would have been mortified.

Most people believed Nicole was younger than thirty-five. Anytime someone misjudged her age this pleased this mother of three and wife of eighteen years. Nicole's: brown eyes were focused on the leafy *Ficus Alli*; she was selectively trimming this plant making sure it was acceptable to remain in her living room. Her oval shaped face was stern. her Rubicon lips were straight and firm, even after nineteen years of her husband telling her how sexy and wonderful her lips were, she still felt they were very unappealing. Her rounded chin added to her overall attractiveness; her natural signs of age only added to her beauty. She was now more attractive than most of the girls she graduated high school with.

She never understood why men found her attractive, but she would gladly accept the flattery. What would have been dreadful for her to know was a few of Jeff's friends had crushes on her. This information would have caused her to radically change how she approached her sons friends. These awkward crushes were rare. Most of Jeff's friends considered her to be their second mother, and one of them wished she was his mother.

When it came to her looks she wished her larger breasts had the same tightness before she had children. She never told anyone how she was having to work twice as hard to keep

her buttock tight, and without trying her hips were slightly larger. Even with these self perceived flaws, she was very comfortable in her skin. This was a benefit of having a loving husband. Her husband Jimmy, who just before he went into the garage, approached her from behind and started to cuddle with her. It amazed her when her husband wanted to cuddle with her when she felt she was completely unattractive. She appreciated the fact her loyal husband found her attractive but this was simply not the time. They gently kissed, and both went about the things they felt were needed to keep the house in order.

Jimmy knew this was going to happen when he approached her.

She turned the *Ficus Alli* around and started to trim this section of the plant. Working on her household plants was one of Nicole's favorite ways to relax. She: picked up a water bottle, she squirted the plant with water, she picked up a small plant sheers, and again started to trim this section of the plant.

She heard the back sliding doors open.

"Momma!!"

She set the trimmer down and quickly headed toward the kitchen. When Nicole stepped into the kitchen she witnessed Julie sitting in one of the kitchen table chairs and her left leg was propped up onto another chair. Standing behind her daughter was Jennie. It was clear to Nicole her daughter was in pain. Nicole: went to the kitchen sink, she washed her hands, she closely observed these two teenagers; what bothered Nicole was how they were talking in mumbled voices. Jennie's voice especially aggravated Nicole.

Jennie and Julie were introduced to one another the previous summer. The intention of Nicole and Jennie's grandmother was to have Julie be a positive influence on Jennie. At the time, Nicole felt this was a good idea due to the fact Julie had been a positive influence on many of her peers. Nicole felt a sense of dread hanging over Jennie, Nicole was sure Jennie was a horrible influence on her daughter.

At this moment Nicole wished Jennie would have stayed in Jacksonville. In the year and four months since Jennie entered their lives, Nicole had given Jennie many opportunities to prove herself; Jennie was never up for the task. The way Jennie dressed was a perfect example of failing at a task. Jennie's grandmother was frustrated and embarrassed by the way Jennie dressed, Nicole was frustrated as well, and both Nicole and Jennie's grandmother discussed on how to handle this issue. Nicole reluctantly took Julie and Jennie shopping. Nicole was prepared to purchase clothes for Jennie, but Jennie was rude and only wanted clothes Nicole disapproved of. Julie knowing Jennie's situation tried to encourage Jennie to accept Nicole's generosity; instead Jennie resented the help. After this shopping trip Nicole wondered if Jennie was shoplifting.

Nicole wondered if Jennie was auditioning for a pornographic movie. Nicole assumed most of the running Julie did was before she ever reached Jennie's house. Nicole assumed it was impossible for Jennie to run very far in the outfit she was wearing. Nicole disapproved of Jennie's hoodie. Jennie's black hoodie with white trim and zipper front dropped down to expose the top of Jennie's pushed up large breasts; they were being pushed up by a size to small pink bralette. Nicole felt she made her breasts look like mountain ranges. Jennie added to her display by wearing a black skort with white trim, the skort was two sizes too small. Nicole reasoned anytime she bent over she caused car accidents and it was obvious Jennie wanted to be a show when there was a slight breeze.

Jennie: had a round shaped face with blended in cheekbones, above these cheekbones

were her dark brown eyes, her eyebrows were dark and long, they were the same color as her long straight brunette hair, her Hollywood shaped lips were full and were a dominating feature of her face, she very rarely smiled, like always she was wearing a lot of makeup. She was using every curve of her body to attract attention, this included: her large sized breasts, her wider hips, her curvy rear end, and those lips she always applied to much lipstick on.

In contrast Julie was dressed to run. Julie was in a pair of two toned light blue and dark blue trimmed running shorts; with small pockets on the sides. She matched these shorts with a dark blue light blue trim sleeveless tank; this top had pockets on the side as well. This top was designed to flatten and support a woman's chest, even with this support, Julie was wearing a sports bra underneath. Matching these items Julie was wearing: a white Adidas baseball cap, a black digital sports watch, short athletic socks, and her blue pair of Adidas running shoes. Nicole knew Julie had run because her brunette hair was in a pony tail sticking out from the hole in her baseball cap and she spotted Julie's sports sunglasses on the table. Nicole felt Julie was dressed appropriately for her activity. As she approached Julie. It was obvious by Julie's strong body odor her daughter had pushed herself athletically.

Nicole could tell Julie was trying to hide her pain.

Nicole asked, "How bad is it?"

"Fine," Julie lied. "It's just a sprain."

Julie winced in pain when Nicole, as a certified nurse, carefully slipped off her daughter's socks and shoes. Julie winced again when her Momma began to inspect her ankle.

Jennie made a face, shifted her body, put her hand on her hip, and let out a sigh.

Nicole restrained herself from scolding Jennie.

Nicole mentioned to Julie, "I'm feeling it could either be a sprain or a fracture. We're needing to get you to the hospital."

"Momma its fine." Julie pleaded, "It's just a sprain."

Nicole was aware Julie had a cross country meet in a couple days. If Julie's foot was falling off she would have said she was in tip top shape.

"I'll prepare an ice pack."

Jennie shifted, let out a loud sigh, and leaned herself against one of the kitchen chairs.

Julie again mentioned, "Momma I'm really feeling this is just a sprain. I'm okay."

An irritated Jennie interrupted, "If it's just a sprain lets go."

Julie gave Jennie a stern warning glare.

Jennie rolled her eyes with indifference, she shifted her body to the other side, and crossed her arms.

Nicole stood up and with a stern tone asked Jennie, "Are you a nurse?"

Jennie gave Nicole a face, "No. What's it to you?"

"I'm the parent"

"So? It's her body."

"I'm her mother."

Julie never heard her Momma use this tone before.

Jennie rolled her eyes and looked at Julie, sighed, and stated, "You're fine. Right? I mean. Are You okay. Cause. We have plans."

An irritated Nicole said, "Stop it."

Jennie looked up at Nicole and ignored what Nicole was about to say, "We have a day

planned. Ain't you a nurse? Like. Why not do something? Why not wrap it or something? You think you could do that?. Like right? We'all need to be somewhere."

"Honey," Nicole's eyes were wide and her hands were flat on the counter, "I'm the parent here and this is..."

Jennie finished, "My house."

She lifted up her fingers and inspected her fingernails.

Julie scolded, "Jennie!"

For the first time in Nicole's life she considered knocking someone out cold.

"What?!"

Julie gave Jennie a glare.

Before her Momma would yell at her best friend, Julie quickly asked her Momma, "What about the meet?"

Nicole snapped her head at Julie, lifted a finger, and in a very angry tone commanded; "Just a moment."

Julie cringed.

Her Momma asked, "What were Y'all doing to have my daughter hurt herself?"

Jennie and Julie looked at one another.

"In all the times you've gone running I don't remember you ever spraining your ankle while running. Y'all were in gymnastics or doing something dangerous on the balance beam I was understanding why Y'all were hurt. This is like when Y'all lift up a rock and snakes go scurrying about. I've been taking care of your bumps and bruises and I ain't ever heard you sprain Y'all ankle while running." Her eyes were like weapons when she stared at Jennie and asked, "So what were you up too?"

Jennie made a face, "Nothing."

Julie sheepishly mentioned, "We went running."

"How could the two of go running the way Jennie's dressed?"

Jennie sighed. Then asked with an indifferent tone, "What's wrong with the way I'm dressed?"

Nicole pointed at her, "If you were my daughter Y'all wouldn't be able to leave the house."

"You ain't. Like be real. I don't need someone telling me..."

Nicole tapped her finger onto the kitchen table, "Youngin' you need a good old fashioned trip to the woodshed. I've got a mind to..."

Jennie rolled her eyes.

She interrupted Nicole by asking Julie, "When are we leaving?"

Nicole stepped right up to the sliding door and just about yanked it off it's hinges, she pointed out the door and commanded, "Y'all are leaving."

Jennie rolled her eyes and shifted her body, "I..."

Julie being wise said, "Go."

"Call me later if you'd like to have..."

Nicole in a demanding tone, "Y'all are leaving."

Julie cringed.

Julie caught movement at the end of the hallway. She looked straight ahead and spotted Ester and Danielle at the bottom of the stairs peering into the kitchen. Julie tried to wave the two girls back up the stairs. Ester missed her older sisters warning.

"Well fine!" Jennie exclaimed, "I'm glad I ain't living in this house."

Nicole snipped back, "Because you can't push around a sweet old lady? A woman who's taking care of you? Y'all should be grateful someone wants Y'all in their house!"

"Whatever!"

Nicole pointed and commanded, "Leave."

When Jennie passed Nicole, Nicole had the impulse to kick Jennie right in the ass. Nicole felt Jennie's rear end was an easy target with her butt cheeks so visible. Jennie slammed the screen door as she stepped out of the house. Nicole wanted to grab her and make her practice shutting a door properly. Nicole concluded this would have been a waist of time.

When she turned to look at Julie, she too caught the slight movement at the end of the hallway. When she looked down the hallway she spotted Danielle and Ester peaking around the stairs railing.

Nicole shouted, "What are Y'all looking at!?"

"Um..."

"I'd suggest stepping out into the garage and checking on Daddy."

"Daddy's..."

Nicole interrupted, "Just go and do it."

"Yes Ma'am."

Danielle and Ester entered the kitchen.

Danielle and Ester ran into trouble when they stopped to talk to Julie.

Ester asked, "Is your leg broken?"

At this moment Nicole was opening her kitchen cabinets and was mumbling to herself.

"No."

Julie answered with a grimace.

Danielle, Ester's best friend asked, "It's your ankle ain't it?"

"It's just a sprain."

Nicole mentioned with a tone, "It just might be a fracture."

The three girls looked up. Julie very rarely heard this tone and when she heard it she knew her Momma was pissed off. They watched and heard Nicole repeatedly take her anger out on the ice pack. This was happening on the kitchen counter next to the sink. It was rare to see their Momma so angry.

Julie whispered, "You better leave. Momma's angry."

"You tell Daddy," Nicole said in a commando voice. She walked over with the ice pack and gently set it onto Julie's ankle, "I'm taking Julie to the hospital."

Julie made a face and a noise when the ice pack touched her ankle. It was obvious the ice hurt.

A worried Ester asked, "May I go?"

"She'll be fine."

Danielle and Ester felt at ease when Nicole told them Julie would be alright.

Slightly more calm Nicole instructed, "Tell Daddy I'm needing the van."

"Yes Ma'am," Ester replied and the two girls opened the door to the garage. Everyone heard him playing his CD player. Julie recognized the song, "Shooting Star", by *Bad Company*. This was one of her Daddies favorite bands.

Nicole cringed when Danielle slammed the door.

Nicole yelled, "I've told Y'all never to slam the door!"

Nicole heard Ester yell, "Okay," and Danielle yell, "I'm sorry Ms. Nicole."

Nicole turned, crossed her arms, and stated; "Y'all will never treat me like SHE just did. I'm assuming she's treating her Grand Momma with such disrespect?"

Nicole knew the answer but was testing Julie.

Julie commented fast and with honesty, "I don't like it Momma. I've been telling her she's only trying to help her. Her Nana is always nice to me."

"I don't like Jennie."

Julie made a face of concern. This was the first time Julie ever heard her Momma openly disapprove of any of her friends or any of her siblings friends.

Julie hurt answered was, "She's my friend."

Nicole trying to calm down asked, "Y'all be honest. How'd Y'all hurt your ankle?"

"I was running and stepped into a pot hole."

Nicole doubted this story.

"Don't you believe me?"

"When Y'all are with Jennie I have my doubts as to what Y'all are doing? She's a bad girl. Where is Zoe? Or Hannah? I haven't seen them lately? They're good friends."

"Jennie is a good friend."

Julie pleaded trying to convince herself more than her Momma.

They looked up when the door flew open, Jimmy asked, "How'd Julie break her leg?"

Julie found this funny.

Nicole answered while giving a glancing look toward her youngest, "She could have a fractured ankle. I'm needing the van. I'm taking her to the emergency room."

"Is everything okay?" Jimmy could see there was more to this situation than an ankle, "Y'all need anything?"

"Just watch Ester and Danielle. Jeff should be back by noon. He's helping Sal. If this should take a while make sure he does his homework."

Jimmy looked down at Julie, "Are Y'all okay?"

Julie answered with a limp smile, "I'll be okay."

"Y'all are a Steward. You'll be just fine."

"Yes Daddy." Julie tried to plead her case to her Daddy, "Daddy I ain't needing to be taken to the emergency room."

Jimmy commented sternly, "Young Lady. If Momma thinks Y'all need to go the hospital. Guess where Y'all are ended up?"

Julie sank in her chair. Her Daddy very rarely yelled at her. Julie was hoping she could avoid the question.

"Answer me?"

Julie recognized her Daddy was in his military mode, "Yes sir."

"You apologize to your Momma."

"Yes sir," stated Julie. "I'm sorry Momma."

"Apology accepted."

Julie caught her Momma's approving wink.

Nicole recognized her daughter was not wearing appropriate clothes for the emergency room; more important Nicole could smell her body odor.

Nicole commanded, "Keep the ice pack on your ankle." She turned to Ester and Danielle, "You help Daddy."

"Momma..."

"Y'all come on out and help me."

This was another one of those occasions where Ester felt left out, but Ester was excited to hang out with her Daddy. Ester felt Julie was her Daddy's favorite. Ester and Danielle followed Jimmy into the garage.

"Are Y'all able to change?"

Julie answered, "Yes Ma'am."

Nicole gently lifted Julie off of the chair and immediately Julie wrapped her arms around her Momma's neck.

"Take it nice and slow to my bathroom," Julie could see, feel, and hear the love her Momma had for her, "I'm assuming Y'all are able to handle a sponge bath before I take you to the hospital?"

Julie had two conflicting thoughts about changing her clothes and having a sponge bath. The first logical thought was the emergency staff probably seen worse and smelled worse than her body odor. The opposite thought was she would have been embarrassed going to the hospital with the way she smelled. Julie wished she was born with a different body chemistry.

"I'll be okay."

With Julie's natural athletic ability and Nicole's experience as a nurse they easily reached the bedroom. Julie found it a victory to balance the ice pack on her ankle all the way to her Momma's bedroom. Once in the bathroom, Nicole wrapped her daughters swollen ankle with athletic tape; Nicole always kept athletic tape around. Nicole provided Julie with: a black pair of joggers with a double green stripe on the side, a long sleeved t-shirt with the same color pattern as the joggers, a green zip up fleece jacket, and gave her brand new deodorant to use.

Nicole: slipped on a light blue pair of relaxed fit straight leg jeans, with a black pair of comfortable boots, she slipped on a multi-red striped quarter inch sleeved poplin shirt, a simple pair of studded earrings, she unpinning her hair, she quickly combed her hair to the point of acceptable, and applied some makeup. While she was getting ready it was hard for Nicole to hear her daughter struggle taking the sponge bath. There were moments when Nicole wanted to go inside the bathroom and help her daughter. Nicole being wise understood this would have embarrassed her daughter; so she stayed in her bedroom.

Nicole was grateful to hear, "I'm done."

Nicole quickly stepped into her large bathroom. Nicole knew Julie and herself were similar sizes, but to see her daughter wear her clothes, was a reminder her oldest was indeed growing up.

Nicole spoke gently, "Let's get you to the hospital."

"Okay," Julie said being brave. She wrapped her arm around her momma and they hobbled their way into the kitchen.

Julie hated to admit it, but she was glad her Momma was there. Julie was relieved she found an excuse to avoid Jennie's house. Julie was uncomfortable with what Jennie had planned once Jennie's grandmother left the house for a Bible study. Julie was being honest with Nicole when she said she disliked how Jennie treated her Grandmother. Julie wanted Jennie to change and hoped Jennie would stop hanging around the snob club. The idea Jennie was a horrible friend was difficult for Julie to embrace.

This was when Jimmy opened the door to the garage. Julie and Nicole noticed the

garage door was open and the minivan was parked in front of the garage. Ester and Danielle watched in amazement when Jimmy picked up Julie and carried her to the minivan. He held onto Julie as he instructed Ester to open the passenger side door. Ester was worried when she saw the tape around her big sister's ankle. Julie was: the indestructible, awesome, big sister, who did everything right; to see her big sister injured put a dent in her child sense of security. Ester watched as her Daddy placed Julie into the front passenger seat.

Julie waved at Ester and said, "Thank-you."

Ester smiled when Julie wanted Ester to hug her.

"I'll be okay."

Julie patting Ester on the back.

It was rare for her big sister to hug her and say such a nice thing.

As Nicole stepped into the minivan she wondered what really happened to her daughter.

She was pleased to see Julie hug Ester.

The nurse side of Nicole commanded, "Lets get a move on."

Ester shut the door. Ester became disappointed when Julie reopened it and closed it again.

Julie looked over at her Momma when she slammed the drivers side door. Julie could tell her Momma was upset. The silence when she started the van was an added confirmation. They sped out of the driveway and headed toward the hospital.

Julie loved her family. Julie was able to discern her family was a lot better than so many of her friend's families. To Julie; her family and her friends were equally important and it was difficult for her to choose which one was a priority.

Julie felt it was super cool of her Momma to be conscience of how embarrassed she was about her body odor. If her Momma would have mentioned her body odor to: Ester, Danielle, or her Daddy she would have wanted to die. Contrasting this feeling, Julie felt like a complete geek wearing the clothes her Momma gave her. She hoped none of her friends would see her dressed like this.

In the silence of the drive, Julie thought about her Momma's comments. Julie knew why Jennie dressed the way she did. With this thought she recalled her Momma's comments about how a person is judged by the company they keep. Julie wondered if kids at school considered her just as slutty as Jennie and the rest of the snob club.

Julie, unlike many of her friends, wanted to wait until she was at least in love with a guy. Julie's plan was to wait until college and find a real guy. She was repulsed by the idea of sleeping with any of the immature boys from high school. Julie was certain if she became pregnant her Momma would make her responsible for a baby; this would end any fun she was having. She knew to many girls who were sexually active and this activity fell way short of the hype of sex. Julie was of the strong opinion kids her own age were clueless to what good sex was. Julie felt it was foolish on how far her friends were willing to go just to have boys like them. In Jennie's case, Julie felt Jennie could have cared less if a boy liked her or not; Jennie just liked sex.

Julie felt, based upon the sexual urges she took care of herself, she would have liked sex as well.

They pulled into; *Community Memorial Hospital of Eastbank*.

Nicole asked Julie, "Are you feeling Jennie is a good friend?"

Julie answered by saying, "She's been through a lot."

Nicole was expecting an answer like this.

Nicole parked the minivan near the emergency room entrance. Nicole stepped out and grabbed a wheelchair just passed the first set of sliding doors. She wheeled it right next to the passenger door; she helped her daughter into the chair.

An orderly came rushing out of the hospital, "Ms. Steward how Y'all doing?"

"Fine." Nicole commanded just like when she was a nurse at the hospital, "Stan could you wheel Julie in for me while I park the van."

Julie looked up.

"I'll be right in."

Only after Nicole said this did Julie feel comfortable with her Momma leaving.

While Nicole parked the van Julie was wheeled into the hospital. Nicole went inside to be with her injured daughter. The same daughter who was trying to be as independent as possible would have been devastated if her Momma was unable to be by her side. Nicole witnessed Julie sitting in the wheelchair talking with Danielle's Mom, who as an admissions clerk at the only hospital in Eastbank, was already typing in what she knew about Julie.

Nicole was able to get Jennifer this job a month after her Husband and Danielle's Daddy passed away.

End of Part Two of Five

September 23, Pandora's Box Shattered

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Ashleigh & Megan *Book I: Friendship*



Saturday
September, 23

Pandora's Box
Shattered
Day Four of Book I
(3months and 22 Days Since Megan was
notified a wealthy neighbor was moving
into the marina)

Part Three of Five

Authored By:
R. P. Voght

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I hope you enjoy this pioneering format I call, "A Story Cast."

What the term "Story Cast" means; is this story is designed to be read in small to medium intervals. This particular story is broken up into "days." These portions are broken up into part or all of a particular fictitious "day" of the story. Each day surrounds the characters lives, relationships, adventures, struggles, mishaps and triumphs. This story is very different from a Novel or conventional story in many ways. Again, THIS IS NOT A NOVEL AND IS NOT WRITTEN IN A CONVENTIONAL NOVEL FORMAT. Instead; as the reader you are following the characters thoughts and actions during the course of this "day." This fiction story is set up like a TV series and or a third person journal. It always starts with one or more character getting up and ends with one or more characters going to bed; while during the day you experience the Characters actions, feelings, and their thoughts.

On a large overview; there is a beginning, a middle, and an end to this "Story Cast"

R. P. Voght

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Saturday, September 23

(3 months and 22 Days Since Megan was notified she was going to have wealthy neighbors)

Megan was having difficulty paying attention to Marcy's long wedding.

She was on the far left of the pew. To the right of her were all her friends: Crystal and William were directly next to her, Ralph was next to William, Krissy was to the right of William, Annie was next to Krissy, Arthur was to the right of Krissy, the last two people in the pew were Michelle and Judy. Megan noticed they were secretly holding hands. Megan was unimpressed with Breanne and her boyfriend: they were late, they made noise from the time they entered the church until they sat down, they sat a few rows in front of Megan, they were falling in and out of consciences, and she felt Breanne's dress was completely inappropriate.

Breanne was wearing a light blue embellished V-neck dress. It was made with a blend of cotton and spandex. If Breanne bent over her breast became a show. Highlighting Breanne's sagging breasts were the stone and bead detailing around the V. Breanne and the dress were mentioned at least once by every woman who attended the wedding; these comments were far from flattering.

Megan turned her attention from Breanne to her friend Marcy. Megan believed Marcy looked beautiful in her white wedding dress; Megan loved the long trail of the dress. She was unsure if she would want a long trail on her wedding day.

She made a face.

The doubts of anyone wanting to marrying her were just on the surface. This caused her to focus on the wedding party. She was amazed these people were still standing. This was a lesson: she would never have a bachelor or bachelorette party the day before the wedding and this reaffirmed her stance on avoiding men who drank; especially a man who was a drunk.

As this wedding moved at a snails pace, unwanted images of what she witnessed in the underground male strip club entered her conscience mind. What was compelling about these

mental images were the different uniforms these men wore. She liked how they came barging out from behind a black curtain. She felt guilty when she focused these memories on her favorite dancer. What was disturbing, she no longer could remember the details of his face, but could clearly remember the size and shape of his cock. It took some effort, but she was able to push the images of this muscular athletic man aside; she tried to concentrate on the wedding ceremony.

As the wedding dragged along she was reminded on how single she was. What compounded this feeling was the fact she just turned twenty-eight the day before. She again questioned why she was such a repellent to any guy she liked. There was Simon. He was the boy she dreamed of marrying; instead he became a horrible heartbreak during high school. In college she fell in love with a martial arts instructor; this ended when she discovered he was already in two relationships. Until Megan talked to these women they were unaware this instructor was taking advantage of them. Megan made a mental list of all the male friends she hoped would ask her out; instead they asked out feminine type of women.

Accused of being a lesbian since she was eleven only added to her feeling she was undesirable to the opposite sex. She was keenly aware the only person who ever asked her out on an official date was Michelle. When she thought back to Michelle asking her out, the feeling of being naive filled her soul. Megan never suspected the dinner Michelle invited her to was a candle light dinner for two; Megan believed they were just going to hang out like they normally did. Megan recalled on how awkward she felt during Michelle's seduction. Megan remembered: feeling completely uncomfortable, stopping Michelle, grabbing her shirt and bra from off the floor, mumbling apologies, shoving her bra into her backpack, putting her shirt on backwards, making a quick getaway out of Michelle's apartment, feeling horrible on how she acted, and yet grateful she stopped everything. Megan was sure she hurt Michelle's feelings. What would have been dreadful is for Michelle to fall in love with Megan to only find out Megan was truly straight. Megan compared this to a homosexual living a straight life then figuring out they were gay. The one positive Megan took from this experience was this helped Megan figure out she was a straight female.

Megan crossed her legs and adjusted her dress so it went passed her knee.

Megan was surprised the third groomsmen was still standing. Her eyes wandered around the church. She wanted the wedding to be over. She felt if the wedding would be over, it would be easier to turn off the sexual feelings and thoughts inside of herself. She was unsure of how to deal with any of them. What made matters worse, the sermon was on marriage and First Corinthians thirteen; a sermon she felt she heard numerous times before. Adding to her boredom was the guilt she was feeling by having sexual thoughts in a church.

She became annoyed when she again recalled what the men looked like in those costumes. Being honest with herself she was turned on by the idea of a spouse willing to wear a costume. She was unsure of what would happen after he wore one, but the idea of a spouse wearing one was intriguing.

This led her to review what she called her "odd" or "weird" feelings when she wore certain types of clothes. It was obvious to her these "odd" feelings were sexual in nature. She was certain she was the only person in the world who felt aroused by the type of clothing she wore. She easily imagined herself buying a whole new wardrobe. This caused her some anxiety. One because she was on a tight budget. More disturbing than the money issue was becoming turned on just by the very idea of purchasing certain types of clothes.

She fought off this sexual rabbit hole.

Right after accomplishing this, her mind went back to the underground strip club and the one educational sex book she paged through at college. This book was far from graphic, it was filled with classy illustrations and the book was written in the 1970's. When she paged through the book, in the college library, hiding the fact she was reading it; she was fascinated by the idea of oral sex. After witnessing oral sex first hand she was: offended at the behavior of the men and women when participated in this activity, it looked gross, and she was of the feeling it was rude. It was difficult for her to imagine this activity being fun or pleasurable for her. What was interesting to her now, unlike when she read the educational sex book, was bringing a spouse to an orgasm with her hand. Her concern was the "goo" that shot out. Because of what she witnessed in the club she was worried on what this "goo" felt like.

She took control of her thoughts by reminding herself she was at Marcy's wedding. She adjusted herself and really tried to focus on the wedding. Focusing on the wedding became easier when the congregation stood up and sang a song. She sat back down with everyone else. She again crossed her legs, hung her dress over her knee, and started to swing her leg.

She immediately stopped swinging her leg.

She: blushed, adjusted her dress, and tried to appear as normal as possible.

She prayed a silent prayer. This was the first time in her life she ever prayed about sex. Initially; she felt guilty praying about sex. When this prayer helped her, she decided she would never feel guilty praying about sex. This confirmed her belief, as taught from her parents, God could handle anything.

Being honest with herself; she decided it was almost impossible for her to completely focus on the wedding. To avoid a sexual rabbit hole she took charge and diverted her mental attention to her business. She felt confident her first mate and her brother Timmy were running the scheduled fishing trip successfully. With Jake leading the charter the customer service would be up to her standards. If Timmy was the only one to cover the scheduled charter she would have stayed home. Timmy was an excellent navigator and seemed to have a supernatural talent at finding fish. What concerned her was his people skills. There were times she marveled he was able to own a business of his own. This feeling correlated with her opinion Timmy's overall life choices lacked wisdom. This was drastically different than the respect she held for her oldest brother Jimmy.

With a sister's love she set up an interview for Jimmy. She received a job tip from retired gentleman; she handled his bi-weekly charters. Jimmy with good faith went to the interview, but was still hopeful he could make it selling insurance. Megan knew Jimmy was one of three final candidates.

Megan continued to direct her fantasy driven mind to her charter. She imagined five vessels lined up along the pier. Currently in the way was the yacht she prepared a business plan to purchase.

She: crunched her teeth together, adjusted her posture, flipped her knees, pulled her dress, and by accident bumped into her purse.

Krissy whispered, "Are you alright?"

With a scowl on her face Megan whispered back, "Yes."

Krissy was sure Megan was upset, but this was the wrong time to discuss anything, Krissy again focused on what she felt was a very romantic wedding.

What Megan thought and wanted to say was, "*The Yankee next door has some nerve*

buying my yacht."

On principle Megan was irritated. She lived in Miami Dolphin territory and the U's territory. And yet, he did, what he did, to what she felt was suppose to be her yacht.

She recalled the Monday before Labor Day. She was running a scuba charter for three couples from Canada. When she came back, there was a construction crew docked alongside of her space. They were installing a ninety foot wooden pier. She recognized the construction company. The company was known for building secure seawalls and piers for municipalities. She learned from talking to the construction guys the owner of this pier was sparing no expense. Based upon the wood alone this Yankee was using materials and techniques more expensive than the total cost of her charter and houseboat. She felt the pier was built to withstand the most violent of weather; while being appealing to the eye. It was completely installed by the Labor Day weekend.

The day before the construction crew was finished Megan witnessed an unusual event. A large SUV with two women, a guy in his twenties, and a body guard pulled up to the marina's main pier. They stepped out of the vehicle. Stepping out of the vehicle first was an average height bleach blond woman dressed in a bohemian east coast style shirt with matching pants. She was carrying a very expensive digital camera and case. Next to step out was a taller blond woman. She was wearing: a summer dress, a brimmed hat, and sunglasses. She was carrying a laptop and a brief case. It was obvious to Megan this tall woman was a secretary and based upon the dress was paid well. The large body guard followed these two woman down to her neighbor's pier; Megan took note he was openly carrying a 9mm hand gun. The guy was dressed in jeans and a nice short sleeved button shirt and was carrying a small square item under one arm and two fold out chairs under the other. As soon as they were in front of the construction crew the body guard took the chairs while the guy folded out a small table. The artistic woman attached large lenses to her camera. This woman immediately began taking pictures. Megan was annoyed someone with a professional grade camera could take detailed pictures of the marina and her vessel. The secretary: placed the laptop on the table, pulled out one of the chairs, sat down, opened the laptop, and started typing. What surprised Megan, these two northern women were polite to anyone who came up to them. A neighbor guessed the woman with the camera was from New York and the other was from the Midwest; the guess was Chicago. Megan found it suspicious Mike never stopped painting the outside of one of the marina's garages; she felt he should have checked on these four strangers. When the artistic woman was done taking photo's, the two women hooked the camera to the laptop and downloaded all the photo's. Megan witnessed: the secretary pull out an expensive cell phone, she talked to someone for about five minutes, this blond woman hung up the phone, and nodded to the security guard. The guard set the brief case on the table.

What they did next was shocking. The secretary called someone on the cell phone. Immediately the site manager from the construction firm came down and talked to the woman sitting in front of the laptop. The construction manager waved everyone down to the pier. Once the guys were huddled in a group: Megan heard the woman in her northern accent tell the construction employees, a person named Bob Waller was delighted with the progress of the pier, she explained on how each one of them would be receiving a bonus, this excited the crew, she sat down again, looking at the laptop began calling out names, when the owner of the name reached the table the person was handed an envelope from the briefcase; this

included the manager. After every worker received the envelope the secretary would ask for some information and based upon what each one of the construction workers told her, she put this information into her laptop. When they were finished handing out the envelopes the two women were quickly escorted back to the car. Once everyone was sitting comfortably in the SUV the bodyguard drove them out of the marina. Megan could see the two women were talking intently in the back seat.

It was obvious the crew received a large amount of cash.

Megan stood up with everyone else and sang another hymn. The pastor motioned for the congregation to sit down. This is when a friend of Marcie went up and started to read a scripture verse.

Megan's mind wondered to the Tuesday after Labor Day. Megan went out on a sight seeing tour an hour after dawn with four French speaking families from Quebec. When Megan returned a yacht was docked alongside of this expensive pier. The stern was against the first pier of the marina, the port side was against the expensive wooden pier, the starboard side faced Megan's charter, and the bow stuck out more than ten feet in front of the wooden pier. Her heart sank. This was the yacht she wanted to purchase for her business. She felt this Yankee robbed her.

Megan was in awe.

Jake yelled at Megan while she docked the charter. This was the first time he ever needed to gain her attention while she docked her charter. She quickly recovered and safely docked the vessel.

Once docked: while speaking French she took care of the families who hired her, she escorted them off her charter, walked them to their rented vehicles, these families promised to refer their friends to her, she thanked them, and returned back to her charter.

Once she was back on her charter Jake and Megan gazed upon this very: unique, elegant, eclectic, and obviously customized yacht.

The rumor he spent a fortune customizing this yacht depended upon someones perspective. Megan knew without any customization this was a reasonable priced yacht for it's size and class. The price of the demo was high enough to bail Benny out of financial trouble, and low enough for someone to bite on the demo. Benny used the money he received from the sale of this houseboat yacht to stop his ex-wife from taking the business away. Comparing this yacht to a house: this would have been a lifetime investment for an upper middle class family; where the pinching of pennies might have been necessary. Or this was the equivalent of a great second home for someone in the upper classes. Megan who was an expert on vessels, recognized the constructional changes were reasonable for the rumored wealth of the owner.

Megan believed her new neighbor was shrewd when it came to money. She felt this: based upon the customization, the fact this owner bought the yacht in cash, he made a deal even better, and now owned a very unique and elegant houseboat yacht. Even after the elaborate paint job she was sure there was a significant percentage difference between this reconstructed yacht and a brand new yacht of the same square footage. This idea irritated Megan. If he had purchased a new yacht, she was sure the yacht docked alongside of her charter would have been part of *Dolphin Tours*.

She liked how this yacht had two decks. Her plan was to use the bottom deck for weddings or large parties. Her plan for the top deck was to make it into a small restaurant and/or a moving bed and breakfast. On the second deck on the port side was space to put in

an elegant meeting room. With the elegant cabins she could have taken long tours. The possibilities were endless.

Standing on her charter she could easily see the starboard side of the yacht. To Megan there were four obvious structural changes: the whole second deck was widened, he changed the bow of the vessel, he added another half a deck on top of the second deck, added stairs on the outside of the vessel; they went from the top deck down to a very secured balcony in front of sliding glass doors on the second deck. He was able to expand the second deck by putting in large Roman s pillars in regular intervals between the first deck and the second deck. With these pillars being on the edge of the vessel he created a covered walkway over the once open walkway next to the original wall of the first deck. On the bow side of this walkway was a door. This door was facing the walkway, it opened into the bow of the yacht; Megan assumed there were stairs on the opposite side of this door. Along the wall of the first deck he added five long skinny windows and a door a quarter of the way from the stern. Megan hated to admit she liked how each one of the windows and the door were in between the roman style pillars. Looking through the windows of the first deck it was easy to see he added pillars in what appeared to be a very large open room. This large room started at the door near the stern side of the vessel and ended at the bow. She suspected these extra pillars were added for both cosmetic and structural reasons.

On the second deck he added long rectangle windows; these were in regular intervals from stern to bow, with one set being wider and a little longer. Knowing the layout of this vessel she made the assumption this longer window was part of the living quarters. Numerous feet from these windows were large sliding rectangle glass doors, in front of these sliding doors was the secured metal balcony hanging off of the vessel. This balcony started at the bottom of this rectangle window, went toward the bow, and after a few feet went up to the top deck. Megan made an educated assumption where these sliding glass doors began was in front of the galley. By the placement of the windows from where the outside pool was, to where she thought the main lounge was, she was certain this was still a master cabin. She made this assumption because this section of the stern was slightly lower than the rest of the second deck before the reconstruction. This structural signature was still present.

Jake and Megan took the charter out into the river to gain a better overall look of this houseboat yacht. It was Jake who pointed out to Megan on how he changed the bow. Instead of keeping the original flat front with a space in between the hull and the living quarters; he extended the living quarters out, curved it, so the bow was now even with the hull of the vessel. Megan hated to admit she liked the u curve to these windows; she could tell they were top of the line windows. It was easy for Jake and Megan to see how the first and second deck now supported the third deck. They took note of the enclosed bridge on this third deck. Megan was envious of the well constructed windows of this bridge.

When Jake and Megan moved the charter to the port side of the yacht, Megan was sure there was a large cabin behind the bridge on the third deck. Along the edge of the open section of this third deck was a multi rung railing protecting passengers from falling into the ocean or onto the back half of the second deck.

The noticeable difference on the port side was a long ladder. This ladder: started a quarter of the way from the stern, it was on the first deck walkway, the rungs were four feet long, it went up to a platform on the second deck, where there was a door entering the yacht. It was easy to surmise this was now the main entrance. The original entrance door was on the

first deck, it was still there, it was now four to five feet in front of this four foot wide ladder. The widening of the second deck on the port side went from the bow of the vessel to the platform; so the front of the platform faced the wall of this extension. There was a series of pillars exactly like the ones on the starboard side, this gave the port side a walkway, but unlike the starboard side the only door was the original entrance. Megan felt the stern half of the vessel's construction was very close to the original design.

The stern was now rounded to form a half circle around the pool, was layered down to the hull, and hung over the aft. This is where the cosmetic changes of the yacht really began.

These cosmetic changes, except for his tribute to the military, irritated Megan. What annoyed Megan was his audaciousness to get rid of the blue and green color scheme and replace it with a green and gold color scheme. In between all the windows on the first deck, were green circles with white numbers in the center. Researching these numbers she realized they were all the Green Bay Packer players inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. The one Megan knew without looking up was Reggie White's number, who had been inducted in the pro football hall of fame the previous year. She respected Reggie White after seeing him preach at a Christian conference during college. On the starboard side, at the stern of the vessel, he painted all of the years the Green Bay Packers won championships and Superbowls: she felt it was arrogant of the owner to leave room to paint more. On the port side of the second deck, at the stern of the vessel, he had the symbol of Super Bowl thirty-one painted on along with the numbers; 4, 36, 80, 82, and 92. On the third deck passed the last set of windows and where the deck slanted down to match the second deck, the Green Bay Packer G was painted on both sides. To add insult to injury just passed the G he had the Wisconsin Badger symbol painted on the starboard side, and the Wisconsin W painted in exactly the same place on the port side. On the stern of the ship, just below the round bulge, is where there was an image of a woman cheerleader in Green Bay Packer colors. The name of this yacht: *Packer Queen*, was printed above this image. This pinup was of a: brunette woman, with green eyes, a nice smile, she was turned to look at a person, she was laying on her side, her head was resting on her left arm, in front of her out stretched legs were green and gold pom poms. Megan was surprised the pinup was classy and avoided the customary large obnoxious boobs. Megan still felt, small boobs or not, this painting was sexist. She felt painting the yacht in all this Green Bay Packer memorabilia was obnoxious; it was Miami Dolphin country and he was promoting a non-Florida college.

As much as Megan despised the overall cosmetic changes to this yacht she appreciated the military tribute on the stern. Due to the pool the rounded second deck stuck out over the aft. On this rounded section all five symbols of the United States Military were painted on in exacting detail. Below these symbols in a bold and elegant font was written, *"Thank-you. Without your sacrifice we couldn't accomplish what we do every day. This nation would cease to be a free nation."* Underneath this tribute and above the title of the vessel, were a list of wars and conflicts any US military person served. What was impressive to Megan there were a few conflicts people forgot about. Above the symbols and attached to the second deck; was a large American Flag. and just below it a yellow *Don't Tread on Me Flag*. She tried to avoid any jealousy when it came to these flags. She would have given anything to be able to afford an American Flag of such high quality. This whole tribute meant a lot to her. She felt this appreciation when: Frank, Duke, Jimmy, Timmy, her Daddy, and others from the marina all stopped in front of this tribute to admire it in their own way. This appreciation for country

continued on top of the third deck with an American Flag, a Florida State flag, and a Wisconsin flag properly attached to the top of the vessel.

Megan felt the name of this yacht, *Packer Queen*, was robbed from her vessel; *Dolphin Queen*. She made a point to go visit the two brothers who painted her vessel. She learned they earned more on this job than any other. He offered them freelance work at his company. When they kindly refused they began to receive inquiries from: famous artists, musicians, and the elite from across the country. This recent business growth was because of Mr. Waller's referrals.

She focused upfront when the pastor stepped in front of Marcy and Darrel and told them to face one another. Megan listened closely as Darrel said his vows and Marcy proclaimed hers, she paid close attention to the preacher pronouncing them man and wife. Megan felt it was romantic when they kissed; after this the wedding guests stood up and started to clap as Marcy and Darrel made their way down the aisle. Megan and the rest of the guests watched as the wedding party made their way down the aisle one couple at a time. Megan was surprised the wedding party made it without passing out.

The ushers started to let each row out one at a time.

Megan joined the conversation the ladies were having about the wedding; many were teary eyed.

Krissy tapped Megan on her elbow and whispered, "Are you alright?"

"Yes."

Crystal looked at Megan, "Y'all look upset."

Annie encouraged Megan, "You'll get married someday."

Megan answered, "I'm hoping I'll marry a good guy. If I was looking upset it's because I was thinking about the guy who docked his obnoxious yacht next to my charter."

"Who is he?"

Annie asked with a smile.

"He's some rich Yankee. He's the most obnoxious guy."

"Why are you..."

She sneered before Krissy could finish, "You should see what he's done to the yacht."

"You should be careful," suggested Crystal. "He just might be the guy."

Michelle and Judy were watching and listening.

Breanne came over to talk to Krissy.

"He ain't the guy." Her dimples flashed, "It's rumored he's the one moving a large company into Eastbank."

The usher came and released the pew.

Annie asked, "What makes him obnoxious?"

"He's painted this gorgeous Yacht in Packer colors. He's lazy."

Annie asked, "Why is he lazy?"

"He's sitting in the yacht acting like he's a king on a throne."

"Packer colors?" asked William, "You mean the Green..."

Megan interrupted, "He's done painted the whole thing in a green and gold pattern."

The ladies looked at one another.

Crystal added, "He's sounding awful wealthy."

This caught Breanne's attention as the group was walking down the aisle. She really believed she was giving Megan great advice, "Why not play your cards right and give the guy

some attention. Y'all will be set for life if you'd snag him."

Megan gave Breanne a look and snipped, "I'm not the type of gal who'll date someone because of his money."

Breanne waved a hand, "It's your life."

Megan glared at her, but Breanne missed the glare.

Megan's dimples flashed.

She spoke to the others, "I'm feeling I should move my charter and houseboat."

Krissy cringed, "Sounds a little extreme."

Michelle mentioned, "Many relationships have started when a woman finds a partner bothersome."

"I ain't having a relationship with an obnoxious Yankee."

Megan's dimples flashed.

Slightly animated, "I was planning on buying it. I made the business plan, it was to be my big break. Now I'm living next to a Green Bay Packer shrine."

Annie asked, "Isn't a Green Bay Packer a football team?"

Her boyfriend Arthur explained it to her.

Crystal never heard Megan talk like this before, she asked as a friend, "Girl; I'm feeling Y'all are a little envious?"

"I'm not a person to get envious. It..." Megan stopped because they reached the meeting line of the wedding party.

Megan greeted everyone on the wedding party and explained who she was. She was grateful when she reached Marcy. The two hugged.

Marcy was a little shorter than Megan but was the same height as her husband Darrel. She had a beautiful rectangle shaped face with long black hair. Her hair was done up elegantly and was mingled perfectly with a wedding hair piece. Her bright green eyes showed glee as she was delighted to be married. Her long hooked nose, her high cheekbones, her wide smile, and just the right amount of makeup added to her appearance. Megan hoped she could meet a guy like Darrel. If Darrel found Marcy attractive, who had a similar shape as herself, she hoped a guy would find herself attractive.

Right away in Marcy's sweet voice she introduced Megan to Darrel, "This is one of my best friends. Darrel meet Megan."

"I've been hearing good things about Y'all."

He shook Megan's hand.

Megan was happy for her friend. This Darrel Manning seemed to be a good guy. Megan understood why Marcy was attracted to him, he had a full head of blond hair, was the same height as Marcy, was very muscular, produced a nice smile, and had pretty blue eyes. What impressed Megan, was he was a correctional officer at Mid-State Correctional Institution, which was one of the state's largest woman's state prisons. This prison was located in the same town as the wedding. Megan secretly wished she could find someone like him.

Marcy whispered to Megan, "I'm never getting' drunk again."

Megan winked, "I believe you."

They smiled at one another.

Marcy looked to her right and hugged Krissy.

When all the college friends and their significant others were through the reception line they stood in the church parking lot talking for about an hour. Megan wondered why Michelle

ignored her. In spite of this Megan enjoyed the conversation. She was overjoyed when they all followed one another to the hall instead of going out to a bar or a restaurant. Enjoying the fellowship of friends was better than sitting in the church battling thoughts and feelings she felt were both invasive and interesting.

*A*shleigh: unlocked the door to the house she grew up in, she adjusted her purse, bent down, picked up Nikita, she grunted, she stuck the house keys into the deadbolt, turned the deadbolt, using her keys she turned the knob of the door handle, and pushed the door open with her hip.

Nikita was getting to heavy to pick up and it was difficult to carry her. If anyone else was holding her Siberian Husky the dog would have wiggled out of their arms. Ashleigh correctly surmised bringing Nikita to her parents house was helping her puppy.

Ariel and Guinevere were patiently waiting for Ashleigh and the pup. Their tails were wagging and they were sniffing the air.

Nikita liked these mature Golden Retrievers, her tail was wagging, and she was excited to get down.

Using her hip Ashleigh shut the door. She immediately noticed the basement door was open and heard the sounds of the washer and dryer. She looked down and smiled at her two golden retrievers.

Ashleigh set Nikita down and commanded all three, "Stay."

Nikita wanted to greet her dog friends. She liked this territory called, "*The House*."

Ashleigh gently reaffirm the command by pushing her but down, and with a tone commanded, "Nikita sit." Nikita's tail was wagging, her tongue was out, she looked up at Best Friend, and listened.

When Ashleigh bent down making Nikita sit: her purse fell forward, she quickly put the purse back onto her shoulder, she adjusted her pink summer-weight chino jacket, commanded "Come"; they all greeted one another. When they were finished greeting Ashleigh: stood up, the three dogs followed Ashleigh to the top of the basement stairs, Ashleigh glanced over the carpeted stairs, she listened to the sounds of the machines, she noticed how silent the rest of the house was; she assumed Felicia and her Dad were out of the house.

Ashleigh was about to yell down the stairs but heard, "Is that you Felicia?"

"No. It's me."

"Thought so."

Ashleigh smiled, she again adjusted her purse, and headed down the stairs.

Nikita quickly followed the two golden retrievers as they passed Ashleigh.

Ashleigh yelled over the washing machine, "I'm coming down."

Victoria yelled back, "Alright."

Ashleigh could tell Victoria was pleased she was over.

As Ashleigh approached the bottom of the stairs she gazed to her left; she studied her Foster Dad's model railroad. Blake was adding on to the U shaped layout and making it into a full square. This layout had come a long way since she was little. If she stepped over to the layout she would have recognized all the area where she "helped". Being older she felt it was special he never fixed any of the area's she "helped" him with. She felt it would be wrong if he

truly finished the layout.

She turned to her right. She glanced into the other half of the basement. This was now a second living room: on the floor was a section of old rug (it was once a section of the upstairs living room rug), there was an old couch, two old matching living room chairs, an older TV, there was a set of rabbit ears on top of the TV. Next to the rabbit ears was a DVD player and VCR; both were hooked up to the TV. To the right of the TV were three department store bookcases filled with VCR tapes and DVD's.

Ashleigh remembered how this area had changed over the years. One of her fondest memories is when Blake brought large refrigerator sized boxes down into the "playroom" and taped them together. Ashleigh led everyone who was willing to play castle in these boxes. A few years later she remembered kissing her first boy in this playroom. Ashleigh easily remembered when this area was transitioning from a play area to a small living room. During this transition was the first time she experienced a heavy petting session. Ashleigh could clearly remember the mix of emotions she felt when someone other than herself touched her developing breasts. She wished she would have listened to both Victoria and Blake when they told her he was only after sex.

Victoria's voice snapped Ashleigh out of this memory.

"You are a cutie." Victoria's tone changed, "You promise to keep her safe?"

Ashleigh smiled.

Ashleigh: turned to the right, stepped into the laundry room, turned to the left, and quickly scanned the room. Directly in front of her against the back wall of this rectangular shaped room was a metal kitchen table; Ashleigh suspected it was from the 1950's. On this table was a small wooden basket with wooden clothes line hangers. Directly above this old table was one of two rectangular shaped basement windows. Looking through the window above the table she could see the window well. The other window: was near the right wall, it was smaller, it was covered by a piece of wood, there was a circular hole cut into this wood, and the end of the dryer hose was fastened into this hole. To the right of the small table was the dryer. To the right of the dryer was the washer; it was making an awful noise. Ashleigh wondered if her Foster Dad would make another attempt at fixing it. Everyone other than him wanted him to just purchase a new machine. There were empty laundry baskets in front of both the washer and dryer. There were four laundry baskets stacked two high to the right of the washer. They were full of clothes; these clothes had already been organized by color. Above the baskets was a built in wooden shelf. On this shelf: were both liquid and powder laundry soaps, a couple different types of softeners, dryer sheets, and stain remover. Across from all this, was a long kitchen table with a sleeve in the center. It was against the left side of the small table and it was against the front wall of the laundry room. The end of the table was a couple feet from the opening of the room. Ashleigh remembered when this kitchen table was brought down here. On the edge of this long table: was a Canasta deck (this was two decks of cards stacked together with the same red backs), a regular deck of cards, a stack of old magazines, on top of this stack was a Cosmopolitan, this meant Felicia was down here helping, and there was an open crossword book with a pen laying in the center binding. In front of this table were three different chairs: one was a computer chair, one was an old wooden kitchen table chair, and another was a folding chair. Above everything and down the center of the room were three clothes lines, on the end of each line were a variety of colored plastic clothes hangers; all purchased on sale from a variety of different stores. Ashleigh knew

her Foster Mom was still working on her first load because these clothes lines were empty.

Ashleigh recalled, mainly because this story was a family legend, a scared little girl pulling a full laundry basket down the stairs; one stair at a time. Once in the laundry room she recalled this little girl: pushing a chair up to the laundry room light, turned the light on, dragged the laundry basket in front of the washing machine, used the same chair and climbed up onto the old kitchen table, pulled down a pink detergent with a teddy bear picture printed on the side, pored this liquid into the washer, set her brand new Barbie toys onto the floor, stuffed all of the clothes she owned into this washer, shut the lid, turned a few knobs, and when the washer started she began to play with the best toys she ever owned. What she never forget was Victoria coming down and talking with her. The details of this conversation were now lost because of time, but Ashleigh was certain Victoria remembered the details. This was the first time Ashleigh considered the idea Victoria might actually be a good Mommy. At the time this was difficult for Ashleigh because she wanted Patty to be her Mommy; Ashleigh now considered Patty her Older Sister. She was now grateful Patty never married her Brother and Victoria and Blake were her legal guardians.

Victoria was petting Nikita, Victoria stated with affection, "You're becoming a big girl. "

Nikita was looking up at Victoria and her tail was wagging.

"Yes you are," Victoria spoke.

Ashleigh was grateful her Mom at fifty-six was still alive and had a zest for living. This was evident in: her bright shiny green eyes, her smile, and her overall appearance. Her oval shaped face shown the signs of her age but this only added to the feeling she was wise. Most important to Ashleigh and her family she was tough but it was all heart. She was wearing a long sleeved teal colored shirt, a gray cardigan zip up sweater, with teal colored relaxed fit bootcut cords, and simple athletic shoes. Ashleigh missed Victoria's long wavy hair but was delighted to see Victoria's hair was growing out. Victoria's hair was now straight, it was passed her ear, and was beginning to look feminine. Ashleigh was certain this was a huge part of her Mom's growing willingness to leave the house.

Victoria noticed Ashleigh smiling at her. Victoria regained her composure and casually stood up.

Nikita ran after the two golden retrievers when they left the room.

The two women looked at one another and they immediately hugged.

"How are you doing?" Asked

Victoria pulled away but held onto her daughter's hands.

"I'm doing okay."

Victoria gave Ashleigh a face and with a stern tone spoke, "Don't lie to your Mother."

Just as Victoria said this the buzzer to the dryer went off. Ashleigh set her purse on the long kitchen table; she avoided knocking over anything. She took off her pink summer-weight chino jacket, hung it around the computer chair, pulled up the sleeves of her shirt, and began to help her Foster Mom.

"What's the matter?" asked Victoria, as she moved the white clothes from the dryer into the laundry basket.

Ashleigh took note of the washer; it was in it's spin cycle.

"I'm worried."

Victoria inspected one of Blake's white button shirts, a pleased Victoria put this shirt on top of the other partially dried clothes, and lifted the clothes onto the long table. Ashleigh

stepped to the end of the clothes line, grabbed a hanger, and handed it to Victoria.

Victoria looked over at Ashleigh, grabbed the hanger and asked, "Are you having money troubles?"

Ashleigh gave her Mom an odd look, "Why would I have money troubles?"

Victoria showing a face of concern asked, "Are you sticking to the budget we worked out?"

"I didn't go to that financial advisor for nothing."

"Don't get sarcastic," Victoria scolded. "I'm just concerned."

Ashleigh made a face, "Why?"

This was when the washer ended it's spin cycle.

Ashleigh looked at the washer, she made a face and asked, "How come it didn't buzz?"

Victoria rolled her eyes as she hung another white shirt, "Ask your dad. I keep telling him we should get a new washer. But he insists he can fix it even though he's fixed that buzzer four times."

Ashleigh smiled and being funny said, "It's not in the budget."

Victoria gave her THE look. This caused Ashleigh to turn and open the washer, inside were dark colored shirts and shorts.

"I received a call from Patty the other day."

Ashleigh asked, "How is she doing?"

Victoria stopped hanging the clothes.

Ashleigh looked up at her; Ashleigh was currently putting the clothes from the washing into the dryer.

"She called me concerned."

"Is she doing okay? How's the fundraiser for the orphanage going?"

Victoria gave her a puzzled look, "The orphanage received a large donation."

Ashleigh stood up and looked at her, she pushed up her sleeves, "Who gave it to her?"

Victoria crossed her arms and with love answered, "It's great you'd send your sister money but..."

Ashleigh interrupted, "I've been sending some money since Bob hired me. I feel guilty it isn't more."

Victoria mentioned leaning up against the table, "We're proud of you for doing so and we know your heart is the right place."

Ashleigh looked at her, "What are you talking about?"

Victoria mentioned, "She told me about the monthly checks. But she's worried after telling you about the mudslide you sent to much money."

"I couldn't help but send her some extra after hearing about that."

With a stern, worried tone, "Enough to fix the whole orphanage?"

"What?"

This reaction surprised Victoria. Victoria was sure her daughter would act like an actress and cover up her actions.

"Your sister received a cashiers check large enough to completely fix the orphanage. All I know it was hand delivered to her by a courier."

The two women stared at one another. Ashleigh was processing this information, turned, and started the dryer. Ashleigh grabbed one of the baskets filled with unwashed colored jeans, pants, and a few dark colored shirts; she set the basket on the table with the

open crossword puzzle book.

Victoria studied her Foster Daughter and allowed her to think.

Ashleigh took out one of her Dad's pair of jeans and checked the pockets and found loose change. She set this change on the table then placed the jeans in the washer.

Ashleigh broke the silence, "I bet Bob sent the money."

Victoria gave her a look of doubt. Victoria was sorting the socks into pairs and then hanging the socks on the side of the basket.

Based upon this look Ashleigh answered, "I sent extra money when she told me about the mud slide. It's true. I've been sending her regular checks since I started working for Bob. I've never sent her enough money to completely repair the orphanage."

Victoria could hear the honesty in her daughters tone, "How did Bob find out?"

"He must have overheard Haley and I talking."

Victoria gave her a look.

Ashleigh shrug her shoulders.

"I don't agree with manipulating people."

Ashleigh answered matter of fact, "Bob doesn't do anything he doesn't want too."

Ashleigh was currently checking one of Felicia's pair of jeans. Ashleigh: could tell these were a brand new pair of skinny jeans, Ashleigh pulled out a couple pens, and quickly tossed this pair of jeans into the washer; Ashleigh was sure her mother was unaware Felicia owned a pair of these new style of jeans.

Victoria mentioned when she saw the pens land on the table, "They're a lot alike."

There was a moment of silence when Ashleigh leaned against the washing machine.

Victoria could tell something was bothering her daughter.

"How's Felicia doing?"

With a face, "She's spending our money."

"Is she shopping again?"

"I swear if that mall blew up she'd have nothing to do."

Ashleigh smirked and said, "She's probably acting better than I did when I was that age."

Victoria looked over at Ashleigh as she hung one of her own white shirts up on a different clothes line.

"She isn't any worse or better she's just different."

"What are you meaning?"

"You two are different," Victoria mentioned with a stern correcting tone. "You realize I consider you as my daughter?"

Ashleigh smiled and understood the layers.

Victoria continued, "She's better than you in some things. She's more difficult in other things, and then there are those times you two act exactly alike. But no matter what I love all three of you girls."

Ashleigh smiled as she dug out change from a pair of her sisters shorts, she set this change next to the other miscellaneous things belonging to her sister; "Yes."

"What's your brother's saying about the past? He's always saying it. He even puts it into his books."

Ashleigh reluctantly answered, "You can't fix yesterday. You can only work on today to make tomorrow better."

Victoria hated to admit, "It's one of the few sayings your brother is always spouting off I agree with."

Ashleigh asked, "How did you two work together?"

"There was a little girl who needed help," was Victoria's loving answer. "Let me help you with that."

Victoria was finished folding and hanging all the white clothes.

Ashleigh smiled. Ashleigh observed her Foster Mom change her mind and grab some powder from the fixed shelf, she poured this powder into a slot in the washer.

"Why didn't you yell at me when I was little?"

Victoria gave Ashleigh a look.

"When I washed all my clothes."

Ashleigh witnessed her Foster Mom's body language completely change. Ashleigh observed Victoria put the detergent onto the shelf, grab the softener, and put the softener into a different slot. Victoria facing the washer spoke softly, "You were a different girl back then."

Victoria held back tears as she set the softener back onto the secured shelf. Her facial expression and her body language held more answers than a thousand words. Ashleigh watched as Victoria picked up another pair of jeans and dig into it's pockets and found a mechanical pencil, upset she said, "How come they can never clear out their pockets?"

Ashleigh smiled.

"What would they do without me?"

"We'd miss you."

Looking into her Daughters dark green eyes she stated, "I'm going to be here for a long time. If I'm here or not you'll do just fine."

"But..."

Victoria interrupted, "Life has many twists and turns. It's like that model railroad of your Dads. Your on one track and we're on a different one. You need to follow the track God has you on. Your prepared for that track because we took care of you and loved you while you were on ours. Now it's time for you to get on your track and get it running right."

"But..."

"Just remember you can always come back onto our track. Don't ever forget your dad and I will always be here for you. No matter what happens on your track. Understand?" Victoria added with a smile, "God's left me on this track for a reason. I'm not taking any moment for granted."

"Maybe I shouldn't move."

"Don't stay here because of me. That'd be wrong. You hear me?"

Ashleigh smiled and put another pair of blue jeans into the washer. Victoria stuffed a pairs of her own into the washer. She shut the lid, turned on the washer, and smiled.

"Want to play five hundred rummy?"

Ashleigh now assumed she was staying for supper.

"How about Canasta?"

Victoria asked, "Where were we?"

Ashleigh smiled.

Victoria lifted a magazine and found a small pad of lined paper. On the top sheet written in Victoria's handwriting were: their names, a line was drawn down the center, and neatly written numbers were in each column.

"I believe we need to meld ninety points and its your turn. I deal."

Ashleigh: smiled, she grabbed the simple computer chair, lifted it up as high as it could, moved it near the edge of the table, she helped her Mom clear the top of the table, and sat down.

Victoria sat in the kitchen chair and started to shuffle the cards.

She asked, "How's the job working out?"

Ashleigh made a face, "We've hired an HR person and she's really good at it."

Victoria set the cards down and Ashleigh cut them, Victoria dealt them and Ashleigh was five to many from receiving a card cutting bonus.

They started to sort their cards and Victoria stated, "I believe you told me before. But what happened to Bob's charities?"

Ashleigh could tell this was Victoria's way of being a detective, "He's hiding them all. He doesn't want any attention for what he's doing."

"I've heard on the radio they were all disbanded."

Ashleigh was about to repeat herself, "Promise not to say anything?"

Victoria picked up a card and put it into her hand, Ashleigh looked at her hand and the two looked at one another as Victoria discarded a card.

"Yes."

"They've actually been hidden and reorganized."

"Wouldn't people find them?"

"Not the way we hide them."

Victoria heard the word WE loud and clear.

Ashleigh set down a card and Victoria picked up the pile, she was laying down cards and organizing her hand, "I don't know what's worse your brother being secretive or out in the open wanting attention."

With a concerned look on Ashleigh's face she answered, "I agree."

Victoria studied her Daughter and asked, "He doesn't do anything illegal does he?"

"No," answered Ashleigh. "You should know better."

Victoria would tread lightly.

"I feel Bob sent the money to Patty in secret so no one would be able to figure out where the money came from. Bob does a lot of what he calls bending the rules. But he isn't dishonest."

"I wouldn't want you to end up in federal prison for bending the rules."

Victoria finally discarded a card.

"Mom." Ashleigh's tone was passionate, "Bob's running an honest company. All these rules are so people in power can steal people's money. It's so often about politics and control over someone really helping anybody. Regulations are making it hard for us to bless our employees and expand our business. It would help more people if we didn't have all these ill-advised rules."

Victoria admitted, "I've heard a lot of good things about your brothers company. The Governor was on TV saying he wants the company to stay."

Ashleigh smiled, "That fake son of a..." She stopped herself from swearing. "He's one of the reasons Bob's leaving this state. All the governor's about is collecting fees and raising taxes to support his constant campaigning. With how high taxes are in this state why would Bob keep his company here? Plus he can't stand how the governor is trying to force the union

down his throat.”

“You met the Governor?”

Ashleigh blushed.

“Haley and I go to meetings on Bob's behalf. We carry a laptop with us and he talks to them through satellite.”

Based upon her Daughters tone, her Daughter was both fascinated and nervous about being involved in these activities.

“So are you running things?”

“Not exactly.”

Ashleigh was grateful her Mom brought up the subject, it felt good to talk to someone about work.

Victoria was surprised when Ashleigh set down a Canasta. She then laid down her discard card. Victoria picked up the three cards off the discard pile, she was able to make a Canasta and go out.

Ashleigh sighed.

They started to count their points.

Victoria was observing her daughter's body language.

“Are you being Bob's informant?”

“Mom our company is different.”

“Why are you upset?”

“With me being in charge of all of the employees move. I realized my decisions could really hurt people. Like Haley's sons or our new HR rep. What happens if I'm horrible at this? What are all those families going to do if I mess it all up?”

“How many points?”

Ashleigh told her, they concentrated on the score, and Ashleigh began to shuffle the cards.

Victoria stated, “It sounds like your brother did a wise thing.”

Ashleigh temporarily stopped shuffling the cards, “What?”

“It looks like he's picked a person who cares about his employees and their families.”

“You taught me family is important.”

“This whole family taught you family was important.”

Ashleigh answered with a heart felt smile.

“You'll be just fine.”

“What happens if I mess up? Everyone will get hurt?”

“Never lie to yourself. Admit to a mistake. Make corrective action and do better the next day. We all make mistakes but the important thing is to learn from every mistake. If you learn from them you haven't failed. I'm very proud of you. You've learned how your decision affect people. To many people in authority only care about themselves and their positions.”

Ashleigh added, “This is why my brother avoids creating mid-manager positions.”

Victoria smiled, “You might have to protect a few good ones.”

Ashleigh really took this comment to heart and would contemplate this later.

“Your sister appreciated the money. I'm surprised he didn't tell you.”

“He doesn't tell anyone about any of the good things he does.”

Victoria smiled.

“Hey,” exclaimed Ashleigh as the cut was a perfect thirty one cards; Victoria received a

one hundred point bonus.

Victoria smiled and with a fun tone said, "A mom knows."

This time the washer beeped. They looked and the dryer was still going, they temporarily left the clothes in the washer.

Ashleigh suspected she was talking about more than the cards.

They heard Ariel bark.

Nikita yelped.

Nikita came running into the laundry room. She ran to Ashleigh and curled up against her leg. Ashleigh looked down at Nikita, "You should listen to Ariel."

Her puppy cocked its head.

"You are a good puppy. You just need to learn." She reached down. Nikita's tail was wagging, "Go back and play with your friends."

Hearing her daughter talk this way was music to Victoria's ears. There were many years when Ashleigh would spank her dolls and stuffed animals. She would tell these toys they were ugly or bad. Seeing how Ashleigh was treating her puppy brought a lot of joy to Victoria. Victoria felt everything she went through with Ashleigh was worth it. What Victoria worried about was Bob's influence; she worried her Daughter would end up in federal prison.

"You're a good master."

"We're best friends. We love each other."

Victoria smiled, "I'm sure she loves you too."

Ashleigh answered Victoria with a smile.

"Your brother gave you the dog? Right?"

Ashleigh made a face, "She was Bob's puppy. He didn't know what he was doing. He hadn't taken her to the vet. Worse. He hadn't named her yet. I had to name her. Imagine him calling her dog."

"Really?"

"I had to pick out the right dog food. I made him take us to the vet. He was doing a terrible job."

It was easy for Victoria to hear the annoyed tone in her daughters voice.

"He runs a big company and can't figure out she needs shots."

Ashleigh put down a card and stated matter of fact, "I was angry at him."

"Well be glad your there for her."

Ashleigh nodded, made a face, and smiled, "Maybe I'm there for more than just Nikita."

Ashleigh wanted an answer.

Victoria winked.

Ashleigh smiled in return. Ashleigh was thankful for what her Mom just pointed out to her. The dogs barked and went running up the stairs; Nikita climbed the stairs carefully.

The two women heard the front door open and girls giggling.

Felicia yelled, "Mom!"

Victoria yelled back, "We're down here!"

Victoria and Ashleigh heard, "Ahhh."

"Its Nikita."

Felicia told her two best friends.

Ashleigh hoped her dog was behaving.

One of the friends asked, "You got a new dog?"

They heard Felicia answer, "It's my sisters."

Victoria stopped playing cards when these teenage girls suddenly became real quiet.

Ashleigh suspected they were talking about her brother or herself.

Felicia after a few minutes walked to the top of the stairs and yelled, "We're going upstairs."

Victoria yelled back. "I want to see those credit card statements."

A sigh.

"My friends are here."

Victoria had already set her cards down and was at the bottom of the stairs.

Ashleigh turned and witnessed her Mom's intense body language.

"I'm not going to give you a chance to hide any receipts."

Ashleigh: smiled, set down her cards, pulled out her cell phone, went to the settings area of the phone, set a digital timer, took the phone with her when she stepped over to the dryer, watched the digital number moving quickly forward, started to move the clothes from the dryer into the basket, glanced at the timer, focused on the washing machine, began to pull out all the dark colored clothes, and was about to put them into the empty dryer. She heard Felicia's desperate loud tone, "Mom..."

Victoria interrupted, "How could you spend this much?"

"Mom you said I could purchase clothes."

"Can't you use common sense? We've talked about budgets."

"But Mom..."

"Don't you dare Mom me."

"Everyone is."

Felicia knew enough to stop speaking.

Ashleigh cringed. Ashleigh pulled for her sister when she had enough sense to stop speaking; finishing the sentence would have been brutal.

Ashleigh: stopped the timer, studied the number, smiled, and went back to pulling out the dark colored clothes. She was expecting a long argument. Ashleigh: started the dryer, put the bright colored clothes into the washing machine, poured the laundry detergent into it's slot, and turned on the washer.

Ashleigh heard Victoria say very loudly, "Give me two of the outfits you don't want and their receipts. After church we'll return them. This way you can spend the rest of the afternoon with your friends. I want your Dad to see how much you like to spend our money."

Ashleigh pulled out a shirt, it was her Dad's, she slipped the shirt onto a hanger and hung it on the cloths line already dedicated to her Foster Dad.

Ashleigh heard Victoria mumbling as she headed back down the stairs.

Before Victoria stepped into the laundry room Ashleigh placed her cell phone into her purse.

Victoria stepped into the laundry room, "Your puppy has been kidnapped by three teenage girls."

"She'll survive."

They looked at one another and laughed.

Victoria walked over to the table and started to fold and hang the clothes.

Ashleigh decided, "Would you mind if I took Dad and you out for dinner?"

Victoria's impulse was to ask if she could afford it, but she decided Ashleigh was being

responsible, "It'd be nice if you treated."

There was silence.

In a very somber tone, "I'm going to miss you."

Tears came down Ashleigh's cheeks.

"Don't you cry."

Victoria herself held back tears.

"Should I stay?"

Victoria: turned around, faced her daughter, they embraced, Victoria whispered in her ear, "Don't you dare."

They hugged for a long while. Victoria finally pulled away and looked at Ashleigh, "You better call me at least three times a week."

Ashleigh again promised; "I'll call."

Nicole chopped up some ice, she placed this ice into an ice bag, she stepped out of the cooking area of her kitchen, on her left she passed the counter with the chairs and the TV, on her right she passed her refrigerator, she passed the opening of the center hallway, on her left she passed her kitchen table and the sliding doors, passed the inside door to the garage, on her left she passed Jeff's bedroom, she was grateful the door was shut, and stepped down into what the family called the playroom. As the two older siblings grew this room transitioned into a second living room; but the name playroom stuck.

On the right side of this room was a couch. In the corner, next to the couch, was an end table with a lamp on it. To the left of this end table against the wall was a green recliner. To the right of this old recliner was a small round table. Across from the couch was a simple three level TV stand and an old tube TV. Above the TV was a long window. Looking out the window a person would have spotted Nicole's garden and the side of the shed. There were three matching plant stands along this wall. Two were to the left of the TV and one to the right; with a variety of house plants on each one. Along the edge of the ceiling were six different hanging plants with six different plant hangers; every plant was doing well. On the wall left of the green chair was a shelf with three scented candles and a small cactus in the center. Above the couch hanging on the wall was a large round candle holder. This gray looking candle holder appeared to have metal leaves growing from the outside and were making their way onto fifteen tea type holders on the inside. On these holders strategically placed to be pleasing to the eye were black, red, and yellow tea type candles. On the wall, next to the opening, was a long skinny picture of a field of yellow daisies with a small girl from the nineteen thirties picking yellow flowers.

Laying on the couch was Julie. Her: foot was propped up by a large pillow, her foot and ankle were tightly wrapped; with her toes sticking out. She purposefully wiggled her toes to look at them, she felt some pain, the pain medication they gave her in the emergency room was wearing off. What was frustrating to Julie was this high ankle sprain would keep her out of sports for the next four to six weeks. A reminder of her situation was the boot that was sitting next to the couch and her crutches that were leaning against the wall. She was grateful her Momma: helped her with a shower, helped her change into a clean pair of black drawstring pants with white and red stripe down the side, and the matching red scoop neck tee. Just in case she needed it, her matching hoodie was hanging from off the arm of the

couch, next to her head.

Julie was passing the time by reading a college level accounting text book. She checked the book out of the public library a week earlier. She was currently taking Accounting One. She was able to take this course because she already passed Introduction to Accounting as a Freshmen. The reason she was able to take accounting as a Freshman because she finished Algebra Two as an eighth grader. She was done reading her Accounting One book and had read a friends Accounting Two book. She was enjoying this older edition college text book, because this text book from the library was finally challenging; more important it was giving her ideas.

Julie glanced up at her Momma. Julie grimaced when her Momma put the ice pack on her ankle.

"Is your ankle hurting?"

Julie responded with a depressed tone, "It's fine."

Nicole assumed the tone was caused by the fact Julie was unable to go to her friends house and she was banned from participating in sports for the next six weeks.

Nicole sat on the edge of the couch, "Your ankle was hurting."

Julie acknowledged her Momma, "It was hurting."

"You were close to a fracture. If you'd kept walking on it Y'all would have missed more time."

Julie reluctantly replied, "Yes Ma'am."

There was a moment of silence.

Nicole asked, "I haven't seen Hannah or Zoe in a while?"

This question hurt Julie. She wanted all her friends to get along but her Snob Club friends disliked Hannah and Zoe. Hannah and Zoe disliked the Snob Club and what made being friends with Hannah and Zoe more complicated was Hannah and Zoe now had their own set of friends. Julie honestly despised most of the girls in the Snob Club; except for Amanda and Jennie. In the back of her mind she was concerned what would happen to Amanda and herself if she left this group. Julie witnessed first hand how cruel the Snob Club could be.

"They're still my friends."

Julie stopped talking and there became an awkward silence in the room.

Nicole crinkled her forehead.

"I'm concerned about Jennie."

"She's my friend."

"I'm seeing what type of gal she is. I'm afraid she'll get you into trouble."

Julie made a face, "I ain't ruining my chances of playing sports."

"What happens if Y'all are at a party and it's raided. If there's drugs and alcohol there you'll get lumped in with em'."

"Everyone knows I ain't into drinking and they all know I wouldn't be touching any drugs."

"What concerns me is Jennie is the type to keep pressuring everyone around her until all of her friends are in trouble."

Julie wondered.

Nicole seeing Julie's reaction asked, "Has she already lead Y'all into trouble?" Julie heard her Mom's loving pleas, "Y'all can talk to me about anything."

Julie's answered honestly, "I ain't touching drugs. I hate how kids act when they're drunk."

Julie was expecting a list of questions on when she saw kids high or drunk.

"Just keep in mind. Even if Y'all are not acting like the company your keeping people will assume Y'all are like the company Y'all are keeping."

This hit Julie.

"Have you talked to Amy-Sue?"

This was a friend Julie missed. She was a church friend who moved away because her Dad found a job near Jacksonville.

"We're talking on My Space."

"Oh."

Julie answered, "It's on the internet. But I'm encouraging her to sign up for Facebook."

"What's a Facebook?"

Julie rolled her eyes, she felt her Momma was still living in the dark ages, "It's like My Space but better. Amy-Sue needs a school email. You need it to sign up. If she signs up we'll be able to talk."

"Oh."

Julie correctly assumed her Momma would find out what Facebook was.

Nicole refocused the conversation, "I just ain't trusting Jennie."

Julie was offended, "You've always let me choose my friends."

"Like I was saying I'm afraid she'll get Y'all in trouble."

"Don't you trust me?"

If Nicole felt this question was sarcastic she would have replied different, "Yes. But we all make mistakes. If Y'all are ever finding yourself drunk. I ain't saying I want you drinking. I'd like to think you'd call me instead of making the situation worse. I don't want to receive a phone call from the police telling my Y'all were in an accident or was arrested."

With a tone Julie commented, "I ain't allowed to drive."

Nicole responded strongly, "We've talked about this before. Once Y'all are able to afford the insurance and gas then Y'all can start taking lessons."

"My friends parents are letting them drive?"

"We ain't other parents."

Julie knew this to be a two edged sword. She wanted to say they could afford it but was aware her Daddy was struggling with selling insurance. Julie correctly assumed, the reason her Daddy was having trouble selling insurance was due to his blunt honesty and his unwillingness to scam anyone.

Nicole continued, "We're feeling playing sports is better for you and will take you further than driving around and working during the school year. I'm hoping you'll find a summer job so you can save up money for college instead of wasting your money on a car. You're good at saving money. Maybe you'll have money for both."

Julie's idea, was to save her own money, convince her parents to purchase a car; otherwise she would wait until after college.

Nicole again refocused the conversation, "What was the plan at Jennie's tonight?"

Julie was torn by this question. She loved seeing her friends but she despised the drinking and the drugs; she was well aware of what happened when police crashed a party. Based upon past experience, she was confident she could escape the house or run from a

campfire before the police reached her; being athletic and sober had it's advantages. If by some chance she was caught, she felt she could talk her way out of anything. She assumed being the granddaughter of Captain and the niece of Megan would keep her from getting into real trouble; especially when they found out she was clean and sober. She was tired of thinking about this sort of childishness. Plus, she was tired of the snob club and all the drama they brought with them. Ultimately; the twisted ankle was a good excuse of avoiding a party without looking like a nerd.

Julie answered, "We'd have hung out."

"If you ever," Nicole put some emphasis on the word ever, "find yourself in trouble call me. Blame me if Y'all have too."

Julie made a face.

Nicole felt if she pushed any further they might start arguing. Nicole wanting to keep their communication open changed the subject, "What are you studying?"

"Accounting."

Julie lifted up the book so her Momma could read the cover.

"When did you start taking college accounting?"

"I'm just reading the book."

Nicole gave her daughter a look, "Should we put you in an advanced school?"

Julie became upset with this idea, "Skipping fourth grade was horrible. Promise me you'll keep me a sophomore?"

"Okay. I won't force you to transfer or to skip a grade."

"Thank-you Momma."

"How are Y'all getting along?"

"I'm bored. I'm tired of everything."

"It's unfortunate but the hardest part about high school is so often everything but the book learning. I'm expecting Y'all to graduate."

There was a moment of silence.

This moment of silence bothered Nicole.

Julie smiled for her Momma and replied, "I'm feeling there are things I'll only experience in high school. I promise I'll graduate."

Nicole hugged her daughter, Julie responded with a hug of her own.

Nicole pulled away and stood up and was about to go back to the kitchen.

Julie believed the GED would be easy. Julie had already looked at all the GED materials at the library. She wanted to move beyond the boredom and childishness of high school and move onto college. She knew her parents would be furious if she dropped out and received her GED. The hurtful part was how disappointed her Momma would be. Julie felt the main reason to stay in school was to continue participating in sports. Julie was absolutely confident she could pass any college course and could compete in any college sport she wanted. She suspected if she dropped out, scholarship offers would end.

Julie felt compelled to ask, "Momma?"

Nicole stopped and turned to look at her Daughter.

"Daddy tells me I can accomplish anything."

"I agree."

"Would you be disappointed if I became a kindergarten teacher?"

"Why would we be disappointed if Y'all become a kindergarten teacher?"

"It ain't a real important job."

"Your Daddy and I believe Y'all are able to accomplish anything you set your mind too. We're trying to encourage Y'all to choose a career Y'all will like. With how smart Y'all are you could pick just about any career you'd like. We'd feel being a teacher, especially a kindergarten teacher would be an important job."

"But I wouldn't make a lot of money?"

"Money ain't everything." Nicole paused, "This ain't meaning Y'all shouldn't make a living."

There was silence as they gazed upon one another.

Nicole responded with a gentle tone, "Honey; you'd have the chance to be an influence on children. You love teaching the little kids at Sunday School and I've watched you help your sister."

Julie knew she had a good Momma.

"Y'all can accomplish anything."

"Like accounting?"

Based upon Julie's facial expression and tone she suspected her daughter was up to something. And yet, Nicole was truly happy she was focused on something academic.

"Yes accounting."

"I was feeling I could make extra money on the side while being a teacher. Would it be alright if I worked with Uncle Duke this summer?"

Nicole's expression spoke volumes to Julie, "NO."

They studied one another.

Nicole broke the silence, and with concern in her voice asked, "Why on earth would you work for your Uncle Duke?"

"I was feeling I could learn a lot."

"Not his brand of accounting."

"He's my Uncle?"

"Doesn't matter. Work with Auntie Megan. She has a business degree. I'm sure she understands accounting. Daddy will help Y'all too. You stay away from your Uncle Duke especially involving accounting."

Nicole hoped she'd heed this suggestion.

Julie felt the need to push buttons, "Is it because of Captain's friends?"

Nicole could feel Julie pushing.

"We love Uncle Duke. Yes, I'd be concerned. Young lady Y'all should be concerned about the people your Uncle Duke works for."

"It'd be kind of exciting."

Julie insistently recognized her mistake.

A very upset Nicole asked, "How's ending up in jail or dead exciting?"

Julie diverted the answer by asking, "Y'all believe Uncle Duke will end up in jail or dead?"

Nicole could tell by her tone she knew the answer and was diverting, but used this as an opportunity to say what she felt, "I'm surprised he's not in jail or dead already. Ma is always worrying. The rest of us are all expecting him to end up missing or in jail. Would you want me to be worrying like Ma does?"

Julie answered honestly, "No."

Nicole was relieved to see and hear the strong love Julie had for her.

"Overall he's running an honest business. It's just when he's working for Captain's friends it ain't so honest. Your Auntie Diana has told me he's been looking for a way out and isn't finding one. Would you want to feel this way?"

"I'd never end up jail," she pointed at herself, "I ain't letting anyone trapping me."

Nicole replied with a snip, "It's that cockiness that'll land you in jail."

"I'm smarter than most people."

Nicole pointed, "Don't be so smart Y'all are dumb."

Julie gave her a face and was obviously offended, "I ain't dumb."

"Feeling Y'all can get away with anything is unwise. You're a smart gal. Don't be throwing it away with foolish talk."

"School's so boring and even accounting is boring."

Nicole again sat down next to her daughter, "The reason everything is so boring is because of how smart you are."

Julie made a face.

"Accomplish something constructive with the intelligence God has given' you."

Julie made another face but was listening.

Nicole gently grabbed Julie's hand, "I know you like pushing yourself."

"Momma."

Nicole pointed, "I'm understanding why. But don't be pushing yourself to the point Y'all are sinking in the ocean and there ain't a life raft."

"Why are Y'all using Ma's sayings."

"The saying fits."

Julie still pushing asked, "Well if I ain't swimming in the ocean may I just talk to Uncle Duke?"

"Call Auntie tomorrow."

Julie did agree calling her Auntie Megan was a good idea. The next time she'd talk to Uncle Duke she would be more cryptic.

"Why can't I today?"

"She's at her friends wedding."

"Is it a lesbian wedding?"

Nicole stood up and in a tone, "We've talked about this before."

Julie loved everyone's reaction to the idea her Auntie was a lesbian.

Nicole was displeased with her daughters body language, "It's Marcy. She's a college friend. She's marrying a guy who works for the women's prison in Ocala. I'm hoping I'd never have to visit Y'all there."

Julie dead serious, "They'd never catch me."

The two women glared at one another.

"How do you think it'd make me feel if I had to visit Y'all in prison?"

Julie was now feeling guilty, "I apologize."

"It'd brake my heart." Nicole laying it thick, "You'd enjoy breaking my heart?"

"No Ma'am."

"Keep thinking Y'all can get away with anything."

Ester asked excited, "Who's going to jail?"

Ester and Danielle were standing in the kitchen staring at Nicole and Julie. It was

obvious they came down the stairs while they were talking.

Nicole asked them, "What are you two doing?"

Danielle and Ester could tell from Nicole's tone she was upset.

Nicole stated matter of fact, "Your sister will graduate high school. After she'll attend college and end up a kindergarten teacher."

Julie rolled her eyes and tried to focus on her text book, but she heard; "Don't be rolling' your eyes at me young lady."

Danielle and Ester started to giggle.

"What's so funny?"

Immediately, both answered, "Nothing Ma'am."

Nicole asked in a calmer voice, "What are you two wanting?"

Danielle answered, "Ms. Steward we're hungry."

It was difficult for Nicole to stay angry at Danielle. From the moment Danielle and Ester met in first grade they were best friends. Danielle was over so often it was if she was another daughter (Jennifer, Daneille's Mom felt the same way about Ester). Nicole felt Danielle was a very good girl: she seemed to enjoy church, listened as much as a ten year old could listen, was respectful, and was generally sweet. The biggest reason Nicole was having a difficult time being angry at Danielle was her Daddy had passed away a month earlier. Nicole was more than happy to watch Danielle while Jennifer went back into the work force.

Danielle was a little shorter than Ester. She had a heart shaped face with long light colored brunette hair. Her facial features were still very childlike but these were slowly dissipating. She was developing angelic shaped lips with a gentle smile, her cheekbones were flush but a little wider; which brought out her gentle looking greenish blue eyes. She was developing a pronounced eyebrow line and a very unique shorter nose that turned up at the end. A plus to her looks was her short and gentle round chin. Overall she was turning into the girl next door.

In a more gentle tone Ester answered her Momma, "We're hungry."

"Why not eat a piece of fruit."

They turned and looked at one another; then made a face.

Nicole being a mother stepped up out of the play room and headed into the kitchen and again strongly suggested, "Have a piece of fruit until dinner."

The two ten year old's turned and were now behind Nicole as she opened the refrigerator.

Ester asked, "How come there ain't any real snacks?"

Julie smiled.

She went back to reading the accounting book.

Nicole pulled out red grapes and put them in a bowl.

"Eating grapes is better for Y'all than cookies or chips." Nicole set the bowl down onto the kitchen table and proclaimed, "These are very sweet tasting grapes."

They made faces but followed Nicole to the table and dug their hands into the bowl.

Nicole stated sternly, "Girls have manners."

Again Julie smiled.

Ester protested, "They're grapes?"

Nicole already handed them napkins and set two bowls on the table, "Young ladies need to have manners."

"Why?" asked Ester, "Boys don't have any."

"Yea," agreed Danielle, "they burp and they even fart."

Ester was excited and wanted to tell a story about a boy at school, "Dennis at..."

"We are not," Nicole emphasised the word not, "Talking about farting."

The girls giggled.

Nicole instructed, "Eat your grapes."

Julie shouted into the kitchen, "What are we having for dinner?"

"I was thinking about blacken' catfish."

Ester and Danielle liked this but wished it would be something else.

Julie asked, "Why not make your Eggs Benedict?"

"For dinner?"

Nicole observed Ester and Danielle get excited, Ester went over and whispered to Danielle.

Nicole hated this secret whispering stuff. Nicole would talk to them about this behavior.

Danielle mentioned, "Ms. Nicole I like your eggs and grits."

Ester asked, "Why can't we eat em' for dinner?"

Julie added, "Y'all are telling us we should try different things."

Ester said, "Momma, Y'all are telling us to try things."

Nicole smiled and asked, "I'll let you ladies have your wish. What type of meat do Y'all want? Sausage, ham, or bacon."

Julie yelled, "Sausage."

Danielle said, "Ham."

Ester following her sister answered, "I'll have sausage too."

Nicole smiled, "We'll wait until your Brother and Daddy arrive home."

Ester full of questions asked, "Where are they?"

Nicole took bottled water out of the refrigerator for herself and the two girls.

"Your Daddy and Jeff are helping Sal's Daddy put up a new fence. They should be arriving in a half hour."

Ester crinkling her nose, "They'll stink."

Julie heard this and thought about Sal.

"Momma will make em' shower."

This statement was directed at Jeff who might miss the fact he needed one.

From the kitchen table they were peaking into the play room. Seeing Julie caused them to be conscience of Julie's condition.

Julie felt compelled to ask, "Is Sal coming over?"

Ester exclaimed, "OOWWWW."

Danielle giggled.

Ester proclaimed, "Julie has a boyfriend."

Julie yelled, "Shut up."

Nicole put a stop to any further childishness, "That's enough."

She then answered Julie's question, "I'm not sure if Sal's coming over."

The two girls eating grapes were making faces and gestures. If visible by Julie these gestures would have upset her.

"Oh."

Nicole: stepped over to Ester, she tapped her on the shoulder, when Danielle and Ester

looked up; Nicole's glare put a stop to their teasing.

Julie announced, "I wish he went to my school."

Ester and Danielle eye's went wide. Due to Nicole's earlier scolding they refrained from acting obnoxious.

Ester asked, "Momma is it alright if we make jewelry?"

"Sure. Just don't make a mess."

Nicole asked, "Why?"

Julie reluctantly answered, "He's a good guy and he doesn't put up with anything."

Nicole could feel the layers in this comment.

"Are you having trouble in school?"

Julie yelled back, "The boys at my school are so immature."

Ester asked, "What's immature?"

Danielle answered, "It's when kids are misbehaving."

Julie answered, "It's being childish when Y'all should know better."

Nicole nodded her head when the two looked over at Nicole.

Ester decided to be bold, "Is Sal your boyfriend?"

"He likes a gal who plays softball at his school."

Danielle pointed out, "You play softball."

There was silence from Julie. Julie was aware his girlfriend played sports. Sal always seemed to date girls who liked sports or were country type gals; many worked on their own ranches or farms. What made him popular at church was he acted like a gentleman. He was one of the few guys who was still a virgin. Julie was certain her brother Jeff was a virgin too. She felt her brother's virginity had very little to do with his faith, but more to do with the fact he was so awkward around girls.

Nicole suggested, "You two should start playing with them beads."

Ester ran to a cupboard in the kitchen where there was a small selection of games and toys. Ester pulled out a plastic bin with: beads, buttons, string, and miscellaneous things for the girls to play with. The two best friends set themselves and the bin in the middle of the play room.

Nicole smiled knowing they chose this room because Julie was laying on the couch. Nicole hoped Julie would help Ester. Nicole was well aware Ester almost worshiped Julie and it hurt Ester any time Julie ignored her. This sister tension was difficult on Nicole who loved both her daughter's and at the same time understood the age difference.

Ester opened the plastic bin. They began by taking out string and a scissors.

Ester looked over at Julie and gently asked, "Is it hurting?"

Julie heard her sisters tone.

Danielle asked, "What did the doctor say? Did Y'all talk to Momma?"

Nicole looked up from preparing dinner; she was ready to intervene.

Glancing at the two girls Julie could tell they were worried. Julie recognized how much Danielle wished her Momma was at home instead of working. Julie had compassion for Danielle. Julie went to her Great Grandma's funeral and this was difficult. Attending Danielle's fathers funeral was heartbreaking for Julie. It was difficult for Julie to observe how upset Danielle was and how brave Ms. Winfield was. The funeral caused Julie to consider how different their lives would be if her Daddy passed away; or was killed while serving in the Persian Gulf.

Very nicely Julie answered, "It's a sprain. Jennifer was very nice to me. She was asking about you."

Nicole smiled when she heard this.

Danielle forced the tears from coming out, "She's liking her new job. But she's missing staying at home."

Nicole listened very closely.

Ester stated, "We're liking it when you come over."

"Y'all are welcomed any time," volunteered Julie. "People are always spending time here. But we especially like it when Y'all come over."

Nicole was proud of Julie for expressing what she felt as well.

Danielle held in the tears by saying, "Momma took care of me when I had a sprain."

"How'd you get a sprain?"

Danielle liked it when Julie talked to her. All the girls at church felt Julie was cool.

"Soccer."

Julie asked, "Are Y'all playing this year?"

Danielle's body language sunk and she frowned, "Maybe. If Momma gets more money. She says soccer is expensive."

Julie spoke up before Nicole could answer, "I'm sure your Momma will get the money."

Danielle answered, "Momma isn't making as much as Daddy." Danielle held in tears, "We're needing to get a smaller place."

Ester mentioned sadly, "They're looking for apartments."

Danielle tried to hold back the tears.

Nicole stepped into the doorway, "Where's your Momma looking?"

With a desperate tone, "All over. Momma's saying it's been hard finding an apartment. She was saying apartments are more expensive. She says they were cheaper when she lived in one before I was born. I ain't suppose to be worrying." More tears fell, "I ain't wanting to move out of my house."

Ester and Julie were unsure of what to say.

Nicole knelt down and faced Danielle, "What's important isn't where Y'all are living. What's important is the tow of you are together."

Danielle pleaded, "We ain't sure where we'll be living. Momma's scared."

"You don't be fretting," Nicole was reassuring and said with heart, "It'll all work out."

Nicole made a mental list of all the people she would call. If necessary these two woman would live with them until Jennifer found a place to stay.

"You ain't fooling Ms. Nicole?"

Nicole gently grabbed Danielle's shoulders, "Your Momma loves you. She ain't letting anything happen to Y'all. You understand?"

Tears flowed.

Nicole hugged Danielle.

Danielle cried for a bit until they heard vehicles pull into the drive way.

Ester mentioned, "I bet it's Daddy."

Nicole grabbed a tissue from off the end table, wiped Danielle's tears, and encouraged this ten year old girl, "It'll all work out."

"Yes Ms. Nicole."

Julie spoke, "Let me show you something with the beads."

In an excited tone Ester asked, "Really?"

"Bring em' over," Julie carefully sat up but warned, "Don't be touching my ankle."

Both looked at the ankle.

Danielle promised, "We ain't touching it."

She brushed tears away and focused on beads.

At this moment Nicole was proud of her oldest daughter.

This was when Nicole heard the garage door open and a bunch of male voices. Nicole would pay closer attention to Sal and Julie's friendship. The door leading into the garage opened. Stepping into the house was: Jimmy, Jeff, Sal, Sal's Dad Lester, a friend of Sal's named Buddy, and Mr. Cooper; an old retired farmer who was friends with Lester.

Nicole stepped up and mentioned, "I'm making eggs Benedict what are you guys wanting on em'?"

Lester mentioned, "Debbie-Ann, made us a late lunch. On account of us working on the fence."

Nicole stepped up to the plate, "Well it's a little early but big guys like yourselves are more than ready to be eating again. It's close enough to dinner. Y'all wanting sausage, bacon, or ham with the eggs?"

Ester made a face and plugged her nose.

Danielle crinkled her face.

Julie who consistently fought body odor made the two girls stop their behavior.

Sal's friend Buddy asked, "Ms. Nicole. Y'all make the best eggs Benedict and grits. But I ain't ever had eggs for dinner?"

Jimmy answered, "Well there's a first time for everything."

Ester yelled, "Sir, we're wanting eggs Benedict."

Danielle agreed, "Yes sir. We're the ones asking for eggs."

Lester bellowed by pulling on his overalls, "Well I guess the gals have spoken."

Sal looked over at Julie, Julie pretended she missed his look.

Ester and Danielle giggled.

The men started a loud discussion about the Miami Dolphins and the newest college football poll.

Lester stepped over to Nicole and asked quietly, "I'm believing she's Bill's daughter?"

"I've been watching her when Jennifer is working."

"Where's she working?"

"She's working at the hospital."

"What's she doing?"

"She's working the receptionist desk."

"Is it paying well?"

In a quiet, serious tone, Nicole answered; "It ain't enough for her to keep the house. I'm hearing they're looking for apartments. I'm betting with all the transplants moving in because of the new company moving here. It's making it difficult for Jennifer to find a place. We're all hearing on how rents are increasing. Ma and Captain are keeping their prices fair. But Y'all know people."

"Hmm."

Jimmy was leaning against the island with the TV on it, turned around, leaned in, and asked; "Are banks ready to foreclose?"

"I'm supposing," answered Nicole. She added, "They'll be needing help moving when the time comes."

Lester put his hand on his chin and made a noise.

Nicole whispered and nodded toward Danielle, "She's worrying. She was telling me they've been looking all over."

The men who were listening to this conversation looked into the room where the three girls were, Lester and Bill were friends for years, seeing Danielle in the play room playing with those beads; well it touched his heart. As well as the other men.

Lester declared, "Well we'll just have to enjoy Eggs Benedict for dinner."

The men agreed.

Jimmy winked at Nicole.

Nicole nodded her head.

Someone made a comment about something unrelated to anything being discussed. The men laughed loudly.

The two girls gave one another odd looks. They wondered what was so funny about what they said.

Julie leaned over and declared, "They're men."

Ester and Danielle glanced at one another and shrugged their shoulders. They again focused on their beads.

End of Part Three of Five

September 23, Pandora's Box Shattered

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Ashleigh & Megan *Book I: Friendship*



Saturday
September, 23

Pandora's Box
Shattered

*(3months and 22 Days Since Megan was
notified a wealthy neighbor was moving
into the marina)*

Part Four of Five

Authored By:

R. P. Voght

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I hope you enjoy this pioneering format I call, "A Story Cast."

What the term "Story Cast" means; is this story is designed to be read in small to medium intervals. This particular story is broken up into "days." These portions are broken up into part or all of a particular fictitious "day" of the story. Each day surrounds the characters lives, relationships, adventures, struggles, mishaps and triumphs. This story is very different from a Novel or conventional story in many ways. Again, THIS IS NOT A NOVEL AND IS NOT WRITTEN IN A CONVENTIONAL NOVEL FORMAT. Instead; as the reader you are following the characters thoughts and actions during the course of this "day." This fiction story is set up like a TV series and or a third person journal. It always starts with one or more character getting up and ends with one or more characters going to bed; while during the day you experience the Characters actions, feelings, and their thoughts.

On a large overview; there is a beginning, a middle, and an end to this "Story Cast"

R. P. Voght

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Saturday, September 23

(3 months and 22 Days Since Megan was notified she was going to have wealthy neighbors)

Ashleigh made a face. In the car with Ashleigh: Blake, Victoria, Felicia, Annette, and Iris. Felicia, Annette and Iris were known as the three musketeers. They were almost inseparable since they met one another in kindergarten.

It was completely natural for Annette to refer to Blake as Dad. Her real father left her Mom and herself for another woman when she was four. Since the time of the divorce she only met her Father twice. The first time was shortly after her parents divorced. The second time was a month earlier while Annette was working at a local drive in restaurant. Her father stepped into the restaurant and stepped into the line she was servicing. When he reached the counter he was too much of a coward to acknowledge who he was. She never recognized him. He put in his order, he watched her work while waiting for his food, he took the food from her, never said a word, drove to the airport, and flew to his third family in Phoenix. Blake took on the role of being a real Dad to Annette. No one could recall when Annette started to refer to Blake as Dad, even after Annette's Mom remarried a loyal man Annette respected; Annette always felt Blake was her adopted Dad.

Annette: was average height for a young woman of sixteen, she was a healthy thin, and had long dark hair. Her facial shape was in transition from an oval shaped face to more of an oblong shaped face. Her beautiful dark green eyes were hid behind thick glasses. These glasses rested on what she felt was a huge nose. It was broad but was not as large as she perceived. She purposely kept her thick black hair long so she could cover what she felt were her large ears. She was so worried about her ears she was afraid to try different hairstyles. Her lips were thin and her medium length mouth created a beautiful smile; at this time she avoided smiling because of her braces.

She felt she had the shape of a bean stalk; this was an accurate description of her shape.

She was frustrated with how slow her body was taking to develop. This process was so slow her Mom took her to the doctor. They were in the process of running tests when she finally had her first menstrual cycle. With her cycle starting so late they were watching for any signs of thyroid problems. She was very disappointed in her slow developing breasts. They started to grow when she was fourteen but they were still very tiny. She became ecstatic when a few weeks earlier she noticed some resemblance of a defining shape. At this point, all she wanted was to actually fill in a bra, currently she wore one to be fashionable. What kept Annette from falling into despair was: her faith, her Mom, Felicia's family, but most of all her two best friends. Annette wanted to believe Victoria and her Mom when they told her late bloomers ended up to be very beautiful women. This prediction was terribly difficult for Annette to believe.

Iris's experience was very different from Annette. At the age of sixteen Iris was a very beautiful young woman. She was averaged height and already stopped growing. She had long beautiful blond hair; hair she enjoyed changing depending on her mood. She had a round face, bright green eyes, the perfect shaped nose, and very beautiful pearlque shaped lips. Without trying she received a large amount of focus from boys. Iris loathed this attention. She wanted to be noticed for who she was and was tired of being noticed for her large breasts; breasts she was grateful stopped growing. The reason she despised this unwanted attention was from watching her Dad. Her Dad treated: her Mom, her two older Sisters, the women around him, and herself with respect. She in turn demanded this from any boy who approached her. It hurt to have a reputation as a tease, she was far from being one, she just received unwanted attention. She was wise enough to understand boys were angry with her because she would never date; much less sleep with any of them. She truly tried to avoid leading any boy on.

Iris was very passionate about her virginity and her faith. Iris was fascinated with boys and had a natural curiosity of sex. She was perfectly content to wait until her wedding night to physically explore this curiosity with another person. Until her wedding night, she was confident to study about sex; while avoiding the traps of pornography. This confidence came from a mother who helped her feel comfortable in who she was. Iris appreciated her Mom's willingness to answer any question she had about sex and relationships. She was: holding onto her virginity like a precious prize, she was looking forward to a fulfilling sex life, and would only date a boy who held to the same values as her.

The street they were driving on was the busiest street in Wisconsin. On the east end of this street was a covered mall with three anchor stores and multiple stores. West of this covered mall were three miles of strip malls and restaurants. She was certain her foster Dad purposely drove passed the strip mall with the Italian restaurant they agreed upon. They were now pulling into a strip mall parking lot where a national chain restaurant was.

Blake announced when he finished parking; "We're here."

The five ladies in the SUV all stared at him.

Ashleigh informed her Dad of the mistake, "Dad we agreed we'd go to *Little Italy*?"

Little Italy was a successful Italian restaurant chain that catered to upper middle class families. Ashleigh correctly suspected her Foster Dad believed: if Ashleigh was paying they should eat at someplace inexpensive and he planned on paying the bill.

Ashleigh repeated herself, "This isn't *Little Italy*?"

"I changed my mind."

"But we all agreed on *Little Italy*," Felicia mentioned confused, "We're hungry for it's lasagna."

"Dad," mentioned Annette, "Why did you change your mind? You never did this before. We're looking forward to spending time with Ashleigh at *Little Italy*."

"Yea," Felicia spoke, "It's bad enough she's leaving after Thanksgiving."

Hearing the hurt in Felicia's voice was making it difficult for Ashleigh to leave.

Blake turned around and looked at Ashleigh, "Are you sure you don't want to eat here? I know it's one of your favorites."

Ashleigh could tell her Dad was calculating on how much *Little Italy* would cost. This was frustrating for Ashleigh because she wanted to take everyone out to an upscale German restaurant, but everyone at the house decided on *Little Italy*. Ashleigh decided the next time she treated she would make the reservations ahead of time.

Ashleigh answered, "I can easily afford *Little Italy*."

Blake insisted, "It's not about the Money."

Victoria turned and looked at Ashleigh; this confirmed it was about the money.

Felicia pleaded, "Lets go to *Little Italy*."

Victoria gently grabbed his hand and gave him a look.

"*Little Italy* is where we're headed."

Blake pulled the car out of the parking lot and headed to Little Italy.

Felicia responded with, "Awesome."

The three teenage girls started to giggle and turned their attention to Ashleigh.

Blake interrupted their conversation, "I'm sure you ladies will want a pizza?"

Victoria scolded with gentleness, "They can get what they want."

Ashleigh could tell as Blake drove east toward *Little Italy* he was still calculating the cost of the Italian restaurant.

Ashleigh stated, "Dad it's okay. I'm being responsible and I can afford treating everyone."

"Of course."

Ashleigh rolled her eyes.

Ashleigh reaffirmed her attentions by saying to the three girls, "You can order what ever you'd like."

Annette mentioned, "Shrimp scampi is my favorite."

Blake was about to say something but Victoria interrupted Blake, "Of course you can order shrimp scampi."

Felicia stated her opinion, "Ashleigh's loaded."

Blake looked into the rear view mirror and scolded Felicia, "Your Sister isn't loaded."

Felicia rolled her eyes, "Of course she isn't."

"I'm not loaded. I'm free of bills and I'm well off."

Felicia with a face commented, "Your Brother is."

An excited Iris responded, "I heard he's made a fortune of that movie. With how many books he's sold I'm sure he's very rich. My Dad was saying he's made a killing with his company."

Annette asked, "I bet he's given you like. A." She paused, "A fortune."

"He gave me enough money to be out of my financial difficulty. Mom and Dad and a couple accountants helped me with a financial plan."

"You won't keep it if you..."

"Blake!"

Victoria gave him a look.

All the women in the SUV smiled.

Ashleigh simply spoke, "I'm making a living working for my Brother. The job isn't easy."

Even before Ashleigh was finished with this sentence Victoria turned and gave Felicia a warning look; this was enough for Felicia to keep quiet.

Iris very politely asked, "What's your job?"

Ashleigh answered, "I'm just a secretary."

Iris brought up the subject all three young ladies really wanted to talk about, "We don't tell anybody."

Annette added, "We don't."

Iris finished her questions, "Is he working on a new book?"

Felicia miss spoke, "He's working on a new one. She reads all his new books."

Iris eyes became big, "Really? So; was *The Dancer* a true story?"

Annette could have revealed the truth about *The Dancer*, but because she loved the Anderson family she kept what she knew to herself.

Changing the subject for Ashleigh, Annette asked, "What's going to be his next book?"

"I'm sworn to secrecy."

Ashleigh spotted how eager both girls were to receive any information on his new book.

Victoria turned in frustration, glared at these three teenagers, and spoke; "You shouldn't read his books."

Felicia in defiance stated, "We're not babies."

"I'm afraid you'd get the idea of making one from reading his books."

Ashleigh again felt the need to defend her brother, "They're not pornographic."

"As a Christian he shouldn't be writing the books he's writing." She stopped Ashleigh from answering by saying, "Its not the point."

The four women looked at one another. The three young ladies decided to refrain from asking her what the point was.

Blake pulled into a large parking lot: on the left was a small grocery store, in the back was a long strip mall, and in front to the right was the drive in restaurant Annette worked at. The large lighted poles lite up the parking lot. Blake was lucky to find a spot somewhat close to the right end of the mall.

Ashleigh was thankful when the girls rushed to get out of the SUV and scrambled to the restaurant. Ashleigh hated being in the middle of these round table discussions on what her Brother wrote. She stepped out of the SUV, walked to the front of the SUV, and stood underneath one of these light poles. Ashleigh was wearing the same type of clothes she wore while working at her Brothers company, except for a red spring jacket her Mom failed to get rid off. Ashleigh was feeling warm and wished she was wearing her pink summer-weight chino jacket, she wanted to please her Mom; so she was wearing this out of fashion red coat. She waited patiently for Blake to walk around and open the door for Victoria.

Ashleigh remembered the first time she ever witnessed Blake open the door for Victoria. Before moving in with the Anderson's, the only time Ashleigh witnessed a guy walk around a car to open a door, was when a boyfriend of her Real Mother was angry. So when Blake went to open the door for Victoria, Ashleigh clung to Patty and buried her face into

Patties chest and started to cry. Patty and Blake were surprised at Ashleigh's reaction. Victoria being wise and a very instinctive woman reassured her Foster Daughter. Victoria in a patient and soothing manner explained to Ashleigh how Blake was being a gentleman and always opened the door. Patty pointed out to Ashleigh, her brother opened the door for her; at the time Ashleigh felt everything was different when it came to Patty and her brother.

The present Ashleigh wished she was dating a guy like Blake. She had enough of: bad boys, projects, and guys who just wanted sex. Instead; she was looking for a guy: who would open a car door, would take her hand like Blake was taking Victoria's hand, would lead her like Blake was leading Victoria, would kindly close the door as Blake closed the door to the SUV, and would gladly accept her hand as Blake accepted Victoria's hand. What Ashleigh wanted most of all was a man like Blake who stood with Victoria: before, during, and after breast cancer. As her Foster Parents passed Ashleigh: Victoria grabbed onto her daughters arm, Ashleigh leaned into her, and they walked step for step up to the restaurant.

Victoria stated very naturally, "I love you."

"I love you too."

Ashleigh held back her tears.

The three of them walked up to the restaurant, Blake opened the door and let the two ladies step in. Blake followed behind looking forward to spending time with his second oldest daughter. Blake was well aware they only had sixty four days left until Victoria and himself would take their second child to the airport.

They stepped into the restaurant. The girls were standing in a small waiting area to the right of the restaurant entrance. Behind them was a large picture window and a bench in front of the large picture window. To the left of the window on the wall was a very elegant painting. The painting depicted people sitting in chairs outside of an Italian restaurant and people walking up and down the Italian street. In front of the three girls was a space, a half wall, and at the end of the half wall was an antique cash register that was no longer used. Behind the register on the wall was a photograph of two Italian women in 1950 style dresses.

Ashleigh noticed all three girls were waiting patiently and all were still wearing their coats. Ashleigh felt sorry for Annette who was trying to look like the young woman she was on the inside, but it was easy to think she was a tall twelve or thirteen year old. Annette was wearing a tan corduroy jacket with shag fur trim with inside lining for warmth. The jacket was unclasped and underneath she was wearing a dark blue thermal Henley with a red tee. She matched this with dark blast wide leg jeans and simple blue tennis shoes. Iris was wearing a light weight long chocolate colored coat, it was unbuttoned, underneath see was wearing a whine and gray colored turtleneck sweater. She was wearing dark blue seamed skinny jeans. She matched these jeans with black studded booties. Ashleigh could see why Iris received attention. Ashleigh instantly recognized the coat Felicia was wearing. Victoria and Felicia argued over the purchase of this coat last spring. This coat was a dark brown cropped leather jacket with seaming detail, the reason for the argument was how tight it clung to Felicia's body. Felicia currently had it unbuttoned, underneath she was wearing a natural colored long sleeved off-the-shoulder tunic, with a pleaded skirt that ended just above the knee; she layered the skirt with winter styled black leggings. She matched this with brown leather buckled mules with chained detail. Ashleigh smiled at the stars and hearts on this chain. All three girls were carrying purses, all were wearing simple jewelry; it was easy to tell they were friends by how they were standing and communicating with one another. Ashleigh knew she

would miss them.

When Ashleigh, Victoria, and Blake reached the girls; Blake gently removed Victoria's gray light weight pea coat. As usual Ashleigh felt her Mom was dressed like a lady. She was wearing a white button shirt, it was covered by a black vest with jacquard detail; until her surgery Victoria never wore vests. This mattered very little to Ashleigh, she was grateful her Mom was feeling comfortable being in public, if this meant wearing vests then so be it. Matching the vest she was wearing black striped pants. She matched the pants with black laced up oxford shoes. Accessorizing the whole outfit she was wearing a glass bead necklace Ashleigh gave her on the previous Christmas.

Blake was holding onto Victoria's coat. Blake was wearing a lightweight chocolate colored bomber jacket, a very nice green plaid long sleeved shirt, khaki colored corduroy pants, and oxford shoes. Ashleigh assumed these articles of clothing were purchased recently by Victoria. The only clothes her Dad ever purchased was his suits. Ashleigh liked the cologne he was wearing and his beard was trimmed.

Felicia stepped up to them and acting important informed everyone, "I put our name under Ashleigh. It'll be about fifteen minutes."

Victoria smiled and replied, "Okay."

Felicia knew by her Mom's facial expression she approved and knew her Dad disliked Felicia choosing to use Ashleigh's name. Blake knew enough to avoid commenting on this.

Blake and Victoria sat down on the bench in front of the large picture window. They watched and listened as Ashleigh and the girls chatted. Victoria and Blake began to quietly talk between themselves; Victoria was still paying attention to her daughters. This is when they heard Ashleigh's name called. They all stepped over to the hostess, she led them to a large table on the left side of the restaurant. Next to this table were a series of windows. The lights of the strip mall and the lights from the distant cars traveling on the road were an interesting backdrop for this Italian restaurant.

They all were taking off their purses and jackets and hanging them on the back of the chairs. As Ashleigh did this she witnessed Blake: pull out Victoria's chair, she gently sat in the chair, and he pushed her in. Victoria set herself directly in front of Ashleigh. Blake sat at the head of the table to the left of Victoria. Felicia sat next to Ashleigh. Across from Felicia was Annette and Iris sat at the other end of the table facing Blake.

When everyone was settled the hostess placed menu's in front of them. A server came over to the table and set down filled water glasses. The hostess took their order of drinks: Ashleigh ordered a soda, Annette order a lemonade, Iris was content with the water, Victoria and Blake ordered coffee. The Hostess promised to have their drinks and a waitress would be there in a moment.

Ashleigh stated, "Thank-you."

The hostess answered, "Your welcome."

Every woman at the table knew this bothered Blake.

The hostess stepped away from the table.

Immediately many different conversations sprouted up among the women.

Annette leaned over and asked Ashleigh, "May I truly have the shrimp scampi?"

Ashleigh whispered back, "Yea sure. Why are you asking?"

"Dad's going to get angry if I order something so expensive."

Ashleigh answered, "He's not paying."

"That's why he'll get angry."

Iris stated, "He's going to end up paying."

A confident Ashleigh answered, "Not this time."

The three ladies gave Ashleigh a look of doubt.

Blake asked, "What are you young ladies discussing?"

Ashleigh smiled, "What we are about to order."

"Ladies what are you deciding to have?"

Victoria was studying the menu.

Felicia answered, "We haven't decided yet."

The four young women looked at one another and sat back in their chairs. They focused on the menu.

The hostess arrived and set down the drinks. The hostess told everyone their waitress would be there in a minute.

Victoria thanked the hostess and the hostess left.

Felicia motioned with her head.

Ashleigh and the three girls continued to have general conversation while they observed Blake study the menu. Blake was missing the fact he was being gazed upon, just as the girls were being observed by Victoria. In the middle of all the chatter Felicia mentioned in a whisper, "Dad's acting weird tonight."

Ashleigh was about to say what she thought he was up to.

Victoria asked, "Felicia have you decided yet?"

Ashleigh gave Felicia a glance and so did Annette.

Felicia answered, "I haven't decided yet."

"On the menu it says a lasagna will feed a family of four," Blake stated overlooking the table, "We all know how large a portion this is. I'm sure it'd feed all of us."

Ashleigh was about to mention she was going to pay, but Victoria under the table tapped Ashleigh's leg with her foot, and gently spoke, "Not all of us want Lasagna."

"Oh."

He again focused on the menu.

Iris mentioned to Ashleigh, "I'm feeling I'd like the Fettuccine Alfredo."

This is when the waitress came by and introduced herself as Sue. She was a college aged woman with blond hair, nice features, and was polite. She told everyone what the soup and salad was, told them the special of the day was all you could eat spaghetti, and mentioned the appetizer plate was discounted with a family order.

Before her Dad would order this discounted appetizer plate Ashleigh asked about the appetizers. The waitress went through the list of appetizers and to everyone's delight, except Blake, Ashleigh ordered two orders of cheesy garlic bread. The waitress asked if everyone was ready to order, no one was. She was polite and stated she would take everyone's order after serving the cheesy garlic bread.

Once the waitress left Ashleigh stated, "It's perfectly okay for you to order the Fettuccine Alfredo."

Blake interjected, "Even with the garlic bread I'm was thinking the two pizza deal would be a good choice."

Victoria pointed out, "We had pizza two days ago. I'm not in the mood for it again."

Blake made a face and answered, "I've seemed to have forgotten that."

Ashleigh and Felicia shook their heads.

"See," Felicia whispered leaning into Ashleigh, "He's acting funny."

Iris leaned over, "He's not himself."

Annette nodded her head, "He's been acting funny for a couple days."

Ashleigh questioned, "He has?"

The reason these ladies could have this conversation was due to the fact Victoria and Blake were discussing what they were ordering. Ashleigh heard Victoria tell him he should order more than a chiefs salad. When Ashleigh reviewed the menu and she noticed the chiefs salad was one of the lowest priced items on the menu.

While Ashleigh was looking up the price of the salad she asked in a whisper, "How's he been acting funny?"

Annette answered in a whisper, "He's been kind of crabby."

Felicia added, "He's been working on the train downstairs a lot. I mean, more than usual. He's been talking about your Brothers company."

"What's he..."

Ashleigh was interrupted by, the waitress setting down the cheesy garlic bread.

Victoria was happy the waitress arrived at this moment.

Sue asked, "Is everyone ready to order?"

Ashleigh started so Blake would have difficulty ordering a group pizza, "I'd like the individual lasagna."

"What would you like as a side?"

"A salad with French dressing."

"Ma'am. What would you like to order?"

Victoria answered, "I'm not sure."

Everyone at the table knew Victoria waited until the last minute. Annette spoke up and ordered her shrimp scampi. While everyone else was ordering Victoria was looking at the menu, finally when she was the last one and everyone was staring at her, she ordered Veal Parmesan. Ashleigh was paying closer attention to her Dad and could tell he was totaling up the cost. This annoyed her. Whenever he treated he made it a point to let everyone know they should pick out what they wanted.

The waitress after taking all the orders asked if anyone needed refills, all of them did except Victoria, the waitress left.

Annette being an only child always wanted a sibling, the closest person who filled this role was Ashleigh. She was happy for Ashleigh but at the same time she really wanted Ashleigh to stay. She wanted a confirmation on what she heard and asked, "Ashleigh when are you moving?"

Ashleigh found this difficult to answer, "I'll be leaving on November twenty-seven, the Monday after Thanksgiving."

Blake added, "This is sixty-four days from now."

Silence at the table.

All the ladies looked at him.

Victoria was grateful the waitresses came with their refills and collected the empty glasses. While the table was quiet a young college couple walked passed the table.

Iris made the mistake of whispering to Annette, "He's cute."

This caused all four young ladies to glance at this well dressed, muscular guy, who had

dark hair, dark eyes, and was with an average looking woman.

"Girls."

Victoria was appalled at their behavior. Victoria had the ability to mix sex, love, and Christianity without being embarrassed or shy; she would never tolerate bad behavior. The teenagers forgot Victoria's standards because they were teenagers. Ashleigh forgot because she was missing sex with another person.

They all quickly turned away and looked at one another.

The waitress mentioned, "Your orders will be up in a moment."

Ashleigh answered, "Thank-you."

Victoria gave the girls one last look.

The waitress smiled and stepped away from the table.

Ashleigh tried to reassure her Dad, "Dad I'll be alright. It's going to work out fine."

It felt weird to be encouraging her Foster Dad. There was only one other time Ashleigh ever needed to encourage her Dad. This incident happened when Victoria was at her worst, Ashleigh went downstairs and stopped halfway down when she heard her Dad crying and speaking at the same time. By the distance of the sounds she assumed he was sitting at the train table. She listened to some of his prayer before she quietly went back up the stairs. When he came up from the basement, Ashleigh went out of her way to encourage her Dad, this led to the only time in her life she witnessed her Dad fully cry. This was both touching and tragic.

"I know you will be...It's just."

He looked down at the table.

All the ladies felt what Blake was feeling.

At this moment the waitress brought out their orders.

The waitress could feel she was interrupting something important.

Everyone was polite to the waitress as she set the orders on the table. Once plates were set light conversation about the meal began. None of them really knew what to say.

After the waitress left Blake surprised the ladies and said, "Let's pray."

They stared at him.

This was the first time they ever heard Blake suggest praying in public. He believed prayer should never be a show.

Blake began his prayer.

During the prayer Victoria reached her foot over and tapped Ashleigh on the leg. Ashleigh and Victoria glanced at one another. Ashleigh was feeling the compulsion to take out her cell phone and tell her Brother she was staying in Wisconsin. The only reason Ashleigh kept her cell phone in her purse was because of Victoria's loving gesture. Ashleigh was grateful when her Dad finished.

All the ladies at the table knew Blake wanted Ashleigh to stay, but at the end of the prayer Blake asked God to bless her choice. They all put in the effort to remain cheery and they all put in the effort to conceal their tears.

Ashleigh looked at her lasagna.

Victoria leaned over and whispered, "Enjoy your favorite dish with us."

Ashleigh smiled. Emotionally Ashleigh wanted to leave the lasagna there but she allowed her body to enjoy her favorite meal.

It became easier for Ashleigh to eat this lasagna when they all started to discuss simple things. Soon they all became more comfortable, this is when Felicia mentioned a teacher she

was frustrated with. Ashleigh knew the teacher and gave Felicia a tip on how to handle the class. This led to the three girls and Ashleigh talking about different teachers and swapping stories. Victoria decided she would take each one aside and mention how a young lady should be behaving in school. Victoria became upset with Blake when he found some of these stories amusing. This conversation went on for some time without Victoria saying much of anything until all four of them started to complain about the uniform.

Victoria interrupted Felicia's complaints, with an observation, "Your wearing a pleated skirt?"

Felicia snipped, "It's different."

Ashleigh, Iris, and Annette all cringed at Felicia's answer.

"Mom," Annette tried to rescue Felicia, "Her skirt doesn't look the same as our old design."

Victoria snipped, "You mean it's not showing your assets?"

Victoria's gaze was a dare to reply.

Iris took the challenge, "The school uniform is suppose to, uh," she paused. "To be ahhh.."

"Ashleigh interjected, "Conservative."

"Yes," Iris took this word, "Conservative so boys will act better."

"It's not just about boys," interjected Victoria, "It's suppose to help teach you how to act like ladies."

In a very serious tone Iris pointed out, "Isn't this trying to wash the outside of the pots? Guys are always staring at me."

"It doesn't stop guys from teasing me," mentioned Annette who pushed up her glasses. "I look horrible in the uniform."

Victoria with heart mentioned, "You look wonderful in the uniform."

Annette held in her tears, "I look like a tall boy wearing a skirt."

Ashleigh immediately responded, "You are not a boy. You are a beautiful young woman."

Annette made a face and sunk in her chair.

The ladies all could feel what Annette was thinking and feeling.

Of all people it was Blake who gently said, "Annette."

"Yes Dad."

Annette was now picking at her Fettuccine.

"You're a smart wonderful young woman who has a lot to offer."

"Boys don't care. They want girls who," she shrug her shoulders and looked down at her meal.

Iris understood what Annette meant.

Both Ashleigh and Victoria were about to answer but Blake beat them all to it, "There are guys who only want a woman for their own pleasure. But there are good men who will honor you and wait."

The three girls were encouraged by this but felt he was too old to understand, but Iris acknowledged, "Dad tells me that all the time."

Blake mentioned, "Your Dad is a man of integrity and he's a good example of what a man should be."

Annette looked at her meal feeling hurt.

It was Victoria who said, "I'm sure Blake loves being your Dad."

This was when Blake noticed Annette's countenance, "I've been blessed every time you and Ashleigh have called me Dad. It has been very rewarding for me and I wouldn't want it any other way. I look at both of you as part of the family. I've tried to love the two of you like you were my daughters."

This perked up Annette a great deal.

Ashleigh already felt this way but was grateful to hear it.

Victoria added, "The situation you and your Mom found yourselves in wasn't your fault."

Annette mentioned with a sad tone, "Mom tells me this all the time."

Victoria answered, "You should believe her."

Annette wanted to believe what Victoria just told her, and she was glad people told her these wonderful things; but she still wondered why her Dad would abandon her.

Victoria brought the conversation back around, "It's important to pick a good guy."

Felicia being sarcastic answered, "You're always telling us that. How do you really know?"

At this moment the waitress came over and asked, "Is everyone doing okay? May I take your plates?"

Victoria answered, "Please do."

"Is anyone interested in a desert?"

"We're fine." Blake added, "You could bring us the check."

Ashleigh was annoyed at Blake's attempt to pay for the meal.

The ladies at the table noticed Ashleigh's look of disapproval.

Based upon this look the girls were curious as to what Ashleigh had planned.

Victoria smiled.

The waitress answered, "Yes sir."

As the waitress was about to step away from the table Blake asked, "May I have more coffee?"

Victoria added, "I'd like more as well."

"Certainly. I'll get everyone refills."

The waitress collected as many of the plates as she could and brought them back into the kitchen. She came back and collected the rest of the dishes. Ashleigh paid close attention to the waitresses pattern.

Blake answered Felicia's question, "You watch a guy for a while. How he treats others is eventually how he'll treat you."

In a very strong tone Iris stated, "You should listen to your dad."

Felicia and Annette gave a warning glare.

Iris realized her mistake.

Victoria and Ashleigh noticed the comment and the three girls reaction.

Victoria asked, "Why would she need to listen to him?"

Iris doing a dance, "I feel Blake's right. If she'd ever want a boyfriend years from now. Ahh... She'd need... Ahhh.. A guy who'd treat his Mom right."

Victoria was suspicious but answered, "That's good advice."

Felicia gave her friend a glare.

Iris gave one back.

Ashleigh and Victoria were reading all of this communication, they were unable to read

all of the details of the map, but it was easy to spot the obvious direction.

Ashleigh was about to respond, but she spotted the waitress carrying a tray of drinks; on this tray was a check. Ashleigh quickly grabbed her purse, pulled out a pen, a Gold American Express card, and swung the purse over her shoulder.

Felicia was visibly surprised Ashleigh's card had a higher limit than her Dad's card.

"Excuse me for a sec."

Ashleigh quickly stood up and headed for the waitress.

Blake asked, "What's she doing?"

The three girls smiled.

Ashleigh met the waitress and the waitress set the tray on an empty table.

Victoria answered, "I believe she's paying the bill."

"She can't do that."

Blake was about to go over to the table where Ashleigh and the waitress were taking care of the bill.

Victoria was stern, "Let her be."

"But she shouldn't pay the bill."

"We all know you always pay the bill. Maybe it's time to allow a daughter who's trying to show us she'll be alright. To bless us."

Blake's countenance changed and the two looked at one another.

As they were talking, Felicia turned to her friends and whispered; "She has a Gold American Express Card."

Annette answered surprised, "Really?"

They were watching Ashleigh take the bill from the waitress. The three girls saw Ashleigh pull out a woman's wallet and hand the waitress some cash. It was obvious this woman was very pleased.

Iris whispered, "How much money is she making?"

Felicia guessed, "I bet it's millions."

Iris mentioned, "I wish I had a rich brother."

Annette recalled the times they were over when Bob picked up Ashleigh, "He was always nice to us. Remember how he'd give us money to spend at the gas station."

Felicia commented in a whisper, "It was only five dollars."

"It was great to us," retorted Iris. "Remember how much fun it was."

Felicia mentioned, "It was fun until Mom would ask us where we got the money."

Annette asked, "You think she believed us when we told her we found it?"

Felicia with a facial gesture answered, "No way."

Felicia glared at Iris, "Why did you say something before?"

Iris gave her a look, "I don't like him."

Felicia answered with a tone, "Your just jealous."

A hurt Iris responded, "Why would you say something like that? We're sisters?"

Annette was worried and spoke from the heart, "No guy is worth us fighting or losing a friendship over."

Felicia agreed, but still felt they were jealous, "I'm sorry."

Iris was still hurt but answered, "Okay."

Annette mentioned, "I don't trust him."

Victoria was concerned at the intensity of their whispering conversation, "Girls did you

like your dinner?"

Iris quickly mentioned, "It was good."

The girls looked over at her with fake smiles.

Victoria could tell something was up, "I hope you thank Ashleigh when she gets back to the table."

Felicia answered, "We will."

The waitress appeared pleased. She stepped up to the table, handed everyone their refills, and asked, "Is there anything else I can get you?"

Victoria answered, "We should be fine."

The girls watched Ashleigh put the card, the pen, and her girl wallet back into her purse. She hung the purse over her shoulder and headed back to the table.

When she reached the table she purposely mentioned out loud, "The bill is taken care off."

Blake looked at her and suggested, "I'll pay the tip."

Ashleigh with a smile mentioned, "I took care of that too."

Victoria with a smile spoke, "It's nice to have you bless us."

She then turned to Blake, "It's nice she's blessing us?"

Ashleigh could tell Blake was annoyed she paid the bill. What he said next surprised her, "I guess it's a sign our daughter is a successful woman."

This meant a great deal to Ashleigh; more than anyone would know.

He asked what Ashleigh felt was an odd question, "Ashleigh do you remember the first time we took you here?"

It was rare for Blake to reminisce.

Ashleigh was caught off guard by this question but answered, "A little."

Victoria's look was enough for Ashleigh to contain her emotion.

It was obvious to the women at the table Blake was emotional.

Felicia hoped her Dad would tell a story about Ashleigh. Felicia only knew a life with Ashleigh in the family. Felicia was annoyed her family never discussed the details of Ashleigh moving in with the family. What little she knew was from a conversation she had with Patty. Felicia was taught from the time she was little Ashleigh was a foster child; which was similar to being adopted. This meant she was part of the Anderson family and would be treated as such. They explained to Felicia how she had an older brother, who was part of Ashleigh's family; because family was important she would spend weekends with him. Felicia remembered being reassured whenever Bob picked up Ashleigh he would bring her back. Being older Felicia wondered why he never used his power and money to take custody of Ashleigh. Felicia was grateful he never did this. The closest Ashleigh came to leaving was when Ashleigh arrived home drunk. This was very traumatic for Felicia, she disliked this memory, and very rarely thought about it.

Blake started to tell the story, "When we first brought you into our house you were very quiet and you clung to Patty. You very rarely spoke to us. You were speaking to Patty and that annoying dog. What was it's name?"

Victoria answered with a face, "Maxine." Reluctantly but with heart Victoria mentioned, "It saved Ashleigh from being kidnapped."

Blake interjected, "It was a brave mutt."

The three girls looked at one another. They would ask Victoria about the kidnapping.

Ashleigh could still feel the love she had for the dog.

Blake kept the story going by saying, "It was obvious you were afraid of me. I didn't hold this against you and there isn't any reason you should feel guilty."

"Wasn't I six or seven?"

"Don't feel guilty at all. You've changed a great deal since the first time you were brought to our house. With emotion Blake stated, "We read the police reports and..."

Victoria interrupted, "I'll never forget those bruises."

Ashleigh in a very steady voice mentioned, "Because of Patty's advice and being able to live with you it stopped."

The three girls gazed upon one another. They were old enough to put the pieces together. The three girls suspected it was bad for Ashleigh. They all knew Ashleigh's Mother was an alcoholic. This was the first they ever heard on how bad it was for Ashleigh. They all knew of girls who were molested or were abused but these issues suddenly became very personal to them.

Blake with a smile answered Ashleigh's comment, "You've come a long way since that broken and hurt little girl entered our house. We're grateful God brought you into our home."

Ashleigh crinkled her forehead and pleaded, "I was horrible to you?"

Felicia was surprised by this comment.

Victoria answered, "You were a good girl. We understood where you came from. We always thought of you as ours."

This was always wonderful to hear but Ashleigh questioned the honesty of the statement.

Blake continued, "I knew you were on your way to accept us when you decided to talk to me when I was eating breakfast."

All four girls smiled.

Blake finished his coffee and looked over the table, then at Victoria and asked, "Are we ready to go?"

All four of the ladies at the table gave him the look.

Ashleigh was trying to remember the first time she talked to her Dad at breakfast. As long as Ashleigh could remember she would sit down and eat breakfast with him. Breakfast was the time to ask questions, to suggest a need or a want, or to just have a conversation. Both girls heard many wise things sitting at the breakfast table.

A frustrated Felicia asked, "What happened?"

"Yea," Annette spouted, "What happened?"

Blake looked at the two of them, "What do you mean?"

Felicia with a confused look said, "You've always sat with us in the morning."

Victoria leaned over to a confused looking husband, "We'd like to know what happened during this first breakfast with Ashleigh."

"You remember."

The four young women were ready for Victoria to finish the story.

Victoria put her hand on Blake's arm, "I feel you should tell it."

He gave Victoria a look, he pushed up his glasses, and touched his beard. He then gazed over the table.

It was difficult for Ashleigh to observe Blake's emotion. Blake was the consistent one, the one who plotted a course and accomplished the goal. And yet; Ashleigh was delighted to

see how much Blake loved her.

Blake sat up in his chair and resumed his story, "Before you moved in I had always went to work early. I had been late going to work because I had to take my car into the shop and your Mom was going to follow me. Our plan was to drop the car off at the shop and your Mom would take me to work."

Victoria asked trying to help the story along, "Why did you stop going to work early?"

He took a sip of his coffee and looked over at Ashleigh, "You came over and laid your pink backpack onto the kitchen table. You sat down and stared at me."

Ashleigh crinkled her forehead: Ashleigh clearly remembered the pink backpack, she could clearly recall Victoria always yelling at her to get it off the table, she could remember watching Blake eat eggs, she could remember eating cereal with Blake, many conversations flashed in her mind, but she was having trouble specifically remembering the day Blake was talking about. Based upon the normal pattern of things Victoria was most likely in the kitchen.

Blake continued, "I was used to you staring at me and never answering any of my questions. I never got used to how you'd shrink in your chair and even run away from me. But on this particular morning when I asked you if you were ready for school." Blake stopped held in tears, "You simply said Yea and then you asked me another question."

The women at the table could see there was something very important about this question. They expected more to the story but with dignity he casually looked over at Victoria, and with a quiver in his voice asked, "Are we ready to go?"

A perplexed Felicia asked, "What else happened?"

Annette asked, "What did she ask?"

Iris was listening very closely.

Ashleigh was trying so hard to remember this particular day. What she recalled were flashes of memories. It was easy to surmise these flashes were out of order. What she remembered was the feeling toward Blake changed. With one memory she would feel confused, with another scared, with another happy, and Ashleigh remembered feeling a fascination on how Blake behaved.

Blake answered Felicia, "Nothing really. Your Mom came into the kitchen holding you and she told Ashleigh to get the backpack off the table." He crinkled his forehead and mentioned, "I reasoned if the only time your sister was going to talk to me was at breakfast I should change my schedule. I made the decision to start work later so I could be with your sister before school started."

Felicia recognized how important this time was to her.

Ashleigh holding back tears asked, "When did I start talking to you?"

He was reviewing the memories and was trying to decide how much he should reveal.

The women at the table felt a deep affection for this man.

"It was two weeks later."

They stared at him.

Victoria asked, "What did Ashleigh ask you at the table?"

"Is it important?"

Ashleigh with a tear pleaded, "To me it is."

She was starting to connect the memories and wanted to confirm something.

All the ladies glared at a very emotional Ashleigh and then turned to Blake. They could see he was trying to act dignified.

"The question you asked me at the table..."

He paused.

The four young women were in shock as Blake shed a tear. This was very unnerving for them.

Victoria smiled and grabbed his hand.

Ashleigh could see the love between her parents; this caused her to feel everything from joy to guilt.

He took a deep breath, "You asked me why I didn't yell at you." He paused holding in all the emotion he could, "You asked me why I didn't want to hug you?"

The morning in question came upon Ashleigh like a flood. She clearly remembered sitting at the table worried Blake disliked her because he never yelled at her and he never tried to hug her. What her step dad called hugging made Ashleigh feel very violated. Blake never once touched her inappropriately and never once spank her. Sitting in the restaurant she was reminded on how fortunate she was to grow up under the protection of the Anderson family and her Brother.

"Dad..."

Ashleigh rushed around the table. On Victoria's nod of permission he stood up. Ashleigh embraced one of two men in her life she looked up to as fathers. This display was a very rare event; it was very uncomfortable for Blake to show such affection. I was impossible for Ashleigh to contain her emotion.

Victoria motioned for the girls to get ready to go and stood up.

The young ladies were pretty emotional but took Victoria's lead.

Victoria heard Ashleigh whisper, "I love you."

This choked up everyone.

Blake answered, "I know."

Victoria smiled.

Victoria whispered to Ashleigh, "Lets go."

Ashleigh let him go.

Felicia went over and gently hugged him too.

Ashleigh went back to her chair and quietly put on her coat and swung her purse over her shoulder.

Annette felt close to her unofficial adopted Dad.

When Felicia was done hugging her Dad the three girls met and walked slowly toward the SUV. All knew without a shadow of a doubt Ashleigh's life was horrible before she moved in, because they loved Ashleigh they were silently thinking about the life she had.

When the whole group reached the SUV Blake stated, "Could I talk to Ashleigh for a moment?"

"Sure."

The girls stood there watching.

Victoria commanded, "Get in the car."

"Oh," Annette mentioned and opened the back drivers side door. Annette and Iris stepped into the back of the vehicle with Felicia shutting the door behind her. As soon as Victoria stepped into the SUV and all three girls were settled. They started to question Victoria about Ashleigh's past.

Ashleigh and Blake stood underneath the lights of the parking lot. Ashleigh had her

hands in the pockets of the red jacket and was looking down at the ground. It was easy to spot, underneath the parking lot light, how much Blake towered over Ashleigh. In the silence between them he was collecting his thoughts.

He stated very gently, "Forgive me for being prideful this evening."

Ashleigh looked up at him and wondered what he was talking about.

"I should have allowed you to just bless us. I'm not used to you being so successful."

Ashleigh wondered why her Dad told her this twice. She was concerned about him.

She answered his compliment, "I'm not successful."

"I believe your very successful."

Ashleigh made a face and stated matter of fact, "I'm only a secretary and I work for my Brother."

"Think about where you came from? I've watched you grow up to be a strong young woman."

Ashleigh spoke behind tears, "I was such a pain in the ass?"

"Your Mom would be upset at hearing you swear."

She looked down at the ground.

"There were many bumps on this journey. But look at you now?"

"Me?" She pointed at herself, "What am I? Dad I'm scared. I'm responsible for all these families moving to Florida. I'm not sure I want to move down there. I feel it's what I'm suppose to do. It's overwhelming."

"We all know there is a risk involved but look at how your handling it..."

She interrupted, "Like a basket case."

"This is untrue," Blake interrupted with a father tone. "You're handling everything with class. The little girl who moved into my house would have been crushed at this responsibility."

Ashleigh looked at him very confused.

Blake continued, "You are handling a very tough job. Like we've said before we believe your brother picked the perfect person to handle the task he's given you."

She crunched her forehead together and felt her Dad was just trying to encourage her.

"The reason your the best pick is because you care about his employee's and your brother trusts you."

"So?"

"I shouldn't have to point this out to you. Your brother doesn't trust anybody."

This hit her like a ton of bricks.

Blake continued, "Who's watching over the employees he cares about? Who did your brother first visit when he took back his company and came out of hiding? Who helped him get over his break down?"

Ashleigh truly believed her next statement, "I didn't do anything."

He answered her question, "How many times did you call his secretary? It is a pretty good assumption he was made aware of every time you called. He'd want to know. I suspect the two of you know everything that is going on in that company."

She never thought about this before.

Blake with a fathers assurance started to point out, "You own your own vehicle."

"He bought it for me."

"Who's paying the insurance. Who's paying for the gas? Who paid for the fancy sound system in the car? Who's taking care of a dog? Who's being financially responsible? Who's

treated a family out to dinner while still having a savings? Don't lie to yourself young lady. Your successful. I believe you could even be more successful. You've grown up so much from the girl I worried about."

"I can see why you'd worry about me."

"The worst day was when I saw you at the treatment center. But it was also the best day."

She would never forget the day her Brother took her to the treatment center.

"I didn't want to be like Ashley."

"Don't ever compare yourself to her."

This meant a great deal to Ashleigh.

Ashleigh could see by his body language he was barely containing his emotion,

"No matter how good or bad. The good did outweigh the bad. I've never regretted the day my adoptive Daughter entered our lives."

She crinkled her forehead, "You weren't allowed to adopt me. Ashley fought it?"

With a forceful tone he stated, "Maybe not by some paper. But didn't I feed you? I certainly clothed you. I enjoyed talking to you. Didn't I get down on the floor and play with you? We worked on those Jeep models together. I certainly loved it when you came down and worked on my train. Didn't all those things mean you were my adopted daughter? Who cares about some paper? You better visit and see how the train is coming along."

She understood the layers, "Yes Dad."

She again embraced him, he held in the tears.

Victoria smiled.

Blake pulled away, "You should see the new section of the train."

She wiped away tears and runny makeup, "I saw some of it."

"When we get back I want to show you the switches I put in."

She focused, "Where did you put them?"

"I'm connecting the..."

Victoria could tell by their body language they were talking about trains, she opened the passenger side door, "It's getting late."

Blake looked over, "Okay."

Ashleigh immediately went over and opened the door behind the drivers side door and stepped into the large vehicle. Blake was already in the vehicle.

On the way back to the Anderson's the girls talked to Ashleigh; but they avoided talking about the past or Ashleigh moving.

Felicia was upset her Sister was moving and was upset her Parents were giving her permission to leave.

During the ride back to the Anderson household Ashleigh wanted to stay with her family in Wisconsin. What helped her feel more comfortable about moving was knowing her parents felt she was successful. She hoped she would make the trip back to Wisconsin on her terms. If not, it brought her comfort knowing her parents were there for her.

Megan was enjoying the reception.

The song, "Everybody Dance Now," by *CC Music Factory*, was blaring over the crowd. The only reason Megan knew this song was because Marcy and Crystal liked older hip hop, the

reason Megan knew the title and the band was because the DJ announced it. Megan barely knew any song titles or artists, the artists she knew were big named stars, and the songs she knew had a sentimental value. She avoided clubs but enjoyed dancing. She looked forward to dancing over Memorial Day weekend and at weddings. One of Megan's favorite memories was when her Auntie took her to a formal ballroom dance; Megan could easily recall this event.

As the song, "Everybody Dance Now," ended, "Open Arms" by *Journey* started to play. She observed Michelle and Judy walk off the dance floor and sit back down at the table. Megan assumed they felt uncomfortable romantically dancing at this wedding. Megan turned away from them and watched the dance floor fill with couples. These were the moments being single were difficult. She wished she was married and was romantically dancing to this 80's slow song.

A secret desire of hers was to have a man who could ballroom dance; or be willing to learn. She would have taken a man who knew how to two step to a country song. As she watched the crowd dance she would have taken a man who tried. Just to dance with someone who really loved her would have meant the world to her.

She was surprised when a man close to her age approached her. He was: tall, had straight black hair, had a long face, was athletic, and had bright brown eyes. She liked his outfit. He was wearing: a very formal white cowboy hat, a nice dark blue western style shirt, nice gray western style dress pants, a western tie, and snake skin cowboy boots. She wondered if he caught the snake himself.

She was impressed when he took off his hat and slightly bowed, he spoke with a northern Floridian accent, "Ma'am; would you care to share a dance with me."

She froze. She all at once felt self conscience.

He put on his hat and said, "I ain't about to bite."

Michelle nudged her.

Megan turned and looked over at Michelle and Judy, they were trying to encourage her with their facial expressions and hand gestures.

Megan turned back to this attractive man and answered, "Yes."

He very politely asked, "Would you mind if I took your hand?"

This impressed her. She felt gentleman were more difficult to find everyday. To Michelle and Judy surprise, Megan allowed him to take her hand.

She liked how he was an inch taller. She was grateful she avoided wearing heels, if she had worn heels, she would have been taller than him. She liked both short guys and tall guys, but she knew many guys avoided asking her out because she was taller than them. They started to dance when the piano solo ended. As a single woman she made sure he was a proper distance away from her. She liked his strong arms and hands.

"Howdy; my name is Roy."

She liked this, "I'm Megan Steward."

They looked at one another. Her heart was pounding and so many things were bouncing in her mind.

"Are you a friend of Marcy?"

"Yes."

He smiled, "Darrell and I have been friends for a time. We met at work."

She asked, "Are you a correctional officer?"

"Yes ma'am. We're working different parts of the prison. He works confinement."

She gave him a face.

"It's a unit for disciplinary problems or inmates who request protection. It's like a jail within' the prison. He's a good man. He ain't let anyone down. He'll have your back."

She smiled.

He offered, "I'm currently working in minimum security. I've just been assigned work detail."

This impressed Megan.

As the song played he commented, "I'm attending night school to become a county sheriff."

This really impressed her.

They danced in silence for a few cords of the song.

He mentioned, "Marcy's a good gal."

"We were best friends in college."

She was still surprised he wanted to dance with her. He was so much of what she was looking for. She kept her feelings in check.

The DJ was slowly bringing up another slow song, the new song was by *Josh Turner*, "Be Your Man."

She was unaware of who did this song, but she heard it on the radio.

"You want to two step?"

Other couples were grabbing one another many were already dancing around the floor.

Her dimples flashed.

She set herself in position. She enjoyed how she felt as they made their way around the dance floor. She thought about the distance between Eastbank and Ocala. This put a huge damper on her excitement. She would never move away from her family, her home, and her business. She imagined how a long distance relationship would work. She felt a long distance relationship would be possible if at some point he would be willing to move to Eastbank. She was positive her Daddy would approve of him and would be more than willing to get him a job at the Eastbank police station.

With excitement in the DJ's voice he announced, "Boot Scootin' Boogie," by *Brooks and Dunn*. Roy gently led Megan off the dance floor.

"I'm hoping we'll share a Coke with me. I'd be much obliged if we continued to talk."

She immediately noticed he was sober.

Her dimples flashed.

She glanced over at her friends. The ones sitting there were encouraging her in their own way. She felt if she sat down and talked with him this was the first step to a relationship.

With the thoughts of a relationship in her mind she asked with concern, "I ain't sure if I should be asking so soon but if we started dating would you be willing to move to Eastbank?"

He gave her a shocked look. He recovered by stating, "Ain't you being a little forward?"

She responded in a very serious tone, "I'm a Christian gal and I ain't giving my heart away to just anybody. I'm feeling it'd be wrong if we didn't get this out in the open. If we were living closer I wouldn't be this forward."

He was shocked at her honesty and out of respect took off his hat and held it.

"Ain't Eastbank down there near Miami?"

"Its a short ways up from Boca Rotan and maybe forty-five minutes from Fort Lauderdale. It can be over an hour from Eastbank to Fort Lauderdale if Y'all are driving at the

wrong time.”

He put his hat on. Based upon his body language Megan expected bad news.

“It's refreshing to meet a lady especially from what I'm working with everyday. But I can't be moving away from my family. My sisters and Momma are needing me since my Daddy had his accident. Would you be inclined to moving here?”

She reluctantly answered honestly, “With me owning my own business I can't be moving. Plus I ain't ever leaving Eastbank.”

He frowned and replied, “It's rare finding a woman who's as moral as Y'all are I ain't intending on leading you astray. It just ain't right of me to be moving away from my family.”

There was a disappointing pause.

Megan would never forget the dance and told him so; “I've enjoyed dancing with you and I ain't forgetting it.”

“I've enjoyed it myself.”

He tipped his hat and very politely stepped away.

Megan was very disappointed.

Her friends were just as disappointed as she was. They were hoping this would turn into something special.

Megan was distracted by hearing the crowd cheer.

She witnessed her friends run out onto the dance floor, they grabbed Megan, and insisted she dance with them. The song the DJ started to play was, “A Man of Constant Sorrow,” By the *Soggy Bottom Boys*. Megan knew this song from the movie, “*O Brother Where Art Thou*.” A movie Marcy and Michelle made her watch with them. Megan was surprised she liked the movie. Everybody on the floor started to line dance. Megan quickly picked up the pattern, to her this was similar to aerobics. Megan was having fun dancing to this song. Megan heard the next song being blended in, “The Devil Went Down to Georgia,” by *Charles Daniels*; this was a song she knew. Megan quickly picked up the new line dancing steps. Krissy and Megan started to push the pace. By the end of the song there were only four women on the dance floor; one of these women was a seventeen year old cousin of Marcy who just had energy, the other was a local friend of Marcy's who was an aerobics instructor, the third was an aunt of Darrell who went line dancing as much as she could, and Krissy was having a wonderful time pushing Megan to go faster. When the song ended everyone cheered and the four women waved at everyone, they congratulated one another, and Krissy and Megan hugged. These women went back to their respective tables.

This irritated Breanne who was reluctantly sitting with the group of college friends. She was disappointed in the reception because none of her friends were parting like she wanted. She was again angry at Krissy. Breanne's goal was to get Krissy to let loose and drink with her. All Breanne accomplished was driving Krissy away from Breanne. This was why Krissy was sitting next to Megan. Krissy's wise action annoyed Breanne a great deal.

The DJ made an announcement and played , “Love Me Tender,” by *Elvis*.

An eager Annie asked, “What happened.”

Michelle and Judy moved in to hear Megan's answer; Michelle was now sitting next to Ralph, and Judy was sitting on Megan's right. Krissy was sitting to the left of Megan. Ralph was sitting across from Krissy. Crystal and William were sitting next to them, William was next to Ralph, and Crystal was next to Krissy. Breanne dragged her boyfriend onto the dance floor so she could avoid Megan.

Megan's dimples flashed, "I'm surprised he wanted to dance with me."

Judy being encouraging said, "Y'all are attractive"

Michelle gave her a look. Judy whispered something to Michelle.

Crystal mentioned, "You have a lot going for you."

With a disappointed tone Megan replied, "He lives up here."

Krissy mentioned, "You could make it work."

Ralph interrupted, "Marcy's coming."

They all turned.

When Marcy reached the table Marcy asked, "How are Y'all enjoying the reception?"

Everyone told her how great everything was.

After the niceties, Marcy with a concerned look mentioned, "I spotted Y'all dancing with Roy."

"I was."

"He's a good guy. I was thinking you'd make a good pair. Did you like em'?"

Megan with some sadness in her voice answered, "He wasn't willing to move from here."

Marcy understood. "You might want to give it a chance. The reason he ain't moving is because he's taking care of his four sisters and his Momma after his Daddy's accident."

Arthur being encouraging mentioned, "Long distance relationships can work. With the internet it's easier than ever."

Megan speaking to everyone, "I ain't moving away from my business. With him taking care of his family it'd be wrong for me to ask him to move."

Megan admired her friends but this was getting depressing, she wanted to remain positive, and mentioned; "It was nice being asked to dance."

Krissy in an encouraging voice, "See. Guys feel Y'all are attractive."

The *Louis Armstrong* song "What a Wonderful World" started to play.

Krissy stood up, "Excuse me."

Ralph was already standing up.

William looked over at Crystal, "Would you like to dance?"

"Yes sir."

She winked at him.

Before she left Crystal stated with a tone, "Stop feeling there ain't a guy for Y'all. There is a guy for you. Maybe all you need is to give a guy a chance."

Megan's dimples flashed.

She would think about this.

As Megan's friends left for the dance floor they all tried to encourage her in their own way. The only ones left at the table were: Michelle, Judy, Marcy, and Megan.

Marcy gazing at Judy and Michelle made it a point to personally say; "I'm glad Y'all decided to come."

Megan wondered what the back story was.

Judy answered, "We were just saying on how much fun we're having. We're both glad we're here."

Michelle with a smile stated, "I'm grateful you insisted we come."

Michelle stood up and the two ladies hugged, Judy winked at Megan, "See what I'm contending with."

Megan was unsure what to think about this comment, until Michelle jokingly said, "You'll pay later."

Then all the ladies laughed and Marcy and Michelle split apart.

Megan said, "Y'all look beautiful."

Marcy answered, "Thank-you."

Marcy was tapped on the shoulder by her sister-in-law. Marcy's sister-in-law and the matron of honor were there. The sister-in-law whispered something to Marcy, she nodded to the matron of honor. The matron of honor went scurrying away.

"I'm needing to leave. I'm glad Y'all could come. Thank-you." Marcy stopped, "If you ever change your mind give me a call."

Megan answered, "I will. But I ain't leaving my family."

Marcy smiled and pulled up her beautiful dress and headed toward some of her family members.

Judy mentioned to Michelle, "I'll get us drinks you want anything?"

"Anything without alcohol."

Judy smiled and winked, "You'll turn into a drunk."

"I'm never drinking again."

Very seriously Judy mentioned, "I believe you. You know what I feel about drinking."

With this Judy left the table.

The song, "Kokomo," by the *Beach Boys* started to play.

Michelle watched Judy leave.

Megan asked, "Is Judy jealous?"

"Why are Y'all asking?"

"I was feeling this is why you've been avoiding me."

"I forgot how blunt you could be." Michelle was careful not to touch Megan even though Michelle wanted to lightly touch her arm, "She's finds Y'all attractive. I should be jealous of you."

Megan's eyes became wide, "I ain't into gals."

"These last couple days I've been reminding myself your straight." There was a pause and Michelle decided to speak freely, "I've been ignoring you because I don't want to cheat on Judy."

Megan was shocked and answered, "I wouldn't ever be the other woman." She felt compelled to say, "Even if the other woman was a woman."

Her dimples flashed.

Megan blushed: she hoped Michelle understood.

"This is part of the reason I've always liked you."

Megan's dimples flashed.

"I don't want to think about sleeping with you when I'm with Judy. I'm being torn with the feeling you'd be the only person I'd ever have an affair with. It's better for us if we stay friends."

Megan respected Michelle. Megan in her way tried to encourage Michelle, "I'm a straight gal. Even if you'd be single I wouldn't want to sleep with you."

Michelle answered sincerely, "I'm glad Y'all figured out your sexuality. Sexuality can be such tricky thing. I could tell by watching you last night Y'all are a straight gal." Michelle smiled and lightened up the mood, "You should've seen your face when you saw the guy taking

off his g-string."

Megan blushed, "I never seen one before."

"It was obvious."

Michelle giggled.

Judy sat down next to Michelle with drinks for both.

"Thank-you."

Judy could see Megan had just finished blushing and Michelle was smiling from ear to ear.

Judy asked innocently, "What's so funny?"

"We're talking about yesterday."

Judy held in her laughter and said, "I'm hoping Y'all find a guy. One as interesting as Y'all seemed to like yesterday."

Michelle and Judy chuckled.

Megan blushed again.

Megan spotted Judy touch Michelle above the knee; Michelle grabbed Judy's hand.

Megan appreciated the fact Michelle had communicated her reasons for behaving the way she was. This reinforced her belief a couple should struggle through everything together. As much as she disagreed with divorce, she believed if a partner found someone else, it was better for the person to leave before they cheated. The biggest fear Megan had in getting married was marrying an unfaithful husband.

The slow set ended.

The DJ announced, "This song goes out by request, It's "Staying Alive," by the *Bee Gees*." Megan recognized the song and liked it, but she stayed at the table when Annie and Arthur sat next to her.

Arthur mentioned, "William and I did some checking on the guy who bought the yacht Y'all wanted. Between the wedding and the reception I called a couple guys I knew."

Megan's dimples flashed.

In a sarcastic tone asked, "Who did Y'all call?"

Annie defending Arthur reminded Megan, "Arthur works finance. He has connections everywhere."

Just as she was defending Arthur, Ralph and Krissy came back and sat down. Megan could tell Ralph was a little winded but Krissy could have gone on. As soon as they sat down they drank from their glasses of iced tea.

"Did you find out he's a character? I'm sure he's whistling Dixie in Texas."

Arthur corrected Megan by clarifying, "He's eccentric."

With a puzzled look Krissy mentioned, "He didn't look eccentric to me."

Annie corrected Krissy by saying, "Not the guy Megan was dancing with but her neighbor."

Breanne in slurred speech yelled from the end of the table, "The one she keeps complaining about." Being bluntly mean, "She'll marry the son of a bitch and he'll divorce her ass."

Megan with a sharp tongue answered, "I ain't ever marrying him."

Breanne made a face. She swayed a little and was about to slur something else.

Krissy made it over to Breanne before Breanne's drunken wisdom poured out of herself. Megan recalled how Breanne was the one everyone wanted to hang out with but as

everyone else matured; her college classmates hoped she would go home. Everyone kept an eye on Breanne and Krissy; mainly to protect Krissy if Breanne misbehaved.

Megan recognized a song she heard at Duke's wedding. The song was; "You Dropped a Bomb on Me," by the *Gap Band*.

It was obvious to everyone the discussion between Krissy and Breanne was quickly becoming heated. The exact words they were saying were difficult to hear because of the loud music, but it was clear when Breanne like a spoiled child yelled; "Fine." Then looked at her fiancée and demanded, "Let's go."

They heard Krissy say, "I'm not meaning you should go. You should get help."

Breanne was slurring her response, "I'm fine just the way I am. It ain't my fault you people no longer...ah...yea...ah. You....ah...ain't raining on my parade" She moved odd. "Yup."

Megan wondered how she was standing.

Breanne continued, "We're taking the party elsewhere. I'm sorry if I ain't a goody goody and you ain't any fun anymore."

As she spoke her voice became louder, loud enough so everyone could hear the last part of her statement.

Megan replied back, "How much fun are Y'all really having?"

"Shut up," Breanne replied back. She almost fell over. "Hope to see ya Annie."

Annie replied by saying, "Call me."

Annie felt this would be the last time she would ever see Breanne again.

Breanne and the boyfriend walked up to Marcy and rudely interrupted a conversation. In a drunken stupor she hugged Breanne. Then they left. The reason they were unable to kill anyone driving home was Breanne was again stopped for drunk driving. Multiple people from the reception called the police; two of these people were Roy and Krissy.

Megan noticed Krissy standing off to the side making a phone call. After the call Krissy came back to the table and sat down next to Megan.

To everyone's surprise Marcy walked up to the table. She spoke with authority, "Krissy you've done everything Y'all could do. If she'll seek help she'll seek you out."

Annie asked innocently, "Why did you invite her?"

"I was hoping if she'd see how well Y'all were doing she'd seek help. Instead she was helping me get drunk for the first and last time."

They all nodded their heads in sadness. Marcy repeated her earlier request, "Don't forget to say goodbye before Y'all leave."

Everyone agreed and Marcy headed over to her husband Darrel. They slow danced to the song, "The Rose," by *Bette Middler*. This song caused William and Crystal to come back to the table. With Marcy and Darrel on the floor a lot of their guests followed them to the dance floor.

Crystal asked, "Did she finally leave?"

With a sad sounding reply. Krissy answered, "Yup."

Crystal made a face and shook her head.

Michelle instructed, "Before we leave we're to talk to Marcy."

Crystal answered, "I will."

Crystal looked over at Megan, "William talked to someone about the guy Y'all are complaining about."

Arthur started, "We started talking about him."

William broke in, "His name is Robert Waller and he's relocating his company *Renewed Mastery* to Eastbank."

Megan spotted Krissy and Ralph look at one another.

Arthur asked, "You confirmed this?"

William answered with confidence, "Yes sir."

"It's a good company," answered Arthur. "I'm thinking about applying."

Michelle gave Arthur a face, "Since when are you believing a company is good?"

"Since I've been working in the real world," answered Arthur. "It's a great company."

Annie expressed, "They're all good companies until they move em' down here."

Michelle's responded to the group, "Annie knows what she's talking about"

Ralph spoke up, "When I went golfing with Krissy's Daddy, he was saying this Robert Waller is bringing in a lot of money to Eastbank and the State."

"It doesn't mean he'll be treating any of us who live down here right," snipped back Michelle. "Every time a northern company moves down here they end up treating everyone like dirt. Whats worse is they pay us southerners half of what our northern counterparts were making."

"Rumor has it," proclaimed William, "He's not changing the salaries. They're paying for everyone's move. He's talked to the school board and they're already planning on expanding the schools. The company is buying up property for it's employees."

Megan replied, "How's it helping anybody if his company is buying property?"

Ralph was telling it like he heard it, "The companies credit union is purchasing the properties. There's conflicting rumors on whats happening' with the houses. I ain't sure if the companies keeping the properties or selling them back to the employees. No matter what it's the only place in Florida were the housing market looks like it's improving."

Megan knew many of the repossessed houses around town were being purchased. Ma received calls from the company about her rental units and the rental houseboats.

Arthur stated, "Everyone wants to be working for any of Waller's companies. They're tough to get into."

William added, "I hate saying this but Breanne was correct on one thing. He's a powerful man with lots of money."

Megan answered from her heart, "I don't care. What is his full name again? He told me his name is Bob. Why is he moving from Wisconsin to Florida? Why did he buy my yacht and make it into a Packer shrine? It should've been my yacht. I'm telling Y'all he's a recluse and he's a character."

Her face contorted with the word character.

They never witnessed Megan so passionate about a guy before; negative or positive.

Krissy asked, "He's living right next to you? Haven't you talked to him?"

William started to answer Megan's question, "His name is Robert Waller."

"I talked to him once."

In the background they heard the song, "Chattahoochee" by *Alan Jackson*. People cheered and soon the noise of boots and heels hitting the floor echoed out over the reception hall.

Michelle asked, "What'd he say?"

Megan's dimples flashed.

She blushed and became angry.

The ladies all gave one another looks.

"For a Yankee he started off nice. I was giving him a chance. I was figuring since we're neighbors I'd be his friend. He introduced himself and said his name was Bob. We began having a nice conversation and then he showed his true colors. Speaking of colors he was wearing this obnoxious bright yellow Hawaiian shirt. Why do transplants think wearing ugly Hawaiian shirts are the thing to do? Plus the shirt was made him look a little plump. He ain't fat just has some extra padding. He should start eating better instead of ordering out all the time. He must be giving out great tips because the delivery drivers sure rush over to get to his Yacht. He's gaining a tummy from sitting at his desk all the time."

Everyone was so focused on how Megan was acting they were ignoring the songs being played.

Krissy blinked her eyes, held in a smile and tried to answer, "They just..."

Megan interrupted, "He started being rude."

Judy felt compelled to ask, "What was he saying?"

Megan looked straight into Judy's eye and said, "The short bugger..."

Annie interrupted, "How short is he?"

The girls looked at Megan very interested.

William, Arthur, and Ralph wanted to give Megan some information but it was impossible to get a word in.

Megan answered, "He's about five ten. Wears glasses, has dark wavy hair is starting to gray."

Krissy asked, "How old is he?"

"He's in his mid thirties," she all at once became defensive. "He ain't old. It's just he's graying early." She paused, "He keeps it trimmed."

With a smile Krissy asked, "What else was he wearing?"

"He was wearing khaki colored shorts and was wearing sandals. It ain't the point,"

Her dimples flashed.

"I was only trying to be friendly and was figuring he'd be a good friend. Instead he starts being rude."

Michelle asked the same question now for the second time, "How was he being rude?"

"He was talking nice and then he starts telling me I'm fascinating and was wondering what it was like being a woman owning a charter."

William with a confused look on his faced asked, "How is that rude?"

Megan's dimples flashed.

"It was his tone."

The women understood. Crystal asked William, "Why are you guys always giving us a tone?"

Krissy looked toward Ralph, "Why are Y'all giving us a tone?"

Arthur raised his arms, this angered Annie, she rolled her eyes, and turned in a way to focus on Megan and have her back to him.

Arthur was now confused, "Is there something the matter?"

Annie answered with a disgusted look, "Nothing."

Crystal asked gently, "Is this all he did?"

Megan blushed.

Then answered, "He started fraternizing with me."

Krissy could imagine a wide range of things a guy could say to get her upset, but this was a different upset, "What was he saying?"

"He started telling me on how taller women such as myself were attractive," she blushed. "He starting saying I was a beautiful looking woman."

Her friends understood why this would frighten Megan.

Ralph with a confused look asked, "I thought Y'all wanted a guy who respected you owning a business? Besides; what's wrong with giving you a compliment?"

Krissy rolled her eyes and glared at him. Krissy wondered why he was missing what was so obvious.

"If I was dating him or if I was feeling he was being sincere I'd taken the compliments. I'm certain he was hoping his complement would lead to the bedroom. I was hearing from a good source he's having' a young woman live with him." She crinkled her forehead and asked William, "William have you heard anything about him being a sugar daddy?"

"The reason he's moved to Florida was because of a woman. This was never confirmed or denied. Originally he was planning on moving his company to Minnesota but changed his mind. The only thing he's keeping in Minnesota is an advertising firm in downtown Minneapolis."

Michelle asked, "Is he married?"

"No." Ralph mentioned, "Just rumors. I was told he was seeing a gal from Wisconsin who came to Florida. Where she headed into some trouble."

With sarcasm Megan spouted out, "I'm sure it was a baby in the bread basket."

They all stared at Megan.

Megan blushed.

William mentioned, "I heard she was stripping when the cops raided where she was and was arrested for drugs."

Krissy gently corrected him, "They're called dancers."

Ralph gave her a face, but mentioned, "I was hearing his girlfriend was arrested at some contest."

In a sarcastic tone Judy asked, "Which one?"

Many at the table chuckled.

Ralph answered, "I believe it was during spring break in either Fort Lauderdale or Miami."

Being sarcastic Annie answered, "Wow. That narrows it down to about twenty raids."

Krissy thought about the novel *Dancer*; written by a guy named Robert Heart. She read this novel while in county prison. The idea this Robert Waller wrote a serious of best selling novels seemed to be a stretch; so she kept this idea to herself.

William added, "He's moving away from Wisconsin because he can't stand the Democrat governor. He's been complaining about the states liberal politics."

It was impossible to ignore the fact everybody starting to sing the song, "Friends in Low Places," by *Garth Brooks*.

Arthur over the noise asked, "Why?"

William was speaking loudly, "My contact was saying he went on TV and was talking about how the governor and the unions were trying to force him out of his own company. He believed the State of Wisconsin was trying to regulate him right out of business or to sell the company."

Annie with a tone interrupted, "Sounds like one of those people."

Arthur answered, "He's wealthier than any of us put together but he claimed the controls were hurting his employees. His claim was the unions were lying to everyone and his employees didn't want the union."

Michelle, Judy, Annie, Arthur, and Crystal had a hard time believing a whole company would be treated so well they would vote down a union.

Arthur went into more detail, "I still find his statements difficult to believe but he claims the Wisconsin government was run by the unions and socialists." He shrugged his shoulders, "Milwaukee did elect a socialist mayor and for years elected an out spoken socialist Governor. No matter if this is true or not. It's impossible to ignore he feels Milwaukee is old fashioned and finds the business community frustrating."

Judy pointed out, "There seems to be a lot of assuming and rumors."

"He's been saying it for years. I'm thinking he's been trying to improve the whole area," William continued to shout, "But something made him give up and he's moving here."

Krissy asked, "Weren't you saying he's keeping the same salaries as up north?"

Arthur answered, "The benefits too."

They were glad when the singing ended and the DJ announced a slow song, it was "Austin," By *Blake Sheldon*.

William spoke in a normal tone, "He disappeared for a while and a few months back just showed up. His enemies were claiming he was paranoid. This turned out to be false. It appears as if they were trying to take over the company. Instead. While he was away he set it up so he's now the sole owner. It's one of the largest privately owned companies in the country."

Megan answered, "Sounds like he's a possum playing dead. I'm sure if you'd get close he'll bite you in the ankle."

Michelle mentioned, "I agree Megan. I'm feeling there's something wrong about him."

Ralph retorted, "I'm thinking he's different than most rich folk."

Megan answered, "He's different. I'm telling Y'all he's a character and a recluse."

Judy wondered, "Why are you calling him a recluse?"

"It's how he's acting He gets up every day at five. He sits in an upper cabin for an hour or so and then goes to work. He barely talks to anybody. I happened to bump into him and was going to pass em' when he introduced himself. I should've kept on walking."

William commented, "You might be wrong about him."

"How are you in the knowing?" asked Crystal. "I'd believe Megan."

There was about to be an argument between the ladies and the men, when Annie shouted, "They're playing our song!! Remember..."

The song was, "Jump Around," by *House of Pain*.

Even before Annie could finish the sentence all but Michelle and Krissy ran up to the floor. Krissy stayed at the table because of memories this song triggered. Michelle was never a big fan of this particular song.

Krissy looked over at Michelle, "Are you feeling she likes this guy?"

Looking out at the floor with everybody jumping up and down yelling. Michelle was surprised Megan was in the middle of this.

Michelle answered, "He's rattled her."

"No one rattles Megan?"

“Whatever he did rattled her. I ain't saying she'll end up with him but she's not admitting something to herself or to anyone else.”

Krissy nodded her head and looked out at the group. She thought about what she overheard her Father tell the elite of Florida, *“Robert Waller is shrewd and he ain't going to play nice if we mess with em'. If we leave him alone he'll be less of a headache. He's bringing a lot of money into the state. It's better catching bees with honey than vinegar.”*

When the song was over Krissy witnessed Roy walk up to Megan and ask her to dance to the song, “Crazy” by *Patsy Kline*.

Megan looked at him, reluctantly turned him down, and wished with all her heart he lived near Eastbank.

End of Part Four of Five

September 23, Pandora's Box Shattered

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Ashleigh & Megan *Book I: Friendship*



Saturday
September, 23

Pandora's Box
Shattered

*(3months and 22 Days Since Megan was
notified a wealthy neighbor was moving
into the marina)*

Part Five of Five

Authored By:
R. P. Voght

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I hope you enjoy this pioneering format I call, "A Story Cast."

What the term "Story Cast" means; is this story is designed to be read in small to medium intervals. This particular story is broken up into "days." These portions are broken up into part or all of a particular fictitious "day" of the story. Each day surrounds the characters lives, relationships, adventures, struggles, mishaps and triumphs. This story is very different from a Novel or conventional story in many ways. Again, THIS IS NOT A NOVEL AND IS NOT WRITTEN IN A CONVENTIONAL NOVEL FORMAT. Instead; as the reader you are following the characters thoughts and actions during the course of this "day." This fiction story is set up like a TV series and or a third person journal. It always starts with one or more character getting up and ends with one or more characters going to bed; while during the day you experience the Characters actions, feelings, and their thoughts.

On a large overview; there is a beginning, a middle, and an end to this "Story Cast"

R. P. Voght

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Saturday, September 23

(3 months and 22 Days Since Megan was notified she was going to have wealthy neighbors)

Julie wiggled her toes. She was able to see them move because of the moonlight coming into the room. Her Momma felt the best thing for Julie was to sleep in the playroom instead of her room. Julie reluctantly agreed. The least thing Julie wanted was to fall down the stairs and miss volleyball season. She already felt she was letting her cross country team down. As one of the top female runners in the state; she knew being out four to six weeks was ruining the teams chances at an invite to the state championship.

She was wearing light blue drawstring sweatpants, a larger dark blue Henley short sleeved shirt; a shirt made for winter wear. She picked out this particular shirt in case her brother woke up before she had a chance to change clothes. She hated it when her brother glanced at her boobs with a bra on, she could only imagine what would happen if he spotted her in a sleep shirt without a bra. On the end of the couch was a throw blanket her Momma put out just in case she felt cold.

Bored; she imagined herself playing high school football. She pictured herself being a star wide receiver or kick returner. One of the reasons she felt she could compete at a high school level was because of a backyard game she played with her Brother. The game was played as follows: she lined up about fifteen yards in front of her brother, they set two markers on the ground, her goal was to get between those markers before her brother tagged her. Their Daddy forbid Jeff from tackling Julie. When Julie was little this really annoyed her, as a young woman she was grateful her brother never tackled her. Up until middle school she usually outran him. This started to switch when Jeff began working out and maturing. Whenever they currently played this game her brother tagged her sixty percent of the time; she felt this game helped her brother become a successful middle linebacker.

The other reason she felt she could play high school football was her experience playing

pick up football with a bunch of guys on Thanksgiving. When she showed up most of the guys laughed at her except for Jeff and his friends. They found out Julie was no joke: when the guys were exhausted she was barely winded, she never dropped a ball thrown to her, she outran everyone on three kickoffs, and she was super competitive. What she never admitted to anyone was a tackle really hurt and the reason she outran many of the guys was out of simple fear.

She never tried out for the High School team was because of a promise she made to Jeff and her parents. Her family was upset she was even thinking about playing: her Momma thought she would get hurt, her Daddy hated the idea of boys tackling his daughter, and Jeff was upset she was playing his sport. Playing girls flag football would have been a different matter. What was a factor only her Papa and herself knew; local media was about to give her a lot of attention for playing. Julie already received attention for her exceptional volleyball and softball play. Julie was being contacted by colleges for both athletic and academic scholarships. After talking with Captain she recognized any attention she received would distract attention from her brother. She agreed with Captain; it was more important for her brother to receive attention for playing football. She knew it was beneficial for the whole family if her brother received a football scholarship. She was certain no matter how well she played football she would never receive a football scholarship. She felt this double standard was unfair but she knew she would receive either an athletic scholarship or an academic one, if pushing the issue to play football hurt her Brother; she would avoid playing. Being honest with herself, she believed if she played football at a varsity level she would end up hurt. An influence on her decision was; where she would get suited up and what it would take to flatten her breasts so she could wear shoulder pads.

She felt she was a part of the football team by: getting Billy to play defensive tackle, helping the guys study the playbook, and by working out with Jeff and a couple of his friends. She worried Jeff would lose a step if she was unable to work out with him.

Looking through the window she studied the stars and the dark sky.

She imagined the party Jennie was throwing. She felt awful she missed the party and with equal conviction was grateful she missed the party. Julie was sure she would receive a difficult time for missing the party. This social pressure irritated Julie. This added to her growing annoyance of the Snob Club. As a popular student she was feeling pressure from the Snob Club to start doing what the other popular girls did to remain popular. This included: drugs, drinking, going to parties, being a certain weight, and performing sexual acts. Instead of thinking about these things, Julie wondered what Zoe, Hannah, and their friends did. Julie suspected they enjoyed each others company: without taking drugs, they would never act out sexually to be popular, they most likely ate some ice cream, talked, played a game, or watched a scary movie. Julie suspected if the three of them were still close friends Zoe and Hannah would have come over to the house and kept her company. Laying on the couch she wished Jennie, Amanda, Zoe, and Hannah could all get along.

Julie questioned who were her friends.

The social pull between both groups was very stressful.

An internal pressure to perform better as a volleyball player was on her mind. She believed if she could play at a higher level the team would win more games. She felt responsible for the freshman team losing. Julie wanted to think positive, but she knew who was signing up for the upcoming season. She was unable to see how valuable she was to the

team. All of her focus was on their record and their inability to get into the state tournament. Where Julie's introspection was incomplete, was if she never played on the team, the team would have had the worst record in the history of the team. Julie considered switching to basketball but felt a loyalty to her volleyball teammates. What annoyed Julie was the Snob Club considered most of the girls who played on the volleyball team beneath their standards. The tension between her volleyball friends and the Snob Club increased the social pressure of school.

The academic part of school was stressful as well. The reason was completely different from ninety-nine percent of the student body: it took all her effort to attend every class, it took immense concentration to actually pay attention in class, and being respectful to teachers was sometimes a chore. What Julie disliked was when a teacher felt the need to one up her in class. It was aggravating to Julie when a teacher would become condescending when she pointed out a contradicting fact or asked a question they were unable to answer. Three weeks into her sophomore year: she completely read all the books assigned to her, she was generally five weeks ahead in every class, and was completely bored. The only reason she went to class was the attendance requirement to play on any of the sports teams. Laying there she again considered dropping out and taking the GED. She avoided this course of action because of her Momma and missing out on a scholarship.

She loved her family, she wanted her parents to be proud of her, and believed she was suppose to be the most successful of her siblings. These thoughts and feelings sometimes caused her to push herself to extremes. If either Nicole or Jimmy knew this was the reason Julie pushed herself they would have taken corrective action.

Julie was concerned her Momma would inspect her room. Many times her Momma brought up: drugs, alcohol, school, friends, and sex. Julie hated how drugs effected her friends and classmates. What Julie disliked about drinking was how foolish everyone acted when they were drunk. Julie imagined her Momma turning her room upside down looking for drugs. Julie believed her Momma was reluctant to inspect her room, but if her Momma found anything she disapproved off, her Momma would proceed to attack the room with a vengeance. Julie started a mental blueprint on how to conceal anything Julie wanted hidden. Julie surmised, once she fully implemented a plan, her worry of an inspection would be over. Julie believed if she keep things hidden from her vigilant Momma; she could hide anything from anybody.

She was feeling a lot of social pressure to date and have sex, just as she felt a religious and internal pressure to remain a virgin. With these equally powerful feelings colliding within her soul, she compromised, she would wait until she could pick out a decent guy in college. She felt boys her age were childish and lacked manners. Julie especially hated the attitude of the popular boys in school. The idea a girl in school should feel privileged to be with one of these guys was simply vexing. Based upon how the girls talked, Julie was certain these popular boys were horrible partners. She decided if she was to perform a sex act she'd pick one of the nerds in her accelerated classes. The reason: she felt they would appreciate the act performed on them, she felt they'd be more respectful, she hated it when they were picked on for being virgins, she liked the idea of pissing off all the popular boys, and performing a sex act on a nerd would enrage Chelsey and Pamela. It was her observation nerds focused a lot of their energy on sex. They were the ones who put in the effort to get around internet blockers at school. She concluded they knew more because they focused so much of their time on sex.

There was only one guy her age she would have dated and this was Jeff's best friend Sal. As much as she was attracted to him, she often felt he acted immature. She was willing to overlook some of this immaturity because she felt she could change him. She was disappointed he had a girlfriend.

Julie was tired of feeling all of these pressures. Her way of escaping these pressures was by logging onto the families computer. The problem with logging onto the computer was the den was locked every night before her parents went to bed.

Since May of the current calendar year, the world of finance was the greatest mental challenge she ever took on. The world of finance was the equivalent of an average person playing a challenging board game or a puzzle. Being behind the computer she could "play" against the adult world without anyone bullying her out of the game. At the beginning she experienced some financial bumps but: she picked herself up, learned from her mistakes, became more determined, and was enjoying the fruits of her effort. She loved pushing investments to the brink and diverting them when the time was right. She believed she was already an expert. She adored feeling like a baron.

It was March of the current calendar year when she decided to by pass the parental controls on the family computer. Since this moment she made regular late night visits or logged on when no one was home. Julie never considered looking at pornographic material as addictive or harmful. She was keenly aware: her parents, her family, and her church would have disagreed. She felt she was in control of all her impulses.

She had the occasional fleeting thought there were consequences to her actions; she dismissed them. The only consequences she imagined was being caught in the den by a family member. The adrenaline rush, the mental stimulation, and the fact she felt as though she was conquering the world were powerful enticements. Julie understood there were people outside of her personal sphere who would be interested in her personnel and financial activities. She believed if she continued to be proactive anyone interested in what she was doing would have great difficulty tracking her down. She was confident she was covering her tracks. This took: great discipline, vigilance, hard work, time, study, cunning, adaptability, patience, and quick decision making. The belief she was outsmarting the adult world encouraged her.

Julie recalled on how she secretly made her own den key from her Momma's original. She was proud of how: she was able to temporarily take the original, go to a big box hardware store in a nearby town, get a copy made, and have the original back before her Momma noticed.

She thought about how far she could bike in a short time. She liked her bike immensely, and knew her Daddy and Brother did an excellent job at making it perform better. However; this never stopped her from imagining how far and fast she would be able to travel on a high end bicycle.

She turned her attention back to the den. She had a couple plans in place if anyone wanted to enter the den while she was on the computer. Her first plan was to remain quiet long enough so whomever was outside the door would believe they were hearing things and go back to bed. She hoped if her parents wanted to enter the den they would have forgotten the key. If they did, she was confident she could duck out of the den and back into her room before they returned. Julie assumed no matter what she was doing, she would have time to appear presentable and present her story; a story tailored for whomever entered the room. Currently; the extra key was hidden upstairs in her room.

Thinking about all of these issues caused her to feel stress.

She wiggled her toes, this time she felt some pain. She would wait as long as possible before taking another pain pill. She disliked how she felt when she was on them. She prided herself on her high pain tolerance and on how fast she healed.

She listened.

The only consistent noise was her brother snoring through the closed door of his bedroom.

She considered going up the stairs. Going upstairs on her crutches was easy with help, by herself was another matter. Her worry was falling and further injuring her ankle. The other problem was her Momma. Julie assumed at some point no matter if she was quiet or not, her Momma would come out and check on her. Julie was certain if there was any noise her Momma would check on her.

She wanted to sleep but she was feeling way to stressed out. She knew if she logged onto the computer and brought herself relief she would be able to sleep. After an internal fifteen minute debate she found herself sitting on the edge of the couch. Her hurt leg was straight out and her foot was gently resting on the floor. In this position she debated for another ten minutes. She grabbed her crutches, she lifted herself off the couch, and as quietly as she could made it to the den.

She listened. The only sound was her brother snoring.

The door was locked.

She hobbled her way to the bottom of the stairs, it was dark except for the outside light that came through the three small windows of the door. If she turned on the light this simple act could wake up her Momma.

She stood there leaning on her crutches.

The pull to climb the stairs, get the key, and come back down was immense. She could feel the excitement of this challenge. This added to the whole experience. There was a huge cost if something happened. She stood there for about five minutes feeling the strong urge to go up to her room and get the key and come back down.

Her ankle hurt.

What stopped her from hobbling upstairs was the vision of herself falling and further hurting her ankle.

What lengths she was prepared to fulfill her strong urges was unnerving. Since March she believed she was the one in control off her impulses. Julie reasoned she was having difficulty controlling these urges due to the pain medication. She reluctantly chose to go back to the side room. She: carefully set the crutches against the wall, hobbled around the couch, grabbed the blanket, carefully laid down, gently put her foot back on the pillows, and covered herself with the blanket; she wished she could sneak into the den.

She laid on the couch listening to her brother snore.

The noise of a small animal next to the house surprised her. When this animal scurried away the house became quiet again. Her urges were overpowering. The least thing she wanted was to have someone wake up. When she felt comfortable she untied the string of her pants, she pulled her pants far enough so she could explore. After forty-five unsatisfying minutes she stopped. She knew if she logged onto the computer she would have found the relief she was seeking.

She felt more stressed out than she ever did before.

She was ready to risk her scholarship and hobble upstairs. Right before she was about to attempt this; Julie remembered reading a woman's personal experience. An experience she would have never thought off. While underneath the blanket and with pain shooting up her ankle she made herself presentable. Cringing in pain: she again sat on the edge of the couch, she managed to grab her crutches, she stood, because of the pain waited a few minutes.

She carefully started the painful journey to the first floor bathroom.

As quietly as she could she: entered the bathroom, opened all the drawers, found what she was looking for, and as quietly as she could went back onto the couch.

Her inner urges were stronger than the pain she felt in her ankle.

She: again pulled the blanket over herself, she untied the string, she pulled down her pants, assuming everyone was asleep, for the first time she used an object; this helped her find the temporary relief to her stress.

She heard the door to her parents bedroom open.

Julie quickly: stuffed the object she grabbed under the cushions, pulled up her pants, became an award winning actress by pretending to be asleep; while keeping her hands underneath her pillow.

Nicole opened her eyes when she heard the sounds of drawers opening and closing. Nicole assumed this was Julie. Nicole resisted the impulse to immediately check on her; instead she would lay awake and listen.

Jimmy was lightly snoring.

She was grateful her husband was sleeping soundly after many days of restless sleep. She felt great compassion for her husband. He was putting in a large amount of effort to become a successful insurance salesman and was showing little profit for the hours he was putting in. After some research she found this was the pattern at the beginning the establishment of regular clients. Until this happened she would make some calls and see if anyone was hiring for a physical therapist or a nurse.

Her motherly suspicions were aroused when she no longer heard any sounds from the bathroom. She sat up and listened more intently. When all Nicole heard was silence she stepped up to her bedroom door and opened it just a hair. All she heard was the snoring of her son.

Nicole felt she was overreacting and gently closed the door. She sat on the edge of her bed. She became alert when she heard a moan and the coach creek. She assumed her daughter was refusing to take her pain medication. When she heard another creek and a gasp, she had a different thought; she discounted this idea. Nicole: stood up, slipped on her robe (this red robe covered her sea shell pajamas), she opened her door, she headed toward the playroom, she tried to see into the room but was blinded by the design of the house, Nicole shook her head when she heard how loud Jeff's snoring was, and when she reached the side room it appeared as though Julie was asleep.

Nicole gently pushed Julie on the shoulder and spoke, "Julie."

"Yea."

Julie pretended to be awake.

Looking at her daughter she felt the need to ask, "Are you alright?"

"Why?"

"You look a little flush? Do you have a fever?"

Julie somewhat stretched the truth, "My ankle is starting to hurt. I'm starting to have a headache."

As a loving mother and a nurse, Nicole stated; "Y'all are due for a pain pill. I'll get it for you. You need to rest."

Julie answered with a smile, "Thank-you Momma."

Nicole stood up and stepped into the kitchen.

If Nicole would have turned on the light, Nicole's fleeting thought would have been confirmed; Nicole brought Julie her pain pill and a bottled water.

Julie was careful on how she grabbed the pill and water bottle.

Nicole stated, "Don't be prideful and suffer. It's alright to wake me up. I appreciate how careful your being with the pain pills. I am too. As a nurse I've seen many people hooked on these things."

"Yes Momma."

Nicole felt the need to say, "I love you."

Julie answered back with similar affection, "I love you too Momma."

They hugged.

Julie was careful on how she wrapped her hands around her Momma.

No matter how difficult their relationship was they loved one another.

Nicole made a mental note to make sure her daughter took a shower early in the morning.

They parted and Nicole asked, "Are you needing anything?"

"As long as I have my water I'm doing fine."

"Okay."

Nicole smiled, "Good night. I'd rather have you wake me up than suffering."

"Yes Momma."

Nicole left the room, poured herself a drink of water, put the glass into the sink, and went back to bed.

Nicole slept light.

*J*ulie watched as her Momma stepped out of the room and headed into the kitchen. Julie heard her Momma: take a glass out of the cupboard, open the refrigerator, and pour herself a glass of water from the water jug in the refrigerator. Julie listened to her Momma make her way back to her room.

Julie recognized she just avoided the most embarrassing moment of her life. She promised herself she would be more careful.

She fell asleep thinking about her many bank accounts.

*A*shleigh stepped into her apartment carrying Nikita. Ashleigh set Nikita down on the floor, yawned, then spoke, "Your to big to carry."

Nikita: sat, wagged her tail, and looked up at Best Friend. Being an active puppy she scratched the back of her head; her collar jingled.

Ashleigh turned on the light.

She looked up at her living room clock. She stayed up late talking to Felicia and her two friends. Talking to these three young ladies was very rewarding and was mind numbing as well. Ashleigh found herself repeating the same wisdom Victoria gave her when she was a teenager.

When Nikita was done scratching her ears she ran and picked up her white rope. She dragged it to Best Friend and set it at her feet. Nikita wanted to hear the word, "fetch."

Instead Ashleigh temporarily set her purse down on the ground, she immediately spoke, "No bite. Mine."

Nikita liked all the interesting smells in this object. She looked up at Best Friend and back down at the purse.

Nikita watched Ashleigh pick up the rope, toss it, and heard her say, "Play with your rope."

Nikita ran after the rope picked it up and brought it right back.

Nikita was now sitting in front of her rope wagging her tail.

Ashleigh hung her pink summer-weight chino jacket on an old fashioned looking free standing coat rack she bought at a local furniture store. Ashleigh lifted up one leg at a time and was grateful to take off her pink athletic shoes off. She repeated this action to remove her socks, except she stuffed these socks into her shoes; to have her feet free was a small delight to Ashleigh.

Nikita howled.

Ashleigh answered, "After playing with Ariel and Guinevere all day you should be tired."

Nikita looked around for the two golden retrievers. If they were here she would have to behave different. Nikita thought her dog friends were at "house" territory. She never once smelled or saw them at "home" territory. Nikita stopped looking for the two golden retrievers when Best Friend picked up her purse and stepped into the kitchen. Nikita sniffed the athletic shoes. Instead of being yelled at for "biting" she scratched the back of her ears. Her collar jingled. Nikita focused when she heard the thing with the cool breeze open; she liked this thing because food was in it. Nikita ran into the kitchen.

Ashleigh felt hungry after the exhausting talk she had with the teenagers. She questioned on why she wanted to eat after the large meal and snacking on chips and salsa. This is when Ashleigh spotted Nikita stick her nose into the refrigerator.

"No beg. Sit."

Nikita was pushed back and heard a more stern, "Sit."

Before Ashleigh would have to push her butt down Nikita sat and wagged her tail.

Ashleigh shook her head, opened the refrigerator again, and spoke out loud, "I don't know why your hungry. Mom feeds you treats like they were candy."

The word, "treats" excited Nikita. She went running in front of the cabinet door where the treats were kept.

Ashleigh realized her mistake and rolled her eyes. She shut the refrigerator door and went over to the cabinet and instead of giving Nikita a treat, she pulled out a brand new bone and set it on the floor.

Nikita liked these. She: howled, growled, pounced on it, she laid down in front of the bone, and started to gnaw on it.

Ashleigh shook her head but smiled at her constant companion.

She picked up Nikita's water bowl and walked it over to the sink. This stopped Nikita from chewing on the bone. Nikita watched Best Friend with her bowl. When Ashleigh set the bowl down Nikita ran to the bowl.

Ashleigh smiled, "You must've been thirsty. You're a spoiled puppy."

Nikita ignored Ashleigh because she was enjoying the water.

Ashleigh looked up at the clock and stepped into her bedroom.

Nikita heard a drawer open, lifted her head, she spotted Best Friend take something out of a drawer, Nikita turned her attention back to the bone, she growled at it, and again began to chew on it.

Ashleigh set a clean pair of coral pink boxer pajamas on the bed. On a chair near her bed was her Kenny Chesney concert t-shirt.

She shut the drawer to her dresser.

At this moment: due to having a conversation with her cute neighbor, the conversation about boys with Felicia and her friends, answering sexual questions these young women had, and the fact it had been three weeks since she felt the need to give herself self pleasure; she was feeling very strong sexual urges. She entertained the idea of going over to the neighbor and keeping him company. Ashleigh knew he would have welcomed the company since his girlfriend broke up with him a few weeks earlier. Her desire was to have a friend with benefits. Still being honest with herself, she knew this type of friendship would end up to be a hurtful mess; with her being the most likely victim. She reversed the idea and wondered how she'd feel if he fell in love with her and would leave him here when she moved to Florida. She decided based upon moral grounds and the drama a friend with benefits would cause; she would avoid a friends with benefits relationship.

Ashleigh was starting to learn who she was without the drama of sex or a relationship. In her growing faith: she was developing a better perspective on herself, what it truly meant to be in love, and what the role of sex was to be in her life. Instead of going over to the neighbors she went over to her nightstand, she opened the small drawer, and pulled out the big box of condoms she bought in Florida.

She really hoped no one would ever discover this box. All during high school she was considered a slut after having sex with a boyfriend. A boy she loved at the time. He showed how much respect he had for her by bragging about their encounters. She thanked God for Victoria, Blake, and her brother keeping her sober during this very difficult time. Ashleigh felt if Victoria had not supported her during this period of her life she would have acted out sexually. She no longer believed she was a slut but the word had a sting to it. Out of curiosity she counted how many condoms were left. She assumed this was the least amount of times she masturbated during a thirteen week period since discovering the pleasures of masturbation. She credited this to her growing faith and her changing attitude toward herself. She took one of the condoms and put it on the stand, she closed the lid of the box, she set the box into the nightstand drawer, and shut the drawer.

Nikita had grown tired of the bone and was exploring the living room. She focused on the pink shoes and socks.

Ashleigh saved her shoes by yelling at Nikita, "No bite!"

Nikita looked over and spotted Best Friend.

Nikita sat down and howled.

Ashleigh smiled and felt she looked cute but sternly said, "You know not to bite my

shoes. Get your rope.”

Nikita turned and grabbed the rope. Nikita heard the object with the cool breeze open. Nikita with the white rope in her mouth came running into the kitchen. She set the rope down at Ashleigh's feet.

Ashleigh: pulled open the vegetable door, grabbed a cucumber, she shut the drawer, shut the refrigerator, and stepped in front of the sink.

Nikita could smell food, could smell and hear the water flowing; it was impossible for Nikita to see what food Best Friend was washing. When the water ended Nikita watched Ashleigh open a drawer and take out an object. Nikita hoped food would drop on the floor.

Ashleigh was using a trimmer and the shavings were dropping onto the counter.

Nikita was focused when Best Friend: opened the drawer, placed an object in it, shut the drawer, opened another cabinet, placed all the shavings into the thing that held all of the interesting smells, shut this cabinet, washed her hands, grab food, and headed to where Best Friend slept.

Nikita heard the command, “Stay.”

Ashleigh felt guilty for yelling.

Ashleigh in a soft tone stated, “I can't if your watching me.”

Ashleigh shut the door leaving Nikita to sit in front of the door.

Nikita howled.

Ashleigh yelled through the door, “No howl.”

Nikita sat down and sniffed the door. She hoped Best Friend would come out soon. After a while she laid down in front of the door. As she laid there she heard Ashleigh start to make soft verbal sounds. Soon Nikita caught Ashleigh's strong aroma. This smell energized Nikita. She: ran after her rope, picked it up, tossed it back and forth, dropped the rope, the world was spinning, gently fell to the floor, eventually stood up, growled at the rope, aggressively attacked the rope, ran after it when it slide across the kitchen floor, picked it up, sat down when she heard distressing noises Best Friend was making, sniffed the air, sensed Best Friend was safe, sat down, chewed on the rope until she heard the door open, ran toward Best Friend with the rope in her mouth, but by the time she reached Best Friend the bathroom door shut. Nikita again heard and smelled water. She went into the room where Best Friend slept. She stopped when she reached Best Friends clothes. She sniffed her dark blue flared jeans, her panties, her bra, and her lightweight crewneck sweater with jeweled detail. She liked Best Friends scent but could smell flowery type of smells too. Nikita put her face into the clothes, her impulse was to bite Best Friends clothes, but she knew this made her friend angry. She lost interest in Ashleigh's clothes when she caught a whiff of the food on the nightstand. Surrounding this item was the strong sent of Best Friend. She went up to the nightstand, stood up on her hind legs, and tried to reach the object. The scent of this object gave her comfort.

This was when the bathroom door opened.

Ashleigh felt refreshed. She was wearing coral pink boxer short pajamas and her black concert t-shirt.

Ashleigh was met by Nikita.

Ashleigh reached down and pet Nikita.

Ashleigh picked up Nikita and told her how special she was and how much she loved her.

Ashleigh: set Nikita down, grabbed her clothes off the bedroom floor, placed them into the hamper, grabbed the cucumber off the nightstand, stepped into the kitchen, wrapped the vegetable into a plastic grocery bag, tied it, and shoved it down to the bottom of the garbage. She washed her hands at the kitchen sink. This is when Ashleigh felt a nose on her leg.

She looked down and smiled at Nikita.

Nikita smelled the scent of a flowers on Best Friend.

Ashleigh picked up Nikita, "It's time for bed."

Nikita licked Best Friend.

In a disappointing tone she commented, "Your getting to heavy."

Ashleigh knew Nikita would get to heavy but it was disappointing anyway.

She set Nikita on the floor and commanded, "Come."

Nikita grabbed the rope and followed Best Friend into where Best Friend slept. She wanted to lay with Best Friend but Best Friend pushed her off the bed.

Ashleigh spent time in prayer before she went to sleep. After her prayer she realized she forgot to turn off the lights in her apartment, before she turned them off, she tried to recall on where she parked her Jeep. She clearly remembered parking it in front of the tattoo parlor. This was when she stood up and turned off all the lights.

Nikita followed Best Friend around the apartment and back into their beds. Nikita was awake and vigilant until Best Friend fell asleep. Nikita felt it was her duty to protect Best Friend and the territory called, "Home."

Megan yawned.

The headlights of her truck lead the way as she drove home. She had a scuba tour the following day and wanted proper rest. She took extra precautions when any of her tours involved snorkeling or scuba diving. This was a referral from one of the guys she nicknamed her; "Grandfather Group." These were wealthy retired men who enjoyed fishing every other Monday. Megan swore they liked swapping stories more than fishing. They were bringing her a lot of business. The other reason she left early was the three and half hour drive from the reception to her houseboat in Eastbank.

Just outside of Ocala she spotted a large billboard advertising a large truck stop; she recalled this truck stop when she drove into town. The truck stop billboard advertised: being open for twenty-four hours, food, drinks, a lounge, laundry, and showers. On the two top corners of the billboard were advertisements for two fast food restaurants; one served hot dogs and ice cream while the other served hamburgers and chicken sandwiches. What she paid attention to was the sign informing drivers to turn off of County Highway 484.

The drivers side window was rolled down and she was enjoying the relative quiet of the night drive. Overall she enjoyed the weekend. The wedding reception turned out better than she thought. She felt it was a huge mistake entering the underground male strip club. She could have done without the drama Breanne brought with her. She was grateful she experienced her first orgasm but felt she needed to respect this feeling. She wished Roy would have lived close, he was the type of man she wanted to marry, Roy gave Megan hope there was a man for her.

Megan spotted the truck stop sign high above the highway. She pulled off of Interstate 75, onto County Highway 484. The large truck stop was to her left. The right side of road 484

was under construction. To the left of the construction was: a closed fast food sub place, a small lighted gas station, and down a ways was a very visible twenty-four hour fast food restaurant. She stopped at the boulevard and waited for a truck to pull out of the truck stop. She watched the eighteen wheeler turn right; this vehicle turned onto the on ramp of highway 75.

She decided this station was very well lit. In front of this truck stop was a sign pointing all regular sized vehicles to the left and all oversize vehicles to the right. In front of the store was a large island of gas pumps. There was a minivan parked in front of the store, there were cars parked alongside of the station, and there were a few cars parked on the edge of the parking lot. The cars were in front of a section of grass and in front of the long oversized vehicle driveway. This long driveway lead to the back of the station. There were a variety of oversize vehicles parked in back and in front of a very large pump island. Megan spotted an owner of an RV pumping gas and two semi truck drivers pumping gas into their trucks.

She crossed the road into the parking lot, she followed the sign, and was in the area for regular sized vehicles. She parked her pick-up-truck in the center aisle of the pumping island. Before she stepped out of her truck she panned the parking lot for anyone lurking in the shadows. She: pulled the keys out of the ignition, placed them in her left hand, and cautiously stepped out of her pick-up-truck. She was vigilant as she: pulled the metal cover open, twisted the gas cap off, pushed a button on the gas pump, waited for the clerks inside of the store to clear the pump, the pump was cleared, she lifted the hose, selected the type of gas she would use, and started to fill her vehicle with gas. If anyone would have made the mistake of rushing her, they would have had a key jammed into their neck, and would have been thrown onto the ground.

As the gas entered her truck she studied the front of this station. On the left side were the fast food restaurants. On the right side of the restaurant was the large store. Glancing at the front of the building she noticed different styles of bricks, whomever owned the station tried to conceal the right side addition by the way they painted the building. It was impossible to miss the big individual lighted letters announcing it was a "Travel Center." On the big window between the "Travel Center" sign and the fast food restaurants were signs attached to the large rectangular shaped windows. The signs advertised: homemade food, a free gallon of milk with a purchase of a gallon of milk, tobacco products, sports drinks, fountain Coke, hot dogs, a laundromat, a rest center with a TV, and showers. Megan took note of the special sign alerting every customer the showers were; *"cleaned after every use."* She disbelieved the sign but hoped this was the goal. Looking inside of the station she noticed a large counter with a muscular man and two women running the counter. She watched a semi leave, while another eighteen wheeling drove down the long oversized vehicle driveway. This is when she heard the gas pump click and felt the handle give way. She: reached down and tapped the gas pump (she always made sure the price was in even amounts), put the handle on the pump, twisted the gas cap on, and closed the metal lid.

She looked into the gas station.

Her dimples flashed.

She decided this was indeed a safe place to take a shower and change out of her dress. She: opened the drivers side door, stepped into her truck, put her keys into the ignition, and drove her pick-up-truck to the front of the station. To her left was a minivan. She: grabbed her purse, hung it across her body, grabbed her duffel bag, swung it over her shoulder, grabbed

her cell phone, shoved it into her purse, stepped out of the truck, locked her vehicle, and made her way to the station entrance. As she passed the minivan she took note of the Minnesota tags and the Minnesota Viking bumper sticker

An idea came to the forefront of her mind. She pushed this idea to the side.

She made a right and stepped into the station. This was indeed a well lit and well maintained station. It seemed to Megan it supplied anything any traveler needed on a trip. She glanced over to her left. There were people in the fast food area eating. The two restaurants were just beyond the cafeteria style tables; only the burger place stayed open twenty-four hours. In back of the station and to the right was the small laundromat, in front of the laundromat was a sitting area. There were a half a dozen truck drivers relaxing or eating in this area. She spotted clothes tumbling in the dryers; they were built into the wall. She observed a variety of truck drivers and a couple groups of families wandering around the station. She focused on a blond middle aged man wearing a Minnesota Viking baseball cap. He was holding the hands of a little blond haired boy. She smiled when a tired looking Momma stepped next to them, a young girl was sleeping on her shoulder; this little girl was wearing a pink Minnie Mouse baseball cap.

Megan stepped up to the counter and greeted the woman behind the counter, "Howdy."

The woman behind the counter answered, "Howdy."

She was in her mid forties, she looked tired, but was legitimately nice.

The woman asked, "I'm believing Y'all used pump seven?"

Megan smiled and answered, "Yes Ma'am."

Before Megan could ask the woman behind the counter, the woman stated, "If Y'all are thinking about changing out of the wedding dress you could use one of our showers. If you ain't about to make a mess and don't use the shower I won't be charging Y'all. Unless Y'all are looking to take a shower? If Y'all are looking to take a shower there'll be a five dollar charge."

Megan answered, "I'll take a shower. Can I pay for the gas after I'm done with the shower?"

The woman winked and smiled, "You look like a gal of your word. Honey, you can pay for the gas before Y'all leave."

Very serious Megan answered, "I ain't leaving before paying."

The middle aged woman: smiled, she stepped over to a plywood board with keys hanging on it, there were pink and blue key chains, each chain had a number attached to it, she grabbed a key with a pink key chain, and handed the key to Megan. "The ladies showers are over yonder'." She leaned over and whispered, "I wouldn't be worried Bubba here will make sure nothing happens to Y'all."

Megan's dimples flashed.

She answered, "I'm able to take care of myself. But I'd appreciate the help if someone was giving me trouble."

The two ladies smiled.

"Howdy folks."

Standing to her left was the man with the Vikings baseball cap. The little boy was clinging to his Daddy.

Megan waved at the boy.

The boy smiled and waved back. His attention turned to a tub of gummy worms on the counter.

"Hi," the man answered. "Pump four."

The boy started to say, "Could I have..."

The Momma arrived, the girl was still sleeping, "No. Don't you know we have snacks in the car?"

Megan enjoyed watching the family just as much as she enjoyed their northern accents.

Megan focused and grabbed the shower key. She headed toward the showers.

She made a mental note of where the fresh fruit was and where the possibility of healthy snacks were. She was happy to notice a cappuccino machine. She saw a pink sign directing her to a back hallway on the left side of the station. Megan observed the men's showers were down a hallway on the other side of the store. This hallway was: behind the laundromat, it was wider, and there must have been at least ten blue doors in this hallway. Passed this was a small game room with: a change machine, a couple pin ball machines, a half dozen video games, and two claw machines. When she turned to her left and made her way into the pink hallway there were four pink shower doors; two on each side. On each door was a sign announcing this was a woman's shower and a small numbered sticker below the sign. Megan looked at the pink key chain and took note she was given shower number two. She: stuck this key into the round silver door handle, turned the key, the door handle turned, and pushed open the door. She was impressed with the size of this room. The room was tiled with small square tiles. The tiles were different shades of pink with white tiles randomly placed within the pink tile sequence. The tiles covered the floor and went half way up the wall. Above this tile, the wall was freshly painted in an ivory color. The toilet was on the right side wall. Left of the toilet was a sink and mirror, and to the left of the sink was a concrete shower. This shower went from floor to ceiling, it was tiled with large pink squares, and a brand new flowered shower curtain hung in front of the shower. To the left of the shower and bolted to the floor was a long wooden bench. Above the bench were three large double hooks. On the left side of this bench attached to the wall was a tiled shelf where towels and wash cloths were neatly folded. Below this shelf was a tall metal garbage can with a lid. To the left of the garbage can was a cloth hamper with a wire frame. Above this simple white hamper was a sign with an arrow; it instructed everyone to place their dirty towels into the white hamper. Just passed the hamper, on the wall to the left, was a full length mirror. Attached to the mirror was a sign pleading everyone to avoid: painting, writing, or scratching the mirror. Passed this mirror was a small vending machine selling: water, a variety of drinks, aspirin, deodorant, feminine products, and shower supplies. Past this vending machine were posters advertising what was in the store.

Megan: let the door shut, she noticed it locked, she set her duffel bag, purse, her cell phone, and the keys to the shower door onto the wooden bench. She zipped open her duffel bag. On top were two plastic bags full of neatly folded dirty clothes. In one of these bags were the breeches Krissy bought her and her dark jeans she had worn the day before. She set these two plastic bags onto the bench. On the left side of the duffel bag was the zipper garment bag the store gave her when her Sister-in-law paid for her dress. She: unfolded the garment bag, she hung it on one of the hooks, went through her clothes, found her red pair of cascade Capri pants, and the second pair of light blue straight legged jeans. She set her red cascade Capri pants onto the bench. She picked up the pair of jeans; she knew these pair of jeans were tight on her. She wondered what it would feel like to wear these jeans without any underwear.

Her dimples flashed.

She blushed.

She quickly set the jeans down, she tried to pretend she never had this idea, and focused on the task at hand.

She pulled out of the bag: a woman's dark green polo shirt with her company's logo on it, a pair of boyshort panties, and a pair of short athletic socks; she neatly set these items onto the bench. She grabbed a shower bag she bought at the thrift store in Eastbank, one day she would purchase a very nice shower bag, but this one fulfilled its purpose.

She was happy to take off her dress and the undergarments to make her appear better in the dress. She very carefully slid, what she felt was an expensive dress, into the garment bag. She hung the dress back upon on the hook above the wooden bench. She was delighted to take off her nylons and all of her undergarments; especially the garments which helped her look good in the dress. She was even happier to remove her makeup. She went to the bathroom and then took her shower. She felt refreshed and a little more alert after the shower. She tied her dark blond hair into a pony tail, she slipped on a pair of comfortable boyshort panties, a comfortable bra, and gazed upon the clothes she set on the bench.

She: picked up the blue jeans, felt the material, wanted to put them on, wanted to go forward with her idea, wanted to experience another orgasm, felt embarrassed, felt concerned, folded the jeans, placed them back into the bag, picked them up again, again placed them back; this was when she sat on the bench.

Her dimples flashed.

She took a deep breath.

She recognized she was feeling the same way she felt while riding the horse and when she was in the underground male strip club. Being honest with herself she admitted this was caused by the feeling of the denim jeans and the impulse to have an orgasm. She thought of a way to repeat the motions she felt while on the horse. This worried her. She was certain she was the only woman who would feel the way she was feeling because of the sensations she felt from clothing. She recognized what she wanted to do was called masturbation. She was unsure if she should or not. She barely knew anything about the act of masturbation; but she heard a lot of philosophies about the topic.

She felt caught between the two extremes of sexual philosophy. On one end of the spectrum was the idea sex was only for procreation. This never made sense to her. She especially felt this now, after experiencing an orgasm, she reasoned God made sex pleasurable. The idea a woman was to ignore all feelings of pleasure seemed far from God's design. The other extreme philosophy was as long as everyone consented everything was acceptable. This made little sense to her. She knew of friends who regretted having sex. She knew of women who enjoyed sex and had wonderful experiences. After her orgasm she desired to have good sex.

She wanted to put on her jeans and repeat what happened while riding the horse.

She blushed.

Her dimples flashed.

She was uncomfortable with the idea of indulging herself in a public place. She remembered being taught in high school health class the only proper place to masturbate was in private. This always made sense to her. In high school she wondered why any girl would play with themselves. In college she was surprised to hear how many of her coeds enjoyed it. She was doubly shocked when she walked in on a number of her friends enjoying themselves.

It never occurred to her a woman would want to: in a dorm, in the same room where a roommate was sleeping, a woman would use porn, or during the afternoon.

She recognized she knew everyone's philosophies about sex but knew very little about the nuts and bolts of it.

At once she felt very ignorant; she hated this feeling.

She really felt overwhelmed; she hated this feeling.

She felt confused; she hated this feeling.

She was unsure of how God really felt about sex; she hated this feeling.

She was sure God gave people sex. She was sure He made it pleasurable. She believed with all her heart God wanted people to wait until they were married to have sex. But what about masturbating? What about the feelings she was receiving from a pair of jeans? Was it a sin she had an orgasm on a horse? Was she a freak? What about oral sex? Or foreplay? What about kissing before a person was married? What did God really approve of? What did the Bible really say about masturbating? Why did God allow it? Or did he? Did God give people the ability to masturbate to give themselves relief? If he did, what did he approve of? How would she change as a person if she started to indulge her desires? Would it be positive? Negative? Or would her experiences be both positive and negative?

In general; she believed everything came with some measure of responsibility and there was a consequence for everything. She believed these consequences could be positive or negative. She now believed God made sex to be pleasurable. She still believed God's ideal was for a woman and a man to be married before they had sex. She reasoned if masturbating caused someone to feel such powerful feelings, then sex must be even more intense; she believed this was the reason God wanted people to wait. After having her first orgasm, she knew she would have to create her own, otherwise there was the possibility she would throw her virginity away.

She looked over at the pair of jeans.

Her dimples flashed.

She blushed.

She turned away.

She looked down at her long legs, her feet, and the floor.

She thought about what the church ladies would tell her. She thought about what her Ma would tell her. She thought about what Nicole would tell her. She thought about what her college friends would tell her. She thought about what different wives would tell her. She wondered what a woman who struggled with orgasms would tell her.

This is when it hit her.

What was suddenly infuriating was how little she knew of her own personal sexuality. The few things she knew for sure was: she was a straight female, she wanted to have an orgasm again, and she was afraid of sex. This caused her to be angry at her own indecisiveness.

She: stood up, blushed, pushed this reaction back with anger, decided she would wear the jeans until she reached her houseboat, and then she would masturbate. She assumed it would be easy to hold off until then.

Her dimples flashed.

She: set her pair of light blue straight legged jeans onto the bench, placed her cascade capri pants into the bag, her heart pounded, stood up feeling nervous, slipped off her boyshort

panties, folded them, neatly placed them in the duffel bag, and took a long deep breath.

Her dimples flashed.

Her heart pounded.

She took one last deep breath.

When she felt calm she slipped on her light blue straight legged jeans. She immediately felt what she had called her “weird” feelings. These feelings were in full force; wherever the denim touched her skin she felt energized. She: felt self conscience about wearing her work polo shirt, put this back into the bag, dug into her bag, found the red tweed western style shirt Krissy bought her, slipped this on, put on the pair of athletic socks she set on the bench, slipped on her blue athletic shoes, found the reversible belt Krissy bought her, she tucked in her shirt, slipped the belt on, she placed the shower bag onto the side of the duffel bag, took the time to repack her clothes, placed her bags of dirty clothes onto the right side, with some difficulty she zipped up the bag, hung her purse across her body, picked up her keys from off the bench, clipped them onto her belt loop, she attached the cellphone to her brand new reversible belt, she placed her towel and washcloth into the hamper, she grabbed her duffel bag, she hung her duffel bag across her body; this is when she took the garment bag off of the hook.

Her dimples flashed when she caught her reflection in the full length mirror.

She: stopped, hung up the garment bag, set her duffel bag onto the bench and performed her own personal fashion show in front of the mirror.

She blushed.

She felt she looked provocative. Wearing these jeans was the most overt sexual act she ever performed. She felt the urge to take off these jeans and shove them into the tall metal garbage can.

Her dimples flashed.

She became angry at all of her sexual struggles. She grabbed the duffel bag and swung it over her shoulder; the strap went across her chest and the bag was on her left side. She took the garment bag off of the hook and hung it over the duffel bag in such a way where the garment bag would stay put. Feeling frustrated she made a few quick steps toward the entrance door; the feeling she received from this quick movement caught her off guard.

Her dimples flashed.

She had to stop.

She closed her eyes to calm herself.

When she opened her eyes she looked around the pink shower room. It suddenly bugged her this shower room was done in pink. In her mind she questioned the world: *Why does everything related to women always have to be in pink? And why does everything related to men have to be in blue?* This irritation propelled her to swing the door open and to step out into the store.

She quickly reacted and caught the door from closing.

She was irritated with herself.

She: went back into the shower room, headed to the bench, grabbed the shower door keys, turned around, quickly stepped to the door, stopped, took a deep breath; the same type of breath she performed before an athletic event. She debated about going back and changing into her boyshorts and her red capri pants. She made her choice by calmly opening the door and stepping out into the store.

She blushed.

A woman stepped out from the woman's restroom. It was across from the showers and to the right of the free newspaper racks. Megan was upset she missed these details. Megan stayed calm even though she wanted to hide behind the free newspaper rack.

The woman passed Megan.

Megan was sure this woman noticed what she was doing; in fact the woman barely noticed her.

Megan decided she needed to act as normal as possible, with this thought she took another deep breath, and when she felt calm she proceeded. She stepped over to a pile of red carrying baskets and picked one up. She started to browse the convenience store.

She felt very self conscience. Megan was sure every person in the store knew she was putting her sexuality out on public display. In actuality; none of the people in the store considered Megan to be acting overtly sexual in any way. The closest thing to provocative anyone felt, was a few of the men in the store admired her rear end and her long legs; this admiration would have happened no matter what she wore.

As she started to walk around the store she began to feel some very conflicting emotions. She was feeling sexually adventurous. The feeling of adventure was countered by a disconcerted feeling she was acting foolish. She was beginning to feel as though she was going down a path she might regret later, but at the moment she was enjoying the physical and emotional sensations she was receiving. She believed she was the only woman, and most likely the only person, who could become aroused by wearing a pair of jeans. At the same time, she wanted to just enjoy the sensations no matter what anyone else thought. She reasoned she would have felt the same sexual feelings while wearing a pair of panties; the extra step she took was just making her nervous. The worst part was how quickly her body was reacting to the sexual stimuli she was allowing herself to participate in. She was growing concerned someone might be able to notice she was becoming wet. She stepped behind a rack and quickly looked down at herself, she hoped the shirt would be long enough to cover...

The guy who worked in the store felt she was acting nervous. He surprised her in the aisle, "Are Y'all finding everything?"

This startled her. She was sure she looked suspicious ducking near a rack with a bag. She responded to the guy in kindness but with a shaky tone, "I'm trying to decide what type of trail mix I'd like."

She could see he had doubts about her fib.

"If Y'all are needing anything just ask."

Megan answered politely, "Yes sir."

When he walked away she quickly lifted up the tails of the red shirt and pulled them down as far as they could go. She was grateful her shirt covered the front of her jeans.

She again took a deep breath.

After calming down she reviewed the bags of dried fruit and trail mix in front of her. She was about to choose a nut mix with some candies inside. She decided the candies made this bag unhealthy and chose a dried fruit mix. From here she went over to the cappuccino machine and poured herself a large cup.

Her dimples flashed.

She once again took a calming breath.

She continued shopping.

She was figuring out the sensations she was experiencing must have been what everyone called arousal or being horny. This revelation caused her to stop shopping. She headed to the cashier.

When Megan reached the counter she thanked the forty year old woman, "Ma'am; thank you for the use of the shower and for letting me wait to pay for gas."

"Getting out of the dress must make Y'all feel better."

"Yes Ma'am."

Megan was certain this woman could tell she was acting sexual. Megan in a nervous voice managed to say, "The shower was clean and very nice. I placed the dirty towel in the hamper."

"Honey, you wouldn't believe how difficult this is for folks."

The woman behind the counter asked, "Honey; are you ready for me to start ringing' up them items?"

"Oh."

Megan realized all her items were still in the red carrying basket.

"I'm betting you had a long day. Let's start with the coffee."

Megan answered, "It's a vanilla cappuccino."

The woman smiled, "I'm needing to confess something to Y'all. I ain't a fan of those highfalutin coffee's. Just give me straight black coffee."

The woman working next to this cashier mentioned out loud to know one in general, "Without it she ain't fun working with."

"Well bless your heart."

The other cashier rolled her eyes. The woman cashier in her mid forties started to ring up Megan's items. Megan's items consisted of: a large bottle of water, the bag of dried mixed fruit, a whole wheat tuna sandwich, a granola bar, a yogurt, and a Florida map that was on sale. Megan was carrying some napkins and a spoon, these were given away free with any purchase.

The woman asked, "Y'all want a bag?"

"Yes Ma'am."

Megan mentioned before she finished, "What about the shower and gas."

"Oh. Thank you for mentioning it. What pump were you on?"

The other teller answered, "Seven."

The cashiers glanced at one another. The cashier ringing up Megan added both the shower and the gas.

Megan started to sip the cappuccino.

"Honey, You have a safe trip home."

"Yes Ma'am."

Megan: placed the napkins and spoon into the plastic bag, she took a few sips of her coffee, she headed out to her truck, she was about to push open the front glass door, but a handsome man from outside opened the door for her.

He acknowledged her, "Howdy Ma'am."

"Thank you sir."

When she passed him, he tipped his hat, turned, and glanced at what he felt was a very attractive and confident woman.

She missed his look, she was completely focused on the intense sexual feelings she was

experiencing.

She: stepped in front of the passenger side door of her truck, she set her coffee onto the hood, she undid her keys from her belt loop, she was about to stick the keys into the door; she was startled.

From behind she heard a girls voice, "Momma it's a dolphin."

When she looked she saw three girls and a Momma; the youngest of the three was pointing at the dolphin painted on her truck.

The Mom pushed her children forward saying, "We're needing to move along."

Megan clearly heard this mother's Georgia accent.

Megan waved at the little girl; all three girls waved back. Megan watched them step into the truck stop.

Megan was disturbed by the fact she was surprised. In frustration she: panned the parking lot, opened the door to her pick-up-truck, hung her garment bag in the back, tossed her bag onto the passenger side seat, placed her purse in between the seats, shut the passenger side door, grabbed her things off of the hood, walked around her vehicle, unlocked the drivers side door, stepped into the pick-up-truck, set her coffee into the two cup holder in between the seats, the coffee cup was in front of a cleaned out empty coffee cup full of quarters, set her bag of food items on top of her duffel bag, quickly shut the drivers side door, unclipped her cellphone, placed it into the plastic square section of the cup holder, plugged the charger into a charging attachment, took a deep breath, checked behind her, took another deep breath, headed out of the truck stop, and turned back onto to I-75.

For the most part this was an unlit two lane highway running through the middle of Florida. She turned on the radio and hit the scan button and found a top 40 country station. She kept it at a low volume but it was enough noise to keep her awake. While driving this section of the road she ate the tuna sandwich. She decided to pull off of I-75 and onto highway 44, she drove into the parking lot of a gas station. Here she called her Ma; like Megan suspected her Ma was waiting for her call. It was very awkward for Megan to talk to her, but Megan wanted to let someone know where she was. They spoke briefly and her Ma appreciated the information. Megan drove out of the parking lot and back onto I-75.

Megan felt aroused. She again felt she was the strangest woman in the world. What was bothering her and making this experience nerve racking was the fact she was without underwear.

She almost missed her turnoff. She weaved from the empty right lane all the way over to the left inner most lane. She went underneath the sign pointing her to Orlando. She was now on the Florida Turnpike, or as some called it the *Ronald Reagan turnpike*, and if you were an old timer it would have been called the *Sunshine State Parkway*. She hated taking a toll road but felt she needed to get home. She could handle the cost of the toll road because of the collection of quarters she started once she received the invitations to the wedding.

She could feel her body responding to the movement of her legs, this felt exhilarating, but this feeling was tempered by the fact she was without underwear. She imagined being pulled over by the highway patrol and the officer noticing she was without undergarments. She imagined her vehicle braking down and a tow truck driver noticing her experiment. The worst idea, was what would happen if she was in an accident? What was progressing these thoughts was how moist her jeans were feeling; until this experience she never knew how moist she could get.

Due to her sexual inexperience, she never considered she would need relief before she reached her houseboat. She now knew how powerful it felt to be aroused. An intriguing idea was to give herself relief while driving, to actually do it, was sort of horrifying to her. She now understood why men and women were arrested for masturbating while driving. She assumed this was the same reason why some couples enjoyed having sex in secluded places. She imagined having sex in a car. This made her feel guilty. She was certain having sex in a public place would be nerve racking; but the idea was very intriguing.

Her dimples flashed.

As she drove she hated paying for the tolls. When she neared a toll both she made sure her red shirt covered her front. She was happy to find out a couple attendants appreciated her quarters. She debated about turning off of I-75 but she pressed on.

She noticed the traffic was increasing and there were more lights, she knew she was approaching Orlando. She was thankful she was driving west of downtown Orlando. She had nothing personally against Orlando, she preferred living in a smaller community; most important she loved living next to the ocean.

The highway again became two lanes. The road was only lit by: cars themselves, the occasional light from a sign, the lights from a small community, or a restaurant. Megan felt this road was a lot different at night.

She spotted a sign for a State of Florida rest stop. She wanted to press on but she felt she needed to correct her mistake. She felt she learned a great deal about herself and her own sexuality. She decided if she was to ever wear clothes that caused her to feel any sort of arousal she needed to plan ahead. She disliked the temptation of masturbating in public; but again it was a very interesting idea.

She pulled into this narrow but long rest stop.

On a blue sign: there was a name of a small river, it showed a picture of a gas station, and there were numerous square pictures advertising different restaurants. There was a mix of well lit area's and dark corners; these dark corners made her concerned about stopping at this rest stop. She chose a well lit area to park. The building in front of her advertised a variety of fast food chains, a Mom and pop ice cream parlor, and to the left of this building was the gas station. With herself stopped she decided to turn on the dome light and look at herself. She lifted up her shirt and blushed. Very cautiously she touched her wet spot. She started to aggressively rub herself, she sighed, it was very pleasurable. She heard a car drive into the lot. She remembered where she was and quickly pulled her hand away. She was surprised on how intense the sensations were.

Her dimples flashed, she blushed, and took a deep breath.

She was being tempted with an idea, she looked at the duffel bag, she was disturbed by the temptation to ride her duffel bag in her pick-up-truck.

She spotted two county sheriff cars pull up to the building. This was enough for her to: start the truck, turn off the dome light, back up, and start to leave the truck stop. She glanced at the gas gage and was now in a pickle. She never let her truck get under a quarter of a tank; she loved her truck but wished the gas mileage was better. She reluctantly pulled in front of the gas station gas pumps. She tried to pull her pants up so no one would see her spot, doing this caused her to feel intense pleasure. She sat back down and took a couple deep breaths. She grabbed her purse, her keys, her phone, and stepped out of the truck. As soon as she stepped out of the truck she quickly pulled down her shirt. She immediately clipped her cell

phone onto her belt.

She faced the pick-up-truck in an odd manner. She undid the metal cover and twisted off the gas cap. She was very careful on how she stood in front of the gas pump.

Megan had to be responsible with her money. One of the ways she accomplished this was by keeping her business money and her personal money separate. One of the ways she kept this separate was owning a small business credit card she only used for business transactions. Anytime she purchased anything personal she only used cash; this helped her stay on track. Before Megan went on this trip she separated enough cash for: gas, healthy snacks, coffee, going out to eat, entertainment, an emergency, and miscellaneous necessities. To use the cash she had separated for this trip she would have needed to go inside of the gas station. In the three years she owned her small business credit card she never once used it for anything personal. She reluctantly opened her purse and took out this small business credit card. It pained her heart when she stuck it into the slot. She accepted the fact she was responsible for this situation and was dealing with the consequences of her choices.

A small SUV with Michigan tags drove up on the opposite side of the pumps she was standing by. At Megan's angle she was looking at the front grill of a silver KIA Sportage. In this vehicle was a family, the Dad was driving, the Mom was looking at a map, and in the back seat Megan could see two girls with their heads against the window, and a small boy was resting his head on his oldest sister's left shoulder. Megan's first impulse was to just run into her vehicle and sit there until they left. Even in her distress she understood running into the truck would have looked awful strange; plus in a few moments the tank would be full. Her solution was to grab her purse and casually walk behind the tailgate of her truck. She was pretending the gas pump was taking forever. Megan was a horrible actress, so much so the Mom in the small SUV wondered if Megan was alright.

The Mom took note of Megan's Florida license plates.

The Dad stepped out of the vehicle, and Megan heard the Mom say; "If you're not sure ask."

In a tone of frustration he shouted, "I know where we're going."

Megan's dimples flashed when she observed the Mom's eye roll. Megan turned away from the Mom when the Dad just about pulled the metal lid in front of the gas cap off. Megan could hear his mumbling, but could not understand the words, as he twisted the gas cap off. Megan watched him yank off the gas handle and in complete frustration shove the pump into the SUV. He hit the start button. It was obvious waiting two seconds for the gas to start was an eternity for him. Megan became completely self conscience when the Mom stepped out of the SUV carrying the map and glanced over at her

Megan was so used to helping people she gave this woman a nod; Megan cringed at her own action.

This Mom called out politely, "Hi."

Megan rested her arms on the tailgate and pressed her pelvis as close to the tailgate as possible.

"Howdy Ma'am."

Megan was grateful this woman passed her and stepped up to the husband.

Megan noticed the two girls were waking up. She noticed the oldest girl blink open her eyes, her mouth dropped open, and she pointed at Megan's truck. The two girls quickly moved themselves to the front of the SUV, while the boy's head dropped down out of sight. Megan

hoped to God they would stay in the vehicle. She now wished she would have worn her boyshort panties and her red cascade capri pants.

In exasperation the Mom asked Megan, "Where are we?"

The Dad replied, "I keep telling you we're going north on the turnpike. We should be passing Ocala in a few minutes."

Megan smiled both at the way he said turnpike and how he mispronounced Ocala.

"Darrin. I'm really feeling we're headed the wrong way. When we drove down to Miami we passed this truck stop."

His face was red but he was controlled, "There's more than one rest stop."

She gave him a look. She looked at the map and pointed at it, "I feel we're right here."

He wanted to ignore her but calmly stated, "How could we turn the wrong way on a freeway?"

Her voiced raised, "You had to try the *Waffle House*. We couldn't have stopped at some restaurant off the freeway. No. We had to drive a half mile off the road. I bet we got turned around in all those crazy loops and off ramps."

He was trying not to yell, "I'm sure I didn't take the wrong road."

"How do you know for sure? There hasn't been a sign for a long time. We should've ate at..."

This is when the anger came into his voice, "Didn't you like the meal? You didn't want to eat at a fast food restaurant."

They looked at one other.

Megan heard the gas pump click. Megan was trying to problem solve her dilemma: she needed to move from her current spot, to the handle of the gas pump, needed to take the paper slip out of the pump, and somehow get into her truck without having any of these strangers noticing her wet spot.

This is when the oldest girl stuck her head out of the drivers side window, and asked "Are we lost?"

Both parents said at the same time, "No."

They gave one another guilty looks.

The girl asked, "Is that a dolphin?"

Megan was used to northern children not addressing adults with the respect southern children were often taught, "Yes honey."

The younger sister asked, "Did you paint it?"

This younger sister was trying to push the older one out of the way.

The older one scolded, "Don't push."

"I'm not."

The Dad yelled, "Girls."

The two girls became quiet for a second.

The youngest broke the silence by yelling, "Why did you paint a dolphin on your truck?"

Megan maintained her dignity even though she felt she had lost it.

"The dolphin is a symbol of my business."

"What do you do?"

The oldest thought it was cool a woman would own a business.

"I'm a charter captain."

The youngest asked, "What's that?"

Megan smiled at the accents, "I'm a gal who takes people fishing and scuba diving. I take my clients to places where they observe animals."

The youngest pleaded, "I want to see."

The boy had been listening, he stuck his head out, and stated, "Girls can't go fishing."

The oldest protested, "Yes they can."

"No..."

Megan interrupting said, "I'm a gal. I've been fishing since I was a little girl."

The youngest girl said, "See."

She was still trying to find a way to stick her head out the window.

Megan heard the Dad say, "I didn't go on the wrong road."

The face the wife made; spoke more than a thousand words.

That's cool," said the oldest girl, "Could you show me a real dolphin?"

The boy stated, "We saw one."

The oldest girl protested, "Not at *Sea World*."

Hearing this made Megan think about her childhood friend Tom.

The little one asked, "Can we see a real one?"

"Your Momma and Daddy would need to schedule a charter."

The oldest replies, "Oh."

Megan heard the Mom say, "We should've passed Ocala a long time ago. I feel that was the one we were suppose to be on." The Mom was pointing at the map, "Not this one."

"I'm telling you we're headed north not south."

The Mom interrupted the conversation Megan was having with the children, "Are you from around here? Are we on the turnpike?"

Megan answered. "I'm from Eastbank and it's not far from Boca Raton." Megan was trying to curb some of her accent. "Y'all are on the turnpike..."

The husband said with a tone, "I told you."

The wife scolded, "Let her finish."

"Y'all are on the turnpike but your headed south."

The wife glared at the husband.

Megan went into her customer service mode, "Did Y'all get turned around near Highway 92 just south of Orlando?"

Darrin reluctantly stated, "I must have."

"It's wound up like a bunch of snakes. It's easy to get turned around over there. Where a'bouts are you headed?"

The woman stated, "We just got back from visiting my parents and we're headed home." She made a face and asked in desperation, "Where are we?"

What impressed Megan the husband looked at his wife with humility and said, "I normally don't get turned around. Its been a long trip."

The wife smiled at him, "It has."

Darrin looked at Megan and asked, "Are we on the wrong road?"

"No sir," Megan said with a smile. "Y'all are on I-75. What Y'all are needing is to go on the other side of this here rest stop and start heading north."

"I'm not taking any chances," the woman told her husband and to Megan's horror this woman walked over to the truck and flattened out the map and pointed, "Are we here?"

Megan hoped she was concealing her circumstances from this woman. Megan was used to pressure situations, "Yes Ma'am." Pointing to the map Megan stated, "Just go around here and you'll be on the highway."

"That's easy."

The Mom was relieved.

The older one again asked, "Mom are we lost?"

Both parents yelled, "No."

The wife answered, "Thank-you."

"Ma'am Y'all are welcome. I hope you've enjoyed your stay in Florida."

Megan stated out of habit.

"With my parents living here we'll be back. Its a lot warmer here than in Michigan," the woman said with a smile. "Do you have a card?"

Megan was grateful she carried her purse, she opened the purse and handed this woman one of her business cards, "Please try and schedule a trip. If Y'all just show up and I ain't there please give me a call or leave a message. I'll get back to Y'all. I'd love to give Y'all a wonderful tour. Listed on the card is my website. Y'all can schedule a charter from there as well."

"We make regular trips."

"I'd love having your folks tag along."

Megan smiled a big dimple smile.

The oldest one mentioned, "I would love to see a real dolphin in the ocean."

The Mom said, "Thank-you."

The Mom headed back to the SUV.

Megan noticed the two girls moved quickly in back to avoid their Mom. The Mom was so irritated she: sat in the drivers seat, moved the seat back, moved it forward again, the Mom sighed, and Megan heard the Mom say, "You two get back there and buckle up."

The Dad who paid for the gas came back and was about to sit on the drivers side, instead; he sat in the passenger side. The Mom started the engine and headed out of the lot. The two girls waved at Megan, Megan waved back.

Megan watched the vehicle drive passed her.

Close to a panic Megan: quickly put the hose back, put the gas cap back on, flipped the metal door, ripped out her receipt, and stepped into her truck. She set her purse down, tossed the phone in the square section of the cup holder, and drove the truck to a dark corner of the rest stop. She locked the two doors and rolled up the drivers side window. Blushing and watching for anybody who might come up to the truck, she pulled off her tennis shoes and yanked her pants off. The pleasure of this shot through her body. She ignored this pleasure and tossed the jeans down onto the passenger side floor. She unzipped her duffel bag, she was glad she placed her clean pair of boyshort panties on top. Once she found them she slipped them on. She frantically dug through her duffel bag and found her red cascade Capri pants and slipped them on. She stuffed her feet into her athletic shoes without untying them first; she needed to fix the back of the heels. Once this was accomplished she: started the truck, rolled down the drivers side window, she sped out of the truck stop, lucky for her the sheriffs were inside eating, and headed onto I-75.

She was speculating on what she felt about masturbating. She was unsure if masturbating was: healthy, normal, and was concerned if it was a sin or not. She knew she

wanted to have an orgasm again, and at some point she wanted to have one with a husband; but she was unsure if she should reproduce one on her own. She was still feeling the desire to masturbate while driving. Even if she wanted to masturbate while driving she was unsure if she could. She eventually tried to block out her sexual thoughts and questions by listening to the radio, drinking her cappuccino, she ate her granola bar, and started to munch on the mixed fruit.

She thought about many things as she drove home.

One of the things she thought about was what the family from Michigan never heard about *Sea World*. It was impossible for Megan to block out so many of her childhood and adolescent memories of her friend Tom. She tried to hold onto these memories instead of what she witnessed on the tape of his death. While training an orca at *Sea world*, the orca dragged him under the water, held him under for a few minutes, raised him out of the water, Tom gasped for air; Megan would never forget his look of fear. His life ended when he was repeatedly bashed against the wall of the tank. It was easy to forgive the staff because they tried everything they could to save one of her best friends. It was harder to forgive the executives who knew this killer whale was a problem.

Megan would never forget the funeral.

Megan received a copy of the smuggled tape from an acquaintance who witnessed the whole incident; Tom's female friend quit working at *Sea World* after the cover up. Tom's friend drove down to Eastbank and gave Megan the tape. This friend assumed Megan would know who to take the tape too. Megan did. But before the female friend delivered the tape they watched it together. The worst part for Megan was telling Tom's Momma what happened. What this accomplished was stopping Tom's Mother from ever watching the video.

Megan focused on the music.

Just North of St. Lucie Florida she needed to use the facilities. She pulled into another rest stop. Just before leaving the pick-up-truck she: took out a couple dollars, shoved this money into her pocket, grabbed her hidden handgun, and slipped it between her pants and body. When she stepped out of her vehicle she pulled her shirt over the gun. Only when she felt it was safe did she walk toward the building of the rest stop. She was ready to use her weapon and panned the area as she: went to the restroom, while using the restroom, while stopping off at a vending machine, and heading back to the truck. When she reached her pick-up-truck she unlocked her truck door, stepped into her truck, shut the door, set the gun in arms reach, locked the doors, connected her cell phone, set a bottled water she purchased from a vending machine into the cup holder, and ate her yogurt. As she sat there eating her yogurt she hoped the events of the last few days would turn out to be a positive; but she was deeply unsure.

She watched a Semi-truck pull out and head back onto the highway.

She glanced at her jeans on the floor. She wanted to feel them on her legs again. She looked around and was sure she was in a secluded area. She again decided being out in public was not the place to put on clothes that made her feel "those" feelings.

When she was finished with the yogurt she shoved this into the plastic bag with the rest of the garbage; a bag she received from the gas station she took a shower. She started her vehicle, drove back onto I-75, and headed south until she reached St. Lucie.

When she reached St. Lucie she drove off the freeway and drove down a major boulevard of this medium sized town until she reached her favorite road; *Highway One*.

Driving along the ocean calmed her nerves.

She turned off the radio so she could enjoy the breeze and the sounds of the ocean.

She prayed silently.

She was thankful when she arrived in Eastbank and was overjoyed when she parked her pick-up-truck into the garage. She stepped out of the truck leaving the garage door open so the light in the garage would remain on. She walked the plastic bag filled with garbage out to the dumpster. She looked out over the marina. It was easy to notice the lights of her neighbors yacht were on.

She unlocked one of the carts attached to the marina fence. She walked back to the garage pushing the four wheeled cart; she left the cart sitting outside the open garage. She opened the door of the pick-up-truck. She: again hid her gun, grabbed her duffel bag swung it on her back, hung her purse over her shoulder, set these items on the cart, grabbed her jeans; she folded them and placed this pair of jeans onto the top of the cab. She felt embarrassed when she caught a whiff of her own sent on these jeans. She grabbed the garment bag and jeans. Before leaving the garage she hit the garage door button, the door started to close, she set these things on the cart and headed to her houseboat.

She pushed the cart onto the first pier and headed toward her houseboat. She: enjoyed hearing the clicking of the flag posts, the noises of the boats of the marina, but mixed in to the normal sounds was the soft sound of music. It was an older tune and whomever was playing it was conscientious of their neighbors. She wondered who would be playing this type of music at this late hour. Normally; if someone was playing music at this hour it was loud and there were the sounds of a party. As she approached her houseboat the noise became louder. This caused her to look up at the houseboat Yacht; it was docked just passed her charter. The lights were on and the windows were open on the second deck. She found it odd a Yankee would want their windows open when it was eighty-three degrees outside. She was still upset her yacht had been made into a Green Bay Packer shrine, but she reluctantly admitted the reconstruction and the paint job were very creative and professional.

This caused her to be curious. She left the cart on the pier in front of her houseboat and approached the yacht. She stepped to the edge of the pier. Holding onto the railing she glanced down at the Eastbank River and it was calm. She noticed the Town of Eastbank was dark and silent. She looked North toward the preserve; it was creepy and dark. There were times she disliked the preserve tonight was one of those nights. She focused on the music coming from the Yacht, she turned around so her back was against the railing, and looked up at the open window. She was shocked to see her neighbor practice dancing. Currently he was wearing an orange t-shirt with an unbuttoned red shirt hanging loosely over the t-shirt. He unsuccessfully matched this shirt with dark green shorts, white socks, and shiny black dancing shoes. His dark hair was brushed neatly back and he was wearing round shaped glasses; instead of the pair of glasses he wore when she met him. She stuck to her belief; he needed to start eating healthier and at the very least start walking every day. He was not obese by any means, but had a little bit of extra padding around the mid section.

She found herself watching him. The song he was playing was an old song she heard her parents play, they played very little secular music, but they liked Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra. The song her neighbor was dancing to was the song, "Ain't that a Kick in the Head," by *Dean Martin*. She was surprised on how fast he was moving to the beat. It was fascinating to watch him ball room dance. She was impressed when at the end of the song he did a move

she never seen before. When the song ended he stopped and set himself in a dance position. She heard a light melody pour out of the yacht, she knew it was an old song and had heard it before; the song he started to dance to was, "Unforgettable" by *Nat King Cole*. She found herself memorized as he was practicing a waltz. She was surprised when he stopped and walked over to the sound system and hit a button; the song stopped. She watched him go around a table, he played with some buttons, and he again walked a few steps away from the sound system. He set himself in a dancing position. He waited for the beginning of the song and then started to dance again. She was impressed with the fact he would take such passion in something. She watched him glide on the floor. She never heard such a sweet melody. It felt odd watching her new neighbor practice ball room dancing. She was impressed when he practiced twirling and it appeared to her he anticipated the end of the song and practiced a dip.

Again he stopped, he set himself, and waited for the next song. She suspected there had been many women on the other end of his stance.

She started to watch him dance to the song, "Papa Loves Mombo," by *Perry Como*. She was fascinated at his movements. She knocked herself out of her trance when she brushed her hair behind her right ear. She questioned on why she was standing there watching him.

She decided she needed to scurry along before he saw her. She made her way passed the stern of the yacht. She admired the military tribute he painted on the stern of the yacht and the large American Flag; but she still despised the Green Bay Packer cheerleader. She would use this tribute at the Memorial Day Parade. This parade was a passion of hers and took very little credit for all the work she put into it. What she took great delight in was organizing a luncheon after the parade for all of the veterans from Eastbank; she made it a priority to make sure any wounded or disadvantaged veteran were served first.

She heard a song change, this new song was "Sentimental Journey" by *The Les Brown Orchestra w/Doris Day*. She heard this song once at the VFW when they held a WW2 ball. She stopped and listened to the song; she imagined him dancing. This stopped when she brushed her hair behind her right ear. She unclipped her keys from her belt loop. It took a few minutes but she finally found the keys she needed to open the door to her houseboat.

She: stepped in and turned on the light to the lounge, walked into the galley, turned on the light of the galley, stepped into her cabin and turned this light on, went back outside to the cart, unloaded all of these items one at a time, set them into her cabin; the exception being her light blue straight leg jeans. She set them into her small washing machine. She went back outside, pushed the cart to the fence, and locked up the cart. When she did so she felt as though she was being watched. She looked up at the preserve; even with the lights from the marina it was too dark to make out anything. She hated this feeling. She quickly went back to her houseboat. She noticed the lights were off and the music was no longer playing at the yacht. Once inside of her houseboat she turned on the air conditioner just enough so she was able to sleep; she turned off the light to the lounge. She: stepped back to her cabin, unzipped the duffel bag, she took out the dirty clothes, she untied the plastic bags, she set all the dark clothes into the washer, the rest of the clothes she placed into the hamper, she put away all the items she stored in the ditty bag, she put away her make up kit, folded up the duffel bag, and properly placed it in her closet. When she was done she opened her linen closet and grabbed a wash cloth and a towel. She stepped into the head and took what she termed a short refreshing shower; it was not a full shower but was long enough to feel clean.

The shower felt wonderful.

She stepped out of the head with a shower towel tightly tied around her body and was carrying the cloths she wore when she entered the head. She placed these dirty clothes into the hamper. With the towel tightly wrapped around her body she stepped into her galley, opened the refrigerator, and finished a previously opened bottle of water. She closed the refrigerator and tossed the plastic bottle into her recycling bin. She: turned off the galley light, stepped into her cabin, when she knew all the blinds were shut she dropped her towel, climbed into bed, and reached up and turned off the light.

In the dark she went over every thing she needed to accomplish so the scuba charter was successful. She considered everything she would need to accomplish after the scuba charter. After the scuba charter she would prepare for the early Monday morning charter.

This early Monday charter was with: a Grandfather, a Son, and a grandson. This grandfather was a regular at the VFW. The Grandfather who was a friend of Megan's Daddy scheduled the charter to cheer up his Son and his Grandson. The son's wife of fifteen years passed away a few months earlier and the father was doing his best to raise the nine year old boy. It was the grandsons birthday and the grandfather wanted to make sure the boy had a great day. She was determined to find a place where the boy would catch as many fish as possible, she reasoned the size was not as a big deal; but the boy repeatedly catching fish would be. She was so determined to accomplish this she only scheduled this charter. If it took all day then so be it; while only charging for a four hour tour.

Her thoughts moved away from work.

She reviewed the last two days of her life. It was a roller coaster ride of: emotions, activity, exploration, realization, confusion, conflicts, and pleasure. She felt she changed as a person. She felt something inside of her was opened, a secret place she never tapped into before, she hoped tapping into this place was positive. She felt if she was reckless with these feelings they could easily turn negative. She liked looked at nude man, but she regretted where and how she discovered this fact. She believed if she looked at photographs of nude men this would have a negative impact on her. She was thankful she experienced her first orgasm. She was unsure if she should recreate what caused her orgasm. She felt if she did recreate this feeling she needed to be responsible. She was thankful she never masturbated on the drive home; she would have felt terribly guilty. She was concerned on why she received sexual feelings just by wearing clothes. She admitted to herself she had experienced this her whole life, but after her orgasm these feelings were far more obvious. She felt she was weird and was certain she was the only woman who became aroused this way.

The most rewarding part of the weekend was how Krissy had changed. The worst part of the weekend was dealing with Breanne. Megan hoped Breanne would get the help she needed. If not, Megan hoped this would be the last time she ever dealt with her. She wished people could have fun without drinking or going into an underground strip club. Seeing all of her other friends was a joy.

She again regretted stepping into the underground male strip club.

In the dark and quietness of the night she wondered what it would be like to marry a fireman. She imagined him coming home wearing his gear, he would be strong, athletic, filled with muscles, and could protect her. She felt guilty for imagining this fireman entering her room and seducing her. She thought about a dream she had; she was wearing a skimpy outfit in a store and a group of men were attracted to her.

She felt guilty for these thoughts and wondered if she was normal.

She was in the dark and she was alone.

Her heart pounded.

She was alone.

She was very intrigued by her earlier idea. She looked at the time and knew she needed to get up early and be alert for the scuba charter. After the scuba charter she would attend a late Sunday church service, after the service, it was likely she would enjoy fellowship with some of her friends. She decided she would wait until Tuesday to try out her idea. She was unsure if she could or if she should give herself an orgasm on her own.

Her dimples flashed.

She purposely turned her thoughts to her houseplants. She imagined what her hanging plants would look like when they blossomed. She started to consider what plants she would again set outside. The list of plants faded into her subconscious as she fell asleep.

End of Part Five of Five

September 23, Pandora's Box Shattered

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