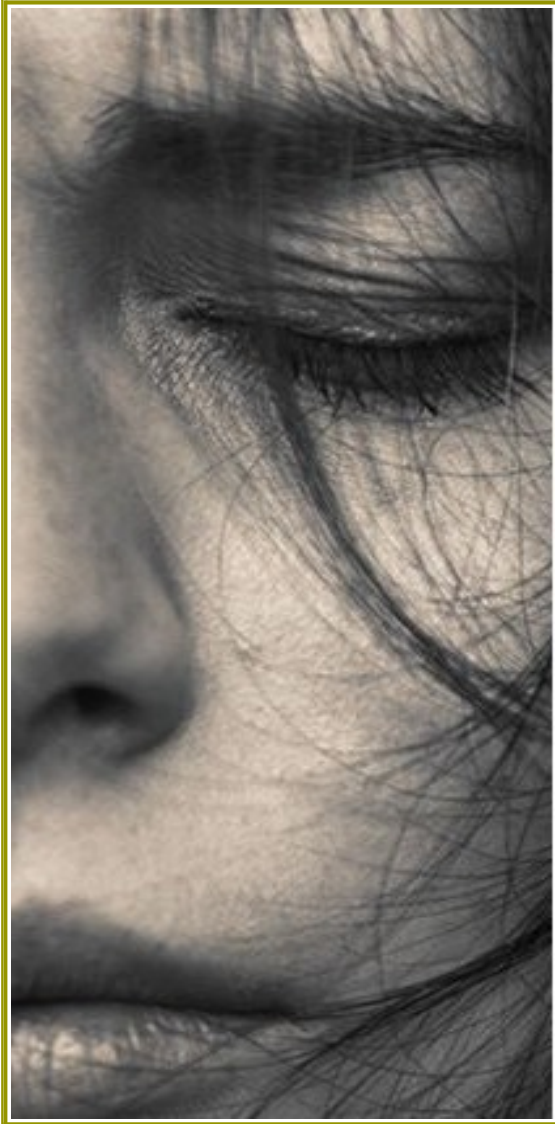


Ashleigh & Megan
Book I: Friendship



Wednesday, April 25
Can't Wait
Any Longer

Day 15 of Book I
(Thirteen Days since Megan and Christopher went
Bowling)

Part Three of Six

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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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April 25 Can't Wait Any Longer Day 15 of Book I

(Thirteen Days since Megan and Christopher went Bowling)

Julie opened her locker. Her impulse was: to shove everything from her locker into her backpack, leave the building, clear out all of her bank accounts, and move to the Caribbean. What kept her from doing so was: her Mother, her family, her true friends, walking Nikita, and her love of playing sports. The toughest part of her day was talking to her softball teammates. She appreciated their encouragement but felt unworthy to receive it.

She: slipped her backpack off her shoulder, set it in on the edge of her locker, removed a book from her locker, placed this book into her backpack, became frustrated when she dropped the next book; she was thankful it dropped back into the locker. She absolutely hated feeling uncoordinated. She hated the feeling her body was fighting against her.

She crunched her teeth together when her bra slipped out of place. She shifted her body so others were unable to see what she was doing and angrily yanked her bra into place.

She survived her first class by reading and highlighting the *Wall Street Journal*. She was frustrated the paper never mentioned *Renewed Mastery* purchasing another company. Once she had access to the internet she would research the company *Criti-Medical*. In her second class she turned in an assignment; an assignment she finished three months prior. While in class she wrote a detailed business plan on how to handle her business affairs. She then read a computer magazine. She purchased this magazine for two articles. One was about web design and the other was about a simulator that helped teach people how to drive. She wondered if her laptop could handle this program. She would ask Burt and Bradley if this was possible.

If the next class was just as boring as the last two she planned on getting a hall pass and getting herself off. This would relieve the stress and boredom she was feeling. She was

debating if she do so in the girls bathroom or behind a set of isolated stairs in the corner of the school. A near by wall made it impossible to look behind these stairs unless you were purposefully going behind them. Based upon how dusty it was behind these stairs this rarely happened.

While closing her backpack she heard pig noises and kids laughing.

She stood back and spotted a dejected looking Brenda being picked on. Julie wondered why none of Brenda's friends were with her. It was Monique's idea to have a friend of Brenda's always around her. Brenda was just trying to get out of the hallway. Following her was: Pamela, Kendall, Tiffany, and Marissa; the girl Julie twisted into a pretzel.

With Julie believing in living a healthy lifestyle she was concerned for Brenda; there were long term consequences for how large Brenda was. Julie believed the teasing she endured only increased her unhealthy habits. Julie believed there were other overweight people in school who were far more deserving of the teasing (Julie disapproved of anyone being teased). Julie never understood why Brenda was singled out. Julie believed if she lost up to a hundred pounds: she would be an attractive curvy woman, she would avoid health issues, guys would be attracted to her, her self confidence would improve, and she could even be a curvy model.

She believed this because of Brenda's long oblong shaped face, her long beautiful blond hair, her soft brown eyes, her long nose that came to a small button, and her classic Hollywood shaped lips. She had large breasts, and large hips; because she was overweight both her legs and hips were larger than what they should have been. If she would loose weight her breasts would have been perfect for her frame. Her bone structure would never allow her to be thin. She was wearing a very nice embroidered denim dress, sea turtle earrings, had a sea turtle pin attached to the top of her dress, she was carrying a matching purse with sea turtle embroidery on it, and she was wearing new shoes. She always wore the right amount of makeup and often times wore very feminine looking hats.

Julie focused as she swung her backpack over her shoulder and shut her locker door. Julie's impulse was to flip Pamela onto the hallway floor.

Pamela was five nine, had very dark hair, green eyes, a long nose, high forehead, blended cheeks, luscious lips, and thick eye brows. Julie disliked how she strutted when she walked: her hips swiveled, she made her long legs appear longer than they were, and somehow made her average sized butt look noticeable. What helped Pamela show off her backside was her khaki colored cargo mini skirt. What pushed up her small boobs was a red cut off the shoulder scallop top with lace.

All of the girls in the Snob Club, besides Amanda, dressed in a way announcing to the world they were willing to have sex. This annoyed Julie because they were the ones who started the rumors she was a slut. These girls had sex with multiple guys and would have sex with girls just to appear more popular with the guys; she had video to prove it.

It was her friend Jennie gave her the nickname Fingerpainter. She felt the best way to combat the teasing was just to acknowledge she enjoyed masturbating. An example was the previous week Zoe proclaimed Julie was a chronic masturbator. The reason Julie never became angry at Zoe was she said it a matter of fact way; her tone was a combination of everyone does it and one of indifference. Julie surprised all the girls at Hannah's house by stated, "I guess I am." This opened up a very positive conversation about masturbation and sex. There was a lot of blushing and giggling but it was sincere and without malice. Hannah

and Monique suggested in a very caring way Julie should never get off at school. Julie made it through two days without doing it in school.

Julie was surprised when Brenda stopped and turned around and commanded, "Stop it."

The girls laughed at her.

Pamela, who was the leader of the Snob Club, stated, "Who and what herd?"

Marissa added, "Or piglets."

The girls laughed.

Julie stepped beside Brenda, "I'll help."

Brenda was unsure of this. The last couple months Hannah and Zoe were trying to convince her Julie changed. Brenda was aware Julie was spending time with her group of friends. Julie made a point to ask Brenda over to her house twice. Because Julie had once belonged to the Snob Club, and there were kids outside of this group who teased her; Brenda was reluctant to give Julie a chance.

Pamela in her snarky tone stated, "Look it's traitor."

Julie was blunt, "Y'all ain't real friends."

They all glared at Julie.

Tiffany answered, "I made the mistake of feeling Y'all were my friend."

Kendall added, "Y'all are just a kill joy."

Julie answered, "If Y'all weren't so childish I would still be hanging out with Y'all."

Pamela gave a face, "If Y'all were smart you'd hang out with us anyway."

Julie stepped up to Pamela, "Brenda is a much better friend than any of Y'all are."

Brenda stood there shocked.

The kids in the hallway started to pay attention.

Pamela sneered, "Y'all should know who Y'all are talking too."

"Spoiled brats."

This caught everyone's attention.

Kendall sneered, "We ain't the whore of the school."

Julie turned toward her, "I'm a virgin."

Marissa snarled, "U's expect us to believe that?"

Julie glared and answered, "Yes."

With a snarky tone Pamela answered, "This comes from the girl who can't make it through the day without rubbing herself off."

Brenda wanted to say a list of things but was afraid too. Her accomplishment was just standing there.

Julie answered, "It ain't like Y'all don't touch yourselves."

Kendall replied with a face, "We don't have to because guys want to be with us."

Tiffany added, "Every guy wants to be with us."

Julie answered, "So what?"

Pamela replied, "For being so smart Y'all are really dumb."

Julie tried, "None of this matters."

Kendall made a face, "Miss Kill Joy is about to lecture us again."

Julie looked over at Brenda and in a stern but caring voice suggested, "Go to your class."

Brenda nodded, gripped her bag, and headed down the hallway. Zoe happened to be walking on the other end of the hallway. She eagerly waved Brenda over to her and escorted her to class.

Pamela was about to chase after her.

Julie stepped in front, "Were are Y'all going?"

"Step out of my way."

Julie glared at her, "No I ain't."

A teacher stepped up them, "Y'all get to class."

Pamela's behavior immediately changed, "We're having a friendly chat. We'll be getting a move on. We wouldn't want our grades to suffer."

Julie and the teacher watched them turn and go the other direction.

Both the teacher and Julie rolled their eyes.

The teacher asked, "Y'all all right?"

Julie answered, "Yes Ma'am."

"Get a move on."

Julie obeyed and went to class.

Walking to class she thought about all the reasons why she hated school. She then reminded herself why she should finish. Without sports, her Mom, and walking Nikita she would have dropped out, taken her GED, and applied for college.

When the hallway was just about empty she yanked on her bra; she hoped it would stay. She stepped into class just as the bell rang. Currently; the two most annoying things in her life were her growing breasts and school.

Brittany was proof reading an email Ashleigh wanted double checked. This was an easy task after changing all of the three ringed binders for the meeting with *Criti-Medical*. Brittany was instrumental in getting the printing department the updated copies, she helped the printing department print these copies, and helped them get the copies into the conference room.

Brittany was five foot five. Her naturally straight long brunette hair was pinned up; she put the ends of her hair into a wave. She had light green eyes, a rectangular shaped face, her forehead had a heart shaped peak, she had a square chin, medium sized boobs, and a nice padded rear end. She had a wide appealing smile. Her upper lip was skinny but a very puffy lower lip. She wore very light makeup. She was currently wearing a dark purple drapeneck dress with rose and purple flower print: it ended below her knees. She felt it covered her rear end and was professional for working in an office. She was wearing a simple cross necklace, a couple bracelets, dangling purple earrings, and matching purple heeled sandals.

She spotted Mr. Bob open the main glass door and step into their office area.

He approached her desk, "Brittany."

"Yes Sir."

"I want you to attend the meeting we're having with Criti-Medical."

She was surprised at this.

"Sir I ain't dressed for a business meeting."

Bob smiled, "Your constantly one of the most professionally dressed women in this company."

This meant a great deal to her. She shopped at: thrift stores, department stores, and clearance racks. Many of the ladies associated with the executive offices were shopping at higher end department stores. She was paid well but she was trying to save up money for a house or condo and felt it would be irresponsible to spend a lot of money on clothes.

Ashleigh, who was sitting at her desk, was paying attention to their conversation without making it obvious.

"Thank-you sir."

"I'd like you to write down everything you feel."

She gave him a look, "What are Y'all meaning?"

"Just what I said. I want you to write down everything you feel."

"Is this a business meeting?"

He smiled, "Yes it is."

She made a face, "Are Y'all wanting me to write down what people are saying?"

"If that is what you want."

She gave him a face.

Bob tried clarifying, "I don't care what you write. Just write down everything you feel is important."

Ashleigh turned and said, "So. If you don't like the CEO write it down. If you like or don't like how we're doing something write it down."

Bob added, "I don't want any ass kissing."

Brittany made a face, "Sir. Why do Y'all swear?"

He pushed up his glasses, "Ass isn't a swear."

Ashleigh rolled here eyes.

"My Momma declares it is."

"God used it in the Bible."

Brittany glared at him, "I don't believe Y'all are using the word in the same context."

He smiled.

Ashleigh liked the fact Brittany could stand up for herself and was willing to challenge her Brother.

Very serious he spoke, "I want you to watch everything and write down everything you feel."

"Yes sir."

Ashleigh added, "Don't edit it."

Brittany was surprised at this.

Bob pushed up his glasses and said, "Thank-you for the reminder."

Ashleigh facing her computer answered, "No problem."

Bob pushed up his glasses.

"I want two versions. One in your handwriting. I want this version to be handed to me right after the meeting. Then I want a typed version where you've had time to think about the meeting."

"Yes sir."

"Any questions?"

"Anything?"

"It doesn't even have to be business related. Whatever you feel is important write it down."

Her eyes focused. She spotted the famous Floridian lawyer Mr. Shelby being escorted by Haley. Haley opened the glass door for: Mr. Shelby, a female attorney, and three associates. Mr. Bob and Mr. Shelby smiled at one another.

Brittany concluded they were friends for a long time when they smiled at one another.

In his Floridian accent Mr. Shelby asked, "How's my Yankee friend?"

Bob answered, "How's my southern aristocrat lawyer?"

Everyone was shocked when the two of them laughed.

Bob motioned, "Come into my office. Ashleigh; I'd appreciate you stepping in as well."

Ashleigh stood up, adjusted her outfit, took a mirror out of her desk drawer, inspected her face, turned, and asked Brittany, "Do I look alright?"

"Yes Ma'am."

Ashleigh: placed her mirror into her desk, shut the drawer, grabbed a legal pad of yellow lined paper from off her desk, grabbed a pen from a pen holder an employee made her, and stepped into the office. The noise from this office flooded the room when she opened it and it was cut off when Ashleigh shut the door.

Brittany focused on the Email made one change and sent it back to Ashleigh.

A few minutes later an associate stepped out of the office and politely shut the door. Brittany concluded the meeting had turned serious with how quiet it was in the office.

This assistant stepped over to Brittany's desk and asked in a professional manner, "Are Y'all Brittany Harris."

She answered in her strong Georgia accent, "It was my married name. Around these parts I go by Morris."

"Yes Ma'am."

He said serious, "I'm presenting you on behalf of your lawyer Mr. Flint a draft of Y'all divorce papers. He'd like Y'all to review it and sign it."

Brittany in shock asked, "What am I all signing?"

"It's a draft of Y'all divorce papers. And there is paperwork to process Y'all name change once the divorce is final."

Brittany looked at him, "Mr. Flint works for Mr. Shelby?"

"Yes Ma'am."

In a worried tone, "But I've only paid twenty-five dollars for a phone call?"

"I ain't in the liberty of telling Y'all how the rest of the bill has been paid for. I'd say Y'all have good friends."

She suppressed her tears.

The assistant continued, "I'm to remind Y'all about your scheduled visit with Mr. Flint next week."

"I ain't forgotten."

"Good."

"If Y'all have any questions call Mr. Fling."

"Yes sir."

"Y'all have any questions for me at this time?"

"No sir."

He had her sign a paper saying she accepted the paperwork.

He gave her a copy and took the signed sheet back into Bob's office. Once the assistant stepped into Bob's office Brittany: stood up, as a southern lady made her way into the

woman's restroom, she cried, she prayed, and before a woman would step into the restroom she took over her emotions. As a lady she: washed her face, reapplied the small amount of makeup she wore, made herself look lady like, went back to her desk, took a few seconds to mentally prepared herself for the meeting, grabbed everything she believed she needed, and headed to the Orange Conference Room.

She liked how all of the conference rooms were named by color. Mr. Bob felt differently and was having a company wide conference room naming contest. Brittany had made up three different lists, she would have to decide which one she would submit by Friday. Ashleigh and Haley would select the five best submissions. Then there would be a vote on which of these five would win; in case of a tie Mr. Bob selected the winner. Brittany believed Ashleigh and Haley would have an influence on which one Mr. Bob selected; even if both Ashleigh and Haley believed they had very little influence.

When she reached the Orange Conference room she: took a long deep breath, calmed her nerves, focused on the task at hand, said a silent prayer, and stepped inside.

Ashleigh was sitting to the right of Bob. Bob was sitting at the head of the table; he had the table all to himself. There were fourteen other tables put together in a tight rectangle; they were back to back and lined evenly with the head table. The outlets on top of these tables were plugged into floor outlets underneath the tables. These brand new tables were set up in the middle of a long rectangular shaped conference room.

These were brand new tables. These were very similar to a dozen tables Renewed Mastery received from the closed New Jersey office. Haley and Ashleigh convinced Bob to order brand new versions of these tables for other meeting rooms. They ordered maintenance to fix the old tables and place them in the back corner of the conference room nicknamed the classroom. There were three differences between these old tables and new tables. The cosmetic difference was the plugs around the two outlets on top of the older tables were square where as the new tables were oval. More important to Renewed Mastery employees, the newer tables were easier to take down, roll, and were a higher quality.

Behind Ashleigh, were a row of windows; if the blinds were opened a person would have viewed the parking lot. In the front of the room (left of Ashleigh) attached to the wall and near the door was a land line business phone. Left of this phone mounted on the wall was the largest flat screen TV currently made; anyone who was into sports wanted this TV and the mount. Directly under the TV on a shelf (the shelf was attached to the mount) there was a DVD player and a plug in station; the cords of this station were neatly placed next to the station. Below this TV, was a long cabinet, on top of this cabinet was a satellite box and camera, the cords were neatly taped against the wall, and were connected to the TV. Inside of this cabinet were all the supplies to keep the meeting running and everything needed to keep the electronics working. In the corner just passed the cabinet was an easel, a wooden podium, a mike stand, and a mike attached to the stand (they could easily be moved).

Hanging on the inside wall just passed the door was a very large dry eraser board with markers, an eraser, and cleaner on the shelf of this board. Above this board was a hand made battery operated wooden clock with roman numerals (a clock *Renewed Mastery* sold). Passed the eraser board was a three sectional painting of an ocean beech. Along the other short wall in the corner was a kitchen sized refrigerator filled with water. Right of it was a table with:

pastries, snacks, fresh coffee in tall coffee pots, a variety of creamers, napkins, small plates, and two small refrigerators. These were filled with: soft drinks, orange juice, yogurt, and other refrigerated snacks.

In front of Ashleigh was: a sign with her name on it, a bottled water, a couple pens, a yellow legal pad of paper, a stack of posted notes, and her laptop was plugged into one of the outlets attached to the table. Sitting to the right of Ashleigh was: their lawyer Mr. Shelby, a lawyer from his office named Ms. Fox, their assistants, Alex from research, a person from accounting, Alex their top engineer, an assistant to Alex, Jimmy who was the vice president of production, Dave the warehouse manager, the HR Manager Gracie, two production people Bob admired, a woman who was a lead in the painting department, the customer service manager, and Brittany. On the opposite side representing *Criti-Medical* were: the owner, his personal lawyer, the CEO, his personal lawyer, two Vice Presidents, the President of Sales, the three board members, and their lawyers.

In front of every person were two three ringed binders and a sign with a person's name on it. Haley and Brittany put together these three ringed binders during Ashleigh's vacation. Ashleigh made changes after arriving this morning. Ashleigh and Bob felt Brittany and the printing department did an excellent job of having the changes made and into the three ringed binders before the meeting started. Neither Ashleigh nor Bob liked to work this way; they both believed in preparation and planning. Ashleigh was planning on personally thanking everyone involved and handing out gift cards to a popular regional grocery store. The only reason this was last minute was because of Ashleigh being on vacation.

Currently there was a lot of small talk. Many on both sides wondered why Mr. Bob invited so many employees from *Renewed Mastery*.

Ashleigh glanced over and spotted Brittany writing something down.

Brittany was unsure of what she was doing. She started by writing down quick notes about the people sitting at the table. She was still struggling to understand all the different accents represented in this room. Because of working with Haley, Bob, and Ashleigh she was starting to understand the Wisconsin accent. She found the strong New Jersey accent both interesting and sometimes difficult. What was fascinating to her was how Gracie's Minnesota accent was different from the Southeastern Wisconsin accent. The worst thing about any Midwestern person was how fast they talked. She agreed with many of her southern colleagues who found the way Wisconsin people pronounced their T's and C's were funny. What was difficult about Gracie was her D's and her verbal cadence.

Brittany became focused on the owner of *Criti-Medical* and the board members; the name on the sign in front of the owner read, "Mr. Clark." After listening to him for only a few minutes she wrote, "*He's upset about something. Someone has been pissing down his leg.*" She went on to write, "*I believe the board members have knots in their knickers.*"

She was about to cross off these statement because they were far from professional. She glanced over at Ashleigh, who was jotting down her own notes. She glanced over at Mr. Bob and he reassured her by a quick approving nod. She acted as if she never spotting this. She decided she would continue to write freely but would make the printed copy more professional.

Ashleigh wrote about the owner and the board members as well, *"He's trying to hide the fact he's upset. It's obvious he was surprised by the information we've been sending him and what Bob's been telling him. The board members are just as pissed off as the owner is."*

Mr. Shelby found Ashleigh's note taking fascinating. Based upon what she was writing he believed she was as smart as a whip with a ton of street smarts. If she was a private detective or wanted to be a lawyer he would have hired her.

Ashleigh was about to show Bob a few of her notes but Bob shook his head. Ashleigh nodded her head.

Brittany made a quick note, *"I believe Ms. Fox is a tough gal. I'd bet my bottom dollar Ms. Fox and Mr. Shelby are related."*

Two thoughts she kept to herself. The first, being impressed there were normal folks sitting on their side of the table. The second, like many of the people attending the meeting, she wondered why Mr. Bob would invite herself and these folks to this meeting.

Bob glanced at the clock on the wall.

He announced, "Lets get started."

The CEO, Mr. Mike McBumble of *Criti-Medical* questioned within a statement, "I was under the impression this was a closed meeting."

Everyone knew exactly what he implied.

Ashleigh smiled when Bob sarcastically asked, "Oh, What do you mean?"

His lawyer spoke, "With the sensitive nature of a company seeking equity I'd assume only those involved in financing would be involved."

Bob answered, "I invited these people into this meeting because they will be impacted by this merger. More important. I'll find their input advantages later in this process. I want them to be on the ground floor of this decision."

Ashleigh caught Brittany's look, Ashleigh winked, then became serious.

Immediately; Mr. Mike McBumble the CEO, stated, "Merger? I was under the pretense this was about equity?"

Brittany and Ashleigh in their notes wondered if this guy: ever exercised, mentioned how they felt he had a giant ego, and believed he liked his ass kissed; they mentioned this because they knew Mr. Bob disliked ass kissing.

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The CEO pointed, "You lied to us."

This irritated Ashleigh a great deal.

Bob looked at him and answered, "I never lied to Mr. Clark. I barely discussed anything with you. You had one conversation with me. A conversation that aroused my suspicions."

One of the two Vice Presidents spoke up, "I was led to believe you were just investing in our company and would allow us to run the company."

Brittany was quickly writing down on how upset the board members were anytime Mr. McBumble or his staff said anything.

Ashleigh was one hundred percent shocked anyone would believe this nonsense.

Bob calmly answered, "I never agreed to anything. The only thing I promised was to look into your affairs."

Mr. Mike McBumble advanced his assumption, "I told you I was looking for investors."

Bob pushed up his glasses and leaned on the table, "I never discussed with you what I was intending. Let's not forget Mr. Clark approached me about the affairs of the company. He asked for my input. In the one conversation we engaged in you kept mentioning financing. You were all about making *Criti-Medical* bigger and better. You were all about increasing sales. This is when I made the assessment you lost focus of the original intent of *Criti-Medical*."

Mr. Mike McBumble stated, "Why would an increase in sales cause there to be a lack of focus? Isn't that the goal?"

Ashleigh was looking forward to her brother's answer; along with everyone on her side of the table.

Bob pushed up his glasses and put his arms on the table.

"At one time the name *Criti-Medical* was about innovation and had a great reputation. It was once thought of as a good small company in Wisconsin. When Mr. Clark asked me to look into the affairs of *Criti-Medical* I was honestly upset he believed there were problems."

McBumble asked, "What problems? The company just needs investors."

Bob took a breath and added, "During our one conversation I told you I'm not a person who invests in companies. I'm a person who wants to make anything I acquire better. In one way I'm considered to be old fashioned. I believe in the long hall. I want to remind you none of the companies I own are publicly traded. In our one conversation I told you this. I told you I was never going to just be an investor. So now you're implying I'm the one lying when I never once promised to be an investor. It's obvious your upset because we're all here discussing a merger."

With a sneer Mr. McBumble stated, "I didn't approach you until my dear old Uncle did."

Bob simply answered, "I want to remind you. It'd be impossible for any of this to be happening without permission from Mr. Clark and the board."

Mike McBumble looked over at his Uncle and glanced down the table. The board members and their lawyers were glaring at him.

He stated, "Why you sell it to him?"

Bob pushed up his glasses and answered, "*Criti-Medical* has made an excellent product but the company has been miss manged since Mr. Clark has stepped down from being the CEO. I believe *Renewed Mastery* is capable of turning *Criti-Medical* around. This is why I invited the employees I did invite to this meeting. This acquisition will affect everyone on this staff."

He looked down the table at his employees, "This is why I'm wanting you to suffer through this get together."

They all snickered. Brittany looked over at Ashleigh. Ashleigh, even though she hated the idea of Bob buying this company, she was proud of her brother. She winked at Brittany. They smiled at one another.

An annoyed Mr. Mike McBumble stood up and pounded his finger on the table and proclaimed, "I've been a highly successful CEO."

Bob answered with a matter of fact tone "Successful is hardly the term I'd use."

Everyone glared at Bob's bluntness.

McBumble responded, "Since I've been the CEO. I've increased our profits, increased sales, and expanded our name. I'm making this company bigger and bolder. Our name is widely known in the industry. This..."

Bob

interrupted, "If profits were the only standard maybe someone could make this illogical claim the company has been highly successful. But if an investor or a person involved is to believe highly successful means being the best and being the top. Then any logical person would have to disagree with your assessment. My team believes you've over extended the company, made promises you can't keep, and never improving your product. While managing to treat employees poorly. Your biggest mistake was going public."

Mr. Mike McBumble stated, "Going public has improved this company. It's the reason the company has made profits and is now a winning company."

Bob answered, "If you believe second place and lying to yourself is winning."

Mr. Mike McBumble stated, "We work diligently and have a great reputation."

Bob answered bluntly, "*Criti-Medical* was known to have a reliable product. It was great for someone who owned a dentist office or a private office. Four years ago it was the top in tech for the price point. It's fallen behind while you ignore the advancements in medical devices. In a year your product will be the model T of medical devices. Your investors were willing to sell to me because of this fear."

Mr. Mike McBumble glared at the board members.

One of their lawyers stated, "We agree."

McBumble's lawyer pulled at his suit.

He sat down but stated, "You should all be happy with the increased sales."

Bob answered, "Instead of focusing on new sales and increasing the brand you should have focused on the lawsuits you've created."

Mr. Mike McBumble glared at Bob.

Bob answered the glare, "The lawsuits based upon the promises never delivered upon. And how about the discrepancies in what month product is actually being shipped. Instead of fixing your production problems you are focused on reaching a number to please your investors."

Silence.

Bob pushed up his glasses.

He continued, "The board, Mr. Clark, and I will admit at one time *Criti-Medical* was the top earner in the market you were in. The lack of innovation and the way you've treated past employees have just about ruined the company. If it wasn't for how good you made the product. You'd have gone bankrupt years ago."

Mr. Mike McBumble stated, "We treat our employees great."

Mr. Clark stated with a sneer, "That's not what I've heard."

One of the Vice Presidents sneered, "Who said we're treating employees subpar?"

Ms. Fox answered, "One of your top engineers."

Mr. Mike McBumble answered, "If you're referring to Phoenix Speerman. He was always a difficult employee. Not only was he a difficult employee he betrayed our company."

Ms. Fox stated, "An ex-employee who is now the star witness in all of your lawsuits."

Mr. Mike McBumble became defensive, "He's just bitter because we wouldn't take his suggestions. He declared in a publication. While he was still working for us. Our product was outdated. He claimed I was an inept CEO and was short sided. I'd say. If you look at profits and the increase of sales I'm a highly successful CEO."

He turned to the board, "I've been an great benefit to all of you."

He again stood up, buttoned his suit coat, "We don't make the most expensive product. But it's tried and true. You won't find a better product at our price point. I plead with. Don't sell to this guy. We all know his reputation in the state of Wisconsin. At the very least don't sell to him."

Again Mr. Mike McBumble's lawyer yanked on his suit.

He again sat down.

Brittany wrote at this moment, "*He's proud of himself? He's as useful as a screen door on a submarine.*"

Bob looked down the table, "Alex. What's your research showed?"

Alex looked over toward Ashleigh and asked, "Is the research I gave you in one of these binders?"

Ashleigh being five foot one had to stand up and hold the binder up, "Open the three ringed binder to the section labeled *Research*."

She stated, "The section Mr. Alex is referring to is on page fifteen, titled *Outdated*."

Many of the people sitting at the table opened to this section.

Mr. Mike McBumble asked, "Who's this guy?"

Bob defended his friend and employee, "He started working with me before I started *Renewed Mastery*. He is the manager of all our labs. He's a great engineer. He's honest. I have full trust in whatever he says. Plus. More important to this conversation. Because I bought everyone of your products. Alex and my staff are familiar with *Criti-Medical* products."

The CEO moaned.

The board members, their lawyers, Mr. Clark, and his lawyer looked at him.

Bob looked over at Alex, "If you could briefly answer this question. What has your research showed?"

Alex nodded his head in appreciation.

Bob did in return.

Everyone sitting on the *Renewed Mastery* side of the table were encouraged.

Alex answered very seriously, "It's my conclusion the only reason any of the *Criti-Medical* products are being sold is because of it's past reputation and the price. I'd give it a year and all of their products will be outdated."

Ms. Fox asked, in her southern aristocratic voice, "Sir. Why have you drawn this conclusion? I might add. A conclusion our team agrees with."

"I'm basing it on the newest tech being developed. At one time their medical devices were top of the line. With the advances in wireless technically *Criti-Medical* will in a short time be a dinosaur. In my opinion. The company has been so focused on increasing sales and relied on their past successes they're about to be obsolete. If *Criti-Medical* wants to advance they have to address many issues. A very serious issue. One that has started within the last four months but is a result of the companies push out more product is a handful of wrongful death lawsuits. A bigger problem is their cost cutting move to cut back on customer service and training staff."

Brittany and Ashleigh noted in their notes Mr. Clark's hurt look.

A Vice President protested, "Our product is of a high standard. Our products have been around since eighty-three. We have a reputation of being safe."

Mr. Mike McBumble mentioned, "Our company can't be held liable for how customers have mishandled our product."

Mr. Shelby in his southern aristocratic, voice answered, "Based upon recent claims I would no longer proclaim those type of statements."

The CEO, his lawyer, and a couple board members all glanced at one another.

Brittany wrote down a simple statement, "*They're acting like snakes when someone lifts up a rock*"

An associate of Ms. Fox took out of his suitcase a stack of stapled papers.

Ms. Fox spoke in an aristocratic southern bell voice, "My associate is handing over a list of law suites filled against your company in the last five years. Ninety percent are related to breach of contract. As Mr. Alex has pointed out. In the last four months there have been a handful of wrongful death lawsuits. I have personally suggested to my client to forgo the purchase of your company."

A Vice President busted out in anger, "With the way the world is today who isn't getting sued? What medical device company doesn't have a lawsuit from time to time?"

Mr. Clark without looking at the list asked his Nephew, "You told me this was taken care off? You said it was a small hiccup."

His lawyer tapped him.

Mr. Clark reluctantly restrained himself.

Bob answered, "Maybe the hiccup is having your Nephew as the CEO."

Mike McBumble snapped, "Your sister is a Vice President."

Bob stood up and spoke with his hands, "My Sister is competent. I'm able to trust my sister. Unlike a certain person who is trying to sell the company."

The CEO shot up from his chair and pointed, "That's a lie!"

Mr. Clark stood up and blurted out, "Is it?"

Mr. Clark's lawyer gently put a hand on him. The lawyer turned toward the nephew, "It's come to our attention you've been reaching out to a variety of investors and other medical device companies. We believe based upon the research given to us. The reason you've been pushing sales is to have someone buy the company and then sell it off. From what I've learned you want a large percentage of the sale."

The Nephew lied, "I'd never sell off the company. I've just been looking for investors."

The lawyer for the owner was about to speak.

Mr. Shelby asked in his southern accent, "Sir May I question Mr. Mike McBumble?"

The lawyer for the owner waved his arm, "Be my guest."

Mr. Shelby stood up, adjusted his vest, and asked, "Mr. Mike McBumble is it true you are part owner of *Tower Medical Supplies*?"

He immediately sat down and turned to his lawyer.

His lawyer in a serious tone answered, "He doesn't have to answer the question."

Mr. Shelby turned toward Ms. Fox, "You may present your evidence."

Ms. Fox: turned toward her associate.

He pulled out a stack of folders. Enough for Mr. Clark, the board members, and all the lawyers to receive two.

She took one and personally sent it across the table, "Listed in this folder is the affidavit proving Mr. Mike McBumble is a founding member of *Tower Medical Supplies*. As well as a the proof he's invested in three other companies all selling parts to *Criti-Medical*."

Mr. Mike McBumble said, "I don't see what the harm is."

Bob interrupted, "Dave."

Everyone besides Mr. Shelby and Ashleigh were surprised Bob would be called upon Dave.

Mr. Shelby sat down.

Ashleigh observed: Ms Fox lean over and whisper to Mr. Shelby, Mr. Shelby smiled and winked. Ms. Fox gave a facial expression and turned toward Dave.

Brittany was so into what was happening she forgot about taking notes.

Dave answered, "Yes Sir."

Bob stated, "Dave is a trusted employee. He was recently promoted to Head of Logistics and Warehousing. This position oversees all logistics and warehousing of the whole company not just in this location."

Dave answered, "Thank-you sir."

Bob asked him a simple question, "Would you find it acceptable if our inventory was off by three million dollars?"

A hush fell over the meeting room.

Dave looked at Bob and answered, "No sir. Y'all know I wouldn't allow it."

Bob pushed up his glasses.

He said, "You are a man of integrity."

"Yes Mr. Bob."

He sat down. Other employees smiled or nodded at him. He humbly accepted their complements.

Ashleigh wished this would stop Bob from acquiring the company.

The owner glared at Bob.

Ms. Fox added, "Mr. Clark. Without a physical inventory we've estimated your company is missing over two to three million dollars in inventory. There is the possibility this amount is greater."

Mr. Clark was clearly angry. He was unable to keep in his emotion, "I invented these products to save lives. I never would have believed you were a thief."

The nephew became angry, "You lack vision."

The owner answered, "But stealing and making a bad product is better?"

The Nephew, Mr. Mike McBumble pointed and stood up, "You never seemed to mind as long as we were making profits every month."

"That's wrong. If I only cared about profits I would have never asked Mr. Waller to look into the affairs of my company."

Mr. Clark held in tears.

He said simply, "I trusted you."

Mr. Mike McBumble pointed, "I'd have made you millions of dollars. Instead you went to Him. I never wanted you to involve him. You go behind my back..."

The Uncle was furious, "Don't you finish the sentence."

Bob asked Mr. Bumble, "Why are you so against Mr. Clark from approaching me?"

Mr. McBumble's lawyer grabbed Mr. Mike McBumble by the suit coat and pulled him down.

This is when Bob and Mr. Clark sat down.

Bob pushed up his glasses turned toward Mr. Clark, "May I suggest firing your nephew?"

Mr. Clark answered, "I believe that was the agreement."

Mr. Mike McBumble asked, "What agreement?"

Bob answered, "Two things I can't stand is incompetence and dishonesty. Before I purchase any company I like to conduct extensive research. Your Uncle approached me knowing my research is stellar. I had no interest in owning the company but I strongly believe *Renewed Mastery* and the people sitting on my side of the table can fix a once great small manufacturer. As a favor to your Uncle he wants me our companies to merge. With *Renewed Mastery* taking over all operations of *Criti-Medical*. I have three conditions. One you will be fired, the other is your Uncle will fully retire, and the board will be disbanded. As I have already discussed with Mr. Clark and all of the board members they will be compensated well. Once all the paperwork is signed *Renewed Mastery* will own all the stock shares and *Criti-Medical* will again be a privately owned company. On the other hand. I will pay bottom dollar for your shares and give you a fair severance package. If it was up to me I'd have you arrested."

Mr. Mike McBumble declared his ignorance, "What happens if I don't agree?"

Mr. Shelby spoke, "If you don't take the generous severance package and allow my client to buy out your shares I'll have no choice to give this stack of papers."

He nodded to an assistant.

The assistant pulled out a stack of papers, "Well. Let me explain the situation. I will send this paperwork to the Wisconsin Department of Justice, the FDA, and I'm sure the IRS will be interested in this acquired knowledge."

The assistant placed this stack and the papers to sign over his shares, in front of Mr. McBumble.

Ms. Fox added, "Once it's signed. Mr. Bob Waller is the private owner of *Criti-Medical*."

His lawyer asked, "What about Mr. Clark and the Board Members?"

Mr. Shelby stated, "My friend this is why this here meeting was called. In a short few minutes all of the paperwork will be signed and Mr. Robert Waller will become the owner of *Criti-Medical*."

He looked at Bob and said, "Mr. Waller still has the option of not signing."

Bob pushed up his glasses.

He turned to Mr. Clark, "You agree with firing your nephew?"

"Yes."

Ashleigh cringed. She cringed but would support her brother.

Brittany spotted this. On purpose avoided writing this down.

Mr. McBumble's lawyer demanded, "Isn't this blackmail?"

Mr. Shelby answered, "My law firm would never be a part of such unscrupulous tactics. Instead. I'd view this a blessing. This will bless all those who have and will sign *Criti-Medical* over to Mr. Waller. It will be a blessing to your client because he will avoid the unpleasantness of prison."

Mr. Clark demanded, "Sign it."

His lawyer quickly scanning the paperwork Mr. Shelby would send the government agencies he mentioned. He made it through three pages of the twenty-eight. He stopped leaned over and whispered to his client.

Bob stated, "It's a better severance package than you deserve."

Mr. Clark demanded, "Don't fight this."

He was about to refuse. His lawyer leaned over and whispered to him.

Brittany looked over at Ashleigh in surprise. Ashleigh rolled her eyes and lifted her shoulders and hands. Brittany took this to mean she had witnessed this many times before.

Bob said, "I'll have security escort you out of the building."

Ashleigh and Brittany gave one another looks and smiled. There was no official security. Instead they had a bunch of ex-military employees who would protect Mr. Bob and Ms. Ashleigh, other employees, and the company without question.

Bob yelled, "Billy-Joe and Bubba."

Billy-Joe worked in maintenance and Bubba worked in the warehouse. Both worked out, both were ex-military, and both had the expertise to easily subdue anyone.

Ashleigh and Brittany smiled.

The CEO pointed, "This isn't the end of me."

The lawyer whispered to him. They looked at one another. After, they were escorted out of the building, where a taxi took them back to their hotel.

Mr. Clark gave a facial expression and honestly said, "I trust you won't sell it off like my Nephew was about too."

Bob answered, "The reason I'm about to sign the paperwork Ms. Fox's assistant just passed me is because of the people who work for your or have worked for your company. I personally know you started this company to benefit people while making a living. I respect that."

Ashleigh perked up. She found her answer. Her brother knew someone, group of people who worked for the company, or people who had worked for the company.

The owner asked, "You promise to treat my employees well?"

Bob answered honestly, "Fairly."

The owner gave a look.

"Your company has lots of problems."

Ashleigh believed the owner's look was the same as a person being invited to an intervention.

Bob pushed up his glasses and with a stern tone added, "I promise to stop any more wrongful deaths. I'll make it into a company you were proud of starting."

The owner stated, "It's why I had you look into everything."

Mr. Bob turned to everyone sitting on the table representing *Criti-Medical*, "A key to ending most of the problems is the end of the month disaster."

This statement shook all three of the Vice Presidents. One of them was unable to contain his displeasure and stated, "It's the way we've always done it."

This shocked every employee of *Renewed Mastery*.

Ashleigh believed this guy's sincerity was the reason her Brother should avoid taking the company over.

Bob pushed up his glasses and asked, "Should we reinvent the wheel?"

Ashleigh knew her brother was angry.

The Vice President answered, "It's a good design."

"If you truly believe that go out and replace your rubber tires with tires made of concrete. While you are at it lets stop using cars and go back to the horse and buggy. Because a horse and buggy was good enough. Why? Because it's the way we always done it."

Bob pointed and said, "One of the reasons you are encountering lawsuits is because you wait until the end of the month to send out eighty percent of your product."

Ashleigh corrected him, "Mr. Bob it's closer to ninety-five percent."

Bob turned toward Ashleigh, "Ninety-five?"

Dave added, "Ninety percent of all production is sent out the last three days of the month. About ninety-five in the last week."

Bob looked at Alex.

Alex answered, "They don't start assembling the product until the start of the third week."

Bob glared at the Vice President, "That's over."

Ashleigh could tell the Vice President, a guy she mistrusted more than the CEO, would do everything possible to keep everything the way it was.

Ashleigh spotted a moment of doubt. She held in her excitement. She prayed her brother would not sign the paperwork in front of him. The board wanted out from this nightmare and hoped he would sign it.

Bob glared at the left side of the table, "I don't play the numbers game. You understand me? I'm all for profits but I'm not having people die on my watch because of reaching some number at the end of the month. You hear me?"

They all shrunk.

He looked at the owner, was about to say something, instead he turned toward Jimmy, "Jimmy how do we fix it?"

Jimmy answered, "If we'all ain't moving the company down here I ain't sure we'll be able to fix it. If we move it here I'm sure we can fix it. But it sounds like Y'all are trying to keep it up north in Wisconsin."

Bob answered, "That's correct."

Jimmy continued, "From what I'm observing Y'all have ticks dug in."

Bob turned to the owner, "Are you ready for me to be removing the ticks?"

The owner thought about all the people who worked for him. He knew his company was in deep trouble.

"Yes."

This disappointed Ashleigh.

Bob surprised Ashleigh by saying, "Ms. Ashleigh."

She said, "Yes sir."

"I'd like you to spend the next hour addressing all of the concerns you have with *Criti-Medical*."

Ashleigh smiled and stated, "Gladly."

Bob said, "One second."

"Okay."

"Mr. Shelby. You have a pen so I may sign this paperwork."

They smiled. Mr. Shelby stood up, and handed him a pen, "Once Mr. Waller signs on every marked x *Renewed Mastery* is the official owner of *Criti-Medical*."

Mr. Shelby's associate stood up and went over to Mr. Bob and showed him where he needed to sign.

As he signed it Mr. Clark's lawyer mentioned, "Mr. Shelby and I believe this is a good order. My client is concerned about your promise to keep the company in Wisconsin."

Mr. Shelby answered, "Well. I want to remind you this is covered in the order. If the conditions in the order are met. Conditions you agreed upon before this meeting *Renewed Mastery* will be allowed to move the company."

Bob signed the last page. The assistant took it.

Mr. Shelby stated, "Well; it's official. *Renewed Mastery* and *Criti-Medical* are now merged. This means *Criti-Medical* is no longer a publicly owned company."

One of the board members lawyers asked, "Everything will happen as we have agreed."

Ms. Fox answered, "As soon as all the paperwork is filed."

Mr. Shelby in his southern aristocratic voice said, "As in normal procedures. If there are any issues please give Ms. Fox or my office proper notification."

They knew what this meant.

Bob looked over at Mr. Clark, "I promise to do my best to keep the company in Wisconsin."

Bob glared over at the executives at *Criti-Medical*, "If you fight me and the conditions are met. Don't think for one moment I won't move it here."

Bob stated matter of fact looked over at the executives, "I will be removing the ticks."

The southern people in the conference room thought the way he said ticks was funny.

The lawyers asked if there was a meeting room they could all sit down and discuss things. Ashleigh suggested the Green Room. Brittany confirmed it was open. Brittany acted as host and lead them to this small meeting room. She trusted this room was stocked with water and snacks.

Bob looked over at Ashleigh and said loud enough for everyone to hear, "Before you go over the material in these binders. Lets have a ten minute break."

Ashleigh answered, "Good idea."

Ashleigh observed Bob pull Mr. Clark off to the side and console him.

Jimmy asked Ashleigh, "Have they always been friends?"

Ashleigh answered honestly, "I've never met him before."

They looked at one another.

Dave stepped over to Ashleigh, "Whats next? I do have a lot of work to do?"

Ashleigh smiled, "I'm sure Mr. Bob wants your advice on how to fix the shipping problems."

Jimmy added, "I ain't sure it's wise buying this company."

Alex added, "I'd feel better if he'd move it here."

The customer service manager in her Jersey accent commented, "Have U's look at the reviews of the place?"

They looked at her.

Talking with her hands, "It's horrible. U should see the complaints."

They heard Bob announce, "Ms. Ashleigh would you lead us through the problems of *Criti-Medical*?"

"Yes Mr. Bob."

It took two hours to go through them. Ashleigh felt she rushed it. They took another half hour discussing ways to fix the end of the month situation. The three vice presidents were annoyed they would even entertain the idea of changing their process.

The board of directors were overjoyed at the agreements signed.

A few minutes into the meeting Brittany arrived.

Mr. Clark believed Bob would honor what he told him. During this her personally warned all of the executives working at *Criti-Medical* Bob meant what he said.

After the meeting was over they privately wished Bob would have never purchased this company.

Shelly watched her friends separate. Two were headed to different classes, one was headed to pick up her child at daycare, another was headed home, and the youngest was headed to her job. Shelly was pulling for this girl. Unlike many of the others her age she was paying for school herself and was helping her mother with a younger brother.

Glancing at the clock she had an hour before her last class. After she would pick up Little Bobby from the schools day care center and go home.

Todd, a father she knew from the schools day care center stepped away from his friends and approached her table. He was the center of gossip with all the single ladies associated with the day care center. Shelly admired him from a distance. He was a single dad who had custody of his daughter. Everyone believed she was well behaved and cute. He was a man's man. He worked part time as a mechanic but was attending tech college to become a certified electrician. All of the ladies talked about: how he treated his daughter, his dream of owning his own business, how he owned a small house, his life was in order, he was toned, and in shape.

What Shelly liked was he never talked about drinking or drugs. Talked about attending a church and once overheard him talking about Jesus to a woman at daycare. She took notice on how his daughter adored him. An important quality Shelly took seriously was how well behaved his daughter was.

She felt he was an attractive guy. He was a couple inches taller than her, he had dark hair, good features, and bright brown eyes. She liked his muscles and his smile. She wished he would shave more often but no one was perfect.

He said with a smile, "Hello."

She answered, "Hi."

"I believe your name is Shelly?"

"Yes it is."

"What's Yours?"

"Todd."

He asked, "You have a son who goes to daycare? I believe his name is Bobby?"

She answered, "Yes."

"My daughter sure enjoys playing with your son."

"I've seen that."

"May I sit down?"

A dozen or so answers flashed in her brain. She answered, "I don't mind."

He set down his backpack on the floor and took a seat across from her.

She wondered why she agreed to this.

He asked, "What are you going to school for?"

"I'm trying to get a business management degree with an emphasis on manufacturing."

"Interesting."

She smiled, "I helped a friend with his manufacturing business."

"You planning on working there?"

"No. He moved the business out of state."

He said with concern, "A lot of business are doing so."

She thought about how often Bob complained about the Democrat leadership in the State of Wisconsin. The least thing she wanted was to talk about politics.

She quickly changed the subject, knowing his answer, "What are you taking?"

"I'm hoping to be an electrician. I'm going to run my own business some day."

Testing the waters, "I hope God blesses your dream."

He became serious, "Without God I don't know where I'd be."

"Without Jesus saving me I'd probably be in jail or dead."

He answered, "Accepting Jesus helped me get through my divorce. He's really blessed me with Debbie."

She smiled, "Debbie must be your daughter?"

He answered, "I named her after my favorite Aunt."

"I'm sure she's happy about that."

He smiled, "She is."

For the first time in a long time she was willing to go on a date with a guy.

He asked in a statement, "I've noticed you help out at the daycare center?"

She shook her head, "I just help out between classes. Sometimes if I'm not rushing out of here I'll help."

"I'm sure they appreciate the help."

She picked up on this.

"It's no big deal."

"The kids seem to really like you."

She answered, "Children like anyone who will spend time with them."

"Not everyone does."

Serious she answered, "I suppose."

He stated, "I wish Debbie's mother was involved."

This was completely off the cuff. Shelly could tell he was shocked he let this slip.

He recovered, "What's important is you do."

She smiled.

He blurted out, "Our church is having a pot luck dinner on Saturday. I was wondering if you'd want to go with me? My parents agreed to watch Debbie."

She was honest, "I have to work on Saturday night."

"Oh."

She found herself saying, "I wouldn't mind doing something Sunday?"

He smiled, "After church?"

"Sure."

He smiled. Then asked, "You go to early or late service?"

"Our church service usually ends around noon."

He asked, "How about if we meet for lunch at one?"

She found herself saying, "Great."

He pulled up his backpack, he took out a pad and paper, and wrote down his name and number, he handed to her, "Give me a call Saturday and we'll make arrangements."

"Sure."

"Call between nine and five."

She smiled, "Because of the pot luck?"

He answered, "That's right."

He surprised her when he said, "You could bring Bobby with you."

She answered, "He'll be with his Daddy this weekend."

"I hope you don't mind me bringing Debbie?"

She found herself saying, "I don't mind at all. She's a sweetheart."

Her cell phone rang.

He noticed her expensive phone.

She noticed it was her Aunt Vera, "I have to take this."

He grabbed his things, "I'll look forward to hearing from you."

She winked.

He left.

As she answered the phone she watched him leave the cafeteria.

She focused, "Hi."

"Hi. This is your Aunt Vera."

Shelly was legitimately happy to hear from Vera.

They talked for fifteen minutes. Shelly looked up at the clock and realized she needed to pick up Little Bobby; she told Vera this.

Vera apologized. Vera with both excitement and some nervousness asked Shelly over to her house on Memorial Day. Shelly felt this was a good time because Little Bobby would be visiting his Father in Florida. Vera agreed; she believed it was better for Shelly to meet the rest of the family without Little Bobby.

After this conversation she headed to class.

She blocked out the nervousness about going on a real date and meeting her deceased father's family.

April 25^h, Can't Wait Any Longer Part Three of Six

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