

Ashleigh & Megan
Book I: Friendship

Monday February 5th
Basic Principles



Day 11 of Book I
(Twenty-Two Days after Bob presented Shelly with an Apartment)

Part One 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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February 5th, Basic Principles Day 11 of Book I

(Twenty-Two Days after Shelly is offered an apartment)

*A*shleigh’s digital alarm clock radio turned on.

She was listening to the song, “Ladies Love Country Boys,” By *Trace Adkins*. A song and an artist she liked a great deal. Once the two morning disc jockey’s started to talk she hit the snooze button. She promised herself she would get up when the alarm started up again; her goal was to get ready before Julie showed up.

Nikita: raised her head, her tail showed her excitement, waited, the room went silent, stopped wagging her tail, and put her head down. She would wait for Strong Scent. She arrived around the same time every morning; with the exception of Sunday or a Holiday. Nikita was unaware of what day it was. What she knew was, the day before, Best Friend took her for a walk. She liked it when Strong Scent took her because they went further and they would “Lets Fly”.

The song, “Before He Cheats,” by *Carrie Underwood* started to play. Ashleigh was disappointed it began in the middle of the song. This motivated her to slip out from underneath her new bedclothes. She adored the blue and white flower pattern. She accessorized the original bedding package with: a second set of darker blue sheets, a second set of dark blue pillow cases, another set of flowered pillow cases, a blue and white striped ruffled bed skirt, matching curtains, and a variety of matching pillows. Currently these extra sheets were cleaned and folded in her walk in closet. She felt the flower designed bedclothes brightened up the whole suite.

Ashleigh commented about the song, “You get Em’.” She looked at Nikita, “Am I picking up a Southern accent?”

Nikita was next to Ashleigh wagging her tail. She listened for a noise she understood.

Ashleigh answered her own question, "Nope."

Ashleigh made a face when the song ended. She: turned off the alarm, stretched her five foot one self, she frizzed up her long blond hair, stepped over to the suite's head, she banned Nikita from stepping into the head, while doing her business she heard Nikita's dog collar jangle, then heard Nikita whine, Ashleigh correctly surmised her dog was at the suite door waiting for the doorbell; a doorbell Ashleigh despised. While washing and drying her hands she decided today was the day to find out who made her Brother's obnoxiousness doorbell. She: stepped out of the head, placed her sleep shorts and panties into the hamper, stepped over to a chair in her suite, glanced at the clean clothes she placed on the chair the night before, slipped off the Tim McGraw concert T-shirt, hung it over the back of the chair, yawned, slipped on a clean pair of panties, an old pair of faded light blue bootcut jeans, a bra, and a pink and purple striped polo shirt; she buttoned up the two bottom buttons. She would change into her work clothes while Julie walked Nikita. Like the clothes on the chair, the work outfit was prepared the night before; this outfit was hanging in her walk in closet. She liked how the polo shirt felt looser and she needed a belt for these jeans if she wore them off of the yacht. Without Julie and Megan's encouragement she would have stopped working out.

While changing clothes she glanced at a painting of Nikita. She knew this artist since she was a teenager. This artist was happy the company moved to Florida. This worked out for both the artist and her husband because they planned on retiring to a warmer climate. Ashleigh wished everyone who moved felt this way. Ashleigh expected more would move back within the year. She hoped this would be a small percentage of their employees.

Bob and Ashleigh were encouraged with the appreciation locals showed with their pay and how they were being treated.

Ashleigh hated firing employees. She always tried to move an employee to another department or give them another position before letting someone go. Ashleigh being who she was, would quickly fire an employee if there was evidence of an employee being dishonest or unethical. She was forever grateful for: Jimmy, Leah, and Haley. Without them she might have moved back herself. She sometimes deeply appreciated her Brother and at other times wished he would have never made her a vice president.

A frustrating conversation was any time her brother brought up college. Ashleigh was choosing to dance around it for as long as she could. She knew there was a place for college but she believed within herself this place was not for her. She believed his motive in wanting her to get a degree was due to people's belief a college degree somehow meant a person was more intelligent or better qualified for a job; this assumption annoyed Ashleigh a great deal. After seeing what college graduates were going through and how they behaved at work; she was even more inclined to avoid going back. She kept pointing out to her Brother on how many college graduates were applying for their apprenticeship programs.

She was relieved all of the office people and most of the artists were now moved in. They were working out the kinks and office furniture was still being moved around; but overall things were settling down in the offices.

Moving production was now in its second week. She decided to make the end of the week her long days, today she would leave work at a reasonable hour and visit with Captain and Ma. She would fulfill her promise of helping Captain with his model railroad.

Nikita became excited when Ashleigh approached the suite door.

She looked at Nikita with concern, “How come she hasn’t rang that doorbell?”

When she opened the door Nikita went running out of the suite. She could sense and hear Strong Scent, heard Woman Friend, and a male human’s voice; she knew he was of the same family as Strong Scent and Woman Friend. Woman friend lived in the territory called “Megan’s Houseboat”.

*M*egan shouted, “Wait!”

Julie spotted Megan and quickly tapped on her Daddy’s truck.

At six foot it was easy for Julie to spot Megan. Her: long dark blond hair was in a tight pony tail, she was without makeup, her swim shoes kept her secure on wet surfaces, she was wearing tan colored cargo pants, a red polo shirt, and a blue unzipped coat; her business emblem was embroidered on the upper right chest of both the coat and polo shirt. Megan had: long athletic legs, a very toned rear end, a flat stomach, small breasts, and small girl muscles on her arms; they were created by participating in athletics and hard work. Julie felt her Auntie’s shape was far from many guys ideal but the ones who liked her body type adored it. Julie felt her Auntie was attractive because of her inverted triangle shaped face, dark blue eyes that sometimes appeared plum, and her large dimples. It was obvious she was part of the Steward family because of her high cheekbones, long jaw line, and long chin with its rounded point. Julie disliked her Auntie’s celestial shaped nose. It was difficult to ignore the bend to the left, the natural bump above her nostrils, and how her nostrils curved up and almost out. Julie was well aware, breaking it a couple times while playing collegiate volleyball and practicing self defense was the reason it looked this way. Even though Julie disliked her Auntie’s nose, she felt it matched her Auntie’s facial shape.

Megan felt Julie could have passed for a college student in the new outfit she was wearing. She was wearing: a black pair of yoga pants with red side stripes, white and red athletic shoes, a red long sleeved athletic styled crewneck; Megan spotted the outline of a high impact sports bra. Her backpack was swung over her shoulder. Julie’s long thick wavy black hair was lightly brushed. She felt what made Julie seem older was her: height, rectangular shaped face, wider jawline, beautiful greenish blue eyes, naturally winged shaped dark eyebrows, roman style nose, developed female form, and overall maturity. Julie’s small dimples and her upper lip moved upward to show the top row of her naturally straight teeth.

Jimmy glanced into the drivers side mirror.

Julie pointed and shouted, “Auntie wants to talk to you.”

Jimmy turned and glanced into the passenger side mirror. He spotted Megan approaching the truck. Before she reached the truck he pressed the button for the passenger side window.

Julie pushed her bike around the truck and was standing next to Megan.

Megan stated, “Howdy.”

Julie responded in kind, “Howdy.”

Megan complemented Julie, “Y’all have a nice outfit.”

Julie smiled and with an excited tone answered, “I bought it with coupons Momma gave me.”

“Coupons help.”

Before this conversation would go down some rabbit hole Jimmy stated, “Howdy Sis.”

Megan turned and looked into the truck.

“I see Y’all are starting early.”

“We’re installing production.”

“I’ve heard Y’all are having trouble and things are disorganized.”

Jimmy made a face, “Ashleigh needs to stop talking non-sense.”

“Daddy what are Y’all meaning?”

In a serious tone Jimmy stated, “Let me tell Y’all something. I’ve never been part of a large move where it seems everything was planned out.”

Julie asked, “Ms. Ashleigh is complaining about changes she’s needing to make.”

“They ain’t been bad. Don’t believe anyone telling tall tails about the two of them. They listen to their employees.”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

“Bob listens?”

“Little sis. It might not seem like he’s listening but he’s listening. They’ve taken my advice.”

Julie smiled and glanced at Megan’s surprised facial expression.

Jimmy repeated himself on purpose, “I’d have thought there’d be a lot more changing. But like I was saying They’ve thought of everything.”

Megan asked, “Then why the changes?”

Jimmy reasoned, “It’s like moving. Everyone during a move changes their minds on where they’ll put the furniture. They’re still moving office furniture and I’ve been hearing the Museum is still being rearranged.”

Julie made a face, “The Museum?”

“It’s what everyone’s calling the Art Store they’re putting in. I ain’t seen anything like it.”

Julie mentioned, “Ashleigh is excited about something called the Bee Hive?”

“Before we started working on production I was helping them install it. It’s three floors of octagon rooms. They’re like closets. They finished it up last week. Even before they were finished artists were decorating the walls.”

“Since when have Y’all liked art?”

“I ain’t. It ain’t meaning I ain’t a little awe struck on what they’re all doing.”

Julie felt the need to defend her Daddy, “They wouldn’t be able to do so without you.”

Megan flashed her dimple smile.

“Honey, I’ve been helping but they’d have done it without me.”

This somewhat irritated Julie.

She was about to comment but she heard the jangling of Nikita’s collar.

Megan pointed to an excited Siberian Husky approaching the three of them.

Ashleigh trusted Nikita would listen to Julie and trusted Julie would bring Nikita back into the yacht before their morning walk.

Julie commanded, “Stay.”

Nikita disliked this command but stopped. Her tail was a weapon.

“Sit.”

Nikita reluctantly obeyed.

Julie turned to her Auntie and her Daddy, “I have to walk her.”

Megan and Jimmy smiled.

Jimmy jokingly commented, "Y'all mean run her?"

"Don't tell Momma. She ain't understanding how good of a dawg she is."

"My tongue is locked."

Megan watched Julie: turn, push the bike onto the first pier, Nikita growled at the bike when Julie met up with Nikita, Julie said something to Nikita because she became excited again, Nikita followed Julie, Julie locked the bike at the end of the yacht's wooden pier, Nikita growled at the bike again, Julie calmed Nikita down, greeted Nikita, the two went running up the stairs of the yacht, when Julie reached the second deck she opened the door, Nikita went running into the yacht, and Julie shut the door behind her.

Megan and Jimmy talked while observing Julie handle Nikita.

Megan stated, "Nikita is a good dawg."

"I'd pity the person who'd try hurting Ashleigh."

"I agree."

Jimmy added, "They remind me of K-9 unit."

"Julie feels Nikita would protect her the same way."

Jimmy responded, "I believe it."

"How does she behave at the company?"

"She stays in Ashleigh's office. Unless someone is walking her. She's more popular than any person in the company."

"Ashleigh showed me a painting of Nikita."

"It ain't surprising me any. You should see all the paintings and drawings of her."

Megan focused on her brother when Julie and Nikita were no longer visible.

"Speaking of K-9 units. Did the dawg find anything in Julie's bedroom?"

Jimmy made a face.

"I told Y'all it wouldn't find anything. Julie's a good girl. She ain't into drugs and drinking."

Megan's dimples flashed.

"I'm feeling..."

Jimmy interrupted with a tone, "I don't see what Y'all are worrying about."

"She's so smart she'd be good at hiding anything."

Megan's dimples flashed.

She seriously asked, "She ain't mixing with Daddy's friends is she?"

"You heard her promise she'd avoid them. Duke has asked everyone to stay away from her."

"I'm worried She'd find it exciting."

He repeated with a tone, "You heard her promise she'd stay away from them."

Megan's dimples flashed.

Nearing tears Megan stated, "Duke promised Daddy the same thing."

Jimmy answered, "She's just being a teenager."

Megan kept her doubts to herself.

She became serious, "I'm believing one of Daddy's friends scheduled a charter."

"Have you asked Captain?"

"Daddy didn't believe any of his friends scheduled one."

Jimmy made a face.

He asked, "Is it a rival family?"

“It’s happened before. When they did. Daddy’s friends or Duke’s friends were with em’.”

Jimmy nodded.

She asked, “I hoping Y’all will help me with this charter.”

“When would it be?”

Megan answered, “On March sixth.”

“Y’all sure it’s a family?”

“They’re wanting the same things. I was thinking about asking Duke and his two helpers to show up.”

“It ain’t like you to ask for their help.”

“I don’t believe I’d need Duke’s friends if Duke and Daddy are helping.”

“How about Timmy?”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

“I ain’t wanting him there. This group is paying a lot of money and were saying if everything goes well they’ll schedule again. He ain’t the greatest at customer service.”

Jimmy added, “You ain’t whistling Dixie.”

They both sighed thinking about their brother.

She commented, “If he wasn’t so good at fixing things he’d have lost his business.”

“Little Sis. What you ain’t understanding is his secretary is good at keeping things in order. He’s smart enough to leave much of the customer service to others. Timmy is good at ass kissing the right folks.”

“It ain’t right.”

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders.

“It’s working out for em’.”

Megan’s dimples flashed, “Until it ain’t working for em’.”

“Little Sis. Y’all ain’t peeing down my leg.”

They sighed.

Jimmy broke the silence, “I’ll put in a day off.”

Megan smiled a big dimple smile.

“She said she’d give you the day off.”

“What...”

She interrupted him, “I told her I needed your help on my charter.”

He shook his head and made a face.

“Alright. We’ll work out the details later. I need to get a move on.”

She smiled her big dimple smile.

“Thanks.”

He nodded his head.

Megan backed away.

She watched the window go up and her brother drive away. She turned and headed back to her charter. She cringed when she spotted Bob step off the wooden pier and head toward her. Her fleeting thought was to turn and head to her office. She liked her new office in the storage unit. This storage area was in one of the buildings built on the marina property. Instead she mentally prepared herself for a conversation.

This is when she spotted Julie and Nikita behind him.

She found it funny when Nikita stopped at the bike and growled at it.

She heard Julie yell, “Come on!”

Nikita spotted Woman Friend walking up the pier.

This excited Nikita.

Megan heard Julie say, "We're running late."

Megan's dimples flashed as they passed her.

Megan heard, "Come on. Y'all will see her again. You like the beach."

Nikita liked the territory named "beach". She followed Strong Scent. Megan turned and watched as Julie walked Nikita near the fence. This fence bordered the Marina Property and the preserve. If it was at night Ashleigh was walking her to the opposite side of the third pier on the bank of the *Eastbank River*.

Nikita left her markings.

Julie: used a pooper scooper to pick up the droppings, she placed the droppings into a plastic grocery bag, walked Nikita to the dumpster, tossed the droppings into the dumpster, hid the scooper behind the dumpster, and headed to the marina entrance.

Megan watched as Julie crossed the road, easily walked to the bike path, stopped at the bike path, watched a lone biker go passed her, crossed the path, stopped Nikita, tied the rope around her waist, pulled something out of her jacket pocket, put her hair into a pony tail, Julie looked down at Nikita, and both went running toward the beach.

Within the last two weeks a dispute was taken care off. Since the construction of the bike path their had been a dispute if the State owned the property from the road to the bike path or Eastbank owned this property. Everyone living in the marina and the owners of the mansions knew about this dispute. Citizens from both groups complained how this long patch of grass was a haven for poisons snakes and vermin; neither the State of Florida or Eastbank were willing to find a resolution to this dispute. Both groups realized the dispute was over when the Eastbank Park Department removed this large patch of tall grass from the first mansion to the start of the preserve. They replaced it with the type of grass they planted in their parks. Everyone in the marina and some of the owners of the mansions correctly assumed Mr. Waller was a factor in this "dispute" being taken care off. The people of the marina and the owners were happy about this. The likely hood someone or a pet being bit by a poisonous snake was greatly reduced and the vermin problem was reduced.

While watching Julie, Megan felt Bob stand next to her; she wished he would have kept walking.

Megan's dimples flashed.

She heard Bob say, "She's a fast girl."

Megan turned and looked at him. At six foot she was taller than his five ten self. He was wearing: a simple purple button shirt, docker pants, black socks, and brown shoes. His dark wavy hair was brushed back, he was wearing new glasses, behind them was his brown eyes, there was a little bit of stubble on his face. She: wondered why he never wore suits, she disliked the stubble on his face, and felt he needed to loose some weight; he was maintaining the same weight but felt he needed to eat better.

Before she could say anything he asked, "Which sport is she most likely to receive a scholarship. Track or volleyball? Which one would she have the most success in?"

This surprised her and answered honestly, "Either one."

"This was my thought."

Bob pushed up his glasses.

He asked, "I've heard the girls volleyball team had a lack luster performance."

Megan's dimples flashed.

With a tone, "It ain't on account of my niece. The only reason they won at all was on account of her."

"I suspect the same."

She was about to comment but Bob asked her a surprising question.

"Is it better for the community to have two high schools at division two or one high school at division one?"

Very serious, "Most people would rather play division one. A select few believe it'd be better if we'd have two smaller schools. These people ain't happy about the attention sports receive."

"What do you feel is best for the community? Both have their pluses and minuses."

This confirmed, what everyone knew, Bob was deeply involved in the community. She resented this and at the same time respected the fact he would seek counsel.

"It's assumed the competition is better in division one. They're others who'd benefit from another school being built."

Bob commented, "That's to be expected."

Her dimples flashed.

With wisdom she said, "Everyone's expectations will be sky high. It'll take all the teams to adjust to the competition. If we split into two schools we're splitting up the talent."

"I've been hearing conflicting reports. Some say the reason the football team is loosing is because of a lack of talent. Others are saying it's coaching. What do you believe?"

She answered, "The people saying there is a lack of talent are making excuses."

Bob pushed up his glasses.

"It's why I'm asking you."

She stated very sternly, "Y'all don't have the right to push out the current coaching staff."

He answered, "Even if I could suggest a coach who'd bring us a state championship?"

She crossed her arms and her dimples flashed.

"Where's he from?"

Bob smiled.

She disliked this smile.

"Y'all can't be changing everything in this here town."

"Once we moved here. Everything changed."

She was about to comment but Bob beat her to it.

In a serious and sincere tone he added, "This being stated. I want the best for the people of the surrounding counties, the state, and especially those living in this town. One of the reasons I moved here is because the leaders of Eastbank, the county, and the State welcomed myself and my company here. I'm deeply aware how every decision I make effects the community."

"Then why are Y'all wanting the coach fired?"

"I believe the whole town would be overjoyed if they won a football championship."

This was an undeniable truth.

She replied, "The current head coach has been here for nearly twenty years. He loves those kids. It'd brake his heart if Y'all push him out."

Bob pushed up his glasses.

“I’ve heard the reason the team reached the playoffs was because of his defense.”

“You ain’t heard a tall tail.”

“I’ve heard before being made the head coach he was the defensive coordinator.”

“Yes sir.”

“I’ve also heard he wishes he could go back to being the defensive coordinator. He’s staying on as the head coach because no one else wanted the job. Or the school was unwilling to pay a head coach a better salary.”

“Y’all have heard correctly.”

“What if I was to recommend a new head coach who would grant him his wish of being defensive coordinator.”

Her dimples flashed.

“It’d help.”

“I agree.”

He smiled.

Her dimples flashed.

“I’m asking again. Who are Y’all recommending?”

“There’s a couple gentleman I have in mind.”

Serious, “Some people will resent an outsider running the team.”

“I’m aware of this.”

This caused her dimples to flash.

She mentioned, “Football ain’t the only sport.”

“Just as there are other activities.”

This confirmed other rumors.

Megan answered, “This is true. Not everything revolves around sports.”

“I’m surprised you’d think so.”

“I’m passionate about sports. It’s a positive in my life. This ain’t meaning I ain’t understand the value of other activities. I ain’t able to paint. It doesn’t mean I don’t appreciate a good painting.”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

She added, “One of the reasons to keep one school is how excited people are about the big play. A lot of folks are happy an orchestra is started. Others are excited to hear a jazz band might be started. I ain’t sure which one people are liking better.”

“It’s nice to hear.”

Megan relaxed, she brushed her hair behind her ear, “Being a parent is more important than sports.”

Megan watched closely.

“Being a parent is one of thee most important tasks.”

“Ashleigh told me she’s an Auntie and Y’all have a son?”

Bob smiled and pushed up his glasses.

“I currently fly to Wisconsin every other weekend.”

“How old is he?”

“A year and five months.”

This quick answer impressed her; normally fathers needed the mother to answer this question.

“He likes animals and bright colors. He’s learning to speak.”

“Oh.”

“He especially likes any animal that makes a growling sound.”

“Little ones like animal noises.”

“I’m unsure about other children but mine does.”

“What’s his name?”

“Robert.”

Her dimples flashed.

“I don’t want him to ever be called Junior. Shelly, his mother, calls him Little Bobby. His family calls him Robert.”

“Ain’t it confusing for the little guy?”

Bob pushed up his glasses, “I don’t believe so.”

“When do Y’all visit him again?”

“I’ll visit him this weekend.”

She was about to mention how excited Ashleigh was to meet her nephew but Bob addressed this.

“The problem is I have two more supervised visits. I understand why the courts wanted supervised visits but both Shelly and I feel it was a foolish idea. I’m waiting for them to end before Ashleigh will see him.”

“Ashleigh is looking forward to seeing him.”

“I’m sure Ashleigh has told you I still own my childhood home in Wisconsin?”

“She’s mentioned it.”

Megan brushed her hair behind her ear,

“I’m assuming Shelly is his mother?”

“Yes.”

She caught the change in tone when he said, “She’s a good mother.”

This shocked Megan; normally split parents bad mouthed one another.

She found herself asking, “Y’all getting back together?”

Very serious, “I wouldn’t believe so.”

This answer bothered Megan. She was unsure of why. All at once she felt uncomfortable. She shoved these feeling aside.

“I’ve heard Y’all are busy.”

“I appreciate your brother and your parents.”

This impressed her. She again pushed her hair behind her ear.

“I’m happy to hear it.”

“Your brother has been a real help to the move. I’ve taken note on how your parents have treated my employees.”

“As Christians they don’t believe in taking advantage of people.”

“I believe you one hundred percent.”

She disliked how relaxed she was feeling.

This relaxed feeling was crushed when Bob asked, “You still dating Christopher?”

Her body stiffened and she crossed her arms.

“Why?”

“Because I’d like to ask you out to lunch.”

In a defensive tone, “I haven’t broken up with him.”

She relaxed her tone, “Even if we were no longer dating we’d be friends and neighbors.”

“Why can’t best friends be lovers too?”

This hit her.

She answered from her personal experience, “Most times one wants to be the lover while the other only wants to be a friend.”

Bob pushed up his glasses.

“I’ve lived this experience.”

“So have I.”

Bob in a frustrated tone stated, “Christopher is a putz.”

Her body stiffened and in a very angry tone, “He’s a gentleman.”

“Alright.”

She looked at him, “Why are Y’all using a tone?”

“I’m not using a tone. I was...”

“Y’all are butting in where it ain’t welcomed.”

“Could I speak to you as a friend?”

She made a face and crossed her arms.

“Sure.”

“You can do better.”

Her dimples flashed.

“Like yourself?”

“For the sake of the discussion let’s say you would never date me.”

“Most likely it’s the situation.”

“Your smart, athletic, and very attractive. You could date anyone you’d like.”

This made her angry.

She answered with a tone, “The only reason I’m somewhat attractive is on account of the hard work I’ve put into staying in shape. I’d say I ain’t able to date anyone I’d like. Most guys find me to be unattractive.”

“Their stupid.”

This caught her off guard.

She replied, “No one is stupid.”

“Some people are.”

She pointed, “Y’all shouldn’t be believing this with Y’all being a leader in this community. Even if Y’all believe so what’d people think or feel if they heard Y’all saying so? There are people around here who are looking up to Y’all.”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

“Maybe they’re wrong about Y’all.”

Defensive, “They’re not.”

“Well then Y’all shouldn’t be saying people are stupid.”

“I don’t really mean they are stupid, like really stupid...”

Her dimples flashed.

“My Momma always said if Y’all don’t have nothing good to say Y’all should keep it to yourself.”

“Your Mother is pretty blunt.”

Her forehead crunched together.

“But she’d never call someone stupid. She might criticize in the hopes they’d get on the right track. But she ain’t calling anyone stupid.”

Bob answered, “I’ll take that under advisement.”

She crossed her arms and her dimples flashed.

“Oh.”

She thought of more to say but he disarmed her by saying, “I see what you are saying. I thank-you for your advice.”

She was unsure of his sincerity but answered, “Y’all are welcome.”

“I do have to get going.”

She brushed her hair behind her right ear.

“I have to as well.”

They gave one another one last look and he stepped passed her.

She watched him walk to his garage. She felt a mix of emotions. Counting the conversation at the pier this was the third conversation like this. It was impossible for her to deny he was trying to be a good daddy. She purposely buried any feelings these thoughts came with.

The garage door went up and Bob stepped into the garage.

Megan turned when Jake yelled to her, “Where’s the tool box?”

“It should be in the storage unit.”

“It ain’t there.”

She rolled her eyes.

“Try the galley.”

“Why is it there?”

“Y’all were fixing one of the cabinets.”

This caused him to remember, “I’d bet Y’all are right.”

She spotted him step into the living quarters.

She smiled her big dimple smile and headed to her charter. While walking to the charter she tucked everything she discussed with Jimmy and Bob into interpersonal compartments to be addressed later.

February 5th Basic Principles

Part One of

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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”

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February 5th, Basic Principles Day 11 of Book I

(Twenty-Two Days after Shelly is offered an apartment)

*A*shleigh cringed.

In her rear view mirror she spotted an Eastbank police car with it’s lights on.

Julie noticing said, “I’ve been telling Y’all. You drive to fast.”

“I was only going five over.”

“Ain’t five over speeding?”

An irritated Ashleigh, stated what she felt, “Not really.”

Julie declared, “It’s Sargent Marcus Tyler and Ms. Janet Foster.”

Ashleigh turned to Julie and her eyes became large.

“How do I look?”

Julie made a face and answered in an odd tone, “Shouldn’t Y’all be worried about a ticket?”

Ashleigh missed what she said. She: lifted herself up, yanked at her matador red pencil skirt with it’s leopard-print trim, made sure the leopard print shirt was tucked into the skirt, quickly buttoned her red matador three-quarter inch sleeve jacket; she liked the jackets leopard-print trim on the sleeves and on the border. She: sat back down, quickly slipped off her athletic shoes, tossed them into the back seat, reached over to the passenger side floor, grabbed her red high heel shoes, and slipped them on.

Nikita wanted to chew on what was called “shoes”. She knew to leave them alone. She stared at them and sniffed them from the back seat.

While Ashleigh was slipping on her heels she was babbling; “I should’ve worn a different suit. I don’t even look like a Vice President. I should have worn one of my stripped suits. What was I thinking with this leopard print outfit?”

Julie reassured Ashleigh, “Animal prints are trendy right now.”

She was still working on her outfit, “You sure?”

“I’m sure.”

“I’ve read it’s dying out?”

“Momma just bought an animal print blouse.”

“Megan likes the animal prints too.”

While securing her shoes she said, “I just shouldn’t wear it to work.”

“I wouldn’t be worried. Y’all look attractive and professional.”

She stopped and glared at Julie, “Do I?”

With a face, “Yes.”

In a hurry Ashleigh reached for her small purse, she liked it because of the zipper pockets, “This doesn’t even match the outfit.”

“He’s a guy he won’t notice.”

Ashleigh became excited by the comment, “That’s right.”

She pulled a mirror out of the purse.

“Are they still in the car?”

Julie looked in the side mirror, “They’re talking.”

“I’m glad we put on the soft top. My hair would have been a mess.”

Ashleigh yanked a brush out of her purse, she quickly brushed her hair, and turned toward Julie.

“How’s my hair? I don’t have on too much make up on do I? I heard he’s conservative. Do I look alright?”

Julie with a confused face stated, “You look wonderful. Ain’t Y’all worried about a ticket?”

“I’m glad I have meetings today. I wouldn’t want him to think I’m a slob. Especially with me being a Vice President. Are you sure he’ll like the outfit?”

Julie made a face. The only reason Julie understood the fast way Ashleigh was talking was because she was used to her Midwestern accent.

She repeated herself in a different way, “I’d be worried about a ticket.”

“Is it alright for a Vice President to ask out someone?”

Julie was shocked and looked at Ashleigh.

Ashleigh again asked, “Should I ask him out?”

Julie answered, “It’d be tacky.”

“I guess.”

In a panic Ashleigh proclaimed; “I better put on lipstick.”

They heard the police car doors close.

Julie and Ashleigh glanced into their respective mirrors.

Julie commented, “They’re coming.”

Ashleigh quickly put on red lipstick, something she very rarely wore, she turned to Julie; “Too much.”

“No.”

Ashleigh: quickly covered the lipstick, dropped it into the purse, grabbed her woman's wallet, and took out her license.

"He's behind the Jeep."

"In the glove box is proof of insurance and registration."

Julie rolled her eyes, "Is it Florida registration?"

"I ain't worried about that."

Julie shook her head and commented under her breath, "The police will care."

"What?"

"Nothing."

Nikita sitting in the back wanted to greet both humans approaching "moving territory" She remembered these humans when they visited the territory called "Marina" when the "moving territory" showed up. She often sensed them in their moving territory. She would protect: Best Friend, Strong Scent, and "moving territory" if she needed to. She was disappointed when she heard; "Nikita lay down."

She whimpered.

"Nikita lay down."

She did so.

Julie mentioned with a smile, "He's at the window."

Ashleigh: glared at Julie, put on a sweet face, turned, and quickly rolled down the window.

Her heart fluttered. She felt if he was any taller than five ten it would have been to awkward. She: liked his bright brown eyes, rectangular shaped face, square chin, how in shape he was; she felt guilty for wanting to see his backside. She found him handsome in the police uniform. She would never forget how safe he made her feel when the Jeep arrived. She found out they were attending the same church but he normally went to the early service; for weeks she tried to make it to this service but failed to do so. She heard from reliable sources he only dated two women in his life. Megan speculated he was a virgin. Ashleigh felt his fiancée' was short sighted for breaking up with him. She wanted to touch his clean shaven face.

While Ashleigh was rolling down the window Janet signaled to Julie to roll hers down as well.

"Ms. Waller."

"Hi."

Julie and Janet rolled their eyes.

"Howdy Julie."

Julie leaned and looked at Marcus, "Howdy Sir."

"We spotted you running Nikita."

"Yes sir. I walk her Monday through Saturday."

Nikita new the human noise, "walk". She became excited.

Ashleigh turned, "Lay down."

Nikita whimpered and again laid back down.

Julie felt Janet inherited the best traits of being Caucasian and the best traits of a Hispanic descent. Julie reasoned underneath this uniform she was an attractive woman. She based this upon Janet's: long oval shaped face, soft blended cheeks, soft puffy lips, bright brown eyes, noticeable backside, larger breasts, light brown hair with blond highlights; currently it was tied in a bun under her police cap. Julie correctly reasoned it would be a

mistake to mess with this officer. There was a lot of power in her lower legs and suspected she was quick. She felt this woman was a good choice for taking over the self defense training classes held by the Eastbank Police Department; classes Megan and Julie once taught. Julie often missed helping with this community outreach program.

Marcus glancing at Nikita asked, "Is the dog registered with the Eastbank police department?"

"Yes sir."

Marcus then asked, "May I see your drivers license, proof of insurance, and registration?"

Julie waited for Ashleigh to give Marcus her drivers license; once she did she handed Ashleigh the proof of insurance and registration.

"Y'all realize you were speeding?"

"No."

"Ma'am; Y'all were going five over."

Ashleigh irritated with this said, "Oh."

Julie and Janet glanced at one another.

Marcus asked within a statement, "You understand five over is speeding?"

Ashleigh made a face.

Answered with a tone, "Sort off."

Janet and Julie again glanced at one another.

Marcus with a tone asked, "Y'all realize you need to register this vehicle with the State of Florida? And Y'all need Florida tags?"

"I've just been so busy with the move I haven't had a chance to get to the DMV."

Ashleigh watched him study the paperwork she gave him. Ashleigh was suppressing her anger at being pulled over for a few reasons: she was angry at herself for procrastinated registering the vehicle, she was angry Sargent Marcus was ignoring her flirtatious behavior, and it was annoying to be pulled over for going five miles over the speed limit.

"It says here this vehicle is registered to Mr. Waller."

"This is true but I'm registered as an occasional user."

Janet and Julie again glanced at one another.

Nikita was now sticking her nose out of the passenger window. Nikita caught the scent of Janet's dogs.

Marcus gave her a look.

Ashleigh gave him a flirty smile.

"Ms. Waller why were you driving over the limit?"

Julie wanted to jump in but she remembered her life long training on how to handle authority: always be polite and only answer a question when asked.

"I was late getting Julie to school."

Marcus asked, "Young lady is this true?"

Julie answered very politely, "Yes Sir."

"Is your Momma aware Y'all are running late?"

Ashleigh answered, "She would have been on time if we weren't pulled over."

Marcus gazed upon Ashleigh, "She needs to be on time for school."

Ashleigh recognized her mistake.

In a more gentle tone answered, "It's my fault she's late. This is the first time she's been late since she's started walking Nikita."

This again excited Nikita.

Ashleigh immediately turned and commanded, "Lay down."

Janet smiled when the dog whimpered and put her head on the back seat.

"Her parents will need to call the school and inform them why she's late."

Ashleigh volunteered, "I'll call Nicole."

Julie cringed. She witnessed the police department bringing kids to school; this was something she wanted to avoid.

"We'll be right back."

"Okay officer."

Ashleigh looked in the rear view mirror and felt guilty for checking out his rear end.

She snapped out of it when Julie said, "Momma will be angry."

"If I wasn't pulled over you'd been on time. I wasn't driving like some maniac."

They glanced at one another.

Ashleigh decided it was time to address it.

"We'd be running on time if you weren't enjoying my bathtub."

Julie gasped and turned a deep shade of red.

Julie wondered how Ashleigh knew.

Ashleigh whispered, "Watch what your doing when you lay down. I don't want you knocking yourself out and drowning."

Slight pause.

This was embarrassing for both of them.

Still whispering Ashleigh added, "When you use the water pick watch where the water sprays. And stop pushing the time."

She leaned toward Julie and gently touched her on the arm.

"Many girls find out a water pick will make them feel funny down there. For some it's overwhelming when they have their first orgasm because of it. Then they find themselves doing it all the time."

They looked at one another.

Ashleigh made a face.

"There is something about that large bathtub. A friend of yours. Someone who hadn't enjoyed herself for years in a bathtub couldn't resist sliding herself below the water after a warm bath."

Julie felt awkward but recognized Ashleigh never told her to stop and never once criticized her.

Ashleigh glanced in the rear view mirror, "They're coming."

What was so tempting about Ashleigh's tub was it was the only tub long enough where laying down was comfortable. She promised herself she would never again completely lay down during the week and would never do it twice.

The officers stepped up to the windows.

"Hi."

Marcus handed Ashleigh six warning tickets.

Ashleigh and Julie gasped at the pile.

Marcus stated, "Y'all need to take care of all of these warning tickets by the date written. If Y'all don't take care of them Y'all will receive the fines and Y'all will lose your privilege to drive in Florida. It'll be far more difficult to receive a Florida license if this happens."

Ashleigh made a face, "Yes sir."

Janet stated "May I recommend you transfer the title in your name?"

Ashleigh looked at her and made a face.

Janet answered the facial expression, "If Y'all don't take care of them warnings no one will be able to drive this vehicle."

Ashleigh seriously answered, "All right."

Janet turned toward Julie, "Have you been late before?"

"On account of a doctor appointment."

Marcus asked, "Do we need to check?"

"No sir. I'm being honest with Y'all. My Momma would kill me if I was missing school."

All three adults believed her.

"Y'all wish them well."

"Yes sir."

Marcus turned toward Ashleigh, "Ma'am get this taken care off."

She purposefully asked, "When everything is fixed where do I take the vehicle?"

Janet answered, "Y'all have to take the tickets and the vehicle to the Eastbank Police Department."

Ashleigh winked, "Sir when do you work?"

She knew this was a risk.

Janet was surprised when he stated, "I work Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday during the day. Along with every Friday and Saturday evening."

She winked, "Yes sir."

Janet and Julie smiled.

"May I go now? I need to get Julie to school."

Julie gave Ashleigh a look. It was sort of sweet but it was sort of sarcastic too. It was obvious sarcasm ran in the family.

"Ma'am. Y'all are free to go."

Julie was surprised Ashleigh was able to drive a manual transmission with high heels. When they reached the first stop sign she: put the vehicle into neutral, lifted up the parking break, slipped off her heels, and moved them near the seat; she could easily drive without shoes.

Julie could tell Ashleigh was thinking.

She asked, "Should I call Momma?"

"Give me a moment."

"Yes Ma'am."

When Ashleigh reached the school she parked the Jeep in a visitor parking spot; normally she drove up to the bike racks.

She turned to Julie, "You promise never to be late like you were this morning."

Julie spoke softly, "Yes Ma'am."

Ashleigh thought about how to proceed with her next question.

"I'm assuming your Mom has talked to you about Jilling?"

Julie was surprised Ashleigh used this term but answered honestly, "Yes Ma'am."

Ashleigh asked, "Knowing your Mom I'm sure she's told you it's normal?"

"Yes Ma'am."

"I'm sure your Mom wouldn't like you doing it in my bathroom?"

Julie made a face, "No."

Ashleigh asked, "Is it keeping you from having sex?"

"Yes Ma'am."

"Don't ever be late and I don't want to ever have an embarrassing moment."

Julie smiled, "Yes Ma'am."

They blushed.

Ashleigh said very serious, "I wish I would have waited until I was married to have sex. Sex isn't like the movies. There are consequences. I really regret having it."

"Yes Ma'am."

Ashleigh pleaded.

"You have a ton of potential don't ruin it because of boys and sex."

"I ain't."

They smiled at one another. Both understood.

Ashleigh broke the silence, "You better say bye to Nikita."

"Are you telling Momma?"

Ashleigh touched her on the arm.

"No. Just don't be late again. And wipe the walls and keep the water from hitting the ceiling."

"I promise."

Julie asked, "What about school?"

Ashleigh could make a phone call and everything would be settled without having Julie's parents know. Ashleigh felt this was a bad example.

Ashleigh answered, "I'll need to call your Mom."

Julie cringed.

Julie listened to Ashleigh explain the reason she was pulled over, she covered for Julie saying she was the one who encouraged Julie to stick around, and then asked if she should call the school.

Nicole was upset but appreciated the call. She said she would call the school. Ashleigh hung up and glanced at Julie.

"Is Momma angry?"

Ashleigh answered, "It should be alright."

Julie smiled, "Thank-you."

Ashleigh winked, "Don't worry."

"Better get going."

Julie said bye to Nikita.

Nikita knew Strong Scent was leaving because "moving territory" took her here before.

Julie was correct in thinking the reason Ashleigh bought a bike carrier was to take Julie to school. It was attached to the hitch and it could hold up to two bikes. Julie looked forward to the day when Ashleigh fulfilled her promise of biking with her. She removed the bike.

Julie shouted, "It's okay."

Ashleigh waved.

Julie watched Ashleigh pull away. She turned and sighed. She hated school. The only reason she stayed in school was because of sports and her Momma. She knew if she dropped out it would ruin her chances at an athletic scholarship and a scholarship through Mr. Bob's company. The least thing she wanted was to disappoint her parents. She felt sports and Mr. Bob were getting her through school. Through Mr. Bob's advice she was learning how to make school interesting. Without these concerns and influences she would have: dropped out, aced the GED, and signed up for college.

She pushed the bike to the bike rack, locked it, sighed, swung her backpack over her shoulder, and headed to the front of the school. She hated the idea of visiting the principles office.

While walking around the school she felt Ashleigh was really cool. Julie respected Ashleigh a great deal and looked up to her.

She sighed when she reached the front entrance of the Eastbank High School.

Nicole snipped the phone shut.

Ester asked in an excited tone; "Was Julie late?"

"Young lady."

Ester shrunk and became quiet.

"Haven't we discussed this before? Shouldn't Y'all be paying attention to yourself?"

The eleven year old answered correctly, "Yes Ma'am."

"Would Y'all like it if Julie became excited when Y'all were in trouble?"

Ester wanted to pretend she missed this question and looked out the minivan window. She knew this road was the one her school was on.

"Young lady answer me."

"No Ma'am."

"No what?"

Her answer was, "She never gets yelled at."

"She gets reprimanded. Didn't she have work duty during Christmas break?"

"Yes Ma'am."

"Didn't I scold Jeff this morning for leaving his lunch?"

"Yes Ma'am."

"If Y'all would think ahead I wouldn't be yelling at any of you. Why is it difficult for Y'all to just plan a little?"

Ester looked at her Momma.

"Why?"

"I do."

"Why am I having to tell Y'all to turn off the TV? If Y'all are done watching it why is so difficult to turn it off? Why am I always having to tell you to clean up after yourself? Why am I always having..."

She glanced over at her daughter and spotted the tears.

She stopped herself.

She pulled in front of Esters school.

She calmed herself down, "I apologize."

Ester looked at her Momma in shock.

“I’m upset Julie was late. I was taking it out on Y’all. This ain’t fair.”

“Yes Ma’am.”

Ester was looking at her strange.

Speaking from the heart Nicole said, “No parent is perfect. I’m trying my best to prepare Y’all for when Y’all are an adult.”

Ester gave her a look, “But I’m eleven?”

Nicole looked at her daughter, held back tears, and answered; “Yes you are.”

Nicole: undid her seat belt, leaned over, and hugged Ester; Ester gladly hugged back.

“I’m sorry Momma.”

“Thank-you for reminding me Y’all are only eleven.”

Ester felt this was an odd thing to say.

Nicole pulled herself away and asked, “You have everything?”

Ester smiled reached down and grabbed her unicorn backpack, “Yes Ma’am.”

There was a knock on the passenger side door, Ester turned, “Danielle.”

Danielle yelled, “Y’all coming?”

“Momma I have to go.”

“Y’all are excused.”

Ester grabbed her back pack and opened the door.

Danielle stated, “Howdy Ms. Nicole.”

“Howdy.”

“Momma says I’m coming over.”

“Yes you are.”

“Am I staying for dinner?”

“Yes.”

This excited Ester and Danielle.

A bell rang, “Bye Momma.”

Nicole smiled when Ester slammed the door shut and became part of a large group of kids running toward the front door of the school.

Nicole spoke out loud to know one in particular, “They grow so fast.”

Nicole: focused, turned the minivan toward her favorite grocery store, glanced at her purse; she spotted her coupon book. After shopping her plan was: putting the groceries away, would get ready for lunch with Jimmy, have lunch with Jimmy, and after she would volunteer at the *Eastbank Community Center*. She was surprised to hear the Company allowed spouses to come in and have lunch with an employee. There were some procedures: before ten AM either the employee or the spouse had to notify the front desk a spouse was visiting, the spouse needed to check in at the front gate, the employee had to meet the spouse at the front desk, the spouse needed to sign in, the employee needed to remain with the spouse the whole time, and the employee had to be back within the time allowed for the employee; Nicole felt these were all reasonable requests. Nicole was looking forward to having lunch with her husband. She heard from more than one person the cafeteria was nice.

Nicole felt the story Ashleigh gave her was fishy. Ashleigh liked Nicole more than Nicole liked Ashleigh. Nicole felt there were a lot of layers to this gal. A layer Nicole both admired and was concerned about was her street smarts. Nicole believed this was one of the main reasons Mr. Waller made her a vice president. Nicole believed Ashleigh could quickly asses a situation and form a plan. She often felt Ashleigh never lied but often times left out

details. This led to other concerns. What lengths would Ashleigh go to protect her Brother and the company; Nicole suspected these were the areas Ashleigh withheld many truths. She believed it was in Ashleigh's nature to protect those people she really cared about. This again was something Nicole admired but also mistrusted. The nagging question, would Ashleigh eventually hurt Nicole's family to protect her Brother and the company.

A larger concern was the relationship between her Daughter and Mr. Bob. Both Julie and Ashleigh made it a point to reassure Nicole; anytime Mr. Bob was around Ashleigh was awake and was visible. Jimmy told her this his policy at work. At no time was Mr. Bob ever left alone with a female employee; this was confirmed by more than one person. What Nicole respected was how Mr. Bob enforced it himself. What bothered Nicole was since walking Nikita, Julie was more inclined to debate. Julie always liked to debate but her skill and willingness increased. She also admitted to herself, the one person who was able to get Julie to read, was Mr. Bob. Nicole always wanted her Daughter to take up reading. Nicole acknowledged within herself Ashleigh and Mr. Bob were having a positive influence on her relationship with her daughter; especially since Christmas. This was the reason she allowed her Daughter to keep walking the dog.

The dog was another worry. As a mother she was certain her daughter: let it off the leash, let it run free, let it approach people, and was careless with it. She expected something bad to happen. She forced herself to admit, since walking the dog, Julie was more positive about school. Nicole made it clear she could stop her daughter from walking Nikita. Nicole believed the only thing Julie loved more than walking the dog was her love of athletics. Nicole speculated this interest in dogs would lead her to be a veterinarian. This was perfectly okay with Nicole as long as her house remained free of pets.

She pulled into the parking lot of her favorite grocery store. She was thankful she found a parking space near the front.

*A*shleigh purposely chose the main entrance.

Nikita liked "work" territory. She liked "work" territory because: humans gave her attention, looked forward to treats, and humans took her for "walks". The humans who walked her at "work" territory walked her different than Strong Scent. Here they came at different times and they never used the command "lets fly". She liked laying down in the "office" because she was near Best Friend, she often spotted Favorite Male, and she was near Human Who Smelled Funny. This female human often times: put fresh water in her bowl, walked her, took her outside so she could mark the territory, greeted her, made noises at her, and was a human who gave her a treat every day; Nikita knew where the treats were. This human often times made noises with Favorite Male and Best Friend. Another human she liked was Loud Noise. Nikita could sense this woman was just beyond the door. She was eagerly waiting for the door to open.

Andrea buzzed the door open.

Ashleigh grabbed the door, opened it, this stopped the noise, she let Nikita through the door first, and they stepped inside of the office area of *Renewed Mastery*. The door swung shut, but just before it was about to slam the door slowed and shut quietly.

Nikita was excited.

Andrea was working on employee badges. Ashleigh was happy Andrea received a larger L shaped desk; it was an old one from a different location but Andrea felt this was perfect for this space. Ashleigh liked how it created a lane between someone stepping into the building and Andrea.

Ashleigh paid close attention to Andrea.

Andrea: was six foot tall, had an athletic shape, long blond hair, small breasts, long legs, and a butt just about every woman in the building wanted. She was wearing a navy french cuffed shirt, she matched this with gold striped straight fit flare leg pants with slit pockets, a matching tailored blazer with a three-button closure; Andrea liked the two flap pockets. She was wearing beautiful dangling ear rings, had on an appropriate amount of make up on, a very nice gold bracelet, navy flats, and seemed relaxed. It was a while since she worn jewelry or makeup.

Andrea immediately greeted, "Howdy."

"Hi."

She started to tell Nikita what a good dog she was. Ashleigh smiled and allowed Andrea to pet Nikita.

Nikita liked it when Loud Noise greeted her.

Ashleigh became suspicious when she spotted a boutique of flowers in a vase.

When Andrea ended petting Nikita. Ashleigh tugged on the leash and Nikita sat. Nikita hoped Loud Noise would pet her again. Nikita was distracted by people and she could sense Woman Who Smelled Funny and Favorite Male. She was taking in all of the familiar sounds and scents she always did when she sat here.

Andrea said, "I like your outfit."

This perked up Ashleigh, "You think? I wasn't sure."

"Honey, Animal prints are in. I like the color on you."

"I see you're wearing a new blazer."

Andrea excited, "It was on sale."

Ashleigh smiled and winked, "Sales are always nice."

"What gal doesn't like a good sale?"

"Agreed."

Ashleigh used a joyful tone, one concealing her concern, "I love the flowers."

"My boyfriend gave them to me last night."

Ashleigh hoped, "Where did you meet him?"

Andrea's countenance changed but she was making an effort to sound positive, "You met him at Nicole's Christmas Party."

Ashleigh asked in a somewhat serious tone, "I thought you broke up with him?"

"He's changed."

Ashleigh kept her opinion to herself.

"He's promised to stop drinking. He was so sweet over the weekend."

Because she was a Vice President she needed to choose her words.

She replied, "Experience has taught me to wait and see if someone is serious about quitting drinking."

"He really means it."

Ashleigh asked, "Is he going to treatment?"

Andrea made a face, "He says it's all about will power. He ain't needing it."

Ashleigh asked, "Is he still living with you?"

With a serious tone, "No. I ain't allowing him to live with me as long as my sister is living with me."

"Is it working out?"

Andrea made a face, "She started counseling last week. I'm trying to convince my brother to go."

Ashleigh whispered, "Are you guys pressing chargers?"

Andrea gave her a look, "We ain't sure."

Ashleigh had a lot to say about abusive mothers.

What she felt safe saying was, "Don't forget we offer free legal advise and counseling services."

Andrea smiled, "I've been using the legal service. The counseling service recommended the counselor we're seeing."

"We're glad you work here. There are a lot of people who like you."

Andrea held back tears, "I look forward to coming here every day."

Andrea smiled.

Ashleigh said, "I hope it works out."

"It will."

Ashleigh glanced at the flowers with a great deal of doubt. During the conversation she conceived of a plan.

Ashleigh changed the subject, "How's it working out with spouses coming in and eating lunch?"

Andrea was happy to discuss this.

"Y'all it's wonderful. Everyone likes it."

"Are they notifying you ahead of time?"

Andrea thought of a few times when this rule was not followed.

Andrea answered, "People are telling me."

Ashleigh suspected this was a half truth.

Andrea stated, "Everyone's getting used to it. There ain't a person who wants it to end."

They glanced at one another.

Ashleigh winked, "Common sense is what we're looking for."

Andrea understood the layers, "Yes Ma'am."

Ashleigh stated, "I have to get going."

"Yes Ms. Ashleigh."

Very serious Ashleigh stated, "If you ever need anything don't be afraid to say something."

"Ma'am may I ask for one thing?"

Ashleigh hoped Andrea would ask for help.

Ashleigh refrained from touching Andrea on the arm.

"What?"

"A lot of us feel it's really cold in here."

Ashleigh held in a sigh and somehow maintained her body language, she gave her standard answer, "We're working on it."

Andrea smiled and whispered, "I'm so happy to hear it. A lot of us are having to wear coats and bring in sweaters."

Ashleigh kept her thoughts to herself, "You keep up the good work."

"Yes Ma'am."

Ashleigh commanded, "Come Nikita."

Andrea waved, "Bye Nikita."

Nikita knew in the "work" territory to never make noises back.

Something Ashleigh was struggling through, but was growing accustomed to, was being called Ms. Ashleigh and answering to Ma'am. She knew this was a southern custom and it was about respect. What made it difficult for her was when people older than her used these terms.

She turned and headed down the hallway. On her left were rows of cubicles. She was happy to see they were being decorated. This started when employees from other area's of the country arrived. Ashleigh was surprised to find out, locals were reluctant to take decorating as far as passed employees, once locals realized there was very little resistance to decorating they were all in.

On the right were filled offices. Each office: had a door on the left, a large window on the right, a name plate on the door; each name plate was a different color and one art symbol to the right of the name. When anyone walked by she made a point to acknowledge them by name. When she worked at her Foster Dad's company he knew everyone's name; she took this practice on. She purposely stopped a couple employees and talked to them. Everyone knew, Ashleigh was ready for business whenever she was without Nikita. The offices stopped and a long wall began. On this wall were a variety of paintings; a few of these paintings were of Nikita. When the wall stopped: there was a wide open space, in the center of this wide open space was a large custom build desk; standing inside of this raised desk was Haley.

Ashleigh moved herself to the far side of the desk. The front of this bowed desk was made of cherry wood, *Renewed Mastery* was printed in large gold lettering. In front of Ashleigh and Nikita were two steps and a railing. These steps went up to where Haley was currently standing. Where she was standing the desk was made off dark brown hardwood, the floor was carpeted, there was a large telephone panel in front of Haley, to the left of Haley was a computer shelf, behind Haley there were built in U shaped cabinets, on top was a U shaped shelf, this shelf started by the steps and ended by the computer shelf. On this shelf were neat piles of paperwork, a covered coffee cup, and pictures of Haley's two boys. Ashleigh noticed updated school pictures. She also spotted a new picture of herself and her two boys in front of an old train. Ashleigh suspected this was taken when Haley took the boys to Boca Raton. Next to this picture was a brand new white purse and a black sun hat with white stripes.

Ashleigh felt Haley had the perfect shape. Haley was in her mid thirties, was slightly taller than an average sized woman, had larger round breasts, her legs were longer than her torso, and her hips were wider because of having two boys; Ashleigh felt her hips added to her overall shape. Haley would have disagreed, she felt her hips were way to wide, and tried to conceal them as much as possible. Ashleigh adored her beautiful long blond hair; it was obvious Haley spent a great deal of time layering her hair. She had wonderful looking greenish blue eyes, a round shaped face, and her angelic looking lips seemed perfect. Ashleigh was envious of the outfit she was wearing. Haley was being trendy by wearing an all white outfit. She was wearing a modest looking seamless top with a ribbed cotton knit, she matched it with a full length crochet skirt with pom-pom trimmed hem. She accessorized with a very long white and black jeweled necklace, a second short pearl necklace, an embroidered belt, and leather platform sandals. Ashleigh spotted a white shrunken blazer hanging off of her chair.

Nikita was excited. She could see Female Who Smelled Funny. Nikita's tail was a weapon and it was torture to be sitting.

Haley winked at Ashleigh.

Ashleigh smiled.

Haley looked directly at Nikita.

Nikita whimpered and was clearly agitated.

"Hows my girl?"

Nikita knew by the tone she would receive a treat.

Ashleigh purposely said, "Sit."

This was torture for Nikita.

Haley again winked.

Ashleigh smiled.

"You want a treat?"

"Stay."

This was torture for Nikita.

Haley reached down and opened a side drawer.

Nikita knew exactly what was in the drawer.

Ashleigh commanded, "Stay."

Haley held onto the treat and said, "What do you say?"

Nikita learned what this command was and made a whimpering noise.

Haley tossed the treat to the ground.

Nikita looked up at Ashleigh in desperation.

With a smile Ashleigh commanded, "It's okay. You can eat it."

Nikita stood on all fours and greedily ate the treat.

While Nikita ate the treat Ashleigh asked, "What's the news of the day?"

"Mr. Bob wants to talk with you after his meeting. I'm suppose to remind you of the two meetings today. One at ten and the other at two."

"I remember."

Haley reminded Ashleigh, "Alex in R and D says he might have an answer for you?"

Ashleigh smiled and her eyes went wide, "He must have made the door bell. Has he said anything?"

"Nope."

Ashleigh made a face.

"Leah would like to talk with you."

"About what?"

"There seems to be a disagreement about a project."

Ashleigh asked with a tone, "Did a sales person promise something?"

"Most likely."

"I bet it's what Bob wants to talk to me about."

"It's more than that."

"You have a lot of posted notes on your computer screen."

"Thanks."

Haley smiled.

Ashleigh responded with a face.

Haley became serious, "Gracie gave us a stack of resumes for the assistant position."

“Anything good?”

“I weeded out a few. The rest are on your desk.”

“Has she found a new accountant?”

Haley made a face, “Oh. She wants to talk to you about that.”

“Wants to meet at the normal time?”

“Didn’t say otherwise.”

“Hows the move?”

“It’s the main reason Bob wants to talk with you.”

“Any computer glitches?”

“None that I’ve heard about.”

Ashleigh’s eyes fluttered and her body showed frustration.

“I so dislike talking to Terri.”

“So does everyone.”

Haley made a face.

“You should have seen her on Friday.”

Ashleigh’s countenance changed.

“Does she want to talk to me?”

Haley smiled, “I’m sure she does.”

“Nikita sit.”

Nikita listened.

Ashleigh asked, “What’s going on with Andrea?”

People were walking down the hallway, “Lets talk on lunch.”

“I have a plan.”

“I’m sure you do.”

Ashleigh gave her a look.

“Any other business.”

Haley sighed, “I’m sure others have said something.”

Ashleigh gave her a concerned look.

“Would you please tell them to turn up the air. It’s just so humid. I’m glad I have my new spring outfit on otherwise I’d be roasting.”

Ashleigh purposely changed the subject, “I really like it.”

Haley whispered, “I’m not sure. What about my hips?”

“They’re fine. You look great.”

Haley smiled, grabbed her hat, and put it on.

She asked, “You like it?”

“Yes.”

A couple ladies wanted to ask Haley about it, but moved on because Ashleigh was there. This upset Ashleigh.

When they were far enough away Ashleigh whispered, “They hate me.”

Haley gave her a stern look, “No they don’t.”

Ashleigh made a face.

Haley put down the hat and stepped down from her desk.

Nikita stood on all fours and wagged her tail.

Haley whispered, “You stop it.”

Ashleigh whispered back, “They could have said something.”

“Not everyone is going to like everything. You are a VP. No one wants to get in trouble or appear like they don’t work.”

Ashleigh still whispering, “I wouldn’t mind they’re good workers.”

“Have you told them?”

Ashleigh thought about this.

“Even if you have. You have to understand most people aren’t going to start talking to you first.”

Ashleigh made a face.

“It isn’t because they dislike you. It’s just how people view things.”

“I don’t like it.”

Haley reminded her, “There’s balance between work getting done and being friendly.”

Ashleigh acknowledged, “There is.”

“See you know.”

Ashleigh changing the subject asked, “I like your new perfume.”

She smiled, “I bought it from Willard’s.”

“I like that store.”

“Me too.”

They heard a beeping.

Haley winked, she looked at Nikita, “You protect your master.”

Haley: quickly went up into her desk, picked up a pair of headphones with a mic, she placed them on her head, and hit a button.

Being professional stated, “This is Renewed Mastery. Haley speaking.”

While talking she sat down in a chair.

Ashleigh smiled and stepped away from the desk. Ashleigh glanced through the glass walls and noticed the doors to her brother’s office were closed. This area behind the glass wall was as large as a good sized studio apartment. She glanced at the pink printing on the glass door on the right, it read *Ashleigh Waller*, the second line read *Vice President*, the bottom line read, *Media, Operations and Personnel*. She liked the dark pink lettering and the flower design the art department picked out. Ashleigh was impressed when the art department brought up eight different designs. She picked out a three flower design, the one in the middle was red, and the opposite two were pink. Printed next to the right side door in gold lettering; was *Renewed Mastery Inc.* underneath her brother’s name *Bob Waller* was written, underneath this *Owner and President*. Ashleigh smiled reading those words. With how many hours and what her brother sacrificed; she felt he deserved having this title printed on the glass wall. She opened the right side door. Directly in front of her, on the back wall, were three evenly spaced tinted windows; from inside it was impossible to notice these windows were tinted. To her right were the double doors leading into her brother’s office; on the right door was another name plate.

Once Nikita was inside of the office Ashleigh bent down and undid her leash. Nikita: ran to her spot underneath the last window on the right, drank from her bowl, turned around a few times, laid down on her dog rug, grabbed a rubber bone, and started to chew on it. She knew she had to lay here until Best Friend or Human Who Smelled Funny approached her; the one exception was is if she needed to make her markings.

The back of Ashleigh’s desk faced the glass wall, the front of the desk faced the windows, it was on the right side; it was only a few feet from where Nikita was laying down.

She wished there was a desk and an assistant to her brother to the right of her. She imagined this desk facing the same way as hers. On the left wall, stepping into this office area, where three bookshelves. On the top of the first bookshelf was a ceramic lighthouse, the middle one had a sailing ship model, and the third one had an old fashioned globe based upon the time of Columbus. The shelves were beginning to be filled with three ring binders. To the right of Ashleigh's desk, still from the viewpoint of stepping into the office, was a huge old school metal cabinet. The side of the cabinet was against the front wall of the building, the back was against the wall of Bob's office, and the front faced Ashleigh's desk; there was just enough clearance for Bob to open the left side office door without hitting it. Directly left of Nikita's spot was a brand new free standing wood coat rack; a coat rack the furniture department built for her. This design was to be added to the furniture they sold.

When she reached her desk she: took off her coat and hung it on the free standing coat rack, took off her shoes and set them under her desk, took down the clipboard she hung on the side of her desk, a nail she hammered into her desk herself, she sat down in her computer chair, read every posted note on her computer monitor, placed these posted notes on the clipboard, stopped every so often and wrote her own posted note, looked it over, reached under her desk and slipped on her pink steal toed shoes, opened a drawer, pulled out a pink colored pen and a black colored pen, shut this drawer, attached the pens to the clipboard, opened another drawer, pulled out safety glasses, shut the drawer, stood up, grabbed a white coat off of the coat rack, and headed out of her office.

She decided she would talk to Bob later. She knew this would be okay with her brother. One of the reasons she procrastinated talking to her brother was because his issue involved sales. Being VP of production she was often irritated with the sales department; she felt they tried to get away with way to much. She reminded herself before talking to Gracie she would read over the resumes and the notes Gracie attached to each resume.

*J*ulie made a noise and dove for the volleyball.

This turned into a three on three competition. On Julie's team was Nelson; he was from a rural town in Wisconsin. He played wide receiver and was currently playing on the Eastbank Basketball team. The other guy on Julie's team was Jayden, he was the star of the Eastbank baseball team. Playing across from these three was Monique's team. Monique was from Connecticut where she played on the girls Volleyball team and participated in track. One of her teammates was a guy named Tyrone who played basketball in the city of Milwaukee and was currently on the Eastbank basketball team. He was one of the reasons the basketball team was playing better. Her other teammate was Junior, he was a local, he was slotted to be the starting running back the following year.

It angered and surprised Monique when the ball went flying upward without ever touching the ground.

The six other students who were supposed to be playing were standing off to the side watching. Students on the other five courts were starting to pay attention to this game.

Nelson jumped and tried to spike the ball.

Tyrone blocked it and it went up into the air.

Monique set the ball and Junior jumped and hit it.

Again Julie blocked another ball and sent it over the net.

Jayden set it; Tyrone jumped and spiked the ball.

Nelson barely missed it.

The score was even.

More classmates stopped playing to watch these six play.

Monique threw the ball into the air, jumped and served it directly at Julie. Everyone made a noise. Julie somehow set the ball. Nelson went running, jumped and spiked it into an empty spot. Nelson and Tyrone pointed at one another and smiled.

Nelson handed the ball over to Julie.

She was in competitive mode. She often restrained herself from reaching this level in gym; it was impossible for her to stop it. During gym she avoided her jump serve. This time she threw the ball into the air, everyone heard her grunt, she pretended she would hit it toward Monique; instead the ball just about took Junior's head off. Julie knew he was the weakest link of the three. Monique was impressed with this serve. What surprised everyone was Tyrone dove and somehow saved it. Monique reacted quickly. She ran out of bounds and hit the ball back into play; where Tyrone spiked it and the ball landed to the right of Julie just in front of the back line.

She was disappointed in herself; she ran toward the ball.

The gym teacher blew the whistle. This caused a few volleyballs to hit the floor.

Everyone looked over when he yelled, "It ain't three on three. The rest of Y'all get back into the game."

Nelson yelled, "Why not?"

"Son."

The gym teacher, who was one of the high school football coaches, stated. "Up north teachers might put up with back talk. Here it ain't working. Y'all understanding me?"

Julie holding the ball ran up to Nelson.

She instructed, "Say Yes sir."

He looked at Julie.

She nodded her head and handed him the ball.

Nelson glanced over at the gym teacher.

"Yes sir."

"That's better. Y'all who are standing around get back into the game. It ain't a game of three on three."

This disappointed the six high school athletes and the students who disliked gym.

Julie looked at Nelson, "I'm disappointed too."

Nelson smiled.

Monique walked up to the net, "Julie."

She turned and stepped up to the net.

Monique asked in an upper east coast accent, "You play for the girls volleyball team?"

"Yes."

Monique smiled, "You think we could win a championship together?"

"I'm feeling we just might."

The female gym teacher yelled, "Girls."

Julie winked at Monique.

She turned toward this teacher, "Yes Ma'am."

She went to a spot on the court.

Monique followed Julie's lead. She missed Connecticut, but was learning the culture of Eastbank Florida. She was making the best of it because she loved her parents. Her plan was to get accepted to an upper east coast college and leave what she felt was a hick town.

Both the male gym teacher and the female gym teacher would tell the girls volleyball coach about Monique. Both these gym teachers mentioned to Monique how the girls volleyball team could use her. Later the male gym teacher approached the two guys from out of town and asked if they were interested in trying out for the Eastbank Football Team.

Since January, the Eastbank basketball teams were dominating the conference. This was causing an uproar within the conference because Eastbank was in a division two conference; everyone rightly complained they should have been in a division one conference. Before December the men's team won three games; since January they won them all. The difference between the girls team and the men's team was, the girls won four games before January; and only lost two since January. Based upon the math, even if both teams won out, they would most likely miss the playoffs. Ending up in third was exciting in Eastbank because the basketball teams were known for being the doormat of the conference. Not once in the history of Eastbank had either basketball team made the playoffs and only a handful of times ended in third. The locals assumed if this level of success would happen for a sport no one cared for; this success could be brought onto the football field.

*M*egan escorted her clients to their cars. The five guys and one lady from Quebec were happy to take home a large barracuda and two cobia; Megan was happy they gave her one of the three cobia they kept. The tourists from Quebec were just as happy with the many pictures they took. Megan knew where a once luxurious yacht sunk; at this time of year the cobia hung around this ship. It was a great spot for a short trip. An added bonus was the barracuda. There was a high possibility of catching one during this time of year. Jake and herself were not aggressively going after one. Megan was happy with the tip she received; like always she would give half to her first mate Jake.

Her clients were surprised at how well Megan spoke French; even if it was with a heavy Southern States accent. Megan was grateful two of them spoke English as a second language. At first Jake was frustrated with the French speaking tourists because he often needed Megan to translate. Now, he knew what certain French words meant, even if he was unable to speak any French himself.

When Megan turned to go back to her charter she spotted Jake pulling a large rolling onto the first pier.

Megan walked toward him. Megan considered her first mate to be a gentle professional wrestler. She often times told him so. Megan treated him as another older brother. As long as she could remember Jake and her oldest brother Duke were best friends. The professional wrestler part of this nickname came from Megan's belief he could win a fight with anyone. This belief was true. At six foot six most people were smart enough to avoid fighting him. Those foolish enough to fight him, found out: he was as strong as he looked and could effectively use his boxing skills. The reason she called him gentle was because of his caring heart.

Jake was wearing a pair of green camouflaged cargo pants, a forest green polo shirt, and a red light weight jacket; it was unzipped. Like Megan his shirt and jacket were embroidered with the *Dolphin Tours* emblem. Jake: had a long rectangle shaped face but because of his weight his face was becoming rounder, his short hair was graying, had straight lips, was clean shaven, and had bright green eyes. Women made it known they liked him. With Jake being a dedicated husband and father other women's attention never phased him.

They were in front of the charter.

Megan glanced over at the flowers underneath the sign announcing where her charter was. She made a mental note she needed to pull a few weeds.

"I'm assuming we're splitting her up."

"Yes."

Jake said, "After lunch I'll clean her. I'll split it up and give your portion later."

"Sounds good."

With excitement in his voice he said, "Linda was talking about making her cobia with pineapple."

"Y'all are lucky she's a good cook."

"Except she keeps fixing me all this healthy stuff."

Megan's dimples flashed, "We want Y'all around."

He shrugged his shoulders trying to make believe he was indifferent to what Megan said; in reality he loved her like a little sister. If anyone did anything to Megan, Jake would have helped her three older brothers fix the problem.

She tapped him on his belly, "We're trying to help Y'all loose some of this."

"I'm still missing my barbecue."

"Linda told me she liked the receipt I sent her."

He rolled his eyes, "It ain't the same."

Megan's dimples flashed.

Jake said, "I'm needing to meet Linda."

"Where Y'all headed?"

"Linda wants me to eat with her at the Company."

"Ashleigh wanted me to ask Y'all. If Y'all like the cafeteria?"

"They have healthy food there too."

He laughed.

Megan's dimples flashed.

She gave him a look.

He became serious, "It's nice. Some things they keep every day. Others things they switch."

"Is it good?"

"It's cheap and Y'all get a lot."

Megan's dimples flashed.

Megan asked, "Is she liking the job?"

"She's happy working there. She was tired of working on those docks."

"What's she doing?"

"She's answering phones."

"Does she like it?"

“She ain’t liking talking to people on the phone all day. She’s getting frustrated with people complaining.”

“Are they letting her go?”

“They ain’t like other places. She was telling Ashleigh talking to complainers was irritating. Ashleigh said she’d make her into a runner.”

“What’s a runner?”

“They take what’s needed from the warehouse to the production floor.”

Megan made a face, “Ain’t it like working on the dock?”

“I was asking her the same thing.”

They glanced at one another.

Jake broke the silence, “She said it ain’t and is looking forward to the change. She says they’ll move her next week.”

Megan asked, “Ashleigh was telling me they’re putting in a day care?”

“Mr. Bob was promising everyone he’s putting in a gym and a day care in the mall across the street. I’s hear a sub place is going in there.”

“Even with the cafeteria?”

“Not everyone eats in the cafeteria.”

Megan asked, “I’ve heard it’s big.”

“There’s like a little park in the middle.”

He shook his head.

“They made a mistake designing it.”

“What?”

“They enclosed it with glass.”

Megan made a face.

Her dimples flashed.

“Ain’t it hot in there?”

“It’s what the locals were concerned about.”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

“Has anyone told Ashleigh?”

“I ain’t sure.”

Megan made a mental note of this.

Jake said, “I’ll be back around four.”

“Okay.”

Before stepping away he asked, “Before I forget. What’s happening with the charter on March 6th?”

“Jimmy says he’ll help. I’ll be talking to Captain later. I’m sure he’ll have more information and he’ll help.”

“Will you have the charter loaded?”

“Fully.”

“I’ll be packing too.”

“Wouldn’t expect anything different.”

“I better get this fish home.”

“Ask Linda to give me her receipt.”

“I’ll bring it with your portion.”

He turned and pulled the cooler to his truck.

She smiled and stepped onto her charter. She only had a few small tasks to finish before her late charter. She would close the charter until five. Her plan was to get chores done in her houseboat and enjoy some private time.

Her dimples flashed.

She was feeling guilty. She was tempted to view naked men or reading erotic stories; she was grateful she never once clicked on a pornographic video clip. By avoiding any video clip she felt she avoided an addiction to pornography. She felt if she continued to view pornographic material she would be addicted to it. This was something she was determined to avoid. She promised herself if it ever became a problem she would stop masturbating all together; this would have been difficult but she would have been able to do it.

While unlocking the door to her houseboat she was looking forward to her private time. Time she slotted into her schedule a week prior.

February 5th Basic Principles

Part Two of Six

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Ashleigh & Megan
Book I: Friendship

Monday February 5th
Basic Principles



Day 11 of Book I
(Twenty-Two Days after Bob presented Shelly with an Apartment)

Part Three of Six

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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February 5th, Basic Principles Day 11 of Book I

(Twenty-Two Days after Shelly is offered an apartment)

Nicole stopped and looked at the tear drop stained glass windows. They were to the left and right of the main glass doors. Nicole loved how each teardrop and the background were a different color.

She swiped the badge in front of the gray plastic square; a badge she received from the guard shack. After the clicking noise ended she tried to open the door; she felt foolish for misunderstanding what the noise meant.

She heard through the small speaker above the gray square, “Ms. Nicole I’ll buzz the door.”

Nicole answered, “Yes Ma’am.”

This time there was a buzzing noise; Nicole easily opened the door. She was surprised to see another set of glass doors. The stained glass windows next to this set of doors were lighthouses. She liked how each lighthouse was different. On her next visit she would study them to see if any were Floridian lighthouses. Through the glass door she easily spotted a rectangular shaped waiting area. It was impossible to miss all of the people in this area.

She opened the door and stepped through.

Nicole was awe struck at the museum quality painting on the walls. The upper half of the wall was painted like a sky, the bottom half was split into thirds: one section was of a coastal beach, another section was of an old time sailing ship, and the last section was a marina. She really enjoyed the old time ship section. She felt the painted ropes and the sea birds made you feel like you were on an old time sailing ship. In the section of the marina someone started to paint a dock with a large bird sitting on one of the pillars, the detailing was

impressive; but the scene was incomplete. In this section of the wall a rock island was being added and there were unfinished seals sitting on the rocks. She was fascinated by a male artist who was adding to the coastal beach. A woman: was on a step ladder, a sketch pad was attached to a small plastic stand, this stand was on top of the ladder; based upon this sketch she was drawing what looked like an island. Nicole felt this would add to this section of the wall. It was easy for her to imagine the impulse to swim to the island. She felt Megan would have loved the how realistic the dolphins looked as they were swimming on top of the ocean.

What caused her to stop studying the wall was a person saying, "Ma'am. Excuse me."

"I apologize."

"It's okay."

Once he stepped passed her she looked forward. Nicole correctly assumed Andrea was separating a paper application from a clipboard. She felt it was fascinating how the artist was blending the door and window into the old fashion boat scene.

She focused on the people sitting in this area. On the right side of the room were four high backed chairs in a two by two pattern with three display showcases in the middle and two on either side. They were: wood and glass, built at the facility, the wood bottom and wood top were square, the glass of the showcase was a high rectangle, there was a lock attached to the front of them, and in each showcase was a 3d likeness of a sea animal or a glass vase; each piece of artwork had a small white tag attached to the item. A young lady was sitting in one of these chairs with a portfolio leaning up against the right side of it. On the other set of chairs was a salesman. To her left, a group of men and women were sitting on a long sectional couch filling out applications. A young man was sitting at one of the high backed chairs gazing at the glass vase in one of the display showcases. Based upon the art portfolio leaning up against the chair and how he was dressed he was from the southwest. There was enough space between the couch and these chairs for the artists to easily paint.

She cringed at the round table in the center of the room. The top of it was glass and underneath was an old fashioned ships wheel; she felt this was a horrible thing to do to an antique. She was about to walk forward but her eye caught the shape of a dolphin in one of the showcases. Nicole took special interest in a sculpture of three dolphins jumping; she made a mental note of the price. She: stood up, stepped passed the table, headed toward the sliding window, Andrea buzzed the door before she reached it, Nicole opened the door, and stepped through.

Andrea was standing behind an L shaped desk, "Howdy Ms. Nicole."

"Howdy. Happy to see Y'all."

Andrea's grandparents and Nicole's family attended the same church. Often Nicole as a teenager would volunteer at the Nursery or Sunday school. Andrea enjoyed church until she started middle school. With everything she was facing she was considering going back.

Andrea with complete sincerity said, "Y'all look nice."

"Thank-you."

This encouraged Nicole. She felt there was a lot to consider. Today, with her husband working on the production floor he was dressed casual; she was well aware he was one of only two production supervisors in the building. She felt she needed to consider how the ladies in the office area were dressed. An added concern was the rumor many of the ladies who worked here were younger and attractive. She felt she needed to consider all of the employees who

knew her. She shot for the middle of it all and hoped she was wearing an appropriate outfit while still appearing attractive.

The first thing she settled on was a newly purchased slimming seamed denim trumped skirt. She added a white supportive crochet cardigan button shirt. The reason she chose this shirt was because of the brown buttons. These buttons went with a contour buckled belt with a snakeskin texture; this gave her an excuse to wear this new belt. This gave her a chance to wear a brown stretch-knit jacket embellished with elegant leather stripes. With how cold the building felt she was grateful she chose to wear a jacket. She accessorized with: a simple brown beaded necklace, a watch with a nice brown band, a brown purse, simple hoop earrings, and natural colored makeup with an emphasis on her lips. She set her hair so it was both neat and natural.

She knew the compliment was sincere when Andrea asked about the skirt.

They stopped their conversation when a male applicant approached the window.

“Just a second.”

Nicole answered, “Don’t worry.”

Andrea smiled, she spoke to him through the opened sliding window, he showed her a badge; this is when she reached down on the desk and handed him a clipboard with an application. Nicole noticed six more clipboards all lined up with applications. Each of the clipboards had a black number stickered onto the metal clip. Nicole wondered what the number was for.

He asked if he could use a pen.

Andrea smiled and handed him one. Once he turned away she placed a magnet on a magnetic board with numbers printed on them. Next to the board was a small plastic bin with five different colored magnets. Nicole realized all five could fit on one of the numbered squares. Andrea placed a blue magnet over the number corresponding to the clipboard number. It was easy for Nicole to conclude Andrea was keeping track of those people who asked to use pens.

Andrea turned and asked, “Ms. Nicole may I have your badge?”

“Yes. Of course.”

Andrea: took it, pressed it on a gray plastic box sitting on the short side of the L shaped desk.

“If you could sign in on this sheet.”

Andrea politely pointed to a clipboard on the edge of the desk.

Nicole signed the sheet with the pen tied onto the clipboard.

Andrea asked, “Should I give Mr. Jimmy a call?”

Nicole purposely arrived early to talk to Andrea. Nicole hoped glancing at her watch would conceal this purpose.

Nicole asked, “How are things?”

Andrea lied, “I’m doing well.”

Nicole answered, “I looked up to your Grandparents. I often helped out your Nana at church.”

“They enjoyed church.”

“I hope Y’all know she cared about you deeply.”

“I often miss Papa and Nana.”

“We all miss em”

Nicole in a very concerned tone, "I've heard your sister has moved in with Y'all."

"Yes Ma'am."

"It ain't easy raising a youngin' especially when Y'all are young yourself."

"It helps with what I'm making here."

Andrea said, "Just a second."

"Sure."

Andrea took the clipboard and glanced at the number of the clipboard.

Talking through the opened sliding window, "Ms. Gracie will give Y'all a call within a few weeks. If I could have your badge."

The woman who handed in the application answered, "Yes Ma'am."

She handed the badge back to Andrea. Andrea dropped this in a box. Nicole noticed this badge was different than the badge she was given.

"Bye Now."

The woman answered, "Thank-you."

Andrea turned toward Nicole, "It's so refreshing working in a place where they actually call everyone back."

"They do?"

Andrea was barely paying attention to what she was doing: she ignored the metal board, she separated the application from the clipboard, put it into a wire basket, set another application onto the clipboard; Nicole noticed she placed it in number order.

Andrea waved her hand, "Ms. Gracie is always calling everyone back."

"Ms. Gracie is the HR manager?"

"Yes."

Nicole said, "She was so helpful to me."

"She's always trying to help."

"She seemed sweet."

Andrea smiled, "We all agree she's a sweet girl. But her Minnesota accent is funny."

Nicole mentioned, "How about how fast Ms. Ashleigh talks?"

"Y'all can tell anyone from Wisconsin because of how fast they talk. Who can pronounce the way they say Wisconsin?"

"It's their C's and their T's."

"Ain't it so true."

They giggled.

Andrea became very serious, "Ms Ashleigh ain't like other Yankees."

Nicole asked just as serious, "In what way?"

Andrea maintained her professionalism, "She cares about the people working here."

Nicole jumped in with both feet, "She ain't the only one who cares. I hope Y'all are in the knowing you could visit the community center any time you'd like."

"With the money I'm making here I ain't needed anything."

Nicole in a very serious tone said, "We ain't just about giving out food. We help people with many things."

Andrea became defensive, "I ain't needed any other help."

Nicole tried to season her speech with salt, "Honey. I'm a mother of three. Two of them are teenagers. I have a youngin' who just turned eleven. It ain't taking a psychic to understand something is wrong if Y'all are raising your teenage sister."

Andrea held in her tears but insisted, "We're doing well."

Like a stern but caring mother, "I ain't forgetting how your Nana helped me when I was first married and living with Momma. She loved all three of you."

Andrea had to admit, "So did Papa."

Nicole mentioned as only a mother of three can, "What would they be feeling about the young man who came over to my house on Christmas Eve?"

"Just a second."

In front of the sliding window was Jake.

Andrea buzzed the door.

As soon as he stepped through the door, in an excited voice he yelled, "Howdy!"

He immediately handed Andrea his badge.

She smiled, "Should I call Linda."

"Naw. She'll be here in a second."

This is when he addressed Nicole, "Well ain't this the berries. How's my adopted sister-in-law?"

"I'm fine."

"Well ain't Y'all looking nice."

"Well thank you. How was the charter?"

"Them foreigners were having a good ol' time."

He looked over at Andrea, "Them French speaking bastards gave us a cobia. It's a large one."

He turned to Nicole, "Y'all think Jimmy would like some?"

"We haven't eaten cobia in a while."

"Well I'll package Y'all some. When I'm visiting Linda tomorrow I'll make sure Jimmy gets a portion."

This is when Jimmy and Linda met one another in the lobby; they entered from different hallways.

Andrea said with a smile, "Jimmy and Linda are here."

Nicole and Jake observed them approach.

Jimmy with a smile grabbed Jake's hand, "Well nice seeing Y'all."

Jake said, "I was telling Nicole some French speaking foreigners gave us a large cobia. She was saying Y'all would like some."

"Of course."

Linda and Nicole glanced at one another.

Jimmy asked, "How was the charter?"

Linda and Nicole made faces at one another.

"Lets discuss it over lunch?"

"Sounds good."

Jake smiled, "Lets make our way to the cafeteria."

Jimmy said, "Ladies first."

Linda assured Nicole, "It's good eating."

Andrea mentioned, "Mr. Bob hired a good cook."

Andrea mentioned, "The desserts are fantastic."

Linda added, "Y'all. The cheesecake is just divine."

Jake added, "She ain't whistling Dixie. I ain't tasted such a creamy cheesecake before. But I'd be avoided the pie."

What disappointed Nicole was the inability to finish the conversation with Andrea. She turned to her, "If Y'all anything you know where to find me."

"Yes Ma'am."

Linda hoped Andrea would seek help.

Jake asked, "Linda if Y'all do the honors and lead us to the cafeteria."

Linda smiled, "Follow me."

Andrea watched the four walk away. Her thoughts went to her grandparents. She would never forget how her Grandmother would scold her Momma. She thought about the times both sets of grandparents took her to church. Her Momma hated everything about God.

Andrea glanced over at the flowers her boyfriend gave her.

She was knocked back to the present when she heard, "Ma'am."

Andrea: apologized, she took the clipboard and the pen he borrowed, and gave him the standard announcement. When he turned away she: glanced at the metal board, noted on the top of the application he borrowed a pen, stapled the resume to the top of the application, and placed it in the wire basket.

One of Leah's assistants stopped at the door: the assistant nodded her head, Andrea buzzed open the door, the assistant opened the door, and announced the name of the artist she was looking for. The artist stood up and grabbed her portfolio. When this artist checked in she asked Andrea a list of questions. Andrea was used to nervous artists. Andrea easily answered this woman's questions, encouraged her without lying; both knew it was very difficult to get this far in the selection process. Andrea was pulling for this woman: she was from South Carolina, was in her mid twenties, desperately wanted a job where she could use her artistic talents, and was nervous. Andrea knew it was even more difficult to get passed the last hurdle and actually be hired as an artist.

Andrea reminded herself to have Jake sign in before he would leave.

She looked forward to her lunch in a half hour.

She smiled when she spotted a husband who showed up every day; he was the only husband who showed up more than Jake. What Andrea found fascinating was he was just as artistic as his wife. This couple, like Ashleigh and Nicole, were concerned about Andrea's situation.

Julie stepped into the cafeteria carrying the lunch her Momma prepared for her.

On one table was: her friend Amanda, friends she played sports with, and the Snob Club.

At a back table were: Hannah, Zoe, Beth, and other less popular girls.

She wanted to sit next to Amanda to make sure she actually ate, she would have enjoyed talking to her sports friends; but the Snob Club was sitting there. Her goal was to avoid them as much as possible. The Snob Club detested Julie; their goal was to make Julie's life miserable. Julie felt all this drama was childish. Julie was aware anytime she sat with Hannah, Amanda's feelings were hurt. The balance was, she was hurt and angered by the Snob Club; especially Jennie for being one of the girls spreading rumors about her. At one time Julie considered her to be one of her best friends.

Monique surprised Julie. While carrying a school lunch tray she nodded her head at Julie and motioned for her to sit at Hanna's table.

Monique learned early being popular and fitting in was not as important as having good friends. Monique was currently six foot but knew there was a possibility of being taller. She: was mix of Afro-American and Caucasian, had straight dark hair that ended at the neckline, dark eyes, a wider nose, an oblong shaped face, luscious lips, and a cleft chin; she received this cleft chin from her white father. Because of her darker Afro-American skin tone most were surprised she was mixed raced. Her smile, when she chose to smile, was as intense as she was. Her long legs appeared as though they could get longer. Her torso was just as long as her legs. Monique; had a long arm reach, short hips, a flatter rear end, and medium sized breasts. Because of her parents she believed she was a beautiful young woman who demanded respect.

Julie was surprised Monique would want to sit with her. Julie was finding as the rumors were spreading the less anyone wanted to be her friend. This was especially hurtful with kids she knew her whole life. Because of these rumors it was difficult becoming friends with transplants; the exceptions being Beth and now Monique.

Monique dealt with nasty rumors and name calling before moving to Eastbank. She was: a Christian, politically was conservative, was determined to be a good student, avoided parties, and was a virgin; in the correct circumstances she was vocal about all of these things. She learned this from her mother. She witnessed both parents try to convince both sides of the family of what it meant to be a true Christian and how the Democrat party was deceiving people; especially minorities. What was difficult for her Mom, was her side of the family believed Monique's Father turned her into a Republican. The truth was, it was her Mom who convinced her Father how deceptive the Democrat party was.

There were many reasons why she was holding onto her virginity. She witnessed to many of her friends and cousins struggle once they became pregnant. Her mother consistently pointed out the downfalls of an unwanted pregnancy and the pitfalls of bad men, she adored her beloved inner city grandmother who prayed for all of her family, she loved her Dad, and respected her Mom's brother. Monique admired her Uncle because of the way he treated his wife and his children. Monique observed men of many races being players. She was determined to marry a good man; no matter what race they were. The only person she was willing to have sex with was a man who was willing to step up to the plate and marry her. Because of this attitude, back in Connecticut, she had a reputation of being: a tease, being old fashioned, a sell out, an Uncle Tom, and other things.

Like Hannah, Monique felt it was foolish for Julie to masturbate in front others or to be getting off in the girls bathroom. Like, Hannah and Zoe, she felt it was awful hypocritical for anyone to pick on somebody for masturbating. These young ladies felt it was especially hypocritical for the Snob Club to be promoting these rumors; these young women slept around to be popular. It was obvious Julie was a chronic masturbator because she was a sexual person. What was a concern for all of Julie's friends, a concern Hannah pointed out to Monique, once Julie started to have sex she would want it all the time.

Julie and Monique met at the back table.

Julie commented, "Y'all are an excellent volleyball player."

Julie admired Monique's following statement, "I should have played better."

"Me too."

Zoe nudged Hannah.

It was impossible to avoid spotting these two tall girls sit down at the table. Julie sat to the right of Hannah and Monique sat to the left of Zoe; these two girls sat across from one another.

Julie asked, "Hannah. Why ain't Y'all at the library?"

Beth answered in her Wisconsin accent, "We aren't scheduled today."

Hannah pushed up her glasses and added, "With the library having more volunteers we're rotating."

Zoe asked Monique, "I ain't ever spotting Y'all buy a cafeteria lunch?"

Making a face Monique answered, "I ate my lunch after gym. I was still hungry and decided to try this."

Zoe joked, "Welcome to hell."

The young ladies stared at her.

Zoe made a face and said, "What? This ain't gourmet food?"

Monique asked, "What's this?"

Zoe with a face answered, "A bad attempt at key lime pie."

Monique made a face, "It's a what?"

Julie answered, "If you ain't ever tried it don't eat it here. I'll bring Y'all a slice of my Momma's."

Beth added, "Lucy's sells it. I had it for the first time a few days ago. It's good stuff."

The two people who caught everything she said was Julie and Monique; with Julie talking to Ms. Ashleigh and Mr. Bob every day she could easily understand the fast way people from Wisconsin talked.

Zoe asked, "Huh?"

Julie answered, "She tried it at Lucy's."

Hannah added, "Lucy's makes wonderful pies."

Julie answered, "Nothing like my Momma's pie."

Zoe confirmed, "Your Momma makes a great pie."

Julie surprised everyone at the table by saying, "Maybe on Friday Y'all could come over."

Hannah pushed up her glasses.

"Y'all want us over at your house?"

Julie showed her remorse, "It's been a while."

Zoe pointed at Julie, "Y'all ain't attending the big party?"

Brenda spotted Julie, because of this she almost sat by herself but Hannah waved her over. Brenda sat as far away from Julie as possible.

Julie answered, "I'm tired of the drinking and drugs."

Everyone smiled.

Julie made it a point to say, "Brenda Y'all invited too."

Brenda made a face.

Hannah said, "Julie invited us all to her house. I'll pick Y'all up."

Julie said, "I was thinking we could watch a movie and order pizza."

Beth mentioned, "I know of some games we can play."

This is when Monique asked Brenda, "Where did you get those earrings? I really like them."

Brenda smiled, "I made em'."

Monique added, "My Momma loves butterflies."

Chelsey, Pamela, Kendall, and a couple new girls; walked by and made pig noises.

Everyone at the table felt the hurt Brenda just experienced. This angered Monique and Julie. What upset Monique was how her friends countenance fell. It was obvious to everyone at the table Brenda tried to pretend she was indifferent to this teasing.

Monique became intense and in her east coast accent said, "What's your problem?"

Brenda's eyes went big.

Except for Julie the girls at the table sort of shrunk.

Chelsey snarled, "Y'all ain't knowing the pecking order around here."

"Yeah," added Kendall.

Monique snipped back in her upper east coast accent, "I don't give a shit."

Kendall said, "Y'all should."

Julie spoke up, "Why?"

Pamela sneered, "Well the traitor speaks."

Amanda observing this from the other table was concerned.

Kendall snarled, "For Y'all information. We have the power to do a lot of things."

Monique pointed as she spoke, "I'd like to see you try something."

Pamela snarled back, "Like anyone will help Y'all"

Julie stood up from the table and pointed at herself, "I'll help her."

Pamela stepped in front of the pack, "I ain't liking traitors."

"I never was on your side. I was friends with Jennie and Amanda."

Pamela said, "She's fat too."

An irate Julie pointed at her, "Y'all. She's throwing up and starving herself."

Kendall mentioned, "She's doing what it takes. Unlike you. Ms. Killjoy."

"Maybe I'm tired of how Y'all are treating people."

The coach of the girls volleyball team stepped in between the two groups, "Is everything all right?"

Pamela looked at this intense woman, she changed her personality, "Everything is fine. We wouldn't want to cause trouble."

"Why not move along."

Pamela nodded her head and the rest of the snob club stepped out of the cafeteria.

This coach and volleyball teacher stated, "I ain't needing Y'all in trouble."

Julie answered, "Yes Ma'am."

Julie smiled and became excited, "I'd like Y'all to meet Monique. She's a great volleyball player. Monique this Ms. Walsh. She's the head coach of the girls volleyball team."

"Howdy."

"Hi."

Julie repeated herself, "Monique is a great player."

Monique was somewhat uncomfortable at the praise but would accept it.

"If Julie believes Y'all are a great player I'd like Y'all on our team."

"I'll play."

"We'll talk."

"Okay."

She shook her head and said, "Call me Coach or Ms. Walsh."

Monique answered, "Yes Coach."

"Honey. That'll be just fine."

She turned and yelled, "Hey."

Julie and Monique smiled at one another.

Coach approached the kids she yelled at.

The two friends sat back down.

Brenda with a smile leaned over, "I could make Y'all a butterfly necklace or earrings."

"Could you make her a necklace?"

"I will."

Julie leaned over and said, "The Company is opening up art classes."

Zoe looked at Julie, "What?"

"Mr. Bob and Ms. Ashleigh were telling me to tell Y'all they're about to start art classes. They're working with the Recreation Department and the Community Center. The classes will be taught by the artists working for the company."

This surprised everyone at the table.

Julie mentioned, "Your Momma should apply at Mr. Bob's company."

Zoe rolled her eyes, "She ain't ever working for a company."

"Mr. Bob's company is different."

Zoe answered, "It's a company ain't it?"

Monique chimed in, "If my Dad didn't think it was a good company we'd never moved."

She wished it would have been a horrible company so the family would have stayed in Connecticut.

Everyone spotted Hannah gently touch Brenda and nod her head.

Brenda reluctantly asked, "What type of classes?"

Julie smiled, "I believe they're teaching just about everything."

Brenda concerned, "What'll it cost?"

Zoe piped up, "Yeah. What's it cost?"

Julie answered, "I ain't sure. But if I talk to Mr. Bob I'm sure something will be worked out."

A gal at the table asked Julie, "How do Y'all know them?"

"I walk Ms. Ashleigh's dawg."

Monique asked, "What's it's name?"

This excited Julie: she promised to bring in pictures of her, they talked about dogs, pets, and about nice things until lunch was over.

As they were leaving Julie stepped over to Brenda, "I'd like Y'all to come over."

She answered cautiously, "I'll think about it."

Hannah was happy about this. Hannah correctly believed the Snob Club was now gunning for Julie. Hannah would try to find a way to talk to Amanda without the Snob Club knowing.

*M*egan stepped off her charter named *Dolphin Queen* onto a professionally installed pier. This pier was on the port side of the vessel. Attached to this pier was a five rung metal fence with a metal gate at the front of the pier and next to the charter. Currently the gate was secured to the five rung fence. She: removed her keys from off her belt loop, unclipped the

gate, shut the gate, stuck the key into the gate, and locked it shut. Once the gate was secured she: selected a short key, stepped to the back of the wooden fence, put the key into a metal box, took out a metal sign that read; *Be back at* below this was sign of a clock, where she moved the hands to when she planned on returning to the charter, underneath the clock was a short message and her business phone number. She stepped from the pier of the charter onto the first pier of the marina. She turned to face the front of her charter. On either side of the charter's pier, attached to the first pier of the marina, was a short but decorative wooden fence. Attached to the right side of this fence was: a wooden pole with a sign attached to it, at the bottom of the pole was a button with a small sign above saying *ring*, a wooden bench was secured to the front of the wooden fence, and above and slightly behind the bench was a flower bed; it was the length of the wooden bench. On the left side of the wooden pier, attached to the decorative fence was a large wooden sign designed by her Nephew Jeff. The top quarter of the sign, in the fancy font Megan used on her business cards, was the name of her small business; *Dolphin Tours*. Just below this title was the symbol of Megan's small business; this was three dolphins swimming swiftly on top of the ocean. Underneath Megan's symbol Jeff carved in fancy but readable letters: *Ms. Megan Steward Owner Operator*, beneath this was Megan's business cell phone number, and her website address. Underneath this sign was a well maintained flower bed; Nicole often times helped Megan maintain it. She stepped up onto the wooden bench and removed a sign that read; *If need assistance please ring bell*. She slid this sign out of the sleeve and replaced it with the one with the clock on it. She quickly stepped back to the metal box; placed the sign into it and shut the lid. She would lock it with the last use of the day.

She: stepped to the gate attached to her pier, unhooked it, while holding onto the gate stepped onto the first pier, used a colored coded key, and locked this gate.

Her dimples flashed.

She glanced at her keys. She wished she would have changed into this system of colored keys and three key rings before October. On the night of the sport and boat show she struggled getting into her houseboat and ended up peeing in her pants. Before this night, if anyone explained to her the premise of watersports; she would have found the whole idea revolting. Without the circumstances of that night falling into place she would have never considered pee a sexual act. As she headed toward her houseboat she was considering putting herself into a pee desperation moment.

She was fighting the temptation to: go into her office, log onto the internet, search out erotic stories, and pictures of nude men. She strongly believed a consequence of viewing pornographic material was becoming addicted to it. The three reasons she disliked pornographic material was: the time it seemed to waist, the compulsion to read and watch it, and it was becoming difficult for her to have an orgasm without it. She felt porn was an overall negative for someone's sexual, mental, and spiritual health.

She wished she would have never entered the male strip club or viewed naked men on the internet. Friends helped her to understand her curiosity in wanting to see what a man looked like nude, but she would never justify viewing pornographic material to fulfill this curiosity. She felt her fascination with big cocked athletic men was hypocritical. For years she complained about men seeking out porn to look at big breasted women. The least thing she wanted was to be disappointed in a husband because of the size of his cock. She felt strongly

about this, because she believed a husband would be disappointed in her small breasts; breasts she felt were hideous looking.

She felt reading erotic stories changed her. She felt some of the themes she read were an extension of what she was already interested in. While other stories exposed her to ideas she would have never considered. She noticed, when she first started reading erotic stories some of the categories listed on the websites were shocking to her, after reading a number of stories it was easy for her to explore those categories she once found shocking. She felt the erotic stories about pee were an example of both. Many of the sexual acts she wanted to explore were only conceived because of the stories she read. She explored two acts only after reading them in erotic stories. She never blamed the stories for her decision to try anything, she understood it was her choice to indulge in an act. She believed her recent fantasies about: restraints, spanking, latex, shoes, boots, feet, public sex, mutual masturbation, teasing, edging, and fetish clothing were all a reflection of the stories she read. She was relieved to find: lesbian stories, threesome stories, group sex stories, violent sex stories, anal sex stories, incest stories, and ridiculing men with small cocks repulsive to her. The type of stories she read only a few times and now avoided were: role reversal stories, domination stories, and pegging stories. She avoided these subjects because she felt they were having a negative affect on what she termed her “sexual personality”. She wished she would have researched these topics in a proper way; instead of reading about these topics in erotic stories.

She: stepped down from the first pier of the marina, onto the wooded pier of her houseboat, and then stepped onto the stern of her houseboat. She studied this area. In a few weeks she would exchange her hanging winter plants with her hanging summer plants. She checked the potted palm tree. It was secured to poles that connected the first deck with the top deck. These poles wrapped around the houseboat creating a walkway around the living quarters of her houseboat. She liked the new planter because it held the moisture of the soil. Observing new buds she felt she did a good job of trimming. She turned around and headed toward the door. She glanced up at the awful looking faded plastic plant hanging a short distance from the door; this is where she hid extra houseboat keys. She promised herself the next time she went to the thrift store she would look for something different to hang there.

She: unlocked her door, stepped into her houseboat, shut the door, locked it, went down the two steps into the lounge, and stepped over to her end table. This end table was just passed the futon on the port side of her houseboat, it separated the lounge from the galley. She: set her keys on it, took off her leather pouch, removed her business cell phone from the pouch, set the pouch on the table, connected the phone to the charger sitting on the table, removed out of her blue jacket her personal phone, and plugged it into a different charging cord. She: stepped over to her Ficus Allie tree, was grateful she trimmed it, liked the new planter, but made a face at the green spot on the ceiling. She was irritated with herself for: the tree growing large enough to leave a green spot on the ceiling and for the green spot still being on the ceiling. She: reached behind this tree, undid the tie to the drapes her Ma sewed for her on Christmas, pulled this section to the middle, making sure to avoid the hanging plant on this side of the window, stepped passed the futon under the window, turned on the antique lamp given to her by her deceased Nana, undid this side of the curtains, pulled this side to the center, this time avoiding the largest hanging plant she owned, and fastened these sides together. She stepped over to the starboard side of the houseboat: she stepped between the TV stand and the plant stand, undid these drapes, was careful to avoid the three hanging plants in

front of these windows, brought it to the middle of these windows, stepped passed the three plant stands, she was now on the edge of the lounge and the galley, undid the curtains, slid the curtains to the center, made sure she missed the three hanging plants in front of this window; she fastened the curtains together. She went over to the port side of the lounge: undid the curtains nearest the galley, slide them to the middle of the window, avoiding another large hanging plant, stepped around the futon on this side, brushed up against her Ficus Allie tree, undid these drapes, slid them over, avoiding another plant, and fastened the two sides together. She: stepped back to the plant she just avoided, carefully removed a bud, and stepped into the galley. The only thing separating the galley was a rug on the deck. She wanted to replace this rug with something else; she was unsure of what this else was. She: stepped to the reverse L shaped cabinet, gently set the bud on the counter, opened a top cabinet, took out a small bowl, filled it with water, gently set the bud in it, set this on the small wooden kitchen table next to three other bowls. She hoped all four would grow and she could give these plants to her three sister-in-laws and to Ashleigh. She stepped to the side of the kitchen table, closed the blinds, and closed these drapes. These were of the same color as the lounge but they were decorated with a leaf pattern. She stepped back to the port side. She easily closed the single drape over the two tubed sink. The coffee maker and toaster she received as Christmas gifts were on the short side of the reverse L shaped counter.

She stepped through the short hallway separating the galley from her cabin into her cabin. On the starboard side of this hallway was the head and a linen closet. On the port side was a utility closet and a small stacked washer and dryer; she only used for small loads.

The starboard side blinds of her cabin were already shut. She stepped to the bow side she leaned over the wheel of her vessel and shut the blinds. Shutting out the view of: her porch like bow, the Eastbank river, and in the distance the walking bridge over the river. These blinds easily missed a cactus and a flowering plant. She stepped over to the door on this side of the vessel, she made sure the door was locked, shut the curtains on the square window of the door, and looked over at the starboard side. She. decided the blinds were not tight enough. She: stepped over to this side, knelt on her single bed, closed these curtains, went back to the bow window, and shut these drapes too. She: stepped over to her linen closet, opened the door, grabbed a towel and a wash cloth, shut the door, stepped into the head, placed the towel and wash cloth on a shelf, removed her clothes, grabbed the wash cloth, and stepped into the corner shower.

Two days prior, she recognized she would have this time to herself. During these two days she considered many ways to enjoy herself. While taking her shower she was weighting the pros and cons of her final two ideas: both in their unique ways caused her to feel awkward, both had preparation, both would bring about great pleasure, both indulged her fetishes, and both involved what she termed her “special clothes.” Both ideas allowed her to clean her houseboat and take care of her plants. If she indulged in pee desperation this would involved a clean up, another shower, washing of clothes, and result in a mixture of feelings. The last time she indulged in this fetish, the anticipation and fantasy was more exciting than the reality. This was caused by the rush to accomplish it, the clean up after, and the uncomfortable feelings of partaking in it. If she dressed provocatively and allowed herself to enjoy the fantasies and feelings of how she dressed, this would prove satisfying; even if it was less enjoyable than indulging in pee desperation. What ultimately made her select dressing up was

avoiding a second shower. Assessing the decision, she felt if she wanted to experience pee desperation she should have needed to start at least an hour before this gap in time.

She started by: leaning up against the shower wall, spreading her legs, allowing herself to pee in the shower, she touched the pee stream with one hand, and teased her nipples with the other. She started this after reading about a woman's experience on a blog. She always felt awkward whenever she did this; but there was no doubt this was a turn on for her. She stopped touching herself when the stream ended. If she wanted a short session she would have been more aggressive in her approach. After the stream she took some extra time to clean herself and finished her shower.

She: stepped out of her corner shower, stepped out onto the shower mat, dried herself, and started to tie the towel around her body. She stopped. She recognized at some point a husband would see her naked. She thought of her reaction whenever she showered with girls and women after sporting events or at the Y; she went to great lengths to cover herself with a towel or to be quick in getting dressed. At this moment she recognized: the blinds were down, the curtains were shut, the doors were locked, and how she often slept in the nude. She felt she needed to gain confidence in her nudity to present herself to a future husband.

Her dimples flashed.

She asked herself out loud, "Who will see me?"

Her dimples flashed again.

It took some personal bravery: she folded the towel over her arm, grabbed all of her dirty clothes, stepped out of the head, stepped into her cabin, stepped to the open French doors of her closet, and placed her shower towel and dirty clothes into the hamper. She: turned from her closet, stepped over to her black and red trunk, opened the combination lock, set it on the deck, lifted the top, grabbed her journal, and the book of sexual questions. She stopped and studied the cover of the second book of sexual questions. This second book was exactly like the first, with the one difference the questions in this book were left unanswered. Her plan was to give this second one to a potential husband. Her intention was to use this book to open a discussion about sex before being married. She: set the journal and the book she was working through onto her bed, lifted up the trunk shelf; underneath were neatly folded clothes. She went through her small stack of: pants, denim jeans, a couple short skirts, and selected a shiny bright red skirt made of a plastic type of material. She wore this skirt before. She then went through a stack of shirts and blouses. She picked out a cream colored embellished scoopneck silky textured tee; this tee stuck to her body. The only place she wore these items was in the privacy of her home. She then selected a pair of red thigh high fishnet stockings with vinyl tops; these were new in the packaging. She: set these clothes onto her bed, fixed the contents of her trunk, put the shelf back, shut the trunk, picked up the lock, hooked it back onto the trunk without locking it, stepped over to her closet, pulled out a drawer, selected a pair of the skimpiest red pair of hiphugger panties she ever purchased, closed the drawer, and closed the French doors of the closet. While changing into these clothes she allowed herself to feel aroused. She was able to plan on what chores she wanted to accomplish and what order to accomplish them in. Once she was finished dressing she stepped into the head of her houseboat.

She modeled herself in front of the full length mirror attached to the back of the head door. She felt a mix of emotions. She felt adventurous; something she liked. She felt sexy; she wanted to grow accustomed to this feeling. She felt embarrassed; if someone she knew spotted

her wearing this outfit she would have wanted to die. She felt guilty; she was unsure if a respectable lady should be dressing this way. She felt somewhat slutty; this bothered her but she knew she was far from one. She wondered; if a moral guy would think less of her for dressing this way. A deep concern; would a future husband be completely turned off and offended she would dress this way. She wanted to believe Ashleigh. Ashleigh felt most guys would be ecstatic with a woman who wanted to dress sexy. Megan questioned this advice. Megan wanted to marry a guy who: was a gentleman, was loyal, and had morals. Her internal question; *Would a guy who liked a woman with fetishes be loyal?*

The one item she felt was missing was high healed boots. She became interested in trying them on after reading erotic stories and seeing models wear them on lingerie websites. She wanted a future husband to like her wearing sexy outfits. Many of the erotic stories written by men mentioned women in boots. She believed if she wore these type of boots a future husband might be more inclined to enjoy her wearing sexy outfits. There were two problems with these type of boots: they were expensive and most had high heels. With her being six foot tall it was difficult for her to wear high heels. She correctly believed if she wanted to wear fetish type of boots she would need to practice walking in them. The biggest issue was the cost. Normally when she purchased shoes on line or through a catalog she ordered more than one and would return any she was unable to wear. This type of footwear was too expensive for her to do this; she was too shy to enter the type of store that sold footwear like this.

She: stepped out of the head of her houseboat, went back to her cabin, grabbed the book of questions and her journal, set them on the kitchen table in her galley, and proceeded with her chores. While vacuuming she imagined a husband helping her clean her houseboat but was distracted because of the outfit she wore. She loved the idea of teasing a husband. She enjoyed the feeling of the blouse touching her nipples. After she was done vacuuming she dusted and wiped off all her counters. She: sprayed, trimmed, and watered her plants. When she stretched to reach her hanging plants she imagined a husband turned on by her long legs and buttock. Before she was done with her plants she: stopped, set the spray bottle and the watering can onto the coffee table, and again stepped in front of the full length mirror. She felt childish staring at the outline of her hard breasts and erect nipples. She imagined Christopher enjoying the view.

Her dimples flashed.

This just about killed her fantasy.

She felt any future husband would most likely avoid them completely. She felt her 34b sized breasts were hideous looking; she felt they were small, disliked how one breast was larger than the other, and she hated her quarter sized areolas. No matter how horrendous she believed her breasts to be, when they were stimulated it sent shock waves of arousal throughout her body.

She turned to look at her side profile. At six foot it was difficult to miss her buttock and legs. She imagined a husband slowly taking off her stockings; this sent chills up her spine. She cut off the fantasy because she wanted to finish her chores. She: stepped out of the head, finished her plants, cleaned the galley, cleaned the head, and finished by mopping the inside of her houseboat; she was starting to like the pine smell cleaner she purchased. Once she was done cleaning she made herself a simple lunch. This consisted of: leftover chicken macaroni salad, blueberry yogurt she mixed herself, peeled an orange, and took out a bottled water.

She relaxed once she set all of these items on her kitchen table. She spent the first part of her lunch writing in her journal. After she answered numerous questions from the book of questions. Filling out these questions forced her to think about her current boyfriend Christopher. She stood up and grabbed a second bottle of water. She sat back down at the table, and set the book of questions to the side.

Her dimples flashed.

While staring into the lounge of her houseboat she thought about her relationship with Christopher. After a few minutes she snapped out of her gaze. She liked so many things about him but she had doubts about their relationship; she wrote these concerns down. She wrote down all of the possible reactions Christopher would have if she brought up the subject of sex. When she finished writing this down she no longer felt aroused.

Her dimples flashed.

She closed out her journal entry and again opened the book of sexual questions; after answering a few questions she again felt aroused. She looked at the clock in her galley. She wanted to answer more of the questions but felt it would be irresponsible. She: tossed out the orange peels and the water bottles, rinsed her dishes, set them in her small dishwasher, cleaned the table, stepped into the head, did her business, washed her hands, and stepped into her cabin. Once there: she opened her closet, grabbed her body pillow, set it on the floor next to her bed, laid on her back, and began to imagine many things. She imagined discussing fetishes with an understanding husband. She imagined what it would be like: to be kissed, to be touched, what it would feel like to touch a penis, and what it felt like to mount a guy. She hoped he would reach up and touch her breasts. The things she wanted most: was a guy who loved her, someone loyal, someone who would communicate with her, someone who would respect her, and would work at having a successful relationship. She focused on the sensations she was giving herself and found relief for the second time. She subconsciously cuddled the body pillow.

While laying there, she thought about: her relationship with Christopher, her business schedule for the next few days, family, and miscellaneous life things. She glanced at her digital alarm clock and set the alarm for an hour nap. After the nap she: cleaned up, placed her special clothes into the hamper, placed her book and journal back into the trunk, locked it, exchanged the pillow case on the body pillow, placed the old pillow case into her hamper, put her body pillow back into the closet, dressed in what she would wear for the charter, and open all of her drapes and blinds.

After she headed to her office.

Shelly spotted her Aunt Vera.

Vera stepped into the Italian restaurant and approached the hostess. Shelly knew who Vera was based upon an emailed photo. Shelly caught her breath. There was a high possibility she would look like Vera when she was fifty.

Her heart pounded.

The high and drunk Shelly would have left the restaurant through the back door. This would have been rude for many reasons. A main reason was the hour and a half drive Vera accomplished during a Wisconsin winter. The weather in Shelly's area was mild but where Vera came from it was snowing; this made the hour drive into an hour and a half.

Shelly stood up when the hostess pointed toward her.

They studied one another. Thoughts and feelings flooding both. Shelly felt it was the right thing to step out from the table.

Vera: smiled and approached.

Shelly was grateful she was the one to approach. Otherwise; there was the possibility she would have collapsed before reaching Vera.

Her Aunt was five seven, her long thick red hair was set nice; as nice as it could stay with the winter wind. She: was unbuttoning her olive colored pea coat, took off her black gloves, and slid off her purse; Vera stopped when she reached the table.

They stared at one another.

Vera blurted out, "You look like Crystal."

This took Shelly by surprise.

Vera felt horrible, "I'm so sorry. Crystal is my oldest daughter."

"It's okay."

In a pleasant voice Vera asked, "Would you mind if I get settled?"

"No. Go ahead."

Shelly watched her: set her gloves in a side pocket of her purse, set her purse on the chair, hung her coat over the chair, and then hung her purse over the chair. She was wearing a brand new pair of black slacks, very nice black boots, a red and black patchwork kimono, underneath she was wearing a matching tank; it appeared to Shelly both were new and warm. Shelly liked the long gold necklace with the gold medallion. She was wearing a light amount of makeup and two simple gold post earrings.

It was insistently obvious to Shelly, Shelly inherited many of her father's family facial features. The similarities that surprised Shelly: Vera's red hair, the same light completion, had similar lips, similar chin, high cheekbones, and long faces. What was different: her Aunt had a more rectangle shaped face, had a smaller skinny nose, eyes were a dark green, was without a cleft chin, and a more petite frame.

When Vera finished hanging her things she took a breath. It was obvious to Shelly she was refraining from tearing.

"Shall we sit?"

Shelly smiled, "Oh yes."

The waitress arrived at the table. Both were happy the waitress showed up, it gave them a moment to settle their feelings.

Water was set on the table and they were handed menu's. She took their order for drinks; Vera asked for a cup of coffee and Shelly ordered a root beer.

"You mind if I get my glasses."

"Oh no."

Shelly watched her open her purse and slip on a pair of glasses.

"I took them off when I stepped out of the car."

She paused for a moment.

"I just dislike the cold."

Shelly answered, "After spending time in Florida I appreciate the changes."

"As much as I complain about the cold. I hated Arizona. My husband."

She smiled.

"Your Uncle. If it was up to him we'd have moved there a long time ago."

“Why haven’t you?”

“My two daughters, my son, and my five grandchildren.”

This was fascinating and overwhelming.

“I apologize.”

She gave a reassuring look.

“I’m not trying to overwhelm you. It’s just I feel like we have a lot of catching up to do. I feel the need to share it all. I know I shouldn’t be like this. It’s just. Well....”

She trailed off.

This hit Shelly like a ton of bricks; granted they were good wonderful bricks.

They both teared.

They were both happy when the waitress returned with their drinks. They both needed time to figure out what they wanted to order. The waitress left.

Vera broke the silence, “Your Mother and I used to eat at a little Italian restaurant all the time. I’m assuming you like Italian food?”

Shelly just looked at her and answered, “Yea. Mother took me here ever since I was little.”

“Did she like the lasagna here?”

“Yea.”

Vera smiled, “I’m sure she liked the garlic bread.”

Shelly found herself saying, “I believed she liked the garlic bread more than the lasagna.”

“Some things don’t change. You mind if I check the menu?”

“I like the cheesy bread. A friend and I used to order it.”

She glanced, smiled, and said, “Hmmm.”

She picked up the menu and started to look it over.

Looking at the menu she said, “Your Mother is a good woman.”

She stopped and gave Shelly a mom look.

“You tell her I still consider her my friend. Will you do that?”

“Of course I will.”

Vera smiled and went back to looking at the menu.

Shelly was feeling a mix of emotions; but this woman was putting her at ease.

Vera just started, “Back in the sixties your mom and I would have been considered wild girls.”

She looked up from the menu.

“I’m not proud of everything I did back then. As I’m sure your Mother isn’t either. But I had a brother who thought he knew every thing. In reality he knew very little.”

Shelly took note of the look of hurt on her face and fluctuation in her voice.

“I don’t like talking about him.”

Silence.

Shelly was unsure of what to say.

Vera pressed on.

It was obvious Vera was allowing herself to touch wounds she disliked touching.

“My brother, who is your father.”

She paused, blinked her eyes, and took a drink of water.

“Made many poor decisions.”

She paused again.

It was obvious to Shelly she was holding in emotion, “I’m assuming you know what happened to him?”

Shelly answered, “I read the newspaper articles.”

“I wish he’d had married your mother.”

Vera made a face and with an angry tone said, “She was probably better off not marrying him.”

Shelly was unsure of what to feel or think.

“My father.”

She set down the menu and pressed on.

“He was a strong man. A demanding man. A man who loved his son. It was easier for him to blame others for the stupidity of his son instead of facing what his son had become. I have an older sister. Your other Aunt. Who was a Daddy’s girl. If Daddy said something she believed him and did as he said.”

She pointed to herself.

“I’m more like my mother. We are independent thinkers. My mother to a lesser degree. Still, my Mother to keep the peace would do what Dad said. I on the other hand felt there was a lot of.”

She paused and thought of what wording to choose.

“Let’s say.”

She again paused.

Then said with confidence while leaning forward, “Shortsightedness going around. We were all hurt by what your father did. To be honest we still feel hurt by what he did.”

She stopped again.

She found the courage to press on, “Unlike some of the others I never blamed your mother or his lover in Iowa for what happened.”

Vera caught herself.

Shelly felt there was more to this woman in Iowa. Shelly felt it would have been wrong to ask about it.

Vera started up again, “I’m certain what happened hurt your mother a great deal. Even if she never said so. I would have visited you myself but I was respecting your mother’s wishes. Don’t you be angry at her. The way my family treated her and what they said to her. I don’t blame her for keeping you away from me.”

She somehow restrained her tears.

“I’m just glad I sent pictures and letters. I wanted to believe she would keep them.”

“She did.”

Holding back tears Vera asked, “I suspect this is part of the reason we’re talking right now?”

They both held in their emotions and both wiped away tears.

Shelly answered, “It is.”

The waitress showed up. She refilled Vera’s coffee and gave Shelly another white soda.

Vera put her emotions in check and answered, “We’d like the family style lasagna and the cheesy bread.”

She turned toward Shelly, “Sound good?”

“Of course.”

The waitress took the menu's and stepped away.

"Most of the women in our family have red hair."

"My son's hair is turning red."

"Do you have a picture?"

This excited Shelly, she reached into her purse, and grabbed her wallet. She took out a large collection of pictures and handed them to Vera.

"He's cute. What's his name?"

"Robert. But I call him Little Bobby."

"I had nicknames for all of my children."

Vera's cell phone rang.

"Shoot. I forgot to call your Uncle. I promised I'd call him when I arrived."

Shelly believed the two of them loved one another.

Vera made sure it was a short call.

Right after she snapped the phone shut she stated, "I'm sorry."

"It's okay."

"I have some pictures too."

Vera: took out of her purse a small envelope, pulled a chair from another table, set it next to Shelly, sat down like a lady, and proceeded to show her a family Shelly never met. What Shelly admired was Vera's honesty. Many of these family members were alcoholics or drug addicts; many were now clean and sober. She mentioned how a couple of these members died of cancer, another died of a drug overdose, one died of the sorceress of the liver, and she informed her of the inherited diseases that ran in the family. Shelly being a mother appreciated this information. Shelly made a mental note on how many of her Father's family wore glasses. It seemed to Shelly her Fathers side of the family were a mix of artists, musicians, and blue collar workers. All of this information helped her fill in many of the nagging unanswered questions she carried around with her.

She agreed with Vera, Vera's oldest daughter, looked a lot like herself.

When the food arrived, Vera gently set the envelope on the side of the table, set the chair back, and sat back down across from Shelly. Shelly took the envelope and slid it into her purse. She believed her Aunt would invite her to a family gathering. Shelly was both excited and nervous about this.

While eating Vera told Shelly how her Uncle owned an electric business; he employed a small number of employees. She handled most of the customer service and as a certified electrician helped out, She made a point to mention it was with "small things." Her youngest daughter was a single parent of a boy. Vera explained on how the father just disappeared. She was excited to talk about her youngest son's love of playing the piano. He was involved in the school band and often played in the worship band at the church. She told her when and why she accepted Christ as a savior. She went on to to say without her faith she believed she would have never been able to turn away from drugs, alcohol, and would have never stopped being what she described as a "wild" girl.

As they finished the meal Shelly felt it was time to be honest about herself. She: admitted how she rebelled against her Mother and Step-dad, mentioned how she was once a dancer, her own struggles with drugs and alcohol, described the moment she accepted Jesus while in prison (she was grateful Vera avoided asking any questions about her experience in prison), mentioned how she was working at a grocery store, and how she was turning around

a tough semester. She explained in detail how she found out about her father. She ended by giving a short history of her Mother, Step-dad, and her two Step-brothers.

At the end Vera smiled, "It appears to me your getting your life together."

"I'm trying."

Very serious she stated, "Some don't ever try. Unfortunately in our family it's a curse. Be happy you have a lot of your mother in you."

This shook Shelly to the core.

"You also have traits of your father. He wasn't all bad. He was a delightful young man before he started taking drugs, started drinking, and drank the political Kool-Aid they sold him in college."

Shelly feeling very comfortable answered, "Nothing good comes from it does it?"

"All three are poison."

Vera gave a look, and asked, "If you don't mind me asking."

"Go ahead."

Vera made a face and asked; "I've told you how my second daughter has a three year old. Lets say the babies father is a real winner."

Shelly knew what was coming.

"Is your son's father a good man?"

"Yes. He's paying child support and we're going through court to get visitation settled. He does live in Florida."

Shelly paused and felt so many things.

"We're working everything out. He owns a house up here. He flies here every other weekend."

She again found herself saying, "He's a good father and we're working things out."

Vera answered, "Hmmm."

Shelly heard her Aunt say this a few times. It was obvious there were heaps of: thoughts, feelings, and wisdom behind this.

Shelly felt compelled to say, "I'm glad we're friends and we aren't fighting. I feel fortunate he's paying support."

Vera smiled, "Is there a chance you would get back together with him?"

Shelly answered, "We're just really good friends who made a mistake one day."

Vera gave her a look and again said, "Hmmm."

"Oh. Nothing will ever happen between the two of us again. I'm focused on my stuff and being a mom. The least thing I need is a man in my life."

Vera smiled.

She looked at her watch, "I'm hoping I could have you at my house to meet my family? I'd also like to meet Robert. I'm not going to over whelm you by meeting everyone."

"I'd like that."

She stood up. She slipped on everything to survive a Wisconsin winter.

Shelly stood up and watched.

Both were unable to hold in the tears and hugged.

When they embraced, Shelly felt an overwhelming sense this woman had prayed for her.

Vera said while holding onto her hands, "I'm so happy to finally have met you."

"Thank-you."

Vera removed the tears from her eyes and said, “You’re part of the family.”

This meant a great deal to Shelly.

“Don’t forget to call.”

Shelly answered honestly, “I promise.”

With this Shelly watched Vera: grab the check, quickly step away from the table, Vera pay the bill at the front register, step out of the restaurant, step inside of an SUV, take off her glasses, appeared to cry for a few minutes, wiped away tears, put her glasses back on, and drove out of sight.

This was a lunch Shelly would never forget.

She: finished her white soda, set her keys on the table, put on her winter clothing, grabbed the aluminum bin filled with left overs, and stepped out of the restaurant. She looked up at the sky and believed snow was headed their way. She was grateful Bob purchased her the Subaru Outback she was now driving.

*A*shleigh was standing in the farthest corner of the warehouse. Her blond hair was in a pony tail. She was wearing: pink steel toed boots, white coat, and the safety goggles were hanging out of a pocket. On her clipboard were five orders and a large posted note reminding her of a wrong shipment. These orders were the copies before they went out to the warehouse: two were for finished goods, one was an order for production, and the last two were office supplies. The note was about a wrong shipment of incoming wood.

All around her she was hearing: shouting, hammering, clanking, and the beeping of forklifts. The metal shelving they were putting up arrived from different warehouses from across the country. There were: orange, green, and blue shelving scattered all throughout the complex. Each section put up looked like a rainbow. But they were all the same type, size, and were secured. There was a debate between painting them all one color or to color code the aisles based upon function.

While in the warehouse she was inspecting it. She understood the warehouse was still under construction, but she was determined to have an organized warehouse system. There was a computer system in place. Each shelf had a marked location. When an item was placed in a location the items location was recorded into the computer system. Once all the shelving was up she planned on changing how the locations were marked. She felt the numbering system lacked common sense. This was happening because new areas were being built up, the locations were created, but they were now out of order. This was something neither Bob or Ashleigh would put with. In addition to changing the locations, Ashleigh felt it was important to label the rows so humans could easily remember where they were. A current problem was none of the rows had official titles. Everyone seemed to have a different name for the same aisle and sections. Her idea was to name them like streets. She wanted aisles going in one direction to have numbers and the other aisles going in the other direction a name. She could have cared less which way was numbered and what they used as names.

Bob was about to announce a contest on naming the aisles.

Ashleigh was in a section of the warehouse with eight short rows. Two rows forward, was what Ashleigh was calling the up and down rows, directly to her right was the last of what she was calling the left and right rows, behind her were the last six rows of this section, and the wall of the building.

She made a noise of frustration.

This section of the warehouse was currently being used for supplies. In front of her were office supplies. They were so over loaded with some of the supplies they were making a list on where to donate these items. While other items were in short supply. She understood some of this happened because of combining the locations, but she suspected there was a lot of double ordering and short sided ordering. On the supply orders she made a lot of notes; just like she did on the other orders. She: placed these orders under some paperwork, made sure it was clipped on tight, turned, and headed toward the dock.

Just before she reached the up and down row she looked up at a brand new mirror hanging from the ceiling; she stopped and a forklift went by. She headed to the area where rail shipments were dropped off. She purposely avoided Dave the warehouse manager and went up to one of the receiving clerks named Joe.

Joe: was in his early fifties, was from a county over, was tough, had worked in warehousing and shipping docks his whole life, was brash, he sometimes irritated Ashleigh, but Ashleigh appreciated his bluntness. He was surprised when Ashleigh approached him and asked about a wood shipment. He gladly showed her what he believed was a lower quality of wood.

The situation was exactly like Dave said. She asked Joe for the purchasing order and the invoice of the shipment. Joe was eager to take her to their long desk. She was delighted to see: how neat and organized the desk was, how Joe knew exactly where the paperwork was and how easy it was to photocopy the original paperwork; she gave back the originals to Joe. Joe being who he was asked what they were doing with the wood. She chose one of the two options she discussed with Dave. Joe gave a rare smile. He promised to move this wood where she wanted it to be used. After she found Dave. They discussed her decision. She made a point of telling Dave on how much she appreciated both Joe and himself.

Dave knew this to be true.

Ashleigh then stepped out of the warehouse and headed to the industrial R and D area of the complex. She stopped a few times to talk with people, these were a mix of both personal and business conversations.

When she reached the R and D area she waved her badge over the gray box; it made a buzzing noise and she stepped in. She slipped in ear buds and put on her pink colored safety goggles. This area was one of the few industrial areas of the complex where the moving was completed. She looked at the map posted on the wall. She looked down the hallway and headed toward one of the electronic labs. While passing the other labs she heard a variety of noises. As she passed lab doors she was happy to see Gus' team had installed on the walls: signs stating what safety equipment was needed in each particular lab, shelves with the proper safety equipment, and they were all filled. She decided someone else should be responsible for filling these shelves.

When she reached the lab she was looking for she: slipped on her hair net, waved her badge over the gray box, the buzzer went off, pushed open the door, and stepped in. The one thing she disliked about being a Vice President was how people changed when she entered an area. She took note of where the radio was. This was a large rectangle room, it was most likely the cleanest room in the complex, everyone was wearing white coats, had hair nets on, safety goggles, and a few were wearing latex gloves.

Alex; the manager of this area made significant changes to this area. A change all of his employees liked was the changing of the headphones they used. His employees felt Alex was: fun, fair, was open to new ideas, but they knew he liked to maintain certain procedures. As long as they maintained his procedures they were given a lot of room to produce. Everyone loved his stories; even his over exaggerated stories were based upon real events.

She trusted these changes; the least thing she ever wanted was to micro manage.

She heard, "Ashleigh."

Alex was behind an employee and he waved his hand. His employee went back to focusing on what he was listening too. Ashleigh noticed he was turning knobs and then typing information into a computer. Alex was the first sound board guy to work at his brothers club. He was a few years older than her brother, his hair was graying, it was in a pony tail, wrapped in a hair net, he had long features, a long skinny nose, a very wide smile, and wore prescription safety goggles. She deeply appreciated and admired the patience he showed her when she was little. Many times he allowed her to "help" him set up and once in a while depending on the act; would even let her sit in his area during a show. He always forced her to wear protective ear muffs. She recently found pictures from Bob's club. She felt she looked goofy wearing these ear muffs but she appreciated him looking out for her.

Everyone looked when Ashleigh yelled, "Alex."

They were surprised when she hugged him.

They quickly separated.

"Hows Sally?"

"She's liking the warm weather."

Ashleigh smiled, "Is she getting you to settle down?"

Every employee who was free from headphones were listening to them.

"It's mutual. This doesn't mean I'm not looking forward to checking out the music scene in Miami and Boca Rotan."

The locals shook their heads on how he pronounced Boca Rotan.

"Be careful in Miami."

"I have connections."

"You still love Jazz?"

"You know it."

"Aren't you going to miss Summerfest?"

"I'm not going to miss out on all that money. We're planning on flying back to Wisconsin for the festival."

"Don't forget to mark the time off."

"I will."

He smiled.

"So Bob went and made you Vice President?"

Ashleigh sighed, "Yes he did."

He smiled and touched his chest, "I'd like to think I'm part of it."

Ashleigh made a face, "How so?"

"I remember a little girl who used to sit at my booth and help me."

She answered sincerely, "You had so much patience with me."

"You helped prepare me for my children."

With a fun tone answered, "Thanks."

“So what brings you here?”

She made a face, “Are you aware I live in a very nice houseboat yacht. It just so happens it’s owned by my brother.”

“You live with Bob?”

“It’s temporary until I find a place.”

He nodded his head.

“Anyway.”

With a serious tone, “This yacht as the most obnoxious doorbell.”

He smiled.

She knew this smile.

He answered very seriously, “Some might consider it a work of art.”

She gazed at him, “He’s playing TV and movie themes.”

The employees were listening.

He chuckled.

“It isn’t funny.”

He touched his chest, “This isn’t the music I’d choose.”

With glaring eyes and sounds of sarcasm, “Of course not.”

“I want you to know.”

He touched his chest.

“Someone you might know has presented this work of art to the marketing team. He was encouraged to do so by Mr. Bob. Why do they call him Mr. Bob?”

Ashleigh made a face, “Long story. I’ll tell you some other time.”

Alex made a face, “Sure. Back to the wonderful music player in the yacht.”

She gave him a look.

“My question is. What seems to be the matter with it?”

“The other day it played the *Love Boat Theme*.”

He laughed.

She stared at him.

Employees held in their laughter or snickered. Everyone who knew Mr. Bob believed he would own a doorbell playing television themes.

He asked with dripping sarcasm, “So how may I help fix this problem?”

She glared at him.

“How might another person living in the yacht change the tunes?”

He touched his chest.

“What makes you believe I would teach this person how to change them?”

“Because the inventor of the doorbell is like a big brother to me.”

“That isn’t fair.”

She glared.

“He’s doing it on purpose.”

“That he might.”

She made a face.

He crossed his arms, “I was like a big brother to you?”

“How many years did you work at the club?”

“All of them. I should have left after your brother sold it.”

“He told you to leave.”

“I know.”

Ashleigh knew she was getting to him.

She acted very sweet, “Don’t forget without me you would have never meet Sally. Because Sally noticed me sitting in your area? Remember. She waved me over to her and talked to me. Without this conversation you might have never met her.”

“That’s a low blow.”

“Oh. Is it?”

She touched her chest.

“It’s what happened.”

He smiled.

He asked, “Do you own an MP3 player?”

“I have an Ipod and I have music downloaded on my computer.”

“If someone was to plug in their Ipod or their laptop into the doorbell a person could easily change the selections.”

“I’ve looked at the doorbell. There isn’t a place to hook an MP3 player into it?”

He smiled, “That seems to be the mystery.”

“So where the music is uploaded isn’t at the doorbell?”

Alex answered with a smile, “That’s correct.”

Sort of frustrated, “Isn’t that a design flaw?”

He answered matter of fact, “Somewhere in the yacht is a spot where it’s possible to upload new music files and delete old files.”

“Where would he have put it?”

He smiled and raised a finger, “That is the million dollar question.”

She glared at him. She was thinking about where her Brother would have put it.

He asked, “Any other business.”

“Yes.”

“What?”

She switched to her business personality, “How soon are you able to test the listening devices the Navy wants?”

“I’d say a couple weeks.”

“The FBI?”

“A month.”

“Keep in mind the other projects.”

Very serious Alex answered, “All are on schedule.”

She smiled.

“I’ll be there for the Navy test. Is it alright if I bring in a guy who served in the Navy and Coast Guard to test it before the Navy arrives?”

“Just let me know ahead of time so I can set up the test.”

“I’ll work it out.”

“I wouldn’t expect any less.”

She chose a path out of the lab where she would pass the radio.

She stepped up to the radio and nudged the guy sitting next to it.

She declared, “Daniel. Don’t have him monopolies the radio.”

He was surprised she remembered his name and was equally surprised when she turned the station.

She switched it to the country station she always listened to.

She turned toward Alex and winked.

She turned toward the employees and said, “Ladies and gentleman. Most of Alex’s bull shit stories are true.”

This shocked every employee.

He stated in a very serious tone, “We have a great vice president.”

She answered just as serious, “Listen to him. He knows his stuff.”

Everyone watched her step out of the lab.

Alex immediately focused on the guy doing tests.

Before leaving R and D she: took off her hair net, tossed it in a nearby garbage can, and again hung her safety goggles on her coat. She purposefully walked passed the main dock. She stopped and observed a machine being taken out of a flat bed. Every machine was marked with a code, this code coordinated with the floor plan; each machine was to arrive in a specific order on a specific day. Ashleigh, Bob, Jimmy, Dave, and the moving team were adaptable if something arrived out of order. She would have moved on without worry but reading the code she realized this code was used already.

She heard Dave yelling her name.

They checked the floor design. They were correct two different machines had been given the same code. She asked where Jimmy was. She was told he was on lunch. An unofficial rule was to never bother anyone at lunch, but this machine was way too important to let this go. She called Bob from the dock table. She told Dave she’d be right back and to leave the machine shrink wrapped and on the huge pallet. She hated to do it but she quickly headed to the cafeteria.

The employees could see Ms. Ashleigh was in a hurry. When she stepped into the cafeteria she felt bad when she spotted: Nicole, Jake, Linda, and Jimmy all sitting together. She was polite with anyone who wanted to stop her, but made it clear she was all business; everyone understood.

She stepped up to the table.

Jake smiled, “How’s things Shorty?”

Linda gave her husband a disapproving look.

“I wish it was better.”

She became serious, “Jimmy I hate to bother you. But we have a problem.”

He became serious, “It’s alright.”

“Would you come out to the dock?”

“Yes Ma’am.”

Ashleigh feeling bad said, “I’ll make it up to you. Could you get your meal to go?”

“Sure.”

What surprised Nicole and Jake was how different Ashleigh was behaving.

Jimmy leaned over to Nicole.

Before he would say anything, Nicole said, “It’s okay.”

Jimmy winked.

Ashleigh smiled.

“I’ll get it to go.”

Everyone watched him walk his food up to the food line.

When it was obvious he would be helped, Ashleigh turned toward Nicole and said, "Sorry about this morning. It was my fault. She won't be late again."
 Nicole felt this was only half the story but answered, "I believe Y'all."
 "She's doing a great job."
 Jake was about to say something but Linda gently kicked him underneath the table.
 "What?"
 Linda gave her husband the look.
 This was why he remained silent.
 "She enjoys walking her."
 Ashleigh smiled.
 "I'm glad she enjoys it."
 Jimmy came back to the table holding his meal in a styrofoam box, "Nice talking with Y'all."
 Jake said, "We'll talk again."
 "Counting on it."
 He turned toward Nicole, "I'll be late."
 Nicole answered, "Okay."
 They smiled at one another.
 Ashleigh said, "Bye everyone."
 She made the mistake of waving at Jake and saying as her flirty self, "Good luck on the charter tonight."
 "Shorty luck ain't involved."
 She rolled her eyes and winked.
 She answered, "I'm sure everything runs perfect when your there."
 Jake smiling, "Who says you ain't smart?"
 He laughed.
 Ashleigh giggled.
 Linda gave her husband the stare.
 Ashleigh: became serious, turned toward Jimmy, they stared to walk out of the lunchroom, started to explain what happened, and suddenly stopped. She spotting Duane the lead cook she: ran behind the counter, approached Duane, everyone spotted Ashleigh point toward Nicole; when the conversation was done she went back to Jimmy.
 They stepped out of the cafeteria.
 Jimmy believed he knew where the machine came from and what plant manager screwed this up.

Nicole looked over at Jimmy when Ashleigh pointed to her.

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders.
 While this was going on she heard Linda say, "Why did she wave to Y'all?"
 Jake answered, "It's just who she is. She ain't meaning anything."
 Nicole turned toward Linda and Jake.
 "I ain't liking how flirty she is."
 Nicole acknowledge this, "She's flirty."
 "I've heard things."

Jake sighed and stated, "She's a good gal. She ain't meaning any harm."

Linda shook her head, "I'd."

She stopped and looked at Nicole, "Forgive me for what I'm about to say."

Nicole answered, "I won't be offended."

"I'd feel better knowing Ashleigh and Megan were a couple."

Jake sighed, "We've been through this."

"I realize..."

Jake interrupted her, "Megan is straight."

Nicole mentioned, "She's dating Christopher."

Linda insisted, "It's what I'm worried about. Y'all are a good man and I just wouldn't want Ms. Ashleigh's flirtatiousness to affect Y'all. I've watched her helping Y'all."

Nicole heard this but wanted confirmation, "She helps?"

Linda made a face and waved her arm.

"I swear every weekend she's helping on the charter. I'm wondering if she's planning something."

She gave Jake a warning facial expression.

He again rolled his eyes.

"She ain't that type of gal."

"With how flirty she is? Who can tell."

He sighed.

"She's has the hots for some police officer."

Linda asked with a tone, "Who?"

"Sergeant Marcus Taylor. She goes on about the guy."

Nicole and Linda put this into their memory banks.

Jake added, "Y'all should know I ain't the type of guy to be cheating on Y'all."

Linda made a face.

"It's what I wanted to hear."

Nicole was beginning to feel some concern. The rumor of so many attractive women working here was turning out to be true.

Linda looked at Nicole, "We're lucky."

"How?"

"We have good husbands."

This made Nicole feel better.

"I agree."

What surprised the three at the table was when the lead cook approached their table. He was tall, had dark hair, was chubby, was dressed in a white cooking coat, was wearing a gray heavy cooking hat, stripped pants, and heavy black boots.

In a Wisconsin accent he asked, "Are you Nicole?"

"Yes Sir."

"My name is Duane. I'm the lead cook here."

"Yes sir."

"I have been getting requests for key lime pie. I've tried making it myself but it just doesn't taste good. I was told you make the best pies."

Jake jumped in, "Y'all ain't whistling Dixie. She's an excellent pie maker."

Linda smiled.

Sheepishly Nicole answered, "Some seem to appreciate my cooking."

"Would you be willing to stop in and show me how you make it? Ashleigh."

He corrected himself.

"Ms. Ashleigh promised you'd get paid for the time."

"I'd be honored to help you."

"Just a second."

After Duane said this he stepped over to the cash register.

Linda looked at Nicole, "I've always told you. Y'all should sell it yourself."

"Oh. My cooking ain't good enough for me to be selling them."

Jake said, "It ain't hurting anybody for Y'all try."

Nicole shook her head.

He came back with a pad of paper and a pen in his hands, with the other he handed Nicole his business card.

"If you wouldn't mind taking my card."

"No sir."

She studied it.

As he handed out the paper and pen he very politely asked, "If I could have your name number and email address? I'm assuming you have an email address?"

"Yes sir."

She took the items.

"If you could write those down for me. I'll get back to you in a couple days."

"Okay."

She wrote down the information.

"Thank-you."

He looked at what she wrote.

"Nicole."

"Your welcome."

They watched Duane walk from the table and back behind the cafeteria line.

The three of them turned toward one another and talked for ten minutes; Linda rushed away to work.

As Nicole left the building she thought about what she witnessed. She admitted to herself she was looking forward to helping the cook and was pleased she would get paid for her time. She was disappointed Andrea was away from the desk. Her replacement was unsure when she would be back; Nicole reluctantly left.

The replacement, who knew Jake, reminded him he needed to sign in. He apologized and signed himself in and out.

February 5th Basic Principles

Part Three of Six

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Ashleigh & Megan
Book I: Friendship

Monday February 5th
Basic Principles



Day 11 of Book I
(Twenty-Two Days after Bob presented Shelly with an Apartment)

Part Four of Six

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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February 5th, Basic Principles Day 11 of Book I

(Twenty-Two Days after Shelly is offered an apartment)

Julie stopped.

She heard: a stall door slam shut, heard someone loudly wash her hands, and slam the restroom door open; the door closed quietly on its own.

This surprised her. Before she started she checked the stalls to make sure they were empty. She contemplated stopping. She reasoned; if everyone was talking about her getting herself off in the girls bathroom why stop. She: lifted her legs up, placed her feet on the stall door, used her dildo, aggressively touched her button, closed her eyes, allowed herself to feel the waves of orgasm, and rested in the afterglow. She wanted to go again. After glancing at her watch she knew this was unwise. She: sat up, reached into her backpack, grabbed a black plastic bag, placed her dildo into the bag, set the plastic bag into her backpack in a way where she felt no one would notice it, pulled her bra and shirt over her breasts, stood up, yanked up her panties, then her jeans, buttoned and zipped them closed, grabbed her backpack, stepped out of the stall, went up to the sink, took out her own hand soap, washed her hands, smelled them, put the soap back, reached back into her bag, took out men’s antiperspirant deodorant, applied it, put it back into the backpack, took out the wooden hall pass, set this pass on the sink, zipped up her backpack, and looked at herself in the mirror.

She asked herself, *“Am I a chronic masturbator? Could I really stop if I wanted too?”*

Afraid of the answer she headed back to class.

After stepping into her World History Class she placed the wooden hall pass on the chalk board shelf. This classroom was a small curved auditorium. Facing the front of the room: there was a desk on the right side of the room, currently behind the desk was a brand

new Flat Screen TV and DVD player, both were secured to a brand new cart; this setup was assigned to Ms. Bright. At the beginning of the semester both the History departments and the Science departments received brand new AV equipment. It was widely known this was donated by *Renewed Mastery*. Ms. Bright was sitting at this desk. Five students surrounded the desk. In the center of the room facing the seats was a podium. Behind the podium attached to the wall was a very large black board, during Ms. Bright's lecture she drew a timeline from the end of World War Two to the Berlin Airlift, after the door and just before the blackboard was a long table, on this table were a series of colored bins; they were filled with assignments and reading materials. Like every room in the building there was a clock attached to the wall above the blackboard.

Ms. Bright was: five five, late twenties, her hair was a cross between blond and light auburn, she had a very defined diamond shaped face, with a defined jawline to match, her eyes were a light green, her eyebrows matched her hair, her nose was skinny with a button end, she had small tight lips, a short smile, her chin came to a point; but her cheeks were flat. Her skin was very light. There were a small amount of light freckles under her eyes and over her nose. She tried to inspire her female students by dressing conservatively without being boring, she wore very little makeup, her long hair was always pinned nice, and she tried her best to hide her medium sized breasts. She was currently wearing: a very shiny gray almost blue tailored button shirt, a khaki colored pencil skirt, and the devon jacket matched this skirt. Her accessories were: a simple necklace, a watch, simple post earrings, and brown colored chain styled stiletto shoes.

She had a masters degree in History with a minor in teaching. She was a substitute longer than she should have. This was due to her conservative political views and how stern she ran her class. She sent her resume to every school district from Panama City to Fort Myers. She was about to give up on being a public school teacher when she heard from a professor friend of hers the *Eastbank School District* was in desperate need of teachers. Ms. Bright was trying to avoid the ocean coast and especially Southeast Florida. After doing some research she hoped Eastbank would be similar to the area she grew up in; she wanted to believe this town was far enough from Miami to be a good community. To her surprise and to the dismay of the *Florida State Teachers Union*; she was hired on as a teacher in the *Eastbank School District*.

She was a respected teacher within the student body. She demanded respect but gave the students respect in return. Julie found her to be far more interesting than other teachers.

Ms. Bright watched Julie: walk up the steps, step up to her seat, glanced at her watch, and then focused on the student she was working with.

By the time Julie reached her seat in the third row corner of the room students: mumbled things under their breaths, were snickering, and whispered to one another.

This hurt her a great deal. She acted like nothing was being said.

There were two girls in front of Monique carrying on and whispering.

The one whispered to her friend, "Y'all wonder what she did?"

Her friend whispered back, "Y'all know she was playing with her button."

"It ain't an accident she's called Fingerpainter."

"She does it all the time."

The two girls giggled.

Monique irritated leaned forward and asked in a whisper, “So you’ve never been caught Jilling?”

The one girl gave a horrid face and blushed.

Monique imagined the girls mother stepping into her bedroom while going at it.

The one who initiated the ridicule glared at Monique.

With a tone answered, “I’ve never been caught.”

Monique in her East Coast accent replied, “So. You were never caught? I bet U’s enjoy your button.”

The girl gave her an astonished look.

A local guy, who knew Julie his whole life; thought Monique’s question was awesome.

Other guys around Monique laughed.

This is when Ms. Bright looked up and asked, “Y’all done with the assignment? If Y’all believe this assignment is easy maybe I should add a few questions.”

The guy answered, “No Ma’am. We’re discussing a question.”

Ms. Bright glared at the group.

This caused everyone to focus on the assignment. The least thing anyone wanted was more questions. She handed the assignment out on Friday. She spent the first half of the class lecturing on the subject; she was giving everyone two more days to turn in it. The following day she was moving on.

As she finished with the five students they returned to their seats.

Julie pulled out of her backpack her photocopied sections of the *Wall Street Journal* and a highlighter.

Out of the corner of her eye she was paying attention to a boy who was one row below her and two chairs over to her right. His name was Earnest Janakowski; every local had difficulty pronouncing his name. The reason she knew how to pronounce it was because of her friend Beth; who was from Wisconsin. He was: six one, super skinny, light blond hair, long face, long nose, had a goofy smile, bright blue eyes, and wore very thick glasses. With the lack of muscle mass he would have been killed on a football field. The only person he hung out with was Nelson; who was from Wisconsin as well. Earnest was in all honors classes, the only time he spoke was when spoken to, and was very well behaved. The only reason anyone noticed him was because of his height and the thick glasses he wore. For the last two weeks while walking Nikita or biking to the marina, with the exception of Wednesdays, she spotted him running. She assumed he took the same route at the same time. He was easy to notice because of how tall and pale white he was. When he ran he always wore: sports glasses with a green strap, a t-shirt, shorts, long socks, and bright red running shoes. The only difference with his style was the color of the t-shirt and the color of his shorts. Because of the shorts he wore Julie believed he had a small cock. She found the sizes and shapes of all cocks fascinating. Depending on the guys size she imagined different things. She assumed, especially with a guy around her age; would be a guys stamina. Overall she was attracted to him and wanted to know more about him. She tried to see if he was infatuated with her. With her unable to see his cock she focused on an article; she highlighted what she felt was important.

It was obvious to Ms. Bright, Julie was focused on something other than her assignment.

“Julie would Y’all step up to the desk. Bring your assignment here.”

Students looked up. Anyone who was a fellow student of Julie for any length of time was ready for what was to happen next. It happened so often students quickly focused on the assignment.

Julie answered, “Yes Ma’am.”

She: set the photocopies and the highlighter back into her backpack, took out a folder with a picture of a group of puppies on the cover, took out the assignment, the printout associated with the answers of the assignment, closed her backpack, set the folder on the empty seat next to her, zipped up the backpack, and walked up to the desk.

Bradly was paying close attention. They knew one another since kindergarten. The previous year she approached himself and his two friends in the computer lab. All three were shocked when she broke all of the unwritten rules of social standing by talking to them. They were even more surprised when she asked about computers and parental blockers. Julie promised; if they never said what she needed help with she would continue to ask them about computers. They held to their promise and Julie held to hers.

Bradly was unable to find the courage to ask her out. The idea a girl would: ask about computers, ask about parent blockers, be as attractive as she was, be nice, have big boobs, and get herself off in the girls bathroom; dazzled him. He heard the rumors she was caught masturbating in just about every place in school. Recently he heard she was giving blowjobs and having sex with a variety of guys. Bradly discounted this. Based upon consistent information by students he trusted and based upon what Hannah, Zoe, and the new girl Beth told him many of these reports were rumors. What he believed: Julie once to three times a day would enjoy herself in the girls bathroom, filmed the group sex parties Melissa set up (it was rumored Melissa tried to have sex with Julie but Julie refused), at these parties Julie often times got herself off in front of others, the only act Julie would perform was giving guys handjobs; this was frustrating to both guys and a couple bisexual girls. Very few kids believed they could force Julie into anything she disliked. There was a general understanding, once her brother Jeff and Melissa graduated, if Julie wanted to attend the party she would need to participate fully.

From what Bradly understood, the reason she was being called a slut and a tease was because there was a falling out with the Snob Club. There were a lot of rumors on why and when. He believed this falling out was an accumulation of incidents. Julie defended him and his friends. She often times tried to protect the unpopular girls. Hannah heard from a mutual friend Julie refused to leave a family Christmas party and this angered Jennie. Zoe felt Jennie was angry at Julie for never having sex with her. Kids witnessed Julie getting angry at the Snob Club for calling Amanda fat. Many of the students believed, this included Bradly, Amanda was in the midst of an eating disorder.

He understood why Julie was labeled as a tease but never believed she was a tease in a spiteful way. When she first started to ask them follow up questions Julie would approach his friends and himself wherever they were. She would stand in a way they liked or would make sexual comments. This led to his friends and himself having to put a book or something in front of their crotches. After an embarrassing moment with one of his friends, she started to only approach them when they were sitting down. He knew perfectly well, all of his friends were virgins, many would have given anything to have sex with any girl. Julie never once teased them for being virgins or their lack of control. A big reason every unpopular guy liked

Julie was she never performed a sexual act with any of the popular guys or popular Bi-Sexual girls.

He would never forget the time his two friends and himself were in the computer lab. They always sat in the corner of the lab to avoid being teased. When she approached them: she turned her back to everyone else, knelt down, panned the computer lab, turned toward them, and started to talk to them about computers. While doing this: she slowly unbuttoned a vest, unbuttoned the shirt she was wearing, to their surprise she lifted her bra over her boobs, and allowed them to gaze at them. It shocked all three how she could talk to them like nothing was happening. Bradley was the only one to notice, while she was flashing them, she checked out their cocks. He never heard or witnessed Julie ever flash anyone else at school or bluntly stare at any other guys cocks. What was equally fascinating, when she felt they gazed at them long enough, she simply pulled her bra over her breasts, buttoned up, made herself presentable, and promised if they never said anything she would do it again. All three made a pact they would never say a word in the hopes they would see her breasts again; this was the first time any of them caught a glimpse of a real pair of boobs.

He heard Ms. Bright say, "I'm assuming this isn't just copied and pasted from the internet? If it is I'll notice."

He wanted to be angry at Ms. Bright but she was his first older woman crush. He watched Ms. Bright take out a highlighter and highlight something on Julie's paper. He needed to turn away from Julie and Ms. Bright when Julie bent sideways and leaned over the side of the desk. These type of actions were the reasons many of the students felt Julie was a tease. He understood all she was doing was leaning over the desk.

Julie was so focused on what Ms. Bright asked her and what she highlighted; she never considered what she was doing to: many of the boys in her class, a bisexual girl who was interested in her, and an out of the closet lesbian.

This lesbian appreciated Julie because she asked honest questions about Coach Megan being gay. The girl suspected, unlike many others, Coach Megan was straight. These questions from Julie caused this girl to have a crush on Julie. She was smart enough to believe Julie was straight and would leave this crush in her fantasy life. She liked the fact she never had sex with any of the popular kids. She would have given anything to masturbate with Julie; even if it meant respecting Julie's wishes of never touching her.

When Julie reached the desk she gently handed her assignment to Ms. Bright.

She whispered, "What were Y'all reading?"

"The *Wall Street Journal*."

"You are in Modern World History?"

"Yes Ma'am."

"Why were you reading the *Wall Street Journal*?"

"Ma'am. I'm done with the assignment."

"Is this what you gave me?"

"Yes Ma'am."

"I gave this to you on Friday?"

"Yes Ma'am."

"Y'all believe this is good work?"

Annoyed Julie answered, "I wouldn't expect any thing less than an A."

Students sighed.

Julie whispered, "May I go back to my desk?"

Ms. Bright looked up at her and recognized she disliked the attention.

Partly to teach her a lesson and because she wanted to talk to her after class, "Wait here."

Talking loudly so everyone in her class could hear, "I'm assuming this isn't just copied and pasted from the internet. If it is I'll notice."

This is when Julie leaned over the desk.

Ms. Bright and Julie noticed a few of the students body language change and their were moans. Julie stopped paying attention to the class when she noticed Ms. Bright speed reading. Julie focused when she stopped in the middle of the fifth page. Ms. Bright grabbed the three sheets of questions, turned to the second page, read the question; referred back to Julie's answer.

Ms. Bright: grabbed a highlighter from a pencil holder, took of the cap, highlighted a section, put the cap back on, put it back, and then pointed.

"Is this true?"

"Yes Ma'am."

"We haven't gone over this."

Julie in a respectable manner answered, "I'm aware we haven't but it helps answer the question."

Ms. Bright asked, "Where did Y'all learn this?"

"From a discussion with an older gentleman."

Ms. Bright glared at her for a second.

"To be honest with Y'all I've never heard this before. If you could site this for me I'd appreciate it."

"Yes Ma'am."

Julie would ask Mr. Bob where he learned it from. She believed he would never deceive her.

"If this is true I'm impressed."

Julie smiled.

"Y'all stay right there. I want to finish reading the assignment."

Julie backed up and leaned against the shelf of the black board. She moved when a student waved her hand, she looked behind her, and recognized her head blocked some of the timeline. She stepped to the other side of Ms. Bright and put an arm on the AV cart. The only thing half way interesting was watching her teacher speed read. Ms. Bright closed the paperwork and motioned for her to lean in.

Ms. Bright glanced at her watch.

"This is A work."

"Yes Ma'am."

"You'll receive the A. But I'd like the source of the highlighted information."

"Yes Ma'am."

"Stay here."

"Yes Ma'am."

She addressed the class, "Y'all have two days to finish the assignment. Tomorrow we will start discussing the building of the Berlin wall. Before Y'all leave grab one item from each of the green bins."

A student asked, “Y’all said you weren’t sure about the text book. Should we keep bringing it?”

She made a face.

“I apologize for not addressing this sooner. Y’all can keep it in your lockers and bring it back on the last day. It’s completely biased and ain’t worth the paper used to print it.”

Kids cheered.

Julie wished she would have waited to read the text book. While sitting in other classes she read the whole book. Julie looked over at the long table and noticed there were three green bins. Each day the amount of colored bins would change. This class always seemed to be told to take from the green ones; one time they had to take paperwork from two yellow bins. This was a survey about the class and general knowledge of history. Julie was impressed a teacher would ask the students the best way they learned and appreciated the general questions about history. She enjoyed quizzing Mr. Bob with these very questions. Julie was impressed Mr. Bob only missed two questions; he insisted he had the correct answer with the second one. A frustrated Ashleigh checked on the answer. The following day Ashleigh made a point to show him how wrong he was.

The bell rang.

Kids started to pack up and rush out, Julie headed toward her stuff.

Ms. Bright stopped her by saying; “Julie.”

“Yes Ma’am.”

“You have a test in your next class?”

“No Ma’am.”

“We need to talk.”

“Yes Ma’am.”

“Grab the next assignment and get your things.”

Ms. Bright wanted to refer Julie to a school counselor. She disliked the schools three female counselors. She felt two of them would have overreacted and the third one would have encouraged her; Ms. Bright disliked ex-hippies. She considered asking another female teacher to sit in with her. The only teacher she believed would be helpful was Ms. Conner. The reason she avoided asking Ms. Conner was she was unsure of the relationship between Ms. Conner and Julie. Ms. Bright was unsure of who she could trust. She believed: many of the faculty could have cared less, others would have wanted Julie to be punished, and worse she considered the possibility the wrong teacher might take advantage of Julie. As a substitute, in a similar circumstance, she witnessed a female teacher take advantage of another female student.

Julie did as she was told but hid her frustration. She expected another lecture about applying ones self. She received this lecture earlier in the day from another new teacher. The only positive was talking to Ms. Bright instead of sitting in Accounting Two. She easily finished all of the assignments in the book. An irritation was the realization her Accounting teacher was clueless to how the real world worked. Mr. Bob constitutionally mentioned on how most public education teachers had very little real life experience.

She pointed to the front row, “Please sit down.”

“Yes Ma’am.”

Julie set her backpack on a chair next to her.

Ms. Bright: glanced at the door and decided to keep it open, took off her jacket, gently set it on her desk, grabbed her chair, moved it a few feet in front of Julie, sat down, very ladylike crossed her legs, and leaned forward. Julie was surprised by the look she was given, and the long pause.

Julie waited to be asked a question.

Ms. Bright stated, "I was two stalls away from you."

Julie blushed.

This one statement broke the ice for Ms. Bright.

She stated, "Its normal to masturbate. What isn't wise is masturbating in the girls restroom."

A blushing Julie answered, "Yes Ma'am."

"Do you feel you have control over your impulses?"

This was the first time she was ever asked this question.

Julie wanted to believe her answer, "Yes Ma'am."

"Some might believe a young lady enjoying herself in a bathroom stall isn't controlling ones own impulses."

"It was the first time I ever did it there. I was turned on by a boy and well..."

She purposely paused and made an attempt at looking ashamed.

"I'll never do it again."

Ms. Bright disliked lying a great deal, but was concerned about her student, and wanted to find out if there was a reason Julie was acting out this way.

"With this next question. I hope Y'all will give me an honest answer. I'm asking it because I care."

Julie was wise enough to catch the layers.

"Yes Ma'am."

"Sometimes when a young person has the compulsion to masturbate its because they were molested."

Julie answered honestly, "I haven't been molested."

"I'm here if Y'all were."

Julie repeated herself, "Ma'am I was never molested."

"I have to believe you."

She took a breath and leaned in.

"There's consequences to our behavior. Imagine the ridicule and gossip you'd endure if a student caught you."

"Yes Ma'am."

"Y'all don't want that."

"No Ma'am."

"More important. Masturbating in a public place makes you vulnerable."

"I know self defense."

"Who taught you?"

"My Auntie, My Daddy, and My Uncle. My Auntie taught self defense classes."

"Excellent."

Julie was surprised to hear, "I've also studied martial arts and self defense."

Julie wanted to focus on this.

Ms. Bright turned the conversation right on her head, "If someone wanted to assault you. It would have been difficult to defended yourself."

Julie never thought of this before.

"I was in a locked stall. I looked to see if anyone was there."

"You missed me stepping in."

Julie made a face, "Yes Ma'am."

"What happens if I was a predator?"

"Y'all are a woman?"

"Women are sexual predators too. I worked with a female teacher who sexually assaulted a female student and a young boy."

Julie was shocked by this.

"There are women in authority who would use this against you. What would happened if a group of girls cornered you?"

"They wouldn't."

"Are Y'all sure?"

This hit Julie. She imagined the Snob Club cornering her.

"I'm assuming. Y'all will never masturbate on this schools property again."

Julie lied, "Yes Ma'am."

Ms. Bright stood up, "I'll write Y'all a pass."

"Yes Ma'am."

Julie grabbed her back pack and stood up.

Ms. Bright stated, "If Y'all feel you need to talk to somebody I'm here."

"Yes Ma'am."

"Wait until Y'all are alone in your bedroom."

Julie blushed.

"You have anyone at home to talk to?"

"My Momma."

"You should count yourself lucky. There are many gals who are unable to talk to their Momma's about personal matters."

"I have a cool Momma."

Ms Bright smiled.

She became serious, "Next time I'll report Y'all to the office. They will go through your things and then call your Momma."

Julie lost a breath.

Ms. Bright added, "I'm sure Y'all wouldn't want the school telling your Momma Y'all were masturbating in a bathroom stall."

"No Ma'am."

"Promise Y'all wait until you get home."

"Yes Ma'am."

"Head to your next class."

"Yes Ma'am."

"Oh wait."

"What?"

"One day we'll have to discuss self defense."

Julie smiled, "Yes Ma'am."

“Get a move on.”

Julie smiled, “Yes Ma’am.”

Julie headed to her next class. She felt this conversation about masturbation was a cross between talking to her mother and when Ashleigh asked her about being sexually abused. Without the conversation with Ashleigh, Julie would have been offended at Ms. Bright’s questions. She thought of her Cousins staring at her breasts. She thought about when her Uncle Timmy grabbed a pair of her panties from a laundry basket; she avoided her Uncle and made it a point to be around Ester whenever he was around. She again considered telling her Momma on what Timmy did.

Ms. Bright: put on her jacket, grabbed her chair, swung it around her desk, and sat down. She hoped she did the right thing. She felt Julie lied to her about masturbating but believed her when she said she was never molested. She decided: if she ever caught Julie again she would turn her in. She took out her laptop. Her plan for the time without a class was: email a professor friend about the information Julie wrote in the assignment, she would look for an answer herself, would call Bob about the counseling situation, would call Valerie about a section of Bob’s new book, and if she had time would start creating a worksheet about the Berlin Wall.

*A*shleigh was about to walk passed Haley’s desk, but Haley signaled for her to stop.

Ashleigh stepped up to the desk and waited for her phone call to end.

Haley sent the caller to voicemail.

She looked up at Ashleigh and stated, “Bob’s having a meeting and wants you to attend.”

“You know what it’s about?”

She whispered, “About his books.”

“I wonder if he found an assistant?”

Ashleigh added to her own question, “He was asking me if I’d agree to a temporary assistant and editor.”

“Because of the move?”

“Yes. We’re still suppose to look for a permanent assistant.”

“Any in the pile of resumes?”

“Breezed through. Before I leave I’ll read them more closely.”

“Gotcha.”

“What are their names?”

“Valerie and Susan.”

“Is that the lady who owns Pirate Books?”

“I believe so.”

“Where is...”

Haley interrupted, “They’re already in his office.”

“Okay.”

Ashleigh looked at Haley.

“Is this the thing he’s been wanting to talk to me about?”

“Don’t believe so.”

Ashleigh made a face, “I hate sales people.”

“He dislikes accountants.”

“That’s different.”

Haley gave Ashleigh a face.

“Sure.”

Ashleigh gave a look back.

“They’re waiting.”

Ashleigh sighed.

She opened the glass door, stopped, with the glass door half open she turned around.

Haley answered before the question, “A couple ladies from customer service took her for a walk.”

“How...”

“She’s been taken out four times. She’ll be tired today.”

Ashleigh answered, “I don’t want her overheating.”

Haley said, “Her bowl is filled. The air is on. I’ll stop anyone from walking her.”

Ashleigh smiled, “Your the best.”

Ashleigh: stepped into the office area, passed the open office doors, and glanced into her brother’s office. Ashleigh spotted two women and Bob looking at a new art piece he added to his wall. This was the longest office of the building, Ashleigh knew for a fact it was the most elaborate; she felt her brother deserved it. Ashleigh quickly believed her Brother would be attracted to the blond standing next to Valerie.

Ashleigh was making quick assessments as she: headed toward her desk, hung her long white lab coat on the free standing coat hanger, tossed her safety goggles onto the desk, untied and slipped out of her pink work boots, took off her socks, shoved them into the boots, slipped on the shoes she came to work in; this made her two inches taller. She quickly: pulled and tugged on her blouse and skirt, slipped on the matching coat, opened a drawer, took out a mirror, was thankful she was okay without brushing her hair or needed to apply makeup, set the mirror into the drawer, shut the drawer, took a deep breath, and made the assumption these women were writers. This was an easy assumption because of meeting Valerie at her book store.

She reminded herself of the tips Diana and Nicole gave her. She stepped into the office being ladylike and professional. Bob and the two ladies were now at the other end of the office by his desk. Ashleigh felt Leah did an excellent job of picking out good chairs. These new short backed elegant chairs were much better than the tall backed ones Bob originally had in his office. When she reached this area of his office she glanced over at the pictures sitting on the shelf between the two tall decorative glass cabinets. The contrasting lighthouses of the stained glass doors of these cabinets were fascinating to her. She took note of two new pictures. One was of his son smiling at the camera with rubber animals all around him. The other picture was of herself and Nikita standing at the end of the pier. She wondered why he would put this picture in his office.

Bob stood up, “Ashleigh this is Valerie. She owns Pirate Books and was the editor of my first book.”

Ashleigh smiled and gave her a look, “I adore your book store.”

“Ms. Ashleigh has been in my store several times.”

Ashleigh loved her southern accent, it was different from the local accent; “Yes I have.”

Valerie stated, “This is my assistant Susan.”

“Hello.”

Ashleigh recognized the local accent when she answered, “Nice to meet Y’all.”

Bob stated, “Lets move to the table.”

Ashleigh watched him pick up a large stack of papers from off his desk. Ashleigh believed these were the novels titled “*The Pirate*” and “*Her Smile*.” She only glanced at the one, a novel she read and was prepared to start editing was titled, “*Her Smile*.” They turned to where he motioned, all four stepped to the long executive table; this table was in the front left of the office (this is the viewpoint of a person stepping into the office).

Ashleigh right away asked, “You ladies want something to drink? We have water or soda?”

They both smiled at her strong Midwestern accent.

Valerie smiled, “No thank-you.”

Susan stated, “I’ll take a water.”

“Bob?”

“I’m fine.”

Ashleigh took two waters out of the refrigerator; this refrigerator door matched the cabinet on the right side of his office. She turned and stepped to the table. Ashleigh set the water in front of Susan. Ashleigh: opened the cap of her water bottle, took a sip, and sat to the right of Bob. Valerie and Susan were sitting next to one another across from Ashleigh; Bob was in the end chair.

Ashleigh understood why her brother was attracted to Susan. Susan was five nine, early thirties, her long blond hair was pinned up and looked professional, she had green eyes, had a bump of a rear-end, and small breasts. She was dressed in a long sleeved white tie wrap blouse with a stand up collar and a side tie, she matched this with a dark navy blue sailor-style pencil skirt with a button-front panel at the waist. She matched the outfit with a dark navy cropped jacket. Her accessories were: simple earrings, a couple bracelets, a nice watch, and light makeup. Ashleigh noticed at one time she wore a wedding ring, the evidence was close to being gone from her finger. Ashleigh knew her outfit was bought from a higher end retail store and noticed the watch was a prestigious brand. Ashleigh could tell this woman was from the upper classes. Based upon her accent and how she carried herself; Ashleigh strongly believed she was local. She made a mental note to ask Megan and Diana about her. Ashleigh estimated Susan was three years older than Megan; which made her to be thirty-one years old. Ashleigh believed Bob would never date anyone younger than Megan. Ashleigh was grateful Bob ignored anyone who was inappropriate for him to date. Ashleigh wished her brother would have liked Valerie, with her being in her late forties, her brother would have ruled her out. Ashleigh felt Valerie was the essence of a confident women. Ashleigh was sure at one point in this woman's life she either wrote her own books or was a professor. Ashleigh believed, while being a southern lady, failed many of her students.

Valerie’s: long blond hair was pinned up, she had an elegant long square shaped face, her long Greek shaped nose seemed to fit perfectly on her, she had bright greenish blue eyes, luscious lips, and a cleft chin. Ashleigh felt her greenish blue eyes and her luscious lips made gave her the appearance of a very beautiful and sophisticated woman. It was obvious she meant business. She was dressed in a safari inspired outfit. The whole outfit was a blend between khaki and yellow. She left her jacket on with it’s: flap pockets, button cuffs and wider belt. Underneath she was wearing a matching silk charmeuse cami, it was impossible to see

the whole top because of the coat, she matched everything with a long trouser skirt with paneled seams and godet inserts. She was wearing light makeup, hoop earrings, a watch with a wide band, and brown dress sandals. Ashleigh felt this was the perfect attitude a person needed in dealing with her brother.

Her brother stepped up to the table and gently set two stacks of papers in front of each lady.

“Give me one second.”

Susan put on her glasses and read the title and started to page through the first few pages. She stopped and started to read.

Ashleigh and Valerie observed Bob: walk back to his desk open a drawer, take out a small stack of paperwork, he walked it over to the table, and set them down in similar fashion as before. This time he set down a copy for himself. Just by glancing at the letterhead Ashleigh knew it was from his lawyer Mr. Shelby.

“So everyone is on the same page. Currently we are in the midst of moving the company. Ms. Ashleigh as VP is instrumental in the success of this move. She’s been stretched to full capacity.”

Bob looked at her, “You’ve been excellent on all fronts.”

Ashleigh watched closely as he glanced at Susan from time to time. Ashleigh noticed Valerie caught the glances.

He continued, “There have been two editors I’ve trusted. One has been Ms. Ashleigh and the other has been Valerie.”

Valerie smirked, “You trusted me?”

Ashleigh was unable to contain herself, “See.”

Susan glanced back and forth at both ladies, Valerie gently touched her with her foot. Susan dropped the pages and focused.

“Yes I did.”

“All you did was argue?”

“If I didn’t respect your opinion I would have never pushed for your books to be published.”

With a smile and a stern look, “Fair enough.”

“The reason your here is because I trust you.”

Ashleigh winked at Valerie.

Valerie slightly nodded her head.

“I’d like to hear your feedback on both novels.”

Both Ashleigh and Valerie were surprised to hear this.

Susan observed these looks.

A couple of things, “Ashleigh is the lead editor. As the author I have the final say.”

Valerie asked, “Why hire us?”

“I’m looking for your suggestions.”

Valerie gave him a look, “Will they be received?”

Ashleigh gave him a glare.

“If I disagree or agree I value all of your input. I want to mention there is another advisor. She’s unable to make it here at this time. But she will be advising on the history of Florida and the history of the pirates in the area.”

Susan stated, “Mr. Waller.”

“You can address me as Mr. Bob.”

Ashleigh looked at Valerie, “Long story.”

“Mr. Bob I’m assuming this is in reference to the manuscript titled “*The Pirate*.”

“Yes. You will be paid well for your services. I have a contract for both of you. Please look at page two of the contract.”

They all turned the first page over.

“One of the stipulations. You will never disclose I’m Robert Heart. As you will see written in this contract are severe consequences for breaching this part of the contract.”

He: stopped, pushed up his glasses, and gave them a very sincere look, “I’d hate to bring this type of consequence upon anyone.”

Susan briefly skimmed the section in question.

“Writing as Robert Heart allows me to write anything I’d like without hurting others. Valerie is able to testify to the fact I only started writing because it was a hobby. I never expected my books to be popular.”

Valerie stated, “There’s a rumor you’ve bought a publishing company?”

“This is true. The corporate headquarters is in New York. I’ve moved the advertising wing of this company to a Minneapolis firm. I own both of them.”

Valerie asked, “Don’t they have an editorial staff?”

“There are only a select few who know for certain I’m Robert Heart.”

He paused and pushed up his glasses.

“Most important. Only Haley, Ashleigh, and yourself do I trust with any material developed ahead of time.”

He asked, “Ms. Susan.”

“Yes Sir.”

“I’m hoping your trustworthy?”

Valerie stepped into the gap, “She has been my assistant on many projects. I would have never brought her here if I didn’t trust her.”

“Good enough for me.”

This surprised Ashleigh.

“I’m expecting an analysis of *Her Smile* in the next two weeks. I’ll make changes based upon this. I’ll send it back to you and we’ll have one more review. After; I’d like us to meet every other week to review the book *The Pirate*. This will be our pattern until further notice. Once we’re ready to discuss *The Pirate* we’ll bring in the advisor.”

They all agreed.

“After the move Ashleigh and I will be hiring an assistant. This assistants main task will be editing my books and helping me with media. A secondary task is helping out Ashleigh and Haley. This woman will be reporting to both Ashleigh and myself. No one in the company outside of Haley and Ashleigh will know her full role. Even after her hire I’d like the two of you to remain on my staff as adviser.

Valerie asked, “What will this mean?”

Bob was completely honest, “I have not fully decided yet.”

Valerie smiled.

“I wouldn’t expect any different.”

“I guarantee you will be treated fairly.”

Susan gave him a look.

“The reason I bought my own publishing company is so I’m able to publish the books I like. This includes mine.”

Valerie answered, “Only you Bob.”

“That’s correct.”

He pushed up his glasses.

“I’d hope you sign the contracts. I will expect a report sometime next week.”

Both signed.

Ashleigh was unable to keep it in longer, “Ms. Valerie.”

She finished signing the paperwork and handed it to Bob. Susan did the same.

“Yes Darling.”

“I know I’ve met you before moving to Florida? Where?”

Bob stated, “I thought you knew.”

“Know what?”

Valerie answered, “I was friends with Bob’s mother. Her family and my family were associated with one another for decades. Amanda and I had a passion for art. Many times when your Brother held art fairs at his club I’d come up and display my art.”

All at once Ashleigh pictured Amanda standing in front of her artwork.

“You were very young at the time. After my husband died I no longer had the desire to show my work and I focused on being a professor. Later I opened the bookstore.”

Susan added, “I was a student of Ms. Valerie.”

“She is one of my best students.”

Bob asked, “Everyone on the same page?”

Valerie smiled, “Yes. I’m looking forward to reading this.”

Ashleigh stepped in, “I’ve read all of *The Smile*. I’ve started to edit it. I’ve made it to chapter three I’d like your opinion about this chapter.”

“We’ve discussed this.”

Ashleigh turned and crinkled her face.

“You want our input.”

Valerie looked at Ashleigh and then at Bob.

He nodded, “True.”

There was a brief silence.

He pushed up his glasses.

“I have other matters to tend to. Ms. Ashleigh would you walk them out.”

“Certainly.”

“Feel free to discuss anything you need too. I’m headed out to the floor.”

“I’ll meet you out there.”

“No rush. These two ladies needs are more important than anything that is happening on the production floor.”

This exchange surprised Susan.

Everyone stood up when Bob did.

“Glad to meet you Susan. As always I’m delighted to work with you.”

Valerie somewhat lied, “Me as well.”

“Please shut the office doors when you leave.”

“Okay.”

Bob turned and stepped out of the office, they observed him turn left, and out of sight.

Ashleigh asked, "Is there any questions?"

"When are we getting together?"

Ashleigh answered, "Is there a day out of the question for you two? Or a day you'd prefer?"

"A good time would be every other Saturday. This is when my son is with his Daddy."

Ashleigh asked Susan, "Would it have to be on Saturday?"

"No Ma'am."

Valerie volunteered, "If we met at the bookstore it'd allow us more flexibility."

Ashleigh added, "That is a great place if we ever want to discuss these books without Bob around."

They smiled and agreed.

Ashleigh stepped up to the plate, "Give me a couple days and I'll send a couple tentative dates."

Valerie replied, "Sounds reasonable."

"Good."

Being professional Ashleigh mentioned, "I'll lead you out."

When they stepped out into Ashleigh's area Nikita stood up.

Susan asked, "Is she your dawg?"

Ashleigh commanded, "Nikita sit."

She did so. Her tail was a weapon. She wanted to greet the two female humans. She sensed they both were friendly.

Susan, Valerie, and Ashleigh greeted Nikita. Like usual Ashleigh was complemented on how good of a dog she was. From there, Ashleigh led the ladies out of the complex; they made small talk until they reached Andrea's desk.

At this moment Valerie mentioned the art work on the walls and how the foyer was being painted. Ashleigh mentioned the Art building and what everyone was calling *The Museum*. She explained how every artist working for *Renewed Mastery* was allowed to sell their own artwork. Ashleigh explained the only time the company took a fee for a given piece was if it was contract work through the company; otherwise the sale of the item went to the artist. The rules were different if an artist was not a regular employee. The one limiter was the space a certain artist was given. Both Leah and Bob were fair in the amount of space each artist was given.

Because of their interest she walked them to *The Museum*. All three agreed to walk outside. Once there she made sure the Museum Director would give them a tour. This refined lady led them on their tour; this led to both Susan and Valerie making a couple purchases.

Valerie collected a handful of artist business cards.

Ashleigh headed straight back to her office. She: took off her nice coat, was happy to take off her shoes, again slipped on a pair of thick socks, put on her pink safety shoes, slipped on her white coat, found her safety glasses, pet Nikita, and headed to production.

She stopped at Haley's desk, "Any messages?"

Haley gave a concerned look, "You think Bob will ask out Susan?"

Ashleigh answered honestly, "I'm not sure."

"He's attracted to her."

"But she's an employee."

"How is she an employee?"

“She’s one of three advisors he’s hired.”

Haley asked, “You think he’ll make an exception?”

“Not sure.”

“Is it because of Shelly?”

“I hope not. But it wouldn’t surprise me any.”

They gave one another looks.

Ashleigh broke the silence, “Has he given you a copy of his book *The Pirate*?”

“Yes.”

“Have you read any of it?”

“Just started.”

Ashleigh asked with a crinkled in her forehead, “Since when does Bob want advisors?”

“That’s a million dollar question.”

Haley answered the phone. Ashleigh was about to walk away but Haley stopped her by tapping on her desk.

Ashleigh went back to the side of her large desk.

“I’m sorry but I didn’t catch your name.”

Haley wrote down the callers name on a notepad specifically designed for phone messages.

“Okay.”

Ashleigh watched her write down some information.

“I’ll make sure he gets the message.”

Haley hung up the phone by hitting a button.

Ashleigh asked, “What was that about?”

“An advisor.”

“What’s her name?”

“A Ms. Lesley Bright.”

Ashleigh made a face, “It’s probably the history advisor Bob talked about.”

“She’s obviously a teacher.”

“What does she want?”

“To confirm a meeting with him and something about the high school needs better counselors.”

Ashleigh made a face, “I wonder how he knows her?”

Haley raised her hands up and shrugged her shoulders. She was about to comment but the phone rang.

Ashleigh headed out to the production floor.

Nicole: picked up a cardboard box from out of a donated shopping cart, placed it into the trunk of a car, she lifted herself up, the husband nodded at Nicole, she smiled at him, he closed the trunk, went to the passenger side, and stepped into the car.

Nicole turned to the mother of the family, “May God bless Y’all.”

The mother was teary eyed, “We’re so grateful.”

Nicole being very reassuring, “Honey. It’s what we’re here for.”

“We’ve always...”

Nicole in a very friendly tone interrupted her, “Darling. Life ain’t always easy and at some point we’re all needing help.”

The mother teared.

Nicole was used to this.

“We’ll be here until Y’all get back on your feet.”

The mother thanked her and stepped back into her car and drove the family away. Nicole waved to the two children in the back seat. When they were out of the parking lot Nicole pushed the donated cart back to the *Eastbank Community Center*. This was the first time this family was served. Nicole suspected once the husband was no longer on workman’s comp this family would no longer show up.

The *Eastbank Community Center* delivered the food through what they called; *The Pantry*. This area was set up like a small store. A person or family was given a colored card, this color was based upon the size of the family and the income of the household (when the volunteers felt it was necessary more was given). Based upon the color they could select a certain amount of items within a category of foods or supplies. *The Pantry* received both State, and Federal assistance, but most of the food and supplies were donated by people in the community, food stores themselves, and by local churches. Most of the volunteers were from local churches; there were exceptions to this. There were certain days and times the food pantry was open. Sometimes this fluctuated based upon the times, the season, and the volunteers who were available. The *Eastbank Community Center* did their best to be open at the same times and to have full staffs; sometimes this was impossible.

Melissa held the door open for Nicole.

Melissa: was five six, had a long oblong shaped face, her nose was both wide and long, she had blue eyes, long blond straight hair, a long smile, thin lips, high cheekbones, large dimples, a tight stomach, powerful legs, a wider rear end, and very large breasts. Melissa was dressed in: a denim skirt, a loose fitting red button shirt, was wearing a baseball cap with an American Flag embroidered on it, her blond hair was sticking through the back of it, and she was wearing store brand athletic shoes.

When she was a teenager she hated her large breasts. Later she used them to: make money as a dancer, to land several sugar Daddies, a couple sugar Momma’s, and helped her be an elite escort. The money she earned was used for drugs and parting. She currently believed her breasts were meant to bless a husband. She wanted to experience what true love was. However, she was in no hurry to find such a man, after a decade of being clean and sober she was content with her life.

Melissa was the director of the *Community Center*, because of this she was one of a few paid employee. It was far from a large salary; but Melissa could have cared less. It provided her with a trailer home she adored and the center gave her purpose. Her two pet projects were *The Pantry* and what the community center called *To Heal*. There were many name changes to this program but the goal was the same. To educate people about abuse and to help those being abused. When she was unable to help someone she reminded herself she was part of something that was helping as many people as possible.

Melissa said, “Thank you for helping.”

Nicole answered, “Y’all don’t have to thank me.”

The door for *The Pantry* was on the left side of the building. Just outside of this door was a large side parking lot.

Nicole stepped through the doorway.

Melissa shut and locked this outside door. She turned to the second more secure door. Hanging on this door was a fake clock used to teach children how to tell time; it was made of wood and plastic. Attached to the top of it was a wooden sign saying, *Next time the Pantry is open*. Attached to the bottom were two clips. Melissa took off the Monday sign and hung on the Thursday sign and then set the clock to the time *The Pantry* would be open. She shut this door and locked it. She slipped the Monday sign into a sleeve attached to the door.

She was pleased to see volunteers restocking the shelves for Thursday. Something Melissa enjoyed was when volunteers were working together and the room was filled with chatter.

Nicole waited for Melissa.

Nicole yelled, "Ma."

A couple ladies turned around.

In the Community Center there was only *one* Ma and only *one* Captain.

Mary Steward asked, "Honey, What are Y'all needing?"

"I need to ask Y'all something."

Mary steward turned and walked over to these two ladies.

Nicole with a very serious tone stated, "We have a young lady being abused."

With this concerning everyone in the room the noise level dropped.

Melissa stated, "Lets get to my office."

Ma and Nicole followed Melissa out of this section. Nicole made sure to shut the door behind them. They were in a large open area. Most activities happened in this room. There were rows of large fold out tables; tables donated over the years by the school district. There were five different looking tables; each type of table donated at a different time. Each table had been repaired between three and ten times. The only time they ever rid themselves of a table was when new tables were donated.

These three women were headed toward a door in the back left corner of this large room. On the other side of the cafeteria near a large bulletin board Captain and two retiree's were trying to hang a large plastic display. On a nearby table were a half a dozen boxes and another plastic display.

Captain holding onto the plastic display yelled in an irritated voice, "Is it straight!?"

The retiree holding the drill stepped back, "Tilt it up a little more."

The other retiree stated, "Just a minute ago Y'all said to bring it down."

"Well it now needs to go up."

Captain moved it, "Hows this?"

"Perfect."

The retiree without the drill stated, "Wasn't it there when we started?"

"No it ain't."

Captain looked and asked, "What are Y'all saying?"

The retiree with the drill answered, "If Y'all weren't so blind. Y'all see it wasn't on the line last time. Now it's on the line."

The other retiree stated, "Well maybe the line is off kilter."

The retiree with the drill stated, "I ain't believing so."

Captain holding onto the plastic holder yelled, "Would Y'all just drill it in."

The guy holding the drill went up and drilled in the second screw into the wall.

The other retiree suggested, “We should put one in the center.”

All three stepped back and studied the display.

The three ladies: walked through a door, when the door shut they no longer could hear the men, on their right was a kitchen area (the metal gate between the kitchen area and the open area was closed), to the left were restrooms, they walked down a hallway, on the left was one door, inside of this door was a storage room, they stepped through an open doorway and were now in a small office area. There were four offices, two had doors, one of the offices without a door was a storage area, the other office without the door had two fairly new office desks in it, one of the offices with a closed door had a sign on saying “*Business Affairs*”. The other office was Melissa’s; there was a sign attached to the door saying “*Director*.” They stepped into this office.

Ma stated, “Y’all have a new desk and chair.”

“Last week new office furniture was sitting on the dock.”

“We put two of them in the open office and Bobbi-Jane took a new desk and chair.”

Everyone knew where the furniture came from.

Ma stated, “I’m sure it came from our anonymous donor.”

“Same one.”

Nicole asked, “Has Captain admitted to helping?”

Ma answered, “He ain’t said a word.”

Melissa with concern answered, “We ain’t saying a word. I have it from a good source if we start talking. The donations will stop.”

Nicole asked, “Why are they behaving this way?”

Mary answered, “Unlike many folks who are wanting attention for what they’re doing. Mr. Bob and Ms. Ashleigh ain’t wanting any. The Lord was showing me. If they get attention it makes it harder for them to help others. People start accusing them of being something they ain’t.”

Melissa listened.

Nicole said matter of fact, “Sometimes I ain’t trusting Ashleigh.”

“There be layers.”

There was a slight pause.

Mary continued in a serious tone, “There ain’t any doubt she’s been through a ringer. But she’s a good gal.”

“I just keep feeling she ain’t telling everything.”

“Honey. With the responsibility her brother gave her and what she’s in all knowing about. She can’t be saying everything.”

“What happens if there is a misunderstanding?”

“Don’t be fretting over a misunderstanding.”

Ma said waved her hands.

“She’d get over one of them. Just don’t be hurting anyone she cares about.”

“Its what I’m worrying about.”

“Honey.”

Nicole asked, “What?”

“Ain’t you aware Y’all are one of the ones she cares about?”

“I ain’t sure.”

Melissa continued to listen.

“Y’all ain’t understanding why she keeps calling Y’all and Diana. How many times has she called Y’all asking about how she should act and dress?”

“Many times.”

“Honey, If she wasn’t looking up to Y’all she wouldn’t be calling. If something ever happened to Y’all I’m betting she’d be there to help.”

“What makes Y’all so sure?”

Very serious, “It’s what I was mentioning before. She’s been to hell and back. On her way back she found out what love was. I suspect it’s on account of that eccentric brother of hers and her foster parents. I’m guessing she put them through the paces when she was a youngin’. She was telling me she’s been trying to get her foster parents to come on down and visit. I’m looking forward to meeting her Foster Momma and her Foster Daddy.”

“What makes you so certain?”

“A hunch.”

There was a moment of silence.

Ma added, “And how Captain has taken to her like a second daughter. He ain’t ever did so before.”

Melissa and Nicole would think on this.

Melissa asked, “Who’s being abused?”

“Andrea.”

Ma with some passion in her voice stated, “Her Momma was always walking with the devil.”

Melissa added, “She came here asking about a counselor and the meetings.”

Ma asked, “I’ve heard her little sister has moved in with her?”

Melissa said, “This has to stay within these here circles.”

These three ladies kept many things between them, except when they felt Captain or Jimmy should know.

Nicole answered, “We’re understanding.”

“The Momma was sexually abusing all three?”

Ma in shock asked, “The Momma?”

Nicole said, “We’re in the knowing she was mean. But she was molesting them?”

“Yes.”

Ma declared, “What is the world coming too!”

Melissa answered, “It happens more than anyone admits.”

Nicole and Ma were shocked but would listen to Melissa.

Melissa continued, “She was able to face what her Momma was doing to her on account of the pamphlets I’m having the guys put up.”

Nicole asked, “Are they the same pamphlets I spotted today in *Renewed Mastery’s* cafeteria?”

“The same.”

Ma asked, “I thought Andrea kicked the snake in the grass boyfriend out.”

Melissa asked, “I was told the same?”

“She did just before her sister moved in with her. But I spotted flowers on her desk and she was talking about how he promised on changing.”

Melissa rolled his eyes.

“Did he promise on quieting drinking? And wouldn’t hit her no more?”

Nicole answered, "Y'all know the drill."

Melissa concerned stated, "She'll lose custody of her sister if she's in an abusive relationship."

"Is there anything we can do?"

Melissa answered, "Unfortunately we can't until she's hurt again or she comes to us."

Ma stated, "Let's keep praying and watching."

She turned to Nicole, "Has Ashleigh said anything?"

"She's watching."

"Don't be saying anything."

Nicole and Ma looked at Melissa.

"It was Ms. Ashleigh who picked out all of the pamphlets. She on her own made sure to give me the displays and those pamphlets."

Nicole asked, "I'm confused. And I ain't trying to be inappropriate. She never figured out she was being molested?"

Ma turned to Melissa for an answer as well.

"I ain't in the knowing what personally happened to Andrea. Many times a mother will say it's part of being a good Momma. Like bathing a child way beyond when they should. Momma's will tell them they are seeing how they are developing. Many times a female guardian will tell a boy they are showing them how to treat ladies. Or they tell their children it's how a Momma loves their children. What child doesn't want to be loved by their Momma?"

Ma declared, "Well that ain't being a good Momma."

"An example was the teacher who was messing with them boys and assaulted the girl."

Nicole stated, "I remember."

Melissa added, "People have a difficult time believing women act like predators. When a gal is molested by a woman it's hard for them to tell because they feel no one would believe them. For the boys they feel their mother was helping them. Or teaching them how to be a man. Many times boys feel they were supporting their Momma during a tough time. Men often feel guilty because they had to get excited to perform. It's often times difficult to convince many boys or grown men what happened to them was abuse."

There was silence in the office.

She opened a drawer of her desk and grabbed the pamphlet on when a mother molests, "Look at this pamphlet..."

She was interrupted by a knock on the door.

"Yes."

"It's Captain."

"Come in."

In his hand were a stack of pamphlets.

"Honey. Are Y'all aware of what these pamphlets are saying?"

Ma asked, "Hand one of them over."

He handed her a pamphlet about same sex couples being abused.

Melissa answered, "Ms. Ashleigh donated them."

Captain lifted his hat and put it back down, "Y'all think it's wise?"

Because of Nicole and Ma's hand motions he handed the other pamphlets to the ladies. Nicole receive the one discussing women as sexual predators.

“We are here to serve everyone in the community. I ain’t trying to promote a gay lifestyle. Especially knowing what I know. But I ain’t turning away anyone who is being beating or hurt. I just don’t believe it’s what Jesus would do.”

To this Captain stated, “I reckon’ so. It’s just I ain’t ever heard of a momma molesting their own children. Or a woman assaulting other gals.”

Melissa had a look, “It happens.”

Captain said in despair, “It’s bad enough hearing how men are treating ladies. Much less woman treating other gals and their own kin?”

“We’ve seen mothers hurting their kids.”

Captain asked, “But having sex with em’? And sexually assaulting little boys?”

Nicole looked at her father-in-law, “We were just discussing the teacher who was messing around with her boy students and assaulted a girl student.”

“I remember.”

He lifted up his hat and put it back down.

“I ain’t ever considered how it’d mess up the boys.”

Melissa stated, “See what I’m trying to say?”

This caused Ma and Nicole to look at one another.

Melissa stated, “It affects boys grades. Often times boys will only relate to gals sexually, They end up dating older women. What’s sad is many end up never having a positive relationship with a lady.”

Captain shook his head and gave a furlong look.

Melissa stated, “Just put up the shelves. I’ll sort out the pamphlets.”

“I’d be much obliged.”

Captain added, “I see what Y’all are accomplishing but I ain’t wanting to be answering on why I was putting them up.”

Melissa smiled, “I’ll handle it.”

“The shelves are hanging. I’ll be playing checkers or reading the word until Y’all are done.”

Ma said, “Captain we’ll be done shortly.”

“Okay.”

He stepped out of the room and shut the door.

The three Christian ladies looked at one another.

Nicole stated, “I guess anyone can hurt anyone in anyway.”

Melissa added, “Like a woman sexually assaulting another woman. A lesbian beating up her lesbian spouse. Guys raping boys or other guys. Or a mother having sex with their own son. An aunt playing with a niece or nephew. The list is endless.”

They became silent.

Ma suggested, “Lets pray.”

The three women spent almost an hour and a half discussing what was happening at the center and then spent another hour and half praying.

Captain was used to what his wife considered a short time. The men discussed the pamphlets while playing checkers and chess. The wives of the two retirees eventually collected their husbands and went home. Captain helped everyone finish up. The community center would be quiet until later in the evening. During this quiet time he: went to his truck, took out his Bible, went back into the center, and patiently waited for his wife.

February 5th Basic Principles

Part Four of Six

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Ashleigh & Megan
Book I: Friendship

Monday February 5th
Basic Principles



Day 11 of Book I
(Twenty-Two Days after Bob presented Shelly with an Apartment)

Part Five of Six

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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February 5th, Basic Principles Day 11 of Book I

(Twenty-Two Days after Shelly is offered an apartment)

Megan: checked her emails, checked her schedule, added charters to her calendar, and sent digital photographs. While accomplishing these tasks the YMCA called her. She agreed to lead a couple more aerobics classes. She reminded the supervisor she was still in the midst of her busy season; but her availability would open in late spring and summer. The supervisor offered her a chance to teach swimming lessons during the summer. Megan gladly accepted because it helped her financially and she enjoyed teaching children how to swim. After the call; she focused on her bookkeeping. When the bookkeeping was done she easily clicked off the computer.

She spent time praying. When she prayed she was both passionate and honest. She always: asked God for wisdom to read the ocean, He’d protect her charter and anyone she was responsible for, He’d give her good weather, He’d bring her home safe, she prayed for those people she cared about, she spent time repenting of anything she felt might be sinful, and she gave God thanks. Today she specifically prayed: about her relationship with Christopher, she thanked God for being a virgin, she asked to remain a virgin until she was married, asked for the strength to keep her boundaries, and thanked him for helping her through her sexual struggles.

After her prayer she cleaned her office. While cleaning she would gaze up at the plywood walls. The next time she went to the thrift store she would again look for frames. She decided she would go to the dollar store and see if they had any decent frames. When she was finished cleaning. She: logged out of everything, turned her computer off, turned off the lamp

on her desk, pushed in her computer chair, used the metal door handle to open the gate, stepped out of this caged area, unhooked her keys from her belt loop, while standing on a platform locked the door handle lock, locked the mail gate lock, and stepped down from the platform. She gazed into the storage area. She felt a sense of accomplishment seeing all of the storage shelves attached to the walls and everything organized on these shelves. She turned off the main light of the storage unit, made sure the metal gate to the storage unit was locked, stepped out of the door to the unit, turned around, locked it, hung her keys back onto her belt loop, glanced at her watch, and decided she would relax on her charter before Jake arrived.

She made a right, only went a few feet, and was at the end of the row of buildings on the marina property; these were both garages and storage units. She glanced to her right was the row of garages and storage units. Behind her was the first mansion, and to her left was the Eastbank River. She walked on the edge of the parking lot. Looking forward she spotted a pick-up-truck and a trailer long enough for two riding lawnmowers. It was easy to see through the metal fence and observe two city employees mowing the grass between the Eastbank River and the Preserve. Mike, the owner of the Marina, allowed the city to park on the edge of the marina parking lot. Because of the fence the city needed to drive the lawnmowers around Mike's house and parallel the preserve. In the distance she spotted people crossing over the walking bridge that went over the Eastbank River. It was high enough for most medium sized vessels to pass through; it would have been impossible for Bob's houseboat yacht to pass through.

While walking toward her charter she spotted one of her Daddy's friends cruising up the Eastbank River.

He honked the horn of his vessel and waved.

She smiled her big dimple smile and waved back.

Looking to the left she glanced across the Eastbank River at this section of Eastbank. She felt it was fairly busy for a Monday. On the weekends, because of the bars and a barbecue restaurant, this was one of the busiest sections of Eastbank. She looked at the rows of buildings to her right. Megan remembered a time when each one of these buildings were painted different and each had different siding. If a person had a background in construction they would be able to notice these buildings were built at different times with different materials. On her left she passed the third and second pier of the marina. She waved at more than one person living in the marina. She stopped to talk to more than one person headed toward the parking lot or the buildings. She spotted a guy fishing in front of the car barrier; next to him was a large tackle box, a cooler for fish, and a small cooler. She wished him well.

She stopped and watched the two guys mow. Being closer she watched as a family crossed the walking bridge. They headed down to the preserve side. She watched them walk north along the river. She hoped the parents would closely watch their three children.

She made a left and stepped on what everyone called the fist pier. On this pier is where her houseboat and charter were docked. The reason a patron of her business knew her charter was docked on this pier was the large sign her Nephew made and the wooden bench in front of her charter.

At the end of the pier and just beyond her charter was the yacht. Her goal was to one day fill the section where Bob's yacht was with a vessels of her own. The frustration of the yacht being docked there was offset by her friendship with Ashleigh. Without Bob docking his

yacht at this spot; there was the chance Ashleigh and Megan would have never become best friends.

She spotted Gina and what Megan believed was a new girlfriend: step out of Gina's houseboat, step onto the first pier, and walk toward her. Megan was surprised how feminine her new lover was. Megan often thought Gina's lovers looked and dressed like men. Megan would never forget the girlfriend of Gina's who flirted with her every time they met. Megan believed this was awful disrespectful to Gina and was happy when Gina broke it off with her.

Megan became concerned Gina's new lover would make a pass at her too. She reminded herself of the advice Florence and Ashleigh gave her. It was impossible for her to stop others from believing she was a lesbian; the only thing she could do is politely address it when it came up. For many years she doubted her sexuality. It was obvious to her now, she was a straight female; while questioning her sexuality it was less than obvious.

Gina spotting Megan and aggressively waved. This was a bad idea because of the items she was carrying. Gina needed to set what looked like a basket down and adjust something else she was holding.

Megan flashed her dimples.

Just as Megan reached them Gina stood up.

At five ten Gina was taller than her girlfriend. Her long wavy blond hair was very neatly pinned back, she was wearing sunglasses, and was in a floral maxi dress. The green and blue flower print, created a vertical stripe pattern, in between this stripe were wide gaps of white, down the front and just below the breast line was a wide dark blue stripe. Megan felt this was a perfect dress for her voluptuous figure. Megan being an expert in physical fitness, bone structure, and body fat; knew Gina was far from overweight. Megan was happy: Gina never once seemed to lack confidence, put in the effort to maintain a healthy weight, and avoided getting herself into a yo-yo pattern of dieting. Her round shaped face made her large nose very noticeable. Her nose was off set by: her lower blended in cheekbones, her cute chin, her long smile, thin lips, and her bright green eyes.

Megan felt her new lover was the most feminine gal she had ever been with. Without this woman being with Gina; Megan would have never suspected she was a lesbian. Gina's new lover was five seven, her straight bleach blond hair came down to the middle of her neck, she was wearing a fair amount of makeup, her breasts were on the larger side, and she had wider hips. Megan felt her yellow medallion centered tunic highlighted her round breasts and at the same time was covering her hips. Megan took note of her light blue embroidered stretch denim jeans; Megan especially liked the white flowery embroidery sewed onto the legs of the jeans. Megan felt a white or yellow belt would have been nice, but because of the shirt it was impossible to know what type of belt she wore. The shirt covered the five pockets, the embroidery on the back pockets, and the zipper button front; things Megan liked when she picked out denim jeans.

Both were in flats, both had similar dangling earrings, and both were carrying items needed for a picnic. Gina's lover was carrying a green plastic cooler with a white top; a blanket was draped over the cooler. Gina was carrying a brown picnic basket and hooked onto the handle was a small radio; these were the items Gina adjusted after waving to Megan.

Megan wished Christopher would invite her on a picnic. She felt Christopher would have gone on a picnic if she suggested it. She speculated he would have hated it. She was

unsure of what was more irritating, the fact he would have never considered taking her on a picnic or never saying how much he disliked the idea.

Gina in her Midwestern accent said, "Megan. How are you doing?"

Megan stopped and flashed her large dimples, "Howdy."

She waved her hand, "We're doing great."

Megan's dimples flashed.

"I'm happy Y'all are doing well."

Excited Gina said, "I'd like you to meet my new girlfriend Melinda."

She motioned with her hand.

"Melinda this is Megan."

"Your the one who owns the charter?"

Megan immediately recognized the Wisconsin accent.

"Yes Ma'am."

Melinda stated, "We've been talking about scheduling one."

"If Y'all wait until after April I'd give Y'all a discount."

Gina smiled, "We can do that."

"Would it just be the two of you or a group?"

Gina said matter of fact, "We'll have to discuss it. I'm sure we'd have friends who would love to go on one."

Melinda suggested, "We could invite some of my friends from the softball team."

This excited Gina, "They'd love it."

Megan's dimples flashed.

Gina said to comfort Megan, "We'll have to tell your friends Megan has a boyfriend."

Melinda made a face, "Why would we have too?"

Gina was surprised by this and gave a look.

Megan asked, "Do Y'all believe I'm straight?"

Melinda was surprised Megan would be a lesbian, "I assumed you were straight. Are you Bi?"

Megan answered happily, "No. Sometimes people mistaken me for a lesbian. But I'm a straight female."

Melinda answered, "I could understand why a straight person might think your gay."

Gina said with a facial expression, "I thought she was?"

Melinda smiled, "You've always been attracted to straight girls."

Gina made a face and answered reluctantly, "There's some truth to that."

Megan purposely changing the subject, "It looks like Y'all are headed on a picnic?"

This excited Gina, "I've been looking forward to this picnic all day."

"Where are Y'all headed?"

Gina answered, "We haven't decided yet."

Megan mentioned, "Y'all should try Sunset Park."

Melinda asked, "Where's that?"

"It's on the southern edge of town just after all of the resorts. There's a lot of room. I like the large grassy area in front of the beach. They just added new picnic tables."

Gina asked, "Isn't that the park with the big play area? And doesn't the town's bike path start there?"

Megan's dimples flashed.

“See. Y’all know where it is.”

Gina excited, “We should go there.”

Melinda answered, “I’d love to check it out.”

Megan asked very politely, “Where are Y’all from?”

“Wisconsin.”

Megan stated, “You must work at *Renewed Mastery?*”

“Actually, I do.”

“Are you off of work today?”

“With how many hours I’ve worked Ms. Ashleigh said I should go home early today.

Later in the week we’re going to get real busy.”

Megan flashed her dimple smile.

They stood looking at one another.

Megan broke the silence, “If Y’all need anything just ask.”

Melinda touched Gina, “She’s been showing me around.”

Gina smiled, “Except for Sunset Park.”

They giggled.

Megan’s dimples flashed.

“I’m needing to prepare for my charter.”

Melinda answered, “We wouldn’t want to keep you.”

Gina touched her chest, “Yes. We wouldn’t want to hold you up.”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

“Y’all have a good rest of the day.”

Melinda answered, “We will.”

The two ladies headed out of the marina.

Megan heard Melinda ask, “Isn’t that Bob’s yacht?”

Gina answered, “Yes.”

“I’ve heard Ashleigh lives there too.”

Gina said with confidence, “Don’t believe what people are saying.”

Megan was unable to hear Melinda’s response.

She passed the bench and stepped to the waist high gate attached to the charter’s pier.

She unhooked the keys from her tan colored cargo pants.

She looked up when she heard Florence yell at her.

Florence was waving and yelled loudly, “Megan!”

Megan assumed; the thirty something year old man walking beside Florence was the second cousin she heard about. She turned from the gate. She was surprised on how attractive he was. He was four inches shorter than Megan; something she neither liked nor disliked. What she liked was: how in shape he was, he was well dressed, and clean shaven. He was wearing a gray colored suit, with a red button shirt, a multi-colored red striped tie, a nice belt, and a pair of brand new brown dress shoes. Currently his suit coat was unbuttoned. He had a long face, blue eyes, a nice smile, light brown hair, he was turning gray along his ears; what was important to Megan was his full head of hair.

Behind them was a reluctant Frank. His facial expression and body language made Megan giggle.

“Howdy.”

Megan focused on Florence and answered, “Howdy.”

Florence responded, "I'd like Y'all to meet my cousin Kyle. This here is my dear friend Megan."

Megan heard Frank say, "He's your second cousin."

She snipped back, "It still makes him a cousin."

Megan held in her smile.

She focused on Kyle, "Howdy."

"Nice to meet Y'all."

Megan was somewhat smitten.

Florence stated proudly and winked, "He stopped to help us with some of our legal affairs."

He smiled, "I'm glad to be helping."

"We appreciate it."

Megan glanced at Frank and he made a face.

Kyle asked in a flattering way, "Florence was telling me Y'all are the one running this charter?"

"Yes."

"It takes courage to run your own business."

He smiled and put his hand on his hips.

"If Y'all don't mind me saying."

"Go ahead."

Frank rolled his eyes.

Florence slapped her husband on his shoulder and interrupted the conversation, "I do apologize. We need to be headed home."

Frank answered, "We do?"

"Yes we do."

She added, "Come on."

Before leaving she hugged Kyle, "Thank Y'all for your help."

"No problem."

She turned toward Megan, and with a grin, "We'll talk later."

"Yes Ma'am."

Frank made a face and pushed up his glasses.

She glared at her husband.

With a sneer said, "Come on."

Frank made a face toward Megan.

Turned toward Florence and answered, "Yes Honey."

She stiffened her body, gave him a look, and stormed back to their houseboat.

Frank sighed and rolled his eyes. He followed her at his own pace; obviously uninterested in getting back to the houseboat in a hurry.

Kyle and Megan chuckled.

Kyle said, "She's great."

Megan admired the sincerity.

Megan stated, "She's been a friend of the family for as long as I can remember."

Kyle said in a sober tone, "Momma and her are like sisters. Florence's Momma past away and my Grandmother took Florence and her sister in."

Megan looked at him, "She never told me."

“From what I understand Florence was only four or five at the time. She loves my Grandparents as if they were her parents.”

“What about her Daddy?”

“I guess he wasn’t able to take care of them. He was around and all. But just felt they needed a woman raising em’.”

Megan answered, “This would have been proper back then.”

He changed the subject, “I admire a woman who can stand on her own two feet.”

She thought about what Nicole, Diana, and Ashleigh had taught her.

She recognized he was showing interest, “I’m currently dating. Even if I wasn’t. It’s important for me to date a man who has faith.”

He smiled, “I’m a Christian. I accepted Christ as my savior when I was ten.”

“I’ve heard Y’all are living with your mother?”

He smiled, “Florence mentioned Y’all could be a little blunt.”

Her dimples flashed.

“Is that bad?”

“It’s refreshing.”

She smiled her big dimple smile.

“What Florence and Frank ain’t aware of is Momma and Pa sold me the house years ago. They talked about moving but Pa caught skin cancer. He was stubborn and never took care of it.”

He paused.

Megan felt she should wait for him.

“I do miss him. I ain’t telling Momma to move. She’s brought up moving into a senior living condo’s. I believe she’s suggesting it because I’m single.”

Megan admired this, “She might be right.”

“I ain’t kicking Momma out of the house. It’s a big house. I’m assuming she ain’t wanting to be living with a wife either.”

“I’m sure she ain’t.”

They smiled.

He reached into his suit coat and pulled out a card, “If it doesn’t work out with the guy Y’all are seeing. Give me a call.”

Megan took the card and her dimples flashed.

“If it doesn’t work out I’ll give Y’all a call.”

He smiled.

A blend of joking and serious he asked, “Y’all watching out for them?”

“Yes Sir. I just ain’t letting Frank know.”

He sighed, “Frank is a handfull.”

“I wouldn’t want to be around if someone tried hurting Florence.”

“You ain’t whistling Dixie.”

“I need to get a move on. It was nice meeting Y’all.”

“Maybe I’ll call.”

“I have to try. If Y’all need a lawyer I’d love to represent Y’all.”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

She answered, “If Y’all need to impress some clients I’m open for charters.”

He respected this and with a smile answered, “I’ll give Y’all a call.”

With this they went their separate ways.

Megan glanced at her watch. She made a face. She took her keys and opened the gate attached to the professionally installed pier of her charter. She immediately changed the sign on the fence saying, “*On a scheduled charter.*” On this sign was the information on how to contact Megan and schedule a charter.

Julie hated this time of year; volleyball ended and it was before track and softball started. Softball was the priority; she was so athletic the track coach always worked with her so she could be on the team.

She was happy the day was over.

Her plan was to use her bike to: collect mail from various spots, take care of some banking, collect what she felt was a large sum of money, and meet what she considered to be business associates. The more successful she was at her business adventures the more pointless school was getting. The three positives keeping her attending school were: her Momma, sports, and Mr. Bob. She felt he was teaching her how to make school interesting. She loved participating in sports and wanted to compete at a collegiate level. She knew dropping out of high school would be devastating to her Momma; the least thing she wanted was to hurt her Momma.

The two negatives keeping her in school. She correctly believed if she dropped out of high school her parents would make her financially responsible for everything she needed; with the possibility of her parents kicking her out. With how easy it would have been for her to live on her own, she correctly believed it would have caused unwanted attention. Plus; she liked all the money she was saving living with her parents. What she was refusing to admit was the primary way she was getting through all of her stresses was through self pleasure. She believed because she was a virgin she had control of her sexual impulses. She felt if she wanted to stop she could have.

She admired her new locker. During winter break the school replaced all of the lockers. They: added lockers on each floor, were built with combination locks, were painted in the school colors, and none of them were dented; what Julie disliked was they were skinnier. Julie was aware the funding for this whole project came from *Renewed Mastery*. Everyone was shocked on how quickly this was finished. Julie correctly suspected Mr. Bob required them to be installed in a timely manner before giving the school the money to fix the problem. She correctly assumed, if it was left up to the school it would have taken years to complete. What she found funny was more than one student ended up in a lot of trouble for what they found in the lockers; some were still not allowed back.

She turned the dial on her lock.

She spotted out of the corner of her eye Bobbi-Sue and one of many new girls attending their school; Julie believed her name was Bette. Julie felt sorry for Bobbi-Sue. Bobbi-Sue’s breasts were the largest breasts of any girl in school and was one of the largest sets of boobs in town. The unwanted teasing and attention she received changed Bobbi-Sue from a fun active girl to one who was very serious and avoided any activity. She: quit sports, stopped going to the beach or a public pool, and gym was a nightmare for her. She tried everything to cover up her breasts but it was simply impossible. When a person looked beyond her breasts they were able to spot a very attractive young lady with a good heart. She had long blond hair, shiny

brown eyes, an oblong shaped face, a long cute smile; with cute dimples. She longed for a guy to like her because of who she was.

This was the reason Bobbi-Sue was sheepishly making her way down the hallway. She always carried her books in front of her breasts.

“Julie.”

Julie opened her locker.

“Howdy.”

“Hi Y’all.”

Bette answered with a simple, “Hi.”

Julie felt Bette was between a nerd and an athlete. She believed she was on the girls golf team and had signed up for track. It occurred to Julie, Bette was a brunette version of Ashleigh and Ester; while having her Momma’s lips and similar type of hair as herself. Bette had a heart shaped face with a defined jawline and cleft chin. Julie felt Bette’s chin and jawline were similar to hers. She also felt her lips were like her Momma’s; they were skinny on the top and were very full on the bottom. Julie felt her mouth and her cheekbones were a cross between Ester and Ashleigh. She wore thick dark glasses; behind these glasses Julie believed her eyes were similar to her own greenish-blue eyes. Julie felt her very dark wavy hair was pretty; Julie liked how she normally layered her hair to cover her wide forehead. Today was an exception, her hair was in a tight pony tail. She always dressed simply and conservative. Today was no different, she was in a short sleeved plaid button shirt, wore very simple jeans, was wearing store brand athletic shoes, and over her shoulder was a homemade beaded purse. She was carrying some notebooks and a couple text books. She had very tiny tits. Her torso was the exact same length as her legs. Because of her shorter stature and how even her legs and torso were; she had a noticeable rear-end.

Julie believed she was smart because she was one of the first to hand in any work or was one of the first done with a test. Julie would sit at her desk waiting for someone else to drop off their work or test before she did.

The only time Bette said anything was when she was asked a direct question.

Julie asked her directly, “Y’all are Bette?”

“Yes.”

Bobbi-Sue in a hurry asked, “Billy asked me out to Lucy’s.”

Julie acted surprised, “He did?”

“Y’all told him too?”

“He likes you.”

Bobbi-Sue asked, “Why does he like me?”

Julie answered honestly, “Because Y’all defended him. The only reason anyone’s been nice to him is because he plays on the football team. Before he played all anyone did was tease him.”

“He...”

Bette watched.

Julie interrupted, “He’s a good guy.”

“Ain’t he slow? We’re all in the knowing Y’all have been helping him since you skipped a grade.”

With some frustration and anger in her voice, “He ain’t stupid. It’s just he struggles with reading and writing. He has a lot of common sense. If any girl would ever see how good of a guy he is.”

She paused and was upset on how girls picked on him.

“He’ll protect and treat Y’all better than any other guy in this school. Maybe the whole town.”

Julie noticed Burt and Bradley step up to Bradley’s locker; his locker was five down from Julie’s. Because of the way the two girls were standing they never spotted these two guys.

“Then why ain’t you dating him? We all know he’s sweet on Y’all.”

Julie took her books and schoolwork from her bag and shoved them into her locker. She again disliked how the lockers were skinnier because she had to set her books on the side.

She turned to Bobbi-Sue, “Y’all know it wouldn’t work out between us. I’m getting a scholarship and heading off to college. I ain’t staying around here. Billy is very loyal. He’s the type of guy I’ve heard you say you’ve wanted. He really likes you.”

“Why does he like me?”

Julie thought of how blunt Ashleigh and Bob could be.

“He does like large breasts.”

“They all do.”

Bette watched and listened.

“Just like how Y’all have been teased. He’s been teased because he struggles with book learning and talks slow.”

Julie very serious said, “Ask him about his truck. He’ll tell Y’all about how he’s fixed it up.”

“I ain’t liking trucks.”

“Y’all want a guy who’ll open a door for Y’all? Or listen to what Y’all are saying? Or protect you?”

“Y’all have heard me say it.”

Julie whispered, “If Y’all ever show him your boobs he’ll assume you want to marry him. He ain’t the type of guy who’ll leave Y’all. He’s wired to be respectful to any gal. I’m certain with the wrong girl she’d take advantage of him.”

“I wouldn’t.”

“It’s why I encouraged him to ask Y’all out.”

Burt was aggressively shoved against a locker two from where Julie’s locker was. Behind this football player were four of his friends. Along side of them were Chelsey, Kendall, Brittany, and Marissa; she was the girl Julie twisted like a pretzel

Quickly Bobbie-Sue said, “I’ll see Y’all.”

“Nice meeting You.”

Bette answered by nodding her head.

Julie smiled at this.

The two girls tried to get away. Leroy, one of the popular guys, stepped in front of Bobbi-Sue. He was repeatedly asking Bobbi-Sue out; his approach was inappropriate for the last six months.

“Where are Y’all headed?”

Bobbi-Sue tried to stand up for herself, “I’ve told Y’all before I ain’t dating Y’all.”

Bette stepped to the side and pushed up her glasses.

Julie took note of Bette's stance.

Julie heard behind her, "You virgin weakling."

The two friends laughed.

This encouraged the guy, "I bet you think a pussy is a kitty cat."

The guys laughed.

Meekly Burt said, "I know the difference."

He was slammed against the locker, "I ain't wanting any sass. What I'm wanting is the assignment I told Y'all to prepare."

Burt pushed up his glasses, "If I get caught helping Y'all cheat I'll be suspended."

"I don't care."

The guys became silent.

"Instead of jacking off get my assignment done."

The guys laughed.

Burt tried to stand up for himself, "I ain't doing Y'all's homework."

"I guess your virgin ass would like to be shoved into one of these here lockers."

Julie glared at him.

She was ready to knee him right in the nuts and if possible at least one more move; she was prepared to run right after.

As this was happening: Julie heard, books tumble onto the ground, and Bobbi-Sue yell, "Don't touch me."

What irritated Bette was Kendall and the girl from Jersey stepped behind Bobbi-Sue.

Bette became infuriated when they giggled.

Julie was ready to physically move one of these girls.

There was a flash, Kendall started to scream, and blood was poring from her nose.

Kendall was crying and freaking out.

Bette turned toward the girl from Jersey, "You want some too?"

Julie recognized the punch. It was the one Megan used as the basis of all her punches.

One of guys stepped around and picked up Bobbi-Sue.

While this happened, the guy who liked Bobbi-Sue grabbed her top and was trying to rip it off.

Bobbi-Sue screamed and tried to fight back.

While this happened two of the friends jumped in front of Julie. These two guys were always hitting on her. She knew them from the group sex parties; she wanted nothing to do with either. The one on her right received a knee right in his balls. He was the rudest of the two.

The girl from Jersey yelled, "You bitch."

And grabbed Julie by the back of the hair.

Fortunately for the girl from Jersey, Leroy (the guy trying to remove Bobbi-Sue's top) was picked up and slammed onto the floor. Leroy lost his breath when Billy landed on top of him.

Everyone gasped and scattered.

This caused the friend who was holding onto Bobbi-Sue to let go. She fell to the floor but landed in a way where she avoided being hurt.

Billy acted in a way no one ever witnessed before. He quickly sat up and started to punch Leroy in the back of the head.

Billy started yelling, "Guys shouldn't be hitting gals."

Screams and cheering filled the hallway.

Julie said to herself out loud, "It finally happened."

They heard from one of the friends, "Billy you dumb fuck! Get..."

He shouted again, "You shouldn't be hitting gals."

This was so loud and filled with so much passion it stopped Leroy's friend from finishing his sentence.

Leroy managed to turn onto his back.

Billy seeing his face started to punch harder.

With Julie being temporarily stunned the guy who was kicked in the balls stood up and was about to bitch slap her.

He: was lifted up and slammed onto the floor.

Jeff stood over him and pointed, "Y'all ain't touching my sister."

The guy on the ground answered, "I don't have a beef with Y'all."

"Then leave."

The one who started this all shoved Burt against the locker. He was about to land a fist into Burt's face, instead Buck slammed him against the lockers; this was the first locker to receive a noticeable dent.

Julie caught a glimpse of the Snob Club rushing Kendall into the restroom. They were using tissues to stop the bleeding.

While this was happening, Leroy was receiving the results of all the years Billy was picked on and ridiculed. It was impossible for Leroy to fight back. All he did was raise his arms up to protect his face.

Julie jumped in, "Stop it."

He kept going.

"Billy STOP!"

She yelled, "Bobbi-Sue is okay."

She grabbed him and yelled, "STOP IT!"

He looked up at Julie.

Bobbi-Sue stepped up to Billy, "I'm okay."

"He was trying to see your boobs"

This surprised all of the girls watching this. After this incident; not a single girl in school ever picked on him.

Julie commanded, "Get off him."

Buck came rushing in and grabbed Billy's wrist, "Billy stop."

He listened to one of the few true friends he had.

"Okay."

"Get the Fuck off me."

Billy was back to his old self.

"I'll kick your ass."

Buck stood next to him, "You'll have to fight me too."

Leroy's nose was bleeding, his eye hurt, his lip was cut, and all at once felt woozy.

The guy Jeff threw to the ground stood up and pointed, "Mr. Righteous to the rescue."

Jeff looked at him and said in frustration, "Stop it."

"This ain't any of your affair."

Jeff said bluntly, "It became my affair once Y'all messed with my sister and touched Bobbi-Sue. No man should treat a woman like Y'all."

He turned toward the guys, "Burt doesn't have to do Y'all's homework any more."

Leroy was too woozy to clearly understand what Jeff said.

Jeff turned toward Burt, "Y'all hear me."

"Yes."

Jeff pointed at Brady, "Don't Y'all do any of their homework either."

"No problem."

"I'm going to kick your..."

Jeff looked at the guy who stared all of this, "Try."

Ms. Bright shoved herself into the middle, "What the hell is going on?"

Jeff turned to this new female teacher.

The guy who Buck shoved answered "Nothing."

She walked right up to him and pointed, "Young man. I ain't a lady to be messing with."

Julie smiled.

Billy, being Billy said, "Ma'am. Leroy was trying to see my girlfriends boobs."

Everyone gasped at this announcement.

Ms. Bright looked at Billy, "Who's Leroy?"

Julie answered, "The guy who's about to pass out."

Other teachers were arriving, a male gym teacher stepped in, a football coach stepped in, and Ms. Conner stood on the side.

Ms. Bright was so intense everyone just stood there, "Who's your girlfriend?"

Everyone wanted to know.

"Bobbi-Sue."

Julie hoped she would do the right thing, even if it was for a couple days.

She stepped up and said, "Ma'am. I'm his girlfriend."

"Who hurt Y'all?"

She pointed, "Leroy."

Julie commented with a smile, "The guy who's sitting on the ground."

The gym teacher walked up to him, "Get your ass up."

Billy said, "He wanted to see her boobs."

Kids laughed.

"It ain't funny."

Ms. Bright in a very commanding tone, with the body language to back it up stated, "Y'all. A girl shouldn't be treated this way."

Ms. Bright turned to the guy bleeding, "Y'all get your ass to the office."

Julie noticed everyone who started this mess had slipped away, even the guy Jeff threw onto the floor. Julie felt they were all punks. She hoped they would get into trouble.

Leroy moaned.

The gym teacher started to drag him to the office.

Ms. Bright turned, her body language was completely different, "Young Man what's your name?"

Ms. Conner stepped up while other teachers dispensed the crowd.

Julie, Jeff, Buck, Bette, and Bobbi-Sue stayed.

Julie took note of Burt and Bradly slipping away. Bradly put an arm around his friend. She felt sorry for both.

She turned her attention to Billy.

“Billy.”

“Fighting isn’t allowed in school?”

Julie quickly stepped up to him and whispered in his ear.

Ms. Conner and Ms. Bright gave her a look.

Julie gave them a look and shrugged his shoulder.

Ms Conner asked, “Billy why were Y’all fighting?”

“It was self defense.”

They looked over at Julie.

She smiled.

Bobbie-Sue jumped in, “He was protecting my honor.”

Julie added, “Yup.”

Billy said in a very angry voice, “Guys keep trying to see my girlfriends boobs. Only a husband is to see a gals boobs.”

Julie winked at Bobbie-Sue.

Bobbie-Sue added, “Yeah.”

This surprised everyone still standing there.

She shrunk, “Sorry.”

Ms. Bright smiled.

“I ain’t sure about everything Y’all said. But I’ll have to take Y’all to the office.”

Billy worried asked, “Am I in trouble?”

Ms. Conner stepped in, “Would Y’all feel better if I took Y’all down?”

“Yes Ma’am.”

Ms. Conner gently escorted Billy to the office. She encouraged him.

Julie yelled, “Remember it was self defense.”

He turned, “I ain’t forgetting.”

Bobbi-Sue looked at Ms. Bright, “May I go and help him?”

“Y’all might want to wait until tomorrow.”

Bobbi-Sue reluctantly stood there and answered, “Yes Ma’am.”

“Stay out of trouble.”

All of them nodded or agreed with Ms. Bright.

Jeff and Julie looked at one another and nodded their heads. They could fight against one another but it was very different if anyone fought against the other. Julie started helping Bobbi-Sue, Bette, Jeff, and Buck pick up Bobbi-Sue and Bette’s things. Both dropped many of their personal items during the fray.

Bette was upset because: her glasses fell off, items from her purse were spread across the floor, and she dropped all of her books.

Buck asked, “Y’all alright?”

She smiled, “Yup.”

Bette smiled and said, “Thank-you.”

Jeff handed her a couple items from her purse, “It ain’t a big deal.”

Bette asked, “What’s your name?”

Julie believed the look her brother gave Bette was different.

For once he answered simply, "My name is Jeff. I believe Y'all are Bette."

"Yes it is."

"I believe Y'all go to my church."

Bette stated, "I've been going to your church's youth group. My church is too small to have one."

Julie smiled and found it interesting on how Jeff was helping Bette; it was obvious they were looking at one another funny.

"Y'all attending youth group Wednesday?"

"Yes."

Julie mentioned, "Jeff how are Y'all getting home?"

"Huh."

She rolled her eyes and made a face.

"With Billy in the office how are Y'all getting home?"

"Oh."

Bobbi-Sue who now was holding her things, glanced at Julie, and winked.

Jeff managed to say, "Myself and Buck could use a ride home."

"Yeah."

Bette asked, "Will you walk me to my locker?"

"Y'all don't mind Buck tagging along."

She looked at Buck, "He's a friend?"

"Yes."

"A guy needs friends."

Jeff picked up her glasses and gently handed them to her.

"Thank-you."

"I'll carry them books."

She gave them to Jeff, she put her glasses on, and adjusted her purse. Buck gave Jeff the rest of her books. The three of them stepped away. It was obvious Jeff, Buck, and Bette were talking about this confrontation.

Bobbi-Sue stated, "Those are the most words she's said at one time since she's started hanging around me."

Julie asked, "Are Y'all friends?"

"I guess so. Last week she just started following me around."

Julie answered, "She's choose a good gal to cling too."

"I guess."

"I have to get my things and bike home."

Bobbi-Sue followed Julie back to her locker.

Julie grabbed her backpack, swung it over her shoulder, and shut the locker. They headed out of the building.

Bobbi-Sue asked, "May I ask Y'all something?"

"Shoot."

"I'm hearing a lot of rumors."

Julie made a face.

"Yeah."

"Did Y'all sleep with Billy?"

Julie answered, "I'm a virgin."

Bobbi-Sue smiled, "I ain't believing all the rumors. I just was checking."

"I'm understanding."

Bobbi-Sue blushed.

"One time I heard Y'all."

Julie glanced at Bobbi-Sue.

They blushed.

"I never told anyone. 'Cause I do it too. I mean not here. But. Well..."

They blushed again.

Julie saved both, "Everyone does."

Bobbi-Sue kindly suggested, "Maybe Y'all should stop doing it here and stop attending the parties."

Julie answered honestly, "I ain't interested in attending the parties."

Bobbi-Sue asked, "Y'all feel attending the parties was a mistake?"

"My biggest mistake was being friends with the Snob Club."

"Amanda misses Y'all."

Julie with a sad countenance said, "I've reached out to her."

"School stinks."

"You ain't whistling Dixie."

They looked at one another and walked in silence.

Julie noticed how Bobbi-Sue carried her things.

Julie mentioned, "I don't like my boobs either."

Bobbi-Sue held in tears, "Why do they like em' big?"

"I don't mind the fact they like em'. Why do they act like jerks because we have em'?"

Bobbi-Sue answered with an angry tone, "You'd think if they liked em' they'd treat the gal who's carrying em' better."

They stared at one another for awhile.

Julie made it a point to say, "With Billy as your boyfriend Y'all won't have to worry about anyone picking on you.."

"I'm sure they will. But Billy likes me for me."

"Yes he does."

They reached a set of doors, Julie glanced at her watch, "I have to be leaving."

"Me too."

"See Y'all tomorrow."

Julie answered, "Yup."

Bobbi-Sue turned and hurried to her locker.

Julie thought for a second, "Wait."

Bobbi-Sue stopped, "What?"

"Let me walk Y'all out."

Being close to Ms. Bright's classroom she stepped into the hallway, "Y'all still here?"

"Ma'am we're leaving once I get my things."

"I'll walk Y'all out."

Julie and Bobbi-Sue looked at one another. Then Julie answered, "Yes Ma'am."

Ms. Bright followed the two to Bobbi-Sue's locker. Then she escorted them out of the building. This gave Julie and Ms. Bright a chance to talk about self defense. Julie promised Bobbi-Sue she would teach her self defense.

Ashleigh stated loudly, “Now try.”

Captain answered, “Alright.”

Ashleigh and Captain observed and heard the switch move; the model train went from the outside main rack onto an inside track. A track Captain worked on during the week.

Ashleigh was grateful she left work early. She was losing patience with the companies sales staff. So many of the issues with production led back to the sales staff making promises they should have never made. Leaving early allowed her to go to the DMV. Which was a nightmare, but she was able to: get a Florida license, update the registration of the vehicle, receive new license plates and stickers; she reminded herself in Florida they were called tags. Bob officially gave Ashleigh the yellow Sport Edition Jeep Wrangler and paid for a year of insurance; something she appreciated. She would wait until she was sure Marcus was working before she would take care of the warning tickets. A bonus to leaving work early: she went home, spent time with Nikita, casually changed her clothes, and made herself ready to visit Captain and Ma.

She was happy to receive a package from one of her favorite clothing stores. In the package was: red chino trousers, a strawberry colored casual looking tuxedo shirt, a pink t-shirt, a strawberry colored vintage inspired chino jacket, yellow chino trousers, a yellow lightweight cashmere sweater, and two safari hats. One was a khaki color and the other was a green surplus color. She planned on giving Megan the green surplus one. She chose to wear the strawberry colored chino jacket; it was hanging over a kitchen chair. The top of her pink t-shirt was visible, over the t-shirt the red tuxedo shirt’s sleeves were rolled up and the shirt was buttoned just to the point where her breasts were covered. She was wearing a vintage train hat with a patch saying, *OshKos B’Gosh*. She was happy to have purchased this on a popular auction website; she received this hat on Saturday. She matched everything with plain red socks and athletic shoes. She was now understanding why Megan ordered clothes from catalogs and online. She was starting to find out why her Brother and her Foster Dad were always checking out the auction website.

She watched the train make it’s way around this section of the table: from the inside track, it then went to the outside, and back onto the inside track. She felt it was moving fine. She: stepped down from the train table onto a brand new plastic step stool, ducked down, and crawled underneath the train table. While under the table she: spotted a brown spider, studied it, decided it was harmless, aggressively smashed it against the top of the table, looked at her hand, and was about to rub it against her pants; except she was wearing new trousers. She reluctantly rubbed her hand on the floor.

Captain yelled, “Did Y’all bump your head?”

“I just killed a spider. I’m tired of bugs and spiders.”

She crawled out from the table.

He asked, “What did it look like?”

“It was brown and ugly.”

“Did it have a fiddle on it’s back?”

“It was a wolf spider. It wasn’t a brown recluse.”

“Y’all know the difference?”

In complete seriousness she said, "I've spent time trying to figure out what is poisonous around here."

He chuckled.

She asked, "Do you have Kleenex?"

He looked at her, "A tissue?"

"Yes."

"Why not use one of the rags?"

She grabbed one and wiped her hand. She set it off to the side, avoiding the pile of clean towels.

Captain stated as the train went passed them both, "She's moving now."

"My Foster Dad didn't like switches either."

"The reason we're having trouble is on account we shorten the track."

"He didn't like cutting track either."

"It's getting easier."

She smiled. She grabbed another brand new stool. She correctly assumed Captain bought these stools for her. She: stepped onto it, crawled onto the train table, stood up, and made her way to the mountain. On the table were a couple dozen hand made trees. This was a wonderful way to spend a Sunday afternoon on the yacht.

"Shorty."

"Yes Sir."

"I like those trees. How did Y'all make them?"

She stated, "My Foster Dad taught me. I just went and got some sticks. Then I used superglue, baking soda, and some old pins. I cut the sticks and glued them together, then used the tree making kits from the hobby store."

"They look better than the store bought ones."

"I had lots of practice. Except we'd make a lot more pine trees."

She stopped; looked over the styrofoam mountain and decided to put the tree somewhere else.

She broke the silence, "Have you ever been to Wisconsin?"

"No."

"Ever in the Midwest?"

"Great Lakes Navy base for boot camp."

"That's in Illinois?"

"Yes Ma'am. With how cold it was. I never needed a reason to visit the Midwest again."

He looked at her.

"Y'all ain't taken offense."

"None taken."

"Good."

She asked, "When were there?"

"August to October."

She smiled, "Oh."

She mentioned, "The fishing and camping is good in Wisconsin."

He perked up, "The fishing's good?"

"A lot of rivers and lakes. People say fishing in Lake Michigan is like fishing in the ocean. Except the water is cold all year round."

“Ain’t surprising.”

They both became quiet. Captain stopped the train so he could focus on what he was trying to accomplish.

Ashleigh mentioned, “The walleye get really big.”

“Y’all done some fishing?”

“When I was little. I stopped fishing when I became a teenager. My Foster Dad still likes to fish. He doesn’t go after the big ones. Or what you guys consider big. The fish don’t get as big as they do in the ocean. Except Megan tells me the Great Lakes should be considered inlet seas.”

“What’s he fishing for?”

“Pan fish and bass. Bass can get big. But not like a muskie. He likes the flavor of blue gill.”

“I remember taking Megan fishing.”

Ashleigh smiled, “I was told you were the one who taught her how to fish and sail.”

“Yes Ma’am. Jimmy gets a lot of the credit for how good she is at fishing.”

Ashleigh stopped and turned to Captain.

“When I was working the boat Jimmy was teaching her fishing. To be honest he’s better at inland fishing.”

He picked up and set his hat back down on his head.

“But there ain’t anyone better than me at ocean fishing.”

Ashleigh smiled, “I’ve herd that. With you still being good at fishing why did you retire?”

He lifted his engineer hat and set his hat back down on his head.

“After finding the pirate ship and all the work it took getting the treasure up. I had enough. I was thinking one of the boys would take over the business.”

He paused.

Ashleigh saw a tinge of regret and hurt.

“Then I goes and sells the boats. But Megan turns around and surprises me by telling me she wants to start her own charter.”

“You must have been proud of her?”

“Yes I was. She’s always talked about running businesses but I never reckoned she’d take to chartering.”

He smiled.

Ashleigh stated, “She wanted to be like her Daddy.”

“I reckon.”

She smiled watching him work on the inside track.

She then focused on the trees. She was being careful on how she was putting them in.

Somewhat joking but if he said yes, she would make one, “I was thinking you should put a Sasquatch in these woods.”

Captain looked up at her and seriously asked, “Y’all believe in them creatures?”

“The only thing my Foster Dad ever told me about Vietnam was his company ran into a creature similar to one. He also claims to have seen one hunting in upper Wisconsin. No one believes him.”

He squinted one eye, “Do Y’all believe em’?”

“My Foster Dad wouldn’t lie. Ever since I believe they’re real.”

“Shorty. Have Y’all ever heard about a skunk ape?”

“No.”

“It’s what we have running around here in Florida. The native people talk about them. I for one believe their tales.”

“Do they live in the preserve?”

He looked at her, “They just might.”

She recalled the night of the thunderstorm. She went back to putting in the trees.

Captain asked, “Where a’abouts did your Foster Daddy serve?”

Ashleigh again turned and looked at him, “I don’t know.”

He nodded his head.

“Until meeting your family I never gave it much thought. The only thing I was never to talk about was Vietnam. So I just never thought about it.”

Very serious Captain asked, “What branch did he serve?”

“Army.”

“Y’all can’t blaming him for keeping a tight lip on his experiences. What we went through ain’t always easy to live with.”

“I’m sure.”

Very serious, “The difficult part ain’t the people dying around Y’all. It’s the fact Y’all are one who’s made it.”

Ashleigh would think about this.

Captain lifted his hat, put it back on his head, and focused on his train.

Based upon Captain’s look and body language she let it go. She focused on her trees.

After a short time Captain broke the silence, “We’ve heard how Y’all are hiring the guys and gals who’ve served. Y’all are working with the VA and the VFW.”

Ashleigh quickly answered, “My brother says If you guys didn’t do what you do. We couldn’t live the way we are living.”

Silence.

Ashleigh broke the silence by asking, “What do you know about Marcus?”

He answered like a Papa, “Served in the Marines and is a good police officer. He’d be a good guy for a good gal.”

Ashleigh asked, “I heard he goes to church?”

“What a lot of people ain’t in the knowing about. He’s the one who started the men’s group at his church.”

Ashleigh asked, “So why did his fiance brake up with him?”

“It ain’t making any sense to me. He treated the gal like a gentleman. I just ain’t understanding what was twirling around in her head.”

She smiled, “Sometimes I don’t know what gets into our heads.”

They laughed.

The door opened. Ma was stopped by the section of the model railroad that crossed in front of the door.

She stated, “Great heavens.”

Captain was about to say something but Ma asked, “What are Y’all laughing at.”

“I asked him why Marcus’ fiance broke up with him?”

Ashleigh received what she called the stern mother look.

“Y’all sweet on Marcus?”

“Just getting some information about him.”

Ma answered, “She was about as useful as a screen door on a submarine.”

Ashleigh held back from laughing.

Ma in a serious tone, “There is some women who ain’t cut out to be married to a police officer or military man. I believe she was thinking once they were engaged she’d be able convince him to stop being a police officer.”

“Isn’t he happy being one?”

Ma and Captain glanced at one another.

“It ain’t easy being married to one.”

Captain winked at Ashleigh.

She smiled in return.

“If Y’all find a good one. There ain’t nothing better than being married to a military man. Right Captain?”

“Yes Ma’am.”

They glanced at one another.

Ma became serious and asked, “Ashleigh what are Y’all doing up there?”

“Planting trees.”

Captain laughed, because Captain laughed Ashleigh giggled too.

“Y’all get down from there. I made us dinner.”

“All right.”

Ma asked, “Y’all make them trees?”

“Yes.”

“Well I’ll be.”

Captain smiled. He turned from working on the track he was working on. He stepped to the section in front of the door and was about to lift it up.

Ashleigh grabbed the rag she set off to the side, tossed it into a metal can with a cover, and before Captain could lift the section she said, “You don’t have to lift it. I can just get under...”

She briefly stopped talking as she slipped under and was quickly on the other side.

“Slip underneath.”

Ma shook her head.

It was a lot more difficult for Captain, but he did the same, once he did so he took off his hat and hung it on a nail next to the door.

Ma looked at Ashleigh, “I hope Y’all like what I made.”

“I’m sure I will.”

“With you liking Shrimp I made Y’all a shrimp and pasta with some other fixings. Plus I made Y’all a dessert.”

Ashleigh’s eyes became big, “What did you make?”

“Honey. It’s a surprise.”

Ashleigh winked, “I like surprises.”

From the hallway, looking into the kitchen, Ashleigh could see Ma made way to much.

“If there is anything left over Y’all should take some home to that brother of yours.”

“He’ll like it.”

Ashleigh again mentioned, “We appreciate how Y’all have treated our employees.”

They reached the kitchen table.

Captain answered, "It's who we are."

Ashleigh remembered her hat and hung it over her coat. She was glad she put her long blond hair into a pony tail.

Ma said, "Lets pray."

They held hands and did so, Captain made a point to pray for: Megan's charter, the success of *Renewed Mastery*, and asked God to bless Shorty.

They enjoyed both the conversation and dinner.

February 5th Basic Principles

Part Five of Six

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Ashleigh & Megan
Book I: Friendship

Monday February 5th
Basic Principles



Day 11 of Book I
(Twenty-Two Days after Bob presented Shelly with an Apartment)

Part Six of Six

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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February 5th, Basic Principles Day 11 of Book I

(Twenty-Two Days after Shelly is offered an apartment)

Julie's: bright greenish-blue eyes were focused, they were hidden behind her dark sunglasses, sweat was dripping from her face, her wavy black hair was in a very tight ponytail, on her head was a brand new orange and gray bike helmet, her naturally wing tipped eyebrows seemed to fit the intensity of her long rectangle shaped face, her long straight lips were closed, her jawline was clinched, and her pointy Steward family chin was noticeable.

She was wearing: a two toned orange athletic styled tank, under the tank was a high impact sports bra, she matched this with a pair of gray colored athletic yoga shorts, and she was wearing orange and white Adidas athletic shoes. She avoided purchasing official biking clothing because of the price. Seeing what serious bike riders were wearing made her believe she should invest in an outfit. The wind was picking up. This made it feel cooler than it was. In her backpack was a light blue and green windbreaker and a matching light blue athletic style pant. It was easy to slip these pants over her shorts and it was tight around her ankles.

Julie's favorite Christmas gift of all time was the bike she was riding. Based upon the time it was taking her to go from one point to another she was much faster than any department store bike. She appreciated the department store bikes her parents bought her but this bike was on a whole new level. This bike was: light, smooth, strong, had great brakes, and the gears were spectacular. She loved passing other riders. She was overjoyed when she kept

up with a bike club. She would consider their invitation of joining the club. A goal of hers: was to pick a spot fifty miles from her house, bike to it, turn around, and come back; she believed she could easily bike a hundred miles in one day.

She slowed down when she turned onto a secluded suburban street. She checked for anyone who would see her approach the house; especially a police officer. She reached her last foreclosure. She visited: five other foreclosures, two abandoned houses, and stopped off at three ATM's. She normally avoided this many ATM's in one trip but circumstances dictated it. When she reached the mailbox she: stopped, swiftly slipped off her backpack, zipped it open, opened the mailbox, grabbed the mail, quickly shoved the mail into a large plastic freezer bag; she left it open while collecting the mail. She quickly zipped up her backpack and was on her way.

She glanced at her watch.

She sped to a local owned gas station. This station: was large, it had a car wash, had two sets of pumps, a fairly large convenience store, and a gift shop. Signs on the windows were advertising: what was on sale, grill items, fishing supplies, boat items, tobacco products, the gift shop, and an ATM without fees. Julie liked this station because it had a wide range of items catering to both locals and tourists. She liked to check out the gift shop to see what odd items they brought in. She biked herself to a series of picnic tables on a grassy area to the left of the store. She slipped off her sunglasses and placed them in a mesh sleeve on the side of her backpack. She locked her bike to one of two bike racks placed between the picnic tables and the store. She disliked spending money but was smart enough to purchase a very expensive bike lock. She stepped over to the picnic tables. She zipped opened a small pocket of the backpack and took out men's antiperspirant deodorant; she knew this was not good enough but it helped. She stood in a way where it would be difficult for people to see her applying the deodorant. When she was done she placed it back into the pocket. Keeping the backpack close to her body she: opened the main compartment of the bag, reached in, sealed the plastic bag with the mail in it, opened another plastic bag, paged through a small stack of bank cards, found the one she wanted to use, read the receipt card attached to it, memorized the pin number of this card, sealed the plastic bag with the receipt card in it, held onto the card, closed the main compartment of the bag, swung the backpack over her shoulder, and headed into the store.

The owner's cousin waved Julie over to the counter. These two ladies talked for a bit. Julie became embarrassed when the cousin caught a whiff of Julie's body odor. She hated her body chemistry. Julie politely cut off the conversation and headed to the ATM. She felt embarrassed whenever a person was repulsed by her body odor. At the ATM she: swung her backpack to the side, blocking what she was doing, selected the amount of money she needed to finish her goal, and an extra twenty for herself. She slipped all the money that completed her goal into a manila envelope; she immediately closed the lid. She placed the ATM receipt and the bank card into the plastic bag with all the bank cards. She quickly zipped her backpack closed. She glanced at her watch and decided she had time to get a few things. She selected: a water, a banana, and a granola bar. Inside of the gift shop there were three new circular displays filled with stickers. One of these racks displayed dog stickers. She stepped over to this particular display. There were two Husky stickers. She grabbed a round one because it pictured a husky with bright blue eyes. She flipped the sticker over and checked the price; she almost put it back. The only reason she kept it was because the image resembled

Nikita. She was again embarrassed when the owner's wife, while purchasing her items, noticed Julie's body odor. Julie appreciated how this woman never mentioned her odor and was nice to her. She quickly left the store. When she stepped out of the station her breasts reacted to the breeze; she crossed her arms over her breasts. When she reached the picnic table she: set her backpack on the picnic table, opened her backpack, placed the sticker in the Ziploc bag with the mail, sealed this bag, closed the bag with the bank cards, pulled out her windbreaker and matching pants.

A guy: pulled his car near the picnic tables, rolled down his windows, and rudely mentioned her breasts. She: turned to the side while keeping an eye on the car, slipped on her windbreaker, and aggressively zipped it tight. The guy aggressively drove out of the parking lot.

She shook her head.

She: slipped on the trousers, glanced at her watch, took a sip of her water, ate her banana, and enjoyed the granola bar. While taking this short break she enjoyed watching: the cars drive in and out of the lot, a couple vessels dock next to the pumps near the river and fill their tanks with gas; most of all she liked the birds near the picnic table act like they deserved a hand out.

She: glanced at her watch, stepped out from the picnic table, went to her bike, pulled out the plastic bottle (that came with the bike) from it's holder, dumped out the old water, filled it with the water left from the water bottle, placed the bikes water bottle back into the holder, tossed her garbage into a nearby dumpster, went back, unlocked her bike, put her sunglasses back on, and sped to a specific lookout. She was biking against the wind. When she reached the lookout she: took off her helmet, clipped it to the bike handles, took off her sunglasses, placed them into the side sleeve, leaned the bike up against a bench, set the backpack on the bench, opened the backpack, pulled out the manila envelope, felt it was wise to place the manila envelope into an inside pocket of her jacket, swung her backpack over her shoulders, wanted to study the ocean; instead she wisely stood next to her bike and focused on the road.

She was expecting two guys. One of these guys was an older brother of Rachel. Rachel was a Senior on the high school girls softball team. Julie approached Rachel because Rachel's brother was part of the same family as Captain's best friend. Captain's best friend was her Uncle's boss. Rachel's brother was part of a different crew and never worked directly with Julie's Uncle. There was a mutual respect between Julie's family and this family. In any other community this could have been a disaster, but because of the unique nature of Eastbank, this was the norm between families. Julie was keenly aware of all of this.

A very expensive luxury car pulled onto the street. This was a very different car from the one Rachel's brother drove. Julie believed she could get through anything. She decided the best thing was to take out the money now. She: quickly opened her jacket, took out the envelope, purposely made it visible, and zipped up her jacket. The car pulled into the look out, drove passed her, and parked a few spots from the bench.

She waited.

She believed she was safe because of her Uncle and Grandfather. Even with this, she was wise enough to be cautious; she hid her nervousness well.

The tinted back passenger window slide down.

She spotted an older gentleman. He was: skinny, his hair was graying but very neat, his eyes seemed to be filled with wisdom, he wore a very expensive suit, and a very expensive Star of David pin. Observing every move in the vehicle she noticed a middle aged guy sitting next to this older gentleman. He scared Julie. He was: in perfect shape, had dark hair, masculine features, his eyes were very dark, and super intense. She observed both men look at one another and the middle aged guy nodded his head. She immediately took on the same posture and mannerisms as her family when they interacted with these families.

She waited to be addressed.

The two men in the back seat were impressed with how respectful she was.

The older gentleman demanded, "Young lady please approach."

"Yes sir."

She pushed the bike in a way where she could throw it at someone and run into the preserve. She held the backpack and the manila envelop up so they could see both.

She heard the gentleman say, "She's a smart girl. Why ain't U's two as smart as she is?"

She reached the window.

She glanced into the front seat. In the drivers seat was the guy who made her: the fake ID's, fake Social Security cards, and paperwork she requested. Next to him was Rachel's brother. For the first time they were quiet and reserved.

Julie focused on the Grandfather of Rachel. She never formally met this man, but Julie's Grandfather and her Uncle Duke made it a point to talk to him. She spotted him at every home softball game and some away games.

In an East Coast accent he asked, "Are U's Julie Stewart? Dave Stewart's granddaughter and Dukes niece?"

Very respectfully she answered, "Yes sir."

She waited to be asked a question.

"Do you have the money?"

"Yes sir."

When he reached his hand out; she respectfully handed him the envelope.

She felt embarrassed by her body odor. It was clear he caught her scent; it would have been worse without the breeze, the antiperspirant, and her jacket.

"U's been biking far?"

"Yes sir."

He said in his upper east coast accent, "I bet U's are fast."

Very respectfully, "Yes sir."

He stopped asking questions as he counted every twenty dollar bill. The middle aged guy next to him was counting as well.

The two guys in front watched.

When they were done, the middle aged guy whispered something to the Gentleman; they smiled. Julie was unsure if she should like any of this or not.

The Gentleman asked, "There's an extra hundred here?"

"Yes sir."

"Why?"

"It's a tip."

"Do U's always tip?"

"Yes sir."

“Why?”

“I was taught by my grandfather and a friend it’s good to tip.”

“U’s are a smart girl.”

“Yes sir.”

His attitude changed and became angry, “You two schleps hearing it? She’s in high school and is outsmarting you two dummies. U’s explain it to me?”

They said nothing.

He turned to Julie, and very seriously asked, “Where does a nice girl like U’s get money like this? You selling drugs?”

“No sir.”

These two powerful men glanced at one another. The middle aged guy gave a crooked smile.

The older gentleman turned, “Then how’s a girl like U’s making this type of money?”

She answered honestly, “Stock market and an online business.”

The young guys in front looked at one another and laughed.

Very angry the older gentleman said, “U’s keep your mouth’s shut. Instead of pissing her money away she’s making money.”

They immediately became compliant.

He very seriously asked, “Are U’s interfering with our type of business?”

“No sir.”

Stern, “Then why the ID’s?”

Very respectfully she answered, “You can’t hide money from the government without fake ID’s and social security numbers.”

The two powerful men looked at one another and smiled. The middle aged guy tapped the older gentleman. He turned. They spoke in whispers. Julie was unable to hear their words but paid close attention to their gestures and facial expressions. She believed she could sprint into the preserve and loose them.

All at once the older gentleman became demanding, “Give me the ID’s.”

The guy who made them handed him an expandable file folder. A file folder Julie bought; they traded this back and forth many times.

The middle aged guy: stepped out of the car, kept the door open, looked at her across the top of the car, with an intense demeanor but with a smooth voice stated, “I have some questions.”

“Yes sir.”

“You understand chain of command?”

“Yes sir.”

“The only person your Uncle Duke answers to is my Father. You understand?”

Julie immediately stood at attention and answered, “Yes sir.”

These powerful men were impressed.

“By direct order none of us are allowed to approach you.”

By the silence she knew they wanted an answer.

“I didn’t know. I ain’t trying to get anyone in trouble.”

The older gentleman asked, “What if U’s are caught with all the ID’s you bought from these schleps? How should we answer your uncle?”

The middle aged guy asked, “Or my father?”

The idea anyone would find them insulted her.

She answered with confidence, "They ain't finding them."

The middle aged guy leaned down into the car. They again whispered to one another.

She could tell this was serious.

The middle aged guy went back to standing.

The older Gentleman said, "Young lady we like your confidence."

He made a face and waved his hands.

"Lets say someone finds them."

Very angry he pointed and said, "It ain't staying on me. It'll be on those two schleps."

Julie worried something would happen to these guys.

These two men spotted this.

The older gentleman said, "U's seem like a good girl. I'm sure U's wouldn't want anything happening to them or to yourself. What are U's telling someone if they find them?"

Very serious she answered, "I'll tell them I made them myself."

The guys in front looked at one another and laughed.

The older gentleman became angry, "U's two shut up."

The car was immediately silent.

Their laughter emboldened Julie, "If Y'all show me how to make my own social security cards and give me a list of Social Security numbers. I'll only use those numbers. Y'all would have to make sure no one else ain't using these same numbers I'm using. I promise I won't sell them to anyone else. If I'm caught then Y'all ain't in trouble."

She paused.

With everyone staring at her she repeated with confidence, "Ain't anybody finding them."

The middle aged guy asked, "Are you cutting in?"

Very serious she said, "I promise I ain't cutting into anything Y'all are into."

The older gentleman asked, "Then what U's doing?"

She avoided the question, "If Y'all teach me how to make my own ID's I'd be able to hide my money without asking for help."

The older Gentleman asked, "Where's our cut?"

She made a quick decision, "I'll pay Y'all three thousand dollars to teach me. I'll give Y'all another thousand for the list of Social Security numbers. Five hundred for the cost of the equipment. If Y'all show me this weekend I'll throw in an extra thousand. I'm assuming this would make us even."

The middle aged guy bent down and looked at the older gentleman. They smiled and shrugged their shoulders.

The young guys gave her a blank stare of shock.

The gentleman asked, "U's have the money?"

The middle aged guy again stood up and watched closely.

"Sir. It'd take me until Saturday to collect it."

She said something she heard others like him use, "I'm an upstanding gal. I'll do what I say."

The middle aged guy said, "Add another five thousand."

"How about an additional four thousand five hundred. I want the best equipment. I ain't needing to ask anything from Y'all again."

The Middle aged guy testing Julie asked again, “You ain’t cutting into our business?”

“No sir.”

He added, “If you are. U’s are in a tight spot.”

“I ain’t cutting in. I promise I’ll never cut into Y’all’s business.”

The older gentleman asked, “U’s understand what our business is?”

“Yes sir.”

The middle aged guy again bent down and the two men whispered to one another.

This made Julie nervous.

The two guys in front were looking odd. Her impulse was to dash into the preserve. The reason she stayed was because of how she was raised.

The middle aged guy again stood up and asked, “My father believes you’d be an asset to our organization. You want to work for us?”

He waved his finger, “You understand he’s the only one who could ask.”

She stated, “I don’t sell drugs.”

The middle aged guy answered, “You’d be working directly for me. Making important deliveries.”

“I wouldn’t want to be deliver drugs.”

He smiled, “You wouldn’t be delivering drugs. You’d be making more important deliveries.”

She noticed the two young guys in front look at one another.

The middle aged guy continued, “It involve some travel. We’d pay for the places you’d stay at. Look at it as a vacation.”

This was temping.

The older gentleman was blunt, “U’s have to take it serious.”

She answered, “Yes Sir.”

The middle aged guy asked, “Would you be willing to make changes to your appearance?”

“Sir. May I ask a question?”

The middle aged guy smiled, “Sure.”

“Why would Y’all want me?”

“We believe you’d do well in our business.”

There was a pause.

Everyone waited for her answer.

This would be very exciting. What stopped her was her promise to her parents. Very respectfully, with reluctance in her voice, answered, “Sir I have to decline on account I promised Momma I’d never work for Y’all.”

She quickly mentioned, “Without the promise I believe I’d make Y’all a lot of money.”

Silence from everyone.

The two powerful men respected this.

The middle aged guy asked in a serious tone, “After Saturday will you ever ask us for our help again?”

“No Sir. I ain’t wanting anyone in trouble. If I was aware Y’all would have been in trouble I would have thought of something else.”

The older Gentleman asked, “Why should we believe U?”

“I was taught a promise meant something,”

She paused and added, "I ain't a rat."

All four guys liked this statement.

The older gentleman testing Julie asked, "Have we ever met?"

"At family functions. I see Y'all at our softball games watching Rachel."

The Middle aged guy asked, "Are you as smart as everyone says?"

"Yes sir."

The middle aged guy answered, "I'll send you the best person to teach you what you need to know. You better have the money."

"Yes sir."

The middle aged guy asked again, "You sure you don't want to work for us? You'd make a lot of money."

"I promised Momma I'd never work for Y'all."

The middle aged guy: bent down into the car, took the expandable file, took a pen out of his pocket, opened the expandable file, wrote a phone number on the back cover, closed it, "You call Candy on Thursday. She'll make the arrangements."

"Yes sir."

The gentleman said, "U's are a good pitcher."

"Thank-you sir."

"You promise to play your best?"

"Yes sir."

"You promise to never ask my crew for anything ever again?"

"Yes sir."

"I'd hate to have something bad happen. U's understand what I'm saying?"

"Yes Sir. I just like making money."

"Do you waste it?"

"No sir."

The Middle Aged Guy asked, "You hiding it well?"

In a matter of fact tone she answered, "It's what the Id's are for."

All four guys believed her.

The middle aged guy slid the expandable file across the top of the car.

She caught it.

The older gentleman said, "See U's on the softball field."

"Yes sir."

The Middle aged guy gave her one last look.

This look frightened her, but she hid this from all four guys.

"We never met. After you call Candy loose the number."

"Yes sir."

The middle aged guy stepped into the car and said, "Drive."

She smiled when she heard the older gentleman say, "How come a teenage girl is smarter than U's too? She has more understanding on how things...."

The window was up and the car pulled out of the look out.

This is when she felt the fear. She physically shook. She never felt so frightened in all of her life. She came to the conclusion once she fulfilled her promises she would never ask anything from the people who worked for her Uncle ever again. While shaking she: zipped

open her backpack, slipped the expandable file into her bag, closed it, and swung it over her back.

She suddenly needed relief.

She: locked her bike to the bike rack, went down a stairs that led down to the beach, spotted a large tree, stepped off of the stairs, went to what she felt was a secluded spot, went around the tree, set the backpack at the bottom of the tree, leaned her back against the tree, slid her hand underneath her underwear, unzipped her jacket, lifted up her shirt, caressed her breast through her bra, after a few minutes she frantically pulled her clothes down just passed her privates, exposed her breast for a better feel, and after aggressively rubbing herself received the stress relief she needed. She was about to sit at the base of the tree and take a slower pace. What stopped her was hearing car doors slam and people talking. She quickly made herself presentable, grabbed her backpack, and headed back up the stairs. She passed a group of tourists. When she reached the look out she: opened her backpack, took out the hand sanitizer, quickly wiped her hands, unlocked her bike, fastened the lock to the bike, set herself onto her bike, unclipped her helmet, placed it on her head, turned on the front bike light, and the red back light.

She: headed south on the bike path, blew past the rest stop at *Swamp Road* and *Bluff Beach Parkway*, this is when she spotted the taillights of Mr. Bob's Ford Escape. She observed Nikita jump to the back and place her head against the back window. She was grateful when Mr. Bob pulled over.

She biked across the street and pulled the bike up to the drivers side door.

The window was already down.

She said, "Howdy Mr. Bob."

"Hi."

She immediately noticed he was upset about something.

"Put the bike in the back and I'll give you a ride home."

She answered, "Yes sir."

When she reached the back she: heard the hatch click, lifted the hatch, an excited Nikita was ready to greet her; it was impossible for Julie to ignore her. Nikita laid on her back and Julie pet her underside.

Mr. Bob commanded, "Nikita sit."

Nikita obeyed.

Julie stated, "Good girl."

Nikita was unsure of these human noises. She wanted to hear human noises she liked "lets fly" or "walk."

Mr. Bob commanded, "Up here."

She knew this one. Favorite Male used this one in the moving territory. She jumped to the back seat. Nikita sniffed Julie's backpack and attached bike helmet when she set it near her. To Nikita's horror, Strong Scent set the thing into the back of the moving territory. She: bristled, growled, and shown her teeth.

Bob turned with concern, "Nikita No."

Nikita turned and looked at Favorite Male.

Bob asked Julie, "What did you do?"

"She always snarls at the bike."

Bob said, "Nikita No. The bike isn't going to hurt you."

This was a light bulb moment for Julie.

She smiled.

She: shut the hatch, waved at Nikita, stepped up to the passenger side door, the door was unlocked, opened the door, and slipped in.

Nikita for good measure again growled at the bike.

Bob commanded, "Lay down."

This was the worst command to hear in the moving territory.

Julie said, "I'm okay."

Nikita laid on the seat for less than two seconds when she stuck her nose by Julie's face.

Bob sighed, "Lay down."

She whimpered but listened.

Julie could tell Mr. Bob was upset.

Politely she asked, "Y'all know how to get to my house?"

"Yes."

He: pulled onto the street, they passed the entrance to the marina, and turned into the lookout north of the marina and next to the preserve.

Julie thought about the weird event she experienced here.

She wanted to believe Mr. Bob would never do anything inappropriate. If he did she was prepared for it. She became embarrassed when he used the buttons to lower the vehicles windows.

"Julie."

She could hear it in his tone.

"Yes sir."

"I heard you and your brother were in a fight today?"

She explained everything. During the discussion they stepped out of the vehicle. It occurred to Julie, in all of the times they talked, he never once focused on her breasts. She admired this a great deal.

He chuckled and asked, "Did his balls hurt?"

With confidence she answered, "Yes sir."

He said serious, "Lets get you home."

She glanced at her watch, and said in a panic, "If I'm late Momma will be angry."

"We wouldn't want that."

Nikita was excited when both entered the moving territory. Julie pet Nikita.

Bob commanded, "Lay down."

She whimpered but listened.

He surprised Julie by asking, "Who is Billy?"

Julie recognized she could help Billy, "He's a good guy. I've known him since I skipped a grade. People around here believe he's dumb. It's just he has trouble reading and writing."

She made a face, "I wish he'd talk different."

"I'm assuming he struggles in school?"

"Yes sir."

"Does he try?"

"Yes sir."

She pointed, "If Y'all make a left it'll be shorter."

"Okay."

They waved to Ashleigh when she drove passed.

His cell phone rang.

Bob picked it up.

Julie could hear Ashleigh's voice but was unable to understand what she was saying.

Bob answered, "I spotted her biking home."

"Okay."

Bob pulled over, "She feels it'd be better if she took you home."

"Nothing happened."

He smiled, "Some people might not believe us."

Julie took this seriously.

"I don't want anyone accusing you of being something you are not."

This meant the world to her.

She forced back tears, "Yes sir."

Bob asked, "What is he good at?"

She quickly answered, "Football, fixing things, and following orders."

"What's the girl planning?"

"I ain't certain. But I'm believing she'll go out with him."

"When you find out let me know."

"Yes sir."

Bob asked, "Will it be difficult for him to find a job?"

"Yes Sir. People around here ain't giving him a chance. Mr. Bob he ain't dumb as people are saying."

"Does he graduate this year?"

"No sir. He graduates with Jeff."

She made a point to say, "He's wanting to work over the summer before football practice starts."

Ashleigh parked her Jeep in front of them.

Bob asked, "Is he able to read an invoice?"

She thought about something but answered, "If it ain't complicated."

Bob rolled down the window and yelled, "Ms. Ashleigh."

Ashleigh was already out of the vehicle walking toward the Escape. Ashleigh stepped to the open passenger side window.

"Yes."

"Julie is friends with an outstanding young man named Billy. She's telling me he has trouble reading and writing. You think we'd have a place for him?"

Ashleigh asked Julie, "Does he have a good attitude?"

"Yes Ma'am."

"Would he appreciate a job?"

"Yes Ma'am."

"He has trouble reading?"

"Sometimes. Since I started working with him he's much better than he was."

"What grade level you think he's at?"

"Sixth or seventh."

"Would he be able to read an invoice or handle a computer?"

"If it's simple."

Julie added, “He’s trainable. If Y’all show him the steps he wouldn’t forget em’. He has an awesome memory.”

By this time Nikita was whimpering and excited.

Ashleigh opened the back passenger door, shut it, and commanded Nikita to, “Sit.”

She listened.

Nikita sensed it in the preserve. It was a distance away but was slowly approaching the vehicles.

Ashleigh said, “We’ll talk about it in the Jeep.”

Bob said, “Don’t forget your bike.”

Julie quickly took the bike and backpack out of the Escape.

As she passed the Escape she said happily, “See Y’all tomorrow.”

“Yes you will.”

He waited in the vehicle until Julie secured the bike to the bike rack and Ashleigh turned her vehicle around.

Bob glanced into the preserve.

He often hated the preserve.

He quickly pulled his vehicle onto the street and headed to the marina.

*A*shleigh asked, “Will you be home on time?”

“If Y’all turn around and make a left at *Swamp Road*.”

Julie was amazed at how quickly she could shift and turn without ever jerking the vehicle.

“When I get my license would Y’all teach me how to drive a standard transmission?”

“Your parents change their mind about you getting a license?”

“They’re letting Jeff and I take drivers lessons this summer. But I have to get a job and pay for my own gas.”

“Don’t worry about the job.”

Julie smiled.

“I’d love to teach you.”

Julie pointed, “Turn left at the stop sign.”

Ashleigh knew this.

Again Julie admired how she handled the shifting.

“Then a left up there?”

“Yes Ma’am.”

Ashleigh stated, “This back way is a lot easier.”

“Yes Ma’am.”

Julie felt embarrassed when Ashleigh rolled down the window. Julie did the same. While rolling down the window she caught a whiff of her own scent. She hated her body chemistry.

“Is this Billy a good worker?”

“He struggles with reading and writing.”

“How about math?”

Julie thought about this.

“He liked it until Algebra.”

“Is he strong?”

“Very.”

They made a couple turns and then turned into the driveway.

Again Julie was impressed with the shifting.

Ashleigh spotted two girls run out of the house.

“Who’s the other one?”

“Danielle. It’s Ester’s best friend. Her Momma and Momma are friends. It’s sad.”

“What is?”

“Last year her Daddy died of cancer.”

Ashleigh was unable to comment on this because Ester ran up to the door, “Ms. Ashleigh.”

Julie whispered, “Momma would be upset if Y’all don’t come in.”

Ashleigh nodded her head.

Ashleigh and Julie stepped out of the Jeep.

Ester asked, “May we pet the dawg?”

Ashleigh let Nikita out and showed the two girls on how to approach a dog. While this was happening Nicole stepped out of the house and approached.

Julie removed her bike, grabbed her backpack, pushed it into the garage, pulled out the water bottle, drank the rest of the water, hung her bike, and headed for a shower.

When Nicole felt they were getting too rough she commanded the two girls into the house. This of course disappointed the two girls. Ashleigh commanded Nikita into the Jeep and to lay down.

Nikita laid down on the back seat.

This disappointed Nikita but she did so.

Once the girls were inside Ashleigh approached Nicole and asked, “Did Duane talk to you?”

“He gave me his card and tomorrow I’ll give him a call.”

Nicole asked, “Did Captain give you a difficult time?”

“No. He gets into it like my Foster Dad. Captain reminds me of him.”

“I’m assuming it’s a good thing?”

“I couldn’t have asked for a better Foster Dad.”

Nicole added, “I’ve heard of nightmares.”

“I experienced a bad boyfriend and a bad stepfather.”

Nicole’s heart went out to Ashleigh, “Sorry.”

“If it wasn’t for my Foster Parents, Bob, and God I don’t know where I’d be.”

Nicole thought about the pamphlets. This helped Nicole understand why Ashleigh acted the way she did.

“Pastor Lilly and I are starting a woman’s group. It’s for women who’ve experienced traumatic situations. I’m betting Y’all would be an inspiration to the ladies attending the group.”

Ashleigh trying to change the direction of the conversation asked, “Talking about bad traumatic situations. Did you talk to Andrea today?”

Nicole made a face.

Ashleigh asked, “It didn’t go well?”

“She’s repeating a pattern I’ve witnessed before.”

“I’ve seen it too.”

“Those pamphlets helped her.”

Ashleigh perked up, “They did?”

“The reason she was willing to get help for her siblings was on account of those pamphlets. It’s because of them she realized how awful her Momma was.”

Ashleigh started to tear, “I agonized over which ones to bring in. We just decided to bring in all of them in.”

Nicole could feel something from inside of Ashleigh was bubbling up.

Tears, “It’s so difficult convincing people a mother can be...”

Ashleigh stopped but the tears pored out of her.

“Honey, It’s alright.”

“You expect a step dad or boyfriend to be bad. But it hurts more when a mother is.”

Ashleigh again tried to stop the emotion but she was unable, “I hate this when this happens.”

Nicole embraced her.

Ashleigh found comfort in Nicole’s embrace.

Ashleigh cried.

Nicole held onto her.

Ashleigh needed this.

When Nicole felt it was time, she gently pulled away, as a lady, she commented very gently; “Maybe Y’all could get something out of our group.”

Ashleigh was about to refuse.

“Honey. Pastor Lilly and I are starting it for all of us ladies who’ve been hurt. We were assuming this was what men have done to us but I shouldn’t have been so naive. We ain’t holding back. Many of us ladies have been hurt in many ways. It’s time we stop pretending things like this ain’t happening. Now we’re also talking about wives struggling with sex and marriages. It ain’t the focus but we’re assuming if a lady has been hurt it’ll effect her marriage. We’re bringing in Christian counselors to help. We also have a yearly woman’s conference at church. We invite all of the churches in the area to attend.”

Ashleigh asked, “Do you help run it?”

“Yes Ma’am.”

“Then I’ll go.”

This meant a lot to Nicole, “I’ll let Y’all know when the conference will be held.”

“Okay.”

“I still believe you’d be an inspiration to the ladies in the meeting.”

“You think?”

“Yes ma’am.”

There was a pause.

Ashleigh asked, “Have you ever heard of a Susan King?”

This took Nicole by surprise. “Oh. Yes.”

“What do you know about her?”

“Her Great Granddaddy arrived here maybe a generation after Eastbank was founded. The legend is. He was filled with bad intentions. These bad intentions led to him making a lot of money. As the story goes he changed his ways in an old time revival meeting.”

“Did he loose his money?”

“No Ma’am. He turned his shipping business into an honest trade. And he became one of the wealthiest men in Florida.”

“Oh.”

“Without her Grandfather or her Fathers blessing. I doubt your brother would have moved his company here.”

“Susan wouldn’t try to take my brothers money?”

“Honey! She likely has more money than he does. She knows how to handle the politics of things. She ain’t involved in the company business. Her older brothers and a younger sister handle them type of affairs. The whole family are God fearing people.”

There was a pause.

Nicole asked, “Why are Y’all asking?”

“Promise not to say anything?”

Nicole answered, “My lips are sealed.”

“I think my brother likes her.”

“She just got out of a nasty divorce and has a seven year old boy.”

“What happened?”

“Her husband was having an affair with a secretary and some woman on line.”

Ashleigh with a concerned tone, “Is she over it?”

“She says she is.”

“How well do you know her?”

“We run in different circles. Diana knows her better than I.”

Ashleigh understood what she meant.

“Thanks. If you don’t mind I’d like to get home. Tomorrow will be a long day.”

“Jimmy is tuckered out too.”

Nicole was surprised when Ashleigh hugged her.

“Oh my.”

She embraced back, “Honey, It’s okay.”

Ashleigh pulled away and said, “You should stop by on lunch.”

Nicole found herself saying, “How about next week?”

Ashleigh thought, “How about the second week of March?”

“Why then?”

“The move should be done.”

“We’ll talk before then.”

“Alright.”

They nodded their heads.

Nicole went back into her house.

Ashleigh: stepped into her yellow Sport Edition Jeep Wrangler, spotted Nikita sleeping in the back seat; once Ashleigh started the vehicle Nikita sat up.

Ashleigh headed back to the yacht.

She felt the neighborhood Jimmy and Nicole lived in would be a nice neighborhood to move into.

Shelly glanced at her son. He was playing on the floor surrounded by his rubber animals. Shelly believed Bobby bought just about every animal the company made.

She turned to the print she was trying to hang on the wall. Leaning around the apartment were prints and art work; some of this art was her own. Shelly missed the knock on the door because she was hammering in a nail. She stopped when the doorbell rang.

Shelly yelled, "Who is it?"

"Naomi."

After setting the hammer on a shelf she stepped to the door.

Her son Robert, who she called Little Bobby, watched his Mommy.

Naomi was dressed in: a black quilted down jacket, a white winter cap with a tassel on top, white knitted gloves, and black quilted boots.

She stepped into the apartment and announced, "Levi asked me to marry him."

Naomi managed to shut the door.

Shelly just as excited asked, "What did you say?"

Naomi took off her winter gloves and presented her engagement ring.

"It's beautiful."

Naomi who rarely showed emotion started to cry.

They hugged.

They felt little hands around their legs and heard, "No'me."

She picked him up and said, "It's Ni-o-me."

"Girl."

He pointed to himself, "Bobby."

Then to Shelly, "Mommy."

Naomi said with a smile, "Your learning how to talk."

He pointed to the floor and made noises.

Naomi tried, "Down."

He pointed and made a noise.

They smiled and Naomi set him down. He ran to his animals picked up a lion, "Grrr."

Shelly warned, "You'll be here for hours if you answer."

They giggled.

"Grrr."

Shelly being a mother said, "Go play."

"Grrr."

"Go play."

"Grrr."

Shelly: went over to him, picked up a few of his favorite animals, set them on a long coffee table, briefly made them look interesting; this was enough for him to become focused and play.

Naomi was a very attractive voluptuous woman. She ate healthy and worked out fairly regular. Due to her bone structure she would never be skinny. The combination of being Jewish, Irish, and German created her shape and look. She had a: square face, larger nose, high well defined cheek bones, full lips with a puffy lower lip, defined cleft chin; and even when she wore glasses on her dark brown eyes appeared beautiful. She often wondered what her children would look like.

While Shelly was taking care of Little Bobby. Naomi: placed her gloves into a large pocket of her black quilted down jacket, set her purse onto a near by chair, unclasped the buttons of the full length coat, unzipped herself out of the coat, hung it on a free standing coat

stand, slipped off her white winter cap with the tassel on top, hung it on the coat stand, removed her black quilted boots, and set them neatly by the other shoes and boots by the door. She reached into her purse and put on her glasses; glasses were a good look for her.

She was happy she went home after work before visiting her cousin. This gave her the opportunity to: dress warmer, more comfortable, and set her long dark hair in a bun. She was wearing: a heavy pair of socks (she had a pair of slippers in her purse just in case her feet became cold), was wearing dark burgundy corduroy pants, an ivory colored plunge V-neck sweater (it could easily be removed if her cousin's apartment was warm), and underneath this sweater she was wearing a long sleeved lingonberry turtleneck. If she would have went anywhere else, she would have chosen a different combination. Wearing the turtleneck her larger breasts were noticeable. With how large her V-neck sweater was; if she bent down it would have led to peeks. She neither disliked or liked her breasts. What concerned her was her hips. She felt at five seven her hips were wide for her height. She felt the corduroy pants made her hips appear extra wide, but they kept her legs warm.

Throughout high school and college she was constantly asked out. Until she met Levi she never once said yes. As a politically conservative Masonic Jew it was terribly difficult to find someone with similar beliefs and values. She was overjoyed to have met Levi, just as Levi was overjoyed to have met Naomi. Both would have been perfectly content to remain single, but now, neither one wanted to live without the other. Many thought they were rushing things; they felt it was taking forever.

Shelly turned from the coffee table and asked, "Is it still cold?"

"The sign on the bank said minus one."

"It's better than the humidity in Florida."

"You really don't like Florida?"

Quickly she answered, "No."

There was a pause then she answered, "To many bugs and snakes. I'm not a fan of the slow pace. Oh, there are the alligators."

They looked at one another.

"Mainly it reminds me of prison."

Naomi who visited clients in prison answered, "It's understandable why you'd hate Florida."

Shelly answered very seriously, "It would take a lot for me to move there."

Naomi asked Shelly a tough question, "You realize if Bobby asks you to marry him he'd want you to move there."

"He isn't going to ask me. Everything is about Little Bobby. He's flying up here to visit every other weekend. His first full week will be the week of Memorial Day. We haven't decided on when the other two weeks will be. Little Bobby will spend those weeks in Florida. Not a fan but it's the right thing to do."

"He kept the house up here?"

"I love that house."

Naomi pointed out gently, "But he set you up here?"

This was both a relief and it hurt.

"It wouldn't be right to live in his house. No matter how big it is."

"Okay."

They looked at one another.

They could have pressed further but neither one wanted an argument. As much as they loved one another, they did have them; Shelly was wise enough to understand they were mostly her fault.

Naomi saved the get together, “This is a very nice place.”

“The window over there opens up onto the balcony.”

“Why would I want to go onto the balcony today?”

They laughed.

“But I’d love for you to show me around.”

This encouraged Shelly. She spent the next hour showing Naomi the apartment and discussing how she wanted to decorate it.

Shelly all at once asked, “Do you hear Little Bobby?”

Naomi gave Shelly a concerned look, “No.”

They went from the cluttered bedroom to the living room. The reason the bedroom was cluttered was because of the boxes Shelly needed to open and go through. In the middle of the floor he was sleeping, in his hand was a lion, and in the other was a dolphin.

Naomi asked, “He just does that?”

“He’s a sound sleeper like his Daddy.”

Shelly picked him up and took him into his room. She changed him, manged to remove the animals from his hands, tucked him in, and kissed him on the cheek.

Naomi took the liberty of preparing herself and Shelly coffee. With it being in the evening she made sure it was decaffeinated. She heard Little Bobby’s bedroom door shut.

Naomi asked, “How come Holly and everyone else calls him Robert?”

Shelly made a face, “You have to ask?”

“She still dislikes him.”

“I’m surprised she helped me move.”

“I’m sure Phillip was a big reason she helped.”

Shelly was honest, “Phillip would have forced my Step Brothers to help no matter what. Between people at church and the truck Bobby rented it went pretty smooth.”

“What was she like today?”

“We had a nice conversation on the phone. She said she would call Vera.”

“See.”

“You know at any moment this could all blow up.”

Naomi answered, “It doesn’t have too.”

The coffee maker beeped; alerting them the coffee was finished. Shelly poured each of them a cup and sat back down at the kitchen table. On the kitchen table was a large old fashioned green colored saucer. All of Shelly’s coffee supplies were on it.

Naomi found it fun to spin it around.

She asked, “Where did you find this?”

“At the thrift store up the street.”

Shelly added, “They have some cool stuff in there sometimes.”

Naomi stopped spinning the large saucer and grabbed some sugar.

Naomi asked, “Bobby isn’t supporting you?”

Very serious, “Not like before.”

They gave one another looks. They both finished preparing their coffee.

Shelly made sure to say, “As long as I finish school he’s paying rent and heat. I volunteered to pay electric.”

“You didn’t have too.”

“I know. But it’s only fair.”

Naomi took a sip of coffee.

“How’s school?”

She smiled, “Even with the move I’m back on track.”

Naomi volunteered, “If you need help I’m here.”

Shelly made a face. “You know who’s been helping me?”

“No.”

“Phillip.”

Naomi answered, “He’d like that.”

“I wish I wouldn’t have treated him so poorly.”

“It’s the difference between clean and sober Shelly and getting drunk and taking pills Shelly.”

Thinking about what this meant they sat in silence and took sips of their coffee.

Excited Shelly asked, “When are you getting married?”

“We’re planning in the summer. We haven’t set a specific date yet.”

“What’s the matter?”

Naomi blushed.

“What?”

Ashamed of herself Naomi answered, “I’m not sure I’ll make it.”

“You?”

“Last time I visited him in Chicago we went a little far.”

She blushed.

“I never imagined how good it feels when someone else touches you.”

Shelly gave her a look, “You stopped it?”

With confidence, “Of course.”

“If you want to make it you’ll have to be more careful.”

Naomi blushed, “It felt wonderful.”

“It’s why you have to be careful.”

Shelly believed it felt wonderful because Naomi was in love. With all of Shelly’s sexual experienced she wanted to know what it would be like to make love to someone. She often questioned if Bobby and herself made love.

Naomi mentioned, “We talked about it today.”

“What did he say?”

“He agreed.”

Shelly was surprised, “He did?”

“When I go down to Chicago I’ll be staying with his sister.”

“How is she?”

“She’s excited for us. I’m happy she’ll be my sister-in-law.”

“That’s good.”

Shelly had to ask, “Wedding plans going well?”

This excited Naomi a great deal. They discussed wedding plans for over two hours. Then spent time talking about general things.

Naomi became really serious, “Don’t take offense at this question.”

Shelly answered, “I ain’t using.”

“You’ve said this before.”

“I have a little boy to take care off.”

Shelly became emotional.

Naomi watched and waited.

Shelly poured herself another cup of coffee.

She sat back down at the table.

Naomi waited.

Shelly stated, “I never want to be the person I was. My life is finally getting in order. The days I’m tempted to use are farther apart. I never want to get high ever again.”

Naomi reminded Shelly, “Based upon the custody paperwork. If you start using Bob would get custody.”

Shelly made a point of saying, “It isn’t finalized yet.”

Naomi answered, “I’m well aware of that.”

Brief silence.

Naomi asked, “Why are you willing to agree to that language?”

Shelly teared, “If I use. Someone else should raise Little Bobby.”

There was a tearful silence.

Naomi shut down her tears, “You understand if you start using Holly will fight with everything she has to make sure she gets custody.”

This hit Shelly hard.

“She would?”

“You know it.”

Shelly asked a very tough question, “What happens if something was to happen to me? You think Mother would stop Little Bobby from being with Bobby?”

Naomi answered, “Of course she would. You know it to be true.”

“What should I do?”

“I’ll draw up a living will.”

“Won’t that wreck your relationship with Holly?”

“If I thought for one second Mr. Waller was a bad father I wouldn’t do it. I had a good father. It wouldn’t be right for Holly to take him from his father.”

Shelly nodded her head.

“I can write it up in such a way where it wouldn’t contradict the custody paperwork. But if you started using again custody would most likely go to Bob. You understand what that means?”

Shelly started to tear but nodded her head and said, “I’ll make you the executor.”

“Smart.”

“Holly blames Bobby for what I started way before I met him. She refuses to believe he offered to pay for treatment.”

She paused and took a sip of her coffee.

“As much as I respect Bob. Someone should stand in the gap just in case something is horrible on his end.”

“Understandable.”

“Is there a way to make it. If the situation is horrible on his end you could have custody of Little Bobby?”

Naomi was honored.

She answered, “I’d have to ask Levi first.”

“Of course.”

They took sips of their coffee.

Naomi said, “No matter if Bob is able to take care of Little Bobby or not. Holly will believe she should be awarded custody.”

Shelly answered from the heart, “I’d rather have Little Bobby with you.”

Naomi repeated, “I have to make sure it’s alright with Levi before I agree.”

Shelly suggested, “Lets have Levi meet him.”

“He’s a softy. So when he comes up this weekend we’ll have to get together.”

Shelly smiled, “Good idea.”

“He loves children. You should see him with his nieces and nephews.”

Shelly asked, “You’ll write up the paperwork?”

“Yes.”

Naomi asked, “Has Holly approached you about being an executor?”

“She’s hinted.”

They looked at one another.

Shelly asked, “I’m assuming you are my executor?”

“Of course.”

“Who will tell Holly?”

Naomi answered, “I’ll tell her or have Mom tell her.”

“We could bring it up in a casual conversation and talk about signing paperwork?”

“Play it by ear.”

Shelly nodded, “I’d appreciate it if you wrote up the paperwork.”

Naomi smiled, “Adopted...”

Shelly smiled, “Sisters.”

It had been decades since they said this to one another. They stood up and hugged one another.

“I need to get up early tomorrow. You wouldn’t mind if we cut this early?”

Naomi started to cry.

Shelly concerned pleaded, “What’s the matter?”

Naomi hugged Shelly.

Shelly was surprised and hugged back.

Naomi whispered, “That is the first time I ever heard you say you wanted to go to bed early.”

Shelly hugged her cousin tight. Shelly knew this was true.

They parted ways.

Shelly suggested they pray. They were both eager to do so.

After Shelly led Naomi to her winter clothes.

While Naomi dressed they discussed changes to the living room, they spent another fifteen minutes discussing where a certain painting of Shelly’s should go; then Naomi left.

Megan asked Ashleigh, “Why ain’t Y’all cold?”

They were sitting on top of Megan’s houseboat over looking the Marina. This way the breeze was behind them. Megan was wearing the warmest coat she owned. Underneath she was wearing a blue multi-colored striped hoodie.

Ashleigh was wearing her new red Chino coat she wore to Captain and Ma’s house.

Megan’s dimples flashed.

“It’s cold today.”

Ashleigh made a face.

Ashleigh looked over at Megan, “Victoria told me it was minus one. That was without the windchill.”

“What’s it with a windchill?”

Ashleigh answered, “Didn’t ask.”

Megan turned toward the marina.

Nikita twitched and made noises.

Ashleigh pointed, “She likes it up here.”

They studied her twitching for a few seconds.

“I’ll have to take you up to see Little Bobby.”

“In the summer?”

“Sure.”

Ashleigh smiled.

“What’s the smile for?”

“Nothing.”

Megan gave her a look. She took a drink out of her bottled water and grabbed some grapes.

“When are Y’all seeing him?”

“I’ll see him for the first time on March tenth. That’s a Saturday. We’re flying up right after work on the Friday. That night I’ll visit with my family. On Sunday I’ll be going to church with my family. After I’m going back to Bob’s house. We’ll drop him off around seven and fly back.”

“Y’all ain’t taking him to church?”

Ashleigh wondered why she never thought of it, “Maybe I’ll take him to our church. I know he goes with his Mom.”

Megan answered, “It’s good for a boy to see his Daddy attending chapel.”

Ashleigh answered, “I agree.”

They took sips of their bottled water and ate more grapes.

Megan’s dimples flashed.

She asked, “You ain’t spoiling him?”

Ashleigh smiled, “I wouldn’t even think of it.”

They gazed upon one another.

Megan’s dimples flashed.

“What have Y’all bought him already?”

“A few things.”

Megan with a serious tone stated, “You ain’t trying to buy his love?”

Ashleigh was annoyed and answered, “No.”

“What’s your Foster Momma telling Y’all? You told me about the time she was angry with Y’all for buying all them clothes for you sister?”

“She made me return everything except for one outfit.”

“I know you love your nephew.”

Her dimples flashed.

“Y’all are making a mistake by spoiling him. You ain’t teaching him to love Y’all for the right reasons.”

Megan hated to say it, “I bet Bob ain’t spoiling him.”

“He bought him animals.”

“What type of animals?”

“Those little rubber ones.”

“Did Y’all buy him a dolphin?”

“I did.”

They looked at one another.

Ashleigh mentioned, “I sent it up last time Bob went up there.”

“Seal?”

“Yes.”

Ashleigh stated, “I believe Bob bought him the whole collection.”

Megan pointed out, “Bob could’ve bought him a zoo.”

Ashleigh sheepishly answered, “Not exactly.”

“Y’all are understanding what I’m saying.”

Ashleigh reluctantly agreed, “I do.”

“You want your nephew to be excited his auntie is coming over because of what she’ll buy em’. Or because he’s excited to see his auntie?”

“I just want to bless him.”

“It’s what’s cool about being an Auntie.”

They looked at one another.

Megan replied to the look, “There’s a smart way of spoiling him without buying him everything.”

“I suppose.”

“I know Y’all get angry at the kids who through a fit in stores.”

“It’s really annoying when the parent gives them the toy after they’ve said no.”

With some anger in her voice Ashleigh added, “I can’t stand that.”

“It’s what Y’all turn him into if you keep buying him everything.”

“I don’t want that.”

“Bless him without handing over gifts.”

Ashleigh would never forget this.

They looked out over the marina. They admired the sights and sounds. With the wind it made the marina extra noisy.

Ashleigh said with a serious tone, “One of the reasons I want you to come up is so I can show you around.”

“I’ll have to wait until my slow season.”

“No problem.”

They ate more grapes and took sips of their bottled water.

“Captain seemed interested in muskie fishing.”

“I’d try it.”

Ashleigh warned, “It’ll probably be cold.”

“I’m convinced everything up there is cold.”

“Just like everything down here is humid?”

They giggled.

Megan asked, “How was the train building?”

“We’re making head way. He liked the trees I made.”

“They were amazing.”

“Practice.”

She turned toward Megan, “My Foster Dad taught me how to make them.”

“It’s the same as Daddy teaching me how to fish and sail.”

“It’s how Dad’s show us they love us.”

Megan produced a big dimple smile.

Megan proudly said, “I had a good one. I’ve known a lot of bad ones.”

“Nicole and I talked about that.”

“You okay.”

“Yea.”

Silence.

Ashleigh said, “We’re always hearing about men and dads being horrible. And we’re always hearing how wonderful Mom’s are. I know how wonderful they can be because of my Foster Mom Victoria. What is...”

She paused.

Megan waited.

In a serious tone Ashleigh continued, “What’s heartbreaking is knowing your own mother was worse than any man would ever think to be.”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

Ashleigh’s story put Megan’s relationship with her Mother into perspective.

Ashleigh said, “I trust you.”

“Yes ma’am.”

“Andrea’s mother is the one who molested her and her two siblings.”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

Megan responded, “People shouldn’t assume certain things when it comes to genders. I sometimes feel what we expect genders to be is silly. I believe if a boy is born a boy he’s a boy. Just like if a girl is born a girl she’s a girl. Why is it wrong with a boy who likes bright colors? Or likes pink? Or a girl who likes baseball? Or wants to run a charter? These things ain’t making a person gay either.”

Ashleigh was listening.

Megan wanted to get out everything she was feeling, “To assume all women are wonderful parents is short sighted. To assume there ain’t a woman out there who would want to be having sex with a youngin’ is just as ignorant as assuming all dads are touching their daughters.”

Ashleigh answered, “That’s why Bob and I decided to bring in all the pamphlets.”

“Bob wanted them too?”

“There was no way I’d bring them in without his permission. Well...”

She paused.

Looked over at Megan.

“I’d have brought them in anyway. But he thought it was a good idea.”

They sat in silence. Took a drink of their waters and ate some grapes.

Ashleigh broke the silence.

“If you don’t mind me asking. Did anyone ever touch you?”

“I ain’t sure if we ever talked about it. The most inappropriate thing I ever experienced was my brother Tim taking my panties.”

“Ewe.”

Ashleigh added, “I’ve heard of brothers doing this.”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

“I thought he was the only one?”

“You never heard of a pantie raid?”

Megan gave her a look.

Ashleigh answered, “It’s guys invading girls dorms and stealing their panties.”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

“Oh.”

They took sips from their bottle waters.

Ashleigh asked, “You want this last bunch?”

“I’ll take a few.”

Ashleigh mentioned, “These are good grapes.”

“They were on sale.”

“I heard he’s expanding the grocery store?”

Megan answered, “On account of everyone moving here he’s finally making the money he needs to expand the store.”

They were silent for a bit.

Megan returned to the topic they were last talking about.

“The worst part. It was wrapped around his cock.”

Ashleigh asked, “Did he see you?”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

“He was in my room.”

“Ewe.”

“We haven’t been the same.”

“Did he stop?”

“It stopped a few weeks later when I threw a pair at him and threatened to tell Daddy.”

“Did you ever tell on him?”

“Didn’t need too.”

“Captain wouldn’t have liked it?”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

“It’s why I confronted him first. Daddy ain’t the type putting up with someone hurting his Baby Girl. Even if it’s own son doing the hurting.”

Ashleigh believed Megan.

Ashleigh and Megan looked out over the marina.

“You think he’s doing anything to the twins?”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

They looked at one another.

Megan answered, "I want to believe he ain't."

They looked at one another.

"I was feeling I should talk to Sam."

Ashleigh answered, "It'll be a tough one. But I feel she'd listen to you."

Megan asked, "Sex ain't easy is it?"

Ashleigh answered, "It's only easy in the movies. It's easy to have it. But the consequences are tough."

She paused

They glanced at one another.

Ashleigh added, "But there isn't anything more pleasurable than sex."

Megan answered from her personal experience, "Even sex with yourself has struggles."

Ashleigh chuckled.

"Why are Y'all laughing?"

"I'm sorry. Normally. Sex with yourself usually has the least amount of consequences."

Megan asked honestly, "Y'all ever feel guilty?"

"Sometimes."

"Me too."

Ashleigh stated, "Experts say we're not suppose too feel guilty. Then religious people say we're not suppose to at all. We've talked about this before."

Megan asked, "When are Y'all feeling guilty?"

Ashleigh blushed.

"When I let myself imagine something weird."

Megan blushed and her dimples flashed.

"I've tried in a dressing room."

Ashleigh felt ashamed of herself.

Blushed.

"I once did it on a long drive."

Megan asked, "What happened?"

With an odd look answered.

"A truck drove by and honked."

"What did Y'all do?"

Megan was the only one Ashleigh would ever tell.

"I pulled into a rest stop. Parked in a corner and quickly finished. And got the hell out of there."

They looked at one another and laughed.

When they finished they took a sip of their waters and ate some grapes.

With a serious tone Ashleigh mumbled, "I felt guilty that time."

Megan's dimples flashed.

Megan thought about some of her fetishes.

"I ain't wanting to take anything to far. Or the only way I'm able to orgasm is by indulging in a fetish."

"I used to worry I did it to much. Then again. Without I believe I'd be in a relationship I shouldn't be in. Or I'd have had a one night stand."

Megan answered, “Y’all ain’t the only woman to say this. On line many gals say they needed to masturbate to remain virgins. I felt guilty when I was looking at nude pictures on the internet and reading erotic stories.”

Ashleigh mentioned, “I hate to admit I’ve watched it with boyfriends. I never liked it because it reminds me of my Stepdad. When my Mother wasn’t around he’d take his thing out and watch porn.”

Both cringed.

Silence.

Very serious Ashleigh said, “He chased me once. Luckily he fell and hit his head.”

Silence.

Megan stated, “I feel like a hypocrite any time I’m looking at guys cocks or reading stories.”

Ashleigh answered, “I don’t believe porn is good for people.”

Megan added, “I’m believing if I ever watch it again I’ll end up addicted to it.”

“Are you okay?”

“I hate to mention it.”

“What?”

Megan blushed.

Ashleigh with patience asked, “I’m your best friend. You can tell me.”

Megan flashed her dimples.

She managed to say, “I’ve heard of an adult store designed for women and couples. Y’all want to go with me?”

This surprised Ashleigh.

“You want to go to an adult store?”

Megan took a deep breath.

She confessed, “I’d like to try on some of their clothes. And look at something.”

Her dimples flashed and she blushed.

Ashleigh said in a kind way, “I’m surprised you’d suggest it. Don’t you feel guilty about the idea?”

“Yes.”

There was silence.

“I ain’t wanting to go by myself.”

Ashleigh admitted, “I only went to real creepy places with boyfriends. I’ve thought about trying a sex toy.”

She thought of a specific toy.

“Ain’t a cucumber like a toy?”

“I’ve heard it feels different.”

They looked over the marina. Took sips of their water. Both unsure of how to proceed.

Megan asked sincerely, “Isn’t a cucumber like a real cock?”

“It feels similar but nothing is like a real human. The good thing is you always get over the hump. The bad thing it isn’t human.”

Ashleigh made a face.

“You get what I’m saying?”

“I ain’t exactly sure what it feels like.”

Ashleigh sat straight up thinking about the toys she wanted to possibly purchase.

“I’ll take you. If we make a deal.”

“What?”

“We never tell anyone else what we’ve bought or what we’ve looked at.”

Megan blushed.

Her dimples flashed.

“I promise.”

Ashleigh answered while blushing herself, “I promise too.”

Megan asked, “When?”

“Would it have to be right away?”

“I’m pretty booked in February and half way through March.”

“Me too.”

They thought about their schedules.

Ashleigh suggested, “I have vacation in April. How about the first day of my vacation. This would be on Friday. My family will arrive on Saturday the seventh.”

“I always take off between Good Friday and Easter Sunday.”

Ashleigh made a face, but answered, “My three week vacation starts on that Friday.”

Megan suggested, “Should we all move it to Saturday?”

“My family is arriving Saturday afternoon.”

“It’s my understanding the store is open twenty-four hours.”

Ashleigh thought about this, “If we go early no one will be there. Less likely anyone we know would show up.”

“What happens if we all meet someone we know?”

Ashleigh shrugged her shoulders, “What would they say? They’re looking too.”

They made faces at one another.

“We’ll get breakfast on our way. Go to the store and get home. You’ll be home before your family arrives. I ain’t shopping there on Good Friday.”

“Agreed.”

They turned toward the marina and contemplated what they just agreed too.

Megan broke the silence, “Ya’ll convinced your Momma to come down?”

“She just agreed to it today.”

They sat back and looked out over the marina.

“I’m assuming Y’all are happy they’re visiting.”

Ashleigh became real serious, “Would you and your Dad like to make some money?”

“How?”

“Would you and your Dad sail the yacht to Key West? Would you also help me with the details of the trip?”

“What about Bob?”

Ashleigh made a face, “He’s all for it.”

“When?”

“On the week of the sixteenth.”

“Both of you will be off that week?”

“Yes.”

“Daddy and I could get a different vessel?”

“Why? I live on one?”

Ashleigh missed Megan’s expression.

“We’d pay for all the food. We’ll be giving your parents extra cash to spend while docked. We’re assuming we can dock and use the yacht like a hotel? As much as possible we’d like it to be a vacation for your parents. But you and Captain would be the captains.”

“What did Captain say?”

“Victoria only agreed to this an hour ago.”

Ashleigh repeated excited, “Bob is all for it.”

“Y’all have enough room for us and a crew?”

“We could make it work.”

Ashleigh stated, “Bob’s been wanting to take the yacht on a cruise but he didn’t want to go by himself. We’ll pay you well.”

“Why Captain and I?”

“We trust you guys. Plus, he wants to bless your parents for the way they treated our employees.”

Megan thought for a second, “How much money?”

“A lot.”

She thought about the charters she scheduled for the week.

Ashleigh with a smile said, “It’s likely to be more money than all of your charters.”

“You ain’t making this easy?”

Ashleigh chuckled, “Nope.”

“Will Bob behave?”

“He promised me.”

They looked at one another.

“He knows you have a boyfriend.”

Ashleigh stated, “He’s asked out someone.”

“Who?”

“Susan King.”

All at once Megan disliked Bob going out with someone; she shoved this feeling way down deep.

“She’d be good for him.”

“You think?”

“She’s a Christian, she’s conservative, and she’d handle the politics of dating Bob.”

“Didn’t she just get a divorce?”

“He cheated on her with four different women.”

Her dimples flashed.

“Maybe more.”

“I heard two.”

“Known two. He’d take charters to Key West and else where.”

Ashleigh felt sorry for Susan.

Megan’s dimples flashed.

“It’s the one thing I worry about.”

“It has to be hurtful.”

“I’d rather have the guy divorce me first.”

Ashleigh recalled Megan saying this before.

Nikita sat up and made a dog noise.

Ashleigh turned, “You have to go outside?”

Nikita headed for the houseboat door by running down the stairs to the first deck.
Megan said, "I'll go with."
"Great."

Victoria was thinking about what she agreed to.

Victoria was a mother of three daughters and a wife of thirty-seven years. At fifty-six her oval shaped face was not as tight as it used to be, she had wrinkles around her long lips, her hair was thin, and she needed to dye it. She was delighted to have enough hair to feel like a woman. Her eyes were filled with: wisdom, love, life, and faith. Being cleared of cancer cemented these traits into her. The love she felt toward her daughters and her husband increased seven fold when none of them rejected her after her breasts were removed.

It took a long time to feel like a woman again. Having this feeling back was one of the reasons she agreed to the vacation. The reason she fought the trip was the fear of wearing a swimsuit. What superseded the swimsuit was the love she felt toward her Foster Daughter. She missed her dearly during Christmas. Foster Daughter or not, Ashleigh was her daughter; no one would ever separate this feeling from her. If her daughter was willing to pay for the trip and set everything up; the least she could do is go.

The disappointing thing was her oldest daughter was unable to make it because of her husbands pastoral duties. Victoria understood it was during Easter and they were leading a fledgling church. She again wished her Oldest Daughter and her Son-in-law lived closer.

None of her daughters irritated her more than Felicia did. The darkest days of raising Ashleigh were less frustrating than Felicia. She understood why Ashleigh acting the way she did. Victoria imagined pushing Felicia overboard if she acted like she did today.

The idea of staying on Bob's yacht, while Bob was staying on the yacht, was annoying to her. She wanted to tell Ashleigh they should take the cruise on another boat. The opposite idea was, this would be a great way of seeing how Bob was treating her daughter. Victoria worried being a vice president was to much for her Daughter.

Ashleigh's words were bouncing around in her mind, *"I want you to see how well I'm doing. I want you to meet the great friends I've made. I don't want you to be so worried about me."*

She: sat up, turned on the light, and woke her husband.

He gently sat up and turned on the light.

Victoria asked, "You think this trip is a good idea?"

He was used to being woken up in the middle of the night, in a somewhat alert voice he answered, "As long as Felicia's boyfriend isn't coming along"

Victoria with a scorn look on her face, "She'd end up pregnant."

"I hope she isn't sleeping with him."

Victoria with a snarl, "I feel she is."

"Have you tried talking to her?"

With an eye roll and a voice of disbelief.

"She says she's a virgin."

"You believe her?"

Victoria answered, "I feel she's sleeping with him because we wouldn't like it."

He sighed, "Unfortunately; there isn't anything we can do about it."

“How about if we ground her until she’s thirty?”

“You suggested that with Ashleigh.”

Victoria was unable to argue the point.

“Felicia is far more sneaky than Ashleigh ever was.”

Blake laughed.

“What’s so funny?”

“It’s difficult to be sneaky when you’re drunk.”

Victoria gave him a look.

“I’m not saying I liked it.”

Victoria made a point of saying, “She’s been sober for a long time. We should be proud of how well she’s doing.”

Blake answered, “I am.”

Blake asked, “What’s the matter?”

“I miss Ashleigh and Patty.”

“We raised them to live life on their own.”

Blake reasoned, “So lets have Ashleigh bless us. If Ashleigh wants to set up a vacation for us lets do the right thing and go. Lets not forget Bob is funding a lot of it too. I’m sure it isn’t cheap sailing a yacht.”

“Maybe we shouldn’t do the cruise?”

“It was Ashleigh’s suggestion. She would have cleared it with Bob before suggesting it.”

Victoria made a face.

Blake said, “Maybe this is God’s way of having the two of you patch things up. He has been a second father to her. There were times I was jealous of him but without his help Ashleigh wouldn’t have lived with us.”

“I know.”

“Wouldn’t Jesus want us to forgive him?”

Victoria wanted to disagree.

“Yes.”

“Look at what he’s done for her.”

“I guess.”

“She has purpose now.”

He stated matter of fact.

“She’s no longer floundering. We wanted her to go to college but college isn’t for everyone.”

“She gets nervous and worried.”

“When she feels this way she calls her Mom.”

Victoria gave her husband a loving look.

“I think we should look forward to it. Maybe it could be the honeymoon we never had?”

“Not on Bob’s yacht.”

“There is the week at the resort.”

Victoria smiled, “That’s something I’d look forward too.”

“How about if we get started tonight?”

“Don’t you have to get up early?”

He made a face.

He asked, “Are you in the mood?”

“Maybe tomorrow?”

“Sounds good.”

They: kissed one another, they turned off the lights, and laid in the dark. Victoria felt Blake’s hand reach over and slide underneath her pajamas. She remembered when this move started with her breasts. With a deep love in her heart she recalled on how he treated her after her surgery and during treatments. She shifted close to him. She moaned when he kissed her neck. She moved in a way so his hand could touch her the way she liked. Sex wasn’t as acrobatic or as intense as it used to be; but because of sharing life together it was in many ways better. Their marriage was far from a fairy tale. There was a time when they contemplated divorce; their faith in God and their love for one another got them through. They finished at the same time.

They cuddled.

Victoria was overjoyed with this; Blake very seldom cuddled.

After a while; they separated and fell asleep.

February 5th Basic Principles

Part Six of Six

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