

Ashleigh & Megan
Book I: Friendship

Saturday
January 13

Nervous

Day 10 of Book I

(Nineteen Days after Bob and Megan talked on the pier)

Part One of Four



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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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January 13, Nervous Day 10 of Book I

(Nineteen Days after Bob and Megan talked on the Pier)

*A*shleigh opened one eye. She was looking at her Siberian Husky named Nikita. Ashleigh was grateful her dog missed the fact her eye was opened; she quickly closed it.

Nikita snorted.

Ashleigh forced herself to remain motionless.

Nikita put her nose up to her face and sniffed.

Ashleigh again remained still. She loved her dog but wished Nikita would go back and lay down on her bed.

Nikita whimpered.

Ashleigh again remained still.

Nikita put her head on her bed.

This was new. Ashleigh correctly believed if she acknowledged this behavior her dog would repeat it.

It was difficult for Ashleigh to just get up and get going. This was especially true this morning. She felt the last two weeks had been chaotic. She was surprised Bob complimented her on her: efforts, planning, leadership, and the hours she was putting in. This surprised her the most. Her brother preached against his managers working an abundance of hours and hated it when his employees worked overtime. He believed working an abundance of hours indicated: a lack of efficiency, was a sign of poor planning, a sign of poor management, and could be a symptom of all three. She felt she poorly planned the move. She believed this because of all the issues she needed to address and how often she needed to change priorities during the companies move. Anytime she changed a priority this created a pressure against

the moving schedule. Every time one thing was off schedule it effected many other things. Ashleigh often times was the one handling the consequences of this.

She was worried her Brother was driving himself to hard to keep the moving schedule. Anytime she expressed this worry, he became angry, and told her he experienced worse. This caused her to reevaluate the events at the club and how he handled things when he first opened *Renewed Mastery*. Even with this understanding she was annoyed he would discount her worry.

Nikita lifted her head off of the bed.

Based upon the jangling of her collar Ashleigh believed her dog was sitting. She could feel her Siberian Husky looking at her. Past experience taught her if her dog spotted her open her eyes Nikita would be right in her face again. Ashleigh hoped her dog would go back and lay on her dogie bed until Julie showed up.

Any time she contemplated the next seven weeks she felt she was about to be buried by an avalanche. What kept her from feeling overwhelmed was advice from her brother; she hated to admit worked. He always advised his staff to first look at the large overview then to brake it down to manageable levels. In the last few weeks he was specifically teaching her the importance of following steps. What surprised her was how often her Brother allowed her to choose what the next step was. When she asked him to intervene, it seemed to her, he knew what was happening before she presented him with the problem. This reaffirmed her belief her brother was gifted with immense vision. What she never realized until he made her a Vice President was how his experience helped his vision. What was remarkable to her was his patience to stay on one task even when it appeared a different unattended task would cause a disaster somewhere else. By directly working with him and observing how he was handling the move, she now understood why her brother believed multi-tasking should be used with wisdom. She was reminded of her brothers advice when it came to multi-tasking, "*Multi-tasking feels and looks like your accomplishing many things. Until one is faced with all the unfinished piles of nothing being completed.*" She witnessed the evidence of this by her own decisions and the decisions of others.

The biggest shock to her was the realization her brother listened to people. She now felt her brother actually listened to everyone. He irritated people when he decided something people disliked; she recognized she was one of these people.

Again Nikita whimpered.

On any other day Ashleigh would have comforted her dog but she just needed to lie there; even if she was only half sleeping.

She started to think about *Renewed Mastery* employees.

She thought about Jimmy, Pete, and the current production manager. She felt all three were very adaptable and all three pointed out potential problems; but she felt the current production manager was the wrong fit. She felt a special kinship with Jimmy when he pulled her off to the side and reminded her any move would have unexpected problems; especially in a large corporate move. It was his opinion without her planning and what she was accomplishing the move would have been worse. She trusted his compliment; when Jimmy said something he meant it. Since becoming a Vice President she now understood why Bob disliked what he called "*ass kissers.*" Neither Jimmy nor Pete fell into this category. She sometimes questioned the current production managers motives. She promised herself if Jimmy continued to work as well as he was, and continued to be a key in setting up

production; she would promote him to Manufacturing Production Lead. The plan was to move the current production manager to Leah's area. Leah and Ashleigh believed the current production manager was better suited for organizing and handling large art projects. Both hoped the current production manager would approve of the transfer otherwise he would be demoted. Ashleigh was surprised when people within her brothers company took demotions or happily took transfers to different departments.

She felt she was excellent at moving employees to different departments. She admitted to herself this was sometimes a battle. An example of one of these moves was an employee on the verge of getting fired until she moved him to customer service. He started out in production. His production levels were slowly decreasing as each day wore on; he was always engaging in conversations with everyone around him. She felt he would be a good fit in their customer service department. When she asked him a transferring to customer service he was reluctant to try because he had never worked customer service before. The manager of customer service was apprehensive about a guy without experience working in customer service. She agreed because they were really short of employees. Two days later the manager expressed to Ashleigh what a good employee he was. Ashleigh felt even happier when her employee approached her and told her: he loved the job, was surprised on how much he enjoyed it, and for the first time felt he was helping people.

Nikita whimpered and ran to the suite door. It was nearing the time of Strong Scent to arrive. Nikita was unaware Strong Scent would be going to "work territory".

Ashleigh hired Julie to sort out all of the mail and if she had time to organize the supplies; even if it was haphazardly. The mail and the mailroom was an annoying issue. Ashleigh made the assumption secretaries and warehouse people would be able to handle the mail and the mailrooms. She underestimated on how busy the secretaries and warehouse people were and how much mail was pouring into the company. To fix this mistake, Gracie hired a local person to fill the newly created mailroom position, but this person was unable to start until February first. Ashleigh was grateful Pete assigned one of his guys to get the mail and to put needed supplies into the mailroom. Copy paper and extra supplies from the closing offices were starting to fill a section of shelving in the warehouse. Her concern with the amount of copy paper they received was tempered by the amount of copy paper they were already using. A concern was all of the office supplies from the other locations that needed to be sorted and gone through. She appreciated Gus who was making attempts at organizing both new and used supplies coming into the warehouse. Gus made the suggestion if they had extra supplies the local school district might be able to use them. The school district was sending her a list of supply needs on Tuesday.

She smiled anytime she thought of Gus. As much as she tried to avoid having favorite employees it was impossible for her to feel a special likeness toward him.

A person she deeply admired was Leah. She seemed to know exactly what was happening with all of the companies artwork and she was great at handling her staff. This included: the artists, designers, advertisers, her customer service people, and her portion of the sales staff. Ashleigh was looking forward to all of these employees arriving in the next two weeks. A special joy was helping Leah assign all of the artists and designers into what the company called the: "The Bee Hive." A project Ashleigh was enjoying was their combined effort in designing the cafeteria.

She cringed anytime she thought of the Vice President of Sales; an Alvin Cohen. Ashleigh struggled with the sales staff. As a production person she often become infuriated at what the sales staff attempted to get away with. Her biggest pet peeve was when they promised something without checking with production; especially during the move. She was grateful Bob handled the Vice President of Sales and the sales department.

Ashleigh was grateful she never needed to worry about Haley. Her biggest issue was the private school her sons were attending. More than once Haley fought the school on placement issues. What frustrated Haley was the schools assumption Wisconsin would have a poor educational system. The educator who ran this private school was from the Upper East Coast. He believed the Midwest region had poor school districts. When Bob caught wind of this, he sent over a dozen faxes to a variety of school administrators and school systems. These faxes included national test results from the states of: Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa. This intervention changed the outlook of Midwestern students.

An ongoing issue was the intermingling of different employees from different regions of the country. Ashleigh would have rather handled the trouble with the computer systems and the mailroom; than the customs different groups of employees believed were necessary. It was especially difficult when these customs directly conflicted with one another. A growing irritation was the complaint of the complexes temperature. If she directed maintenance to turn up the temperature the transplants complained it was too hot, if she directed maintenance to turn down the temperature the locals were putting on jackets. A complaint she was tired of hearing from transplants was about the humidity. Anytime she heard this complaint she restrain herself from yelling at them, "*Your living in Florida!!*" What surprised her was how the warehouse and production areas were air conditioned. She surmised this was the same as having the warehouse and production area's heated in Wisconsin.

It was disappointing anytime an employee quit working after moving them to Florida. She restrained herself from taking it personal. She reminded herself sometimes things failed to work out. What bothered her was how this effected the employees around her; she especially felt sorry for Gracie. She believed they needed to hire a human resource assistant for Gracie. What kept Ashleigh upbeat was: Gracie, Haley, Megan and her Brother. All of them reminded her, no matter what she did, employees were bound to leave. She understood the truth of this but it still upset her.

What was worse than having an employee quit was having to fire someone. The most recent firing was a manager that transferred from the New York office. On her first day she started an argument with an employee from a different department. As time wore on it was obvious she was struggling. The final straw was when she was rude to Terri Green; Terri Green was the manager of IT. Ashleigh understood why someone would get flustered with Terri Green. Even with this understanding the manager from New York was way out of line. Bob being who he was: gave this manager severance, approved of her unemployment, and paid for her family to move back to New York. Bob complimented Ashleigh on how she handled the situation. Because of this firing and everyone freaking out with the problems with IT; on the previous Thursday she cried on the way home from work.

She was starting to feel guilty for ignoring her dog. The conflicted feeling was the struggle to get motivated.

At the moment she was proud of her Brother. In spite of all what was going on he was flying to Wisconsin to meet his son. His plan was to fly to Wisconsin every other weekend; he

would leave by plane on Friday and come back on Sunday. There were consequences for making this choice. It effected Renewed Mastery and his writing in different ways. Ashleigh was trying her best to bridge the gap to any of these consequences. After the company move Ashleigh would come up and meet her Nephew. Between three to six months later, depending on how visitations were going, Ashleigh would stay over night at Bob's house in Wisconsin. Ashleigh hoped she would have the time to visit with her family on these weekends.

With his writing taking a back seat during the move of his company and the legal issues with his son, this gave Ashleigh time to find the right person to fill the position of editor and personal assistant to Bob and herself. She was looking for a specific personality traits and a specific skill set to work as her brothers editor. There were a few leads both inside and outside of the company but none of them felt right to her.

Nikita snorted again and even nudged her.

"Can't you let me sleep?"

Nikita ran to the suite door and howled. She sensed Strong Scent was on the thing Nikita despised. Nikita wondered why this thing kept harassing Strong Scent. She tried to scare it away. It seemed to always come back. Nikita believed it was a threat because it was large and it made awful noises.

Ashleigh: grunted, flipped over the covers, stepped out of bed, removed her Kenney Chesney concert t-shirt, removed her multi-colored striped sleep shorts, removed her panties, and set these items except the t-shirt into a hamper. Since Christmas, the outfit Ashleigh wanted to wear was either hung in her walk in closet or was neatly set on the chair across from her bed. She changed her mind once every three days. Today she was too tired to look for a different outfit. She: slipped on a clean pair of panties, secured her bra, slipped on a brand new pair of rosebud summerweight chino trousers, added a black belt, slipped on a rosebud and black trimmed colored dotted tunic; she would accessorize later. This was the most casual outfit she ever wore to work. She took a long bath the night before, all she needed was deodorant and squirt of perfume. It was a Saturday and she was without a meeting. Something she picked up from Julie was the importance of a pony tail.

She stepped into her walk in closet and glanced at her reflection in the full length mirror. She: wished she was taller than five foot one, liked her hair in a pony tail, felt her back-side was benefiting from working out, she always liked her breasts, she felt they were the perfect size for her frame; she liked how she could easily conceal them or highlight them. She was thankful her breasts were larger than Megan's and were smaller than Julie or Nicole's.

She glanced at her face.

She made one.

Her biggest complaint about herself, even more of a complaint than her height; was how cute she looked. She always wanted to be glamorous. She wished she looked more like Julie who was a combination of athletic and a model. Ashleigh believed Julie would look gorgeous in a formal dress. It was impossible for Ashleigh to have an honest analysis of: her heart shaped face, her roman style nose, her peaked cheekbones, her thin lips, her medium length smile, and her somewhat pointed chin; a chin similar to her real Mother Ashley Vindavaine. She was coming to terms with the fact she would always be referred to as "cute" or associated with a "cheerleader". As Megan suggestion, Ashleigh tried to find a positive, she felt she looked attractive with or without makeup.

The theme song to the *Flintstones* played. This was the first time she heard this song coming from the doorbell. She cringed. Without wanting to, even after the song ended, she continued to sing it.

She cringed again.

She believed this song would be a wormhole in her mind through out the day. She looking forward to the electronic division to arrive. She was determined to figure out who made the doorbell so she could change the settings.

Nikita howled in excitement.

Ashleigh stepping out of her walk in closet and scolded, "No howl!"

Nikita sat down and whimpered.

Ashleigh felt bad for yelling.

She said in an excited voice, "Ready to go for a walk?"

Immediately Nikita stood up on all fours and her tail became a weapon. When Ashleigh opened the door to her suite; Nikita went running toward the main door of the houseboat yacht.

Julie wanted to impress: her Daddy, Mr. Bob, and Ms. Ashleigh. The only time Julie addressed Ashleigh as Ms. Ashleigh was when they were in public. In her backpack: was her camera case (it was in a small over the shoulder bag), a list of tasks Ashleigh gave her the day before, maps of the company, she specifically marked where each mailroom was, a change of clothes, feminine products, her most powerful soaps, and deodorant for during the day. The least thing she wanted was to have body odor while working for Mr. Bob and Ms. Ashleigh.

She pushed the button to the doorbell.

She smiled at the *Flintstones* theme. She suspected Ashleigh would hate it. Soon after she heard Nikita howl.

Julie yelled to Nikita, "I'll be right in."

Nikita howled again.

Julie heard Ashleigh command, "No howl. Sit."

Based upon Ashleigh's tone, Julie believed she was tired. She felt this was due to the many hours of work Ashleigh was putting in. She knew this because of her relationship with Ashleigh and how many hours her Daddy was working.

Julie was certain Mr. Bob was tired. She knew he was putting in more hours than anyone else. She believed finding out he was a father added to his stress. She felt he took being a father very seriously. Julie wondered about a woman who would wait almost two years to tell Mr. Bob he was a Daddy. She knew of girls in school who became pregnant and the guys did nothing to help them. She understood if a guy was a dead beat or creepy; a woman would keep a child a secret. She felt Mr. Bob was neither of these things. It seemed outrages to her, a woman who knew Mr. Bob, would believe he would be a poor daddy.

There were only two men she respected more than Mr. Bob; one was her Daddy and the other was her Grandfather. She loved her mother's Daddy but the respect was never the same.

The door opened.

Reading Ashleigh's body language it was confirmed Ashleigh was tired.

Ashleigh immediately noticed Julie was in a new outfit. She was wearing thunder blue windbreaker pants: the bottoms were light green with a white printed upside down V at the

bottom. She matched it with a light green V-neck sport tee, the shirt had stripes in a diagonal pattern with the company logo printed on it. Ashleigh spotted the lines of her sports bra, her mockneck windbreaker was unzipped, the shoulder was decorated with a light green filled in V, this V went to the center of Julie's chest; underneath this V in white font was the logo of the company.

Julie questioned if Ashleigh was dressed for work.

Julie stepped in and Ashleigh shut the door behind them.

She spoke, "I'm going to lay on the couch for awhile. I trust you know what to do?"

"Yes Ma'am."

"Like always you can use my shower. If I'm in the head. I hate calling it a head."

"I know Y'all do."

Ashleigh was unsure if she liked her outfit and said, "If I'm using it. Feel free to use the head in the hallway."

"Yes Ma'am".

Julie preferred Ashleigh's shower. She used the one in the hallway when both were getting ready at the same time.

"I know you spend more time with her on Saturday's be ready to leave at nine."

"Yes Ma'am."

"I'm glad you walk Nikita,"

Julie smiled, "It's my job."

Ashleigh winked, "I suspect you'd walk her if I didn't pay you."

"Not as often."

"Fair enough."

Ashleigh touched Julie on the arm.

Julie smiled.

Ashleigh stated, "I'm going to lay down on the couch."

"Yes Ma'am."

Ashleigh: nodded her head, turned, and went to the couch. This was the first time she was leaving her unsupervised with Bob; granted she was on the couch. On the couch was different from sitting in the galley observing and listening to their conversations. Julie never believed Mr. Bob would do anything inappropriate. She respected Ashleigh for wanting to protect both in case of a nasty rumor. Thinking about rumors caused some tears to fall.

She blocked out the hurt of being the cause of rumors and what kids were calling her behind her back; instead she focused on walking Nikita. Julie: greeted Nikita, set her backpack next to the China cabinet, bent down, opened it, removed the over the shoulder bag with her camera case in it, set it on the deck, swung this smaller backpack over her shoulders, pulled it very tight so it would stay still, zipped up her backpack, stood up, with Nikita following her they went to what was called Nikita's closet, opened the door, took out the leash, the pooper scooper, and a plastic bag. She liked this new scooper because she could scoop up Nikita's droppings while standing. She stopped at the refrigerator and put up the route she was going to take. There were four maps showing four different routes of where she took Nikita. She was upholding her promise to both her Momma and Ashleigh; whatever route she picked at her house she selected at the yacht. On Saturdays she either ran South on the beach all the way to the inlet and back up *Bluff Beach Parkway*; this road was in front of the mansions, connected to the large public pier, and was the road in front of the marina. Or she

would head north on the bike path that was along side of *Bluff Beach Parkway* until she reached a secluded outlook. When they reached this outlook Julie would take Nikita down to the beach. She hoped she could finally get a clear picture of Nikita running on the beach; her best was a blurry blob with the ocean in the background. She wanted to run along the beach side of the persevere or on the bank of the *Eastbank River* but her Daddy forbid her. She selected the route titled the *Preserve Route*. This was the route headed toward the look out. They: reached the main door, she hooked on the leash, they stepped out of the yacht, she made sure the door was shut, they ran down the stairs to the first deck, they stepped off the yacht onto the wooden pier of the yacht, they stepped onto the first pier, they turned right, Julie stepped to the edge of the pier, glanced across the Eastbank River, looked north up the river, looked south, she debated about running along the bank of the river, she remembered her promise, they turned and headed to the marina parking lot; Julie believed Nikita enjoyed exploring the pier.

They passed Julie's locked bike; it was against the end of the wooden pier.

Nikita growled at the thing.

Julie rolled her eyes, "Why are Y'all always growling at my bike?"

Nikita looked up at Strong Scent. She was about to turn back toward the thing and growl at it again.

"Come."

This excited Nikita. She stopped warning the thing.

Nikita was excited to be with Strong Scent. Nikita knew all four routes. Nikita's spot to do her business was passed: territory called Yacht, territory called Megan's Charter, territory called Megan's houseboat, passed Old Male and Old Female, passed the things that moved, passed the box with many smells where Strong Scent tossed her droppings, and the grass where she marked her territory; she would pick a spot along the fence line. Strong Scent and Best Friend forbid her to place her sent between the gap between the fence and the *Eastbank River*.

Julie always wondered why the owner of the Marina put up such a tall and heavy fence.

When Nikita was done doing her business: Julie picked up the droppings, put the droppings into the plastic bag, they headed to the dumpster, tossed the bag into the dumpster, and leaned the scooper against the fence behind the dumpster; she assumed no one would steal a pooper scooper. Once this was accomplished they walked along the left side of the parking lot, passed Mike's house (he was the owner of the marina and his house was on the left side of the parking lot), and to the entrance of the marina. On the right side of this entrance were the Marina's mailboxes. This is when Julie pulled out a hair tie from out of the pocket of her running pants.

Nikita became excited. She knew when Strong Scent played with her fur, she would wrap the leash around her waist, and then she would speak the command "Let's Fly". Nikita loved running with Strong Scent. She sometimes ran with Best Friend in the evening or on Sunday but she never went as fast or as far as Strong Scent.

Julie looked both ways.

She walked Nikita across *Bluff Beach Parkway*. Julie led Nikita to a path through the tall grass; before crossing it she made sure there were no snakes slithering across it. Once through this path they stopped at the bike path. A bike went cruising by her. This is when she stepped onto the path.

Julie stated the command “*Let’s Fly.*”

They took off running.

Nikita knew to always be on Strong Scent’s right side, she either took the same pace, or was slightly ahead. Strong Scent would yell if she jerked or chased anything. Nikita sensed it first.

Julie liked to imagine Nikita was the lead dog of a sled team and they were traveling in the wilds of Alaska. Or she imagined herself a native person with her dog on a hunt. The ideas were endless, but they always involved her running during the winter; she had no idea what a northern winter was like.

She started to have the nagging feeling she was being watched. She shrugged this off as an overactive imagination.

When they arrived at the lookout everything felt wrong. The first thing she noticed was everything was quiet. Normally at this time in the morning the sounds of the preserve were dominating. Many times she took pictures of squirrels rummaging through the garbage cans or just doing their thing. On one early morning she took a picture of a large Raccoon on top of one of the cans. She especially liked taking pictures of the water fowl that were active in the area. Her routine was to take Nikita down some steps to the beach; there they would play fetch and run around.

Going down to the beach felt like a horrible idea.

It was creepy because of the complete stillness.

A group of fast bikers headed south on the bike path. The path went in between the parking lot of the look out and the steps. Julie’s impulse was to run with the bikers.

Nikita’s instinct to protect Strong Scent started way earlier and was at a high level. Due to her ancestral DNA she knew what was following them; this separated her from other dog breeds. Nikita was aware this creature was of the same species her ancestors fought; but Nikita was unaware it was of a different kind. Before white men arrived in Alaska and Siberia the native peoples had legends of this creature. Many of these legends told of women and children being kidnapped and dragged away into the forest. They witnessed this creature stealing their food and sometimes killing their livestock. In the dogs ancestral past, when the men went to hunt or left an area, the dogs were left behind to protect the women and children. They protected them from what the white man considered the known animals, but more importantly; Nikita’s breed protected them from the Legend of the Forest. Because of Nikita’s descendants being the chosen breed of the native peoples of Alaska and Siberia she was willing to lose her life to protect Strong Scent; this was especially true because Strong Scent was a female. What Nikita was unaware of, in her ancestral past, humans and many of her kind worked together to hunt and protect one another. Nikita often times sensed a similar creature when she left her markings.

The creature that liked to watch Nikita leave her markings knew: Ashleigh, Megan, Bob, and Julie. This creature observed Julie arriving and walking Nikita at the same time for weeks. This creature and it’s group stayed along the river and seldom crossed *Bluff Beach Parkway*. On Sundays it wondered why Ashleigh walked Nikita. The creature who liked to watch Nikita and Julie bent down into the foliage once they reached the lookout.

The creature near the lookout chose to approach the edge of the preserve because of: curiosity, it was the lookout for it’s group, and more important Julie was on her monthly. This group liked to stay along the ocean and very seldom went south of this look out. On this

morning due to a dolphin carcass they went passed this look out. Like the other group they rarely crossed *Bluff Beach Parkway*.

The two groups disliked one another.

Nikita's tail was down, she was very stiff, and she was focused on the treeline.

"What's the matter?"

Nikita looked up at Strong Scent and back to the preserve.

Nikita growled.

Julie studied the area Nikita growled at. She was unable to spot anything. The preserve was awful thick.

It was obvious Nikita was trying to protect her. The question was from what?

Julie felt a strong desire to flee. She also felt it was necessary to keep Nikita on the leash.

Nikita was determined to show this creature she meant to protect Strong Scent. She howled a very aggressive howl. This came from her ancestral DNA. In the days her ancestors protected themselves and their humans, this was the first call to all of her kind; she then hunched herself and growled again.

This caused dogs in the area to howl and bark.

The howl and how Nikita bristled frightened Julie.

Nikita started to stalk herself into the preserve.

Julie reasoned there was a homeless person in the thicket. She wished she could see who was in the preserve, it was just to thick.

She put herself into a defensive posture, faced the preserve, and yelled; "I ain't afraid of Y'all. I know self defense."

This is when a different creature, one much older and bigger than the century, gave a growl.

The creature who often watched Nikita and Julie hid behind a tree.

Julie never heard anything like it before.

Nikita rushed the preserve. Because of Julie's strength and athletic ability she was able: to stay upright, stop Nikita from rushing into the thicket, and yell in a very commanding voice; "Stay."

Nikita hated to listen but did so.

Julie reasoned there was some predator in the preserve. With this thought she remembered what the men in the family taught the boys when they went hunting. If they ran into a predator they were to: make themselves as large as possible, to make noise, to back away slowly, and to only shoot if their lives were in danger. Her Daddy warned her Brother to remain as calm as possible because their lives might depend on it.

Julie: shortened the leash, slowly stepped backward, and commanded, "Come."

Nikita turned toward Strong Scent and then back to the preserve.

The century stayed where he was but the larger one approached.

Julie heard something move forward, this sounded bipedal; this confused Julie.

She again put herself into a defensive posture and yelled, "I ain't wanting to hurt Y'all but Y'all be hurting if Y'all don't leave me alone."

She added, "My dawg will tare you to pieces."

Silence.

This was very frightening.

She felt the word “*Leave.*”

The creatures near the lookout heard it too. They temporarily focused across the street.

Julie: shortened the leash even more, backed up at a quicker pace, this caused Nikita to be pulled back; Nikita disliked this.

She felt a strong desire to yell again, “Leave us alone and I won’t fight Y’all. I don’t want to. But I will.”

Nikita growled again.

She again felt the word, “*Leave.*”

Her idea was to get across the road and run as fast as she could until they reached the marina. She felt the back of her foot hit the curb of the street. She quickly looked both ways.

Nikita was resisting the leash.

“NO.” Julie then commanded, “Come. Lets go home.”

Nikita knew, “Go Home.”

This diffused Nikita enough for Julie to lead Nikita across the street.

Once on the other side she felt the word, “*Fly.*”

The creatures near the lookout felt this too.

This is when Julie heard a growl from the lookout.

Nikita wondered why Strong Scent never commanded, “Let's Fly.” Once they were running Nikita relaxed and enjoyed being with Strong Scent.

She kept her fast pace while paying attention to her surrounding and looking for cars. She was unsure of what was worse the two growls she heard or the idea something spoke into her mind. *Did she tell herself to leave? Did she command herself to fly? Or did something else plant the thought into her mind?*

Julie wanted to believe: a creeper of a guy spotted her, he slipped into the preserve, followed her, and it was her own instincts telling her to leave. She believed if she told anyone what happened she would be banned from walking Nikita.

Nicole missed making love to her husband. Being a faithful wife she never considered cheating. This faithfulness was due: to her faith, the love she felt for her husband, the love for her family, and observing the consequences of affairs. The worst part of Jimmy's new job was the hours he was putting in. Ashleigh reassured her this was only temporary. Julie informed her how upset Mr. Bob was at all of the overtime. Jimmy was told by long term employees the only time the company ever came close to this amount of overtime was before Christmas. Nicole understood the circumstances. This reminded Nicole of when Jimmy was a construction lead and a project was filled with issues.

Just before he started to work so many hours they were in a phase of wonderful sex. She wondered what was worse: when Jimmy was away in the Marines and sex was impossible, or when there were gaps in their love making and her husband was physically there. After: hearing the complaints of other wives (both Christian and non-Christian), and how many women pretended sex was unimportant to them; it was obvious Jimmy was a patient and understanding lover. She was grateful for an overall satisfying sex life. Even when they were in ruts it was never horrible. How they moved beyond the ruts was by trying new things or revisited things they once enjoyed. What she believed kept their sex lives satisfying was: the

effort they put in, their communication, the trust they had for one another, the love they felt toward one another, and most important their faith

During gaps she turned to self pleasure. This was especially true when Jimmy was in the Marines. Before she was married she avoided masturbation because her mother caught her in the act; Nicole often wondered if her mother caught her on purpose. Her mother severely chastised her and called her a slut. Being called a slut by her own mother hurt terribly. This was especially hurtful because her Mother knew Nicole wanted to remain a virgin until she was married. After this: she felt terribly guilty any time she enjoyed herself, she would hold off as long as she could, and was paranoid of being caught in the act. She wanted to believe the desire to masturbate would end once she was married.

While Jimmy was away in boot camp she became very short tempered. A friend from church pulled her off to the side and politely suggested she purchase a sex toy. Nicole was very offended at this. A week later she went to purchase one. She never felt comfortable entering any of the adult stores she drove passed. These stores: were off of the main roads, they seemed secluded, they seemed dangerous, and she was repulsed by the advertising; one even advertised booths with live girls in them. A few days later Nicole mustered the courage to approach her friend and ask where she could purchase one.

Nicole was surprised on how patient her friend was. This friend revealed to Nicole on how sex at the beginning of her marriage was horrible. This lasted until the wife and husband researched the nuts and bolts of sex. This research ended assumptions, led to honest communication, and fulfillment. This friend revealed to Nicole on how difficult it was for them to change their patterns but felt it was worth it. What irritated the friend was how they needed to research outside of the confines of what they believed was appropriate. They were frustrated by two things. The first frustration was the anti-Christian views she came across. The second frustration was the realization the church was more uptight about sex than the Bible was.

Nicole would never forget how willing this woman was to answer her questions. This friend gave her two adult catalogs and an address to what she described as a "boutique." This store was designed for women and couples. The store sold: lingerie, toys, and books. The friend reassured Nicole if it sold pornographic material she would have walked out of the store.

Nicole's first purchase was a simple non-threatening vibrator. What made her nervous was the possibility her Mother would receive the package before she did (when Jimmy was in boot camp Nicole was living with her parents). A couple weeks after receiving this vibrator she found the courage to visit the boutique. Nicole liked how it was in a strip mall and the outside of the store appeared to be a regular clothing store. Before leaving her vehicle she: slipped on a pair of large sunglasses, a large hat, and tried to hide behind a very large bag. She was happy no one she knew witnessed her step into the store. She was relieved: to see another woman shopping in the store, a couple ladies shopping through the large selection of lingerie, a male and female couple looking at some toys, and she was approached by a very friendly woman near her age. When she left the store she was grateful she brought the bag.

In the past she experienced the temptation to substitute masturbation over making love to her husband. Unlike in the movies where sex was always wonderful, there were times when it would have been easier to just get herself off. Her experience was, fulfilling sex took effort and honest communication; many times this took effort.

The house was empty: Jimmy was putting in a full days work, Jimmy would most likely be to tired to have sex, Julie was at work, Ester stayed overnight at her best friend Danielle's house, Ester was staying there until Danielle's Mom would drop both off before dinner, Jeff was fishing with some friends, they planned to stay the day at Sal's farm; on a rare occasion she had no where she needed to be.

With the house empty she allowing herself to take her time and to be verbal. She looked forward to the day when all of her children moved out of the house and she could be as expressive as she wanted. At some point she: went to her dresser, opened a drawer, selected a toy she very rarely used, took it into her bathroom, attached it on top of the tub, and mounted the toy. She imagined making love to her husband.

She enjoyed being expressive and loud.

When she was finished she took a shower.

She looked forward to the time she could make love to her husband.

Julie opened the refrigerator.

The only noise was the soft sounds of Ashleigh sleeping. Usually at this time the galley was full of conversation and the sound of the local country station. Ashleigh purchased a clock radio the previous week and attached it to the bottom of one of the hanging cabinets.

After Julie took a shower she put on: a pair of green military styled camouflaged cargo pants, a tan colored tank, and a black polo shirt; this was the only black clothing item she owned. She kept her sports bra on. She chose this outfit because she wanted to wear clothing least likely to be wrecked and she wanted to appear modest. What she liked about the cargo pants was the zipper on the pant leg; she could easily make these into capris pants. She heard conflicting reports of *Renewed Mastery* being to cold and it being to hot. Based upon who complained about how cold it was, she believed she would most likely be cold; but just in case it was warm she was prepared for it. She also believed having a variety of pockets would help with the type of work she was hired to do.

Nikita was sitting next to Julie hoping for a snippet of food.

Standing with the refrigerator door open she was unsure of what to eat. Ashleigh always told her she could have whatever she wanted. She thought about eggs. She spotted some yogurt, she grabbed one, she grabbed an apple, grabbed the milk, and closed the refrigerator door. She set these items on the island. When she opened the cabinet with the cereal she was relieved to see healthy cereals; she correctly surmised Ashleigh was now buying the groceries. She was about to grab a granola cinnamon raisin cereal; she changed her mind and grabbed a canister of oatmeal. She again opened the refrigerator, she put the milk back and the apple back, and decided to look for a grapefruit.

Nikita stuck her head into the refrigerator. She knew if this was Best Friend or Favorite Male they would have yelled at her. She hoped Strong Scent would give her something.

Julie gently moved Nikita out of the way and accidentally opened the vegetable drawer. It was filled with a variety of fresh vegetables. What seemed odd to her was a bag of three cucumbers. She pulled the bag out of the drawer and studied them. She never once spotted a bowl of sliced or cooked cucumbers; nor had she ever witnessed Ashleigh or Mr. Bob eat any.

Her eyes went big.

The least thing she wanted was to embarrass Ashleigh. She calmly and quietly set them back. She would never criticize a person's way of enjoying themselves.

She quickly pushed Nikita's nose out of the way and shut the refrigerator door. Julie prepared the oatmeal and a piece of toast; before the microwave beeped she stopped it. As quietly as possible she took out the bowl, she found the brown sugar, put a dash of it into the oatmeal, pushed the button up on the toaster, went back to the refrigerator, grabbed a homemade jelly, tasted it with her finger, it was really tart, read the label, it was called rhubarb strawberry, she correctly assumed Ashleigh's mother sent it to her, set the jelly back, took out a grape jam, spread it on the toast, cleaned the area, put everything back, and sat down at the kitchen table.

On the table was: a pile of newspapers, a flexible file folder with a tie around it, and a file folder with the words, "*Roberts Paperwork*" written on it. Julie recognized Mr. Bob's hand writing. She correctly assumed this was the paperwork related to his son. Julie wondered if the tied flexible file folder concealed a new Robert Heart novel. Both were tempting to look through. She avoided this temptation because of the respect she had for Mr. Bob. She grabbed one of the papers; it was a Milwaukee paper. She: glanced at the daily temperature and cringed, looked over the Sports page, read a couple articles, and focused on the business section of the paper.

Julie was ignoring Nikita sitting next to her.

She was trying to concentrate on the articles. What was distracting her was what happened to her at the lookout. What bothered her was the feeling of being watched and the guttural noises she heard. She wanted to believe this was some creepy homeless guy. The nagging question was, "*Could a human make that noise?*" The other nagging question was "*Where did the idea to leave come from?*"

She heard Mr. Bob coming down the spiral staircase at the end of the hallway.

She: refolded the paper, set it back onto the pile, and observed him. They enjoyed many interesting conversation based upon the headlines. Julie believed he was impressed she read the *Wall Street Journal*; she never told him why she read it.

Nikita went into the hallway to greet Favorite Male.

Julie heard Mr. Bob say, "Go to your spot."

An upset Nikita walked passed Julie and laid down in her spot. This was in between the kitchen table and the China cabinet but in front of the sliding glass door.

When Mr. Bob stepped into the galley he was wearing: jeans, a blue t-shirt, a heavy blue flannel shirt, winter style hiking boots, in his right hand he was carrying a heavy winter jacket, in the other he was carrying a medium sized all leather bag; his bag had a famous northern sporting goods store emblem embroidered on the bag. She spotted this same bag in the most popular southern sporting goods store; the difference being it had the southern sporting goods name embroidered on it. It was obvious he was headed to Wisconsin.

"Ms. Julie."

She immediately paid attention. The only time he addressed her as Ms. Julie was when he was serious.

"Yes Sir."

"Where's Ashleigh?"

"She's sleeping on the couch."

He set his things down on the table, stepped into the lounge, and woke Ashleigh.

A tired Ashleigh followed her Brother into the galley. Based upon Bob's body language he wanted answers.

Ashleigh assumed this was something related to her Nephew. Bob disliked flying to Wisconsin to visit his son, but he understood the situation, and he would do anything to have a relationship with him. Ashleigh hoped Shelly's mother would agree to the paperwork he was giving Shelly. With how powerful: Bob was, his lawyer Mr. Shelby was, and with Shelly's mother being a Wisconsin Prosecuting Attorney; this case was swiftly moving through the courts. Ashleigh knew for a fact this was moving much faster than any other case in the system.

Ashleigh and Bob were grateful the first visit with his son went well. The one today was more than an introduction at a restaurant, this was a four hour supervised visit. Shelly was to stay in a waiting area while a Wisconsin State Counselor was to be in the room with the two of them during the full four hours. Ashleigh correctly believed this bothered both Shelly and Bob; but this was something Shelly's mother insisted upon.

Julie was surprised when Mr. Bob gave her a very serious look.

In a serious tone asked, "Were you in a fight this week?"

She felt this was a pivotal moment in their relationship; she viewed their relationship as if Mr. Bob was a trusted professor. It was disappointing to see him upset with her. Her impulse was to lie.

Julie sat straight up and answered just like she would have answered her Father or her Grandfather; "Yes sir."

Ashleigh gazed upon Bob and then Julie.

Bob asked, "Did you tell your Parents? I suspect your Mother would disapprove of you fighting."

This hit hard. Again she wanted to lie. Instead she answered truthfully, "No sir. I never spoke of the fight to my parents. Yes Sir. Momma would disapprove of me fighting."

She added, "Daddy would understand."

Ashleigh asked, "Why didn't the school call Nicole?"

Julie sheepishly answered, "It was after our last volleyball practice."

Bob asked, "I heard volleyball will be set up different next year?"

"Yes sir. Instead of having the playoffs and championship after Christmas break the season will start sooner and the championship will be before Christmas break."

Bob asked, "What was the fight about?"

"This new girl was saying she could whip my ass."

Ashleigh asked, "Why did she say that?"

"On account I told her to stop picking on another girl."

Bob thought about this.

Ashleigh asked, "Who were the girls?"

"Do I have to say?"

Bob answered, "Yes."

Julie hated ratting out anyone, but Ashleigh and Mr. Bob's trust were more important to her. Plus she disliked the drama filled kids a school.

She answered, "The girl being picked on was Susie Lewendowski. The other girl was Marissa Cohen."

Ashleigh looked over at Bob.

Bob nodded his head.

Julie broke the silence, "Susie is a sweet gal. She's really struggling. She's nerdy and ain't very aggressive. I feel she went to tryouts to make friends."

Mr. Bob with a surprised tone asked, "Was she hoping to be on the volleyball team?"

"She was trying out for the spring play. The tryouts for the play were at the same time as our last practice. It's the reason Marissa and Pamela spotted her stepping out of school."

"I understand Marissa is one of your friends?"

Julie answered, "Not really."

Ashleigh annoyed asked, "What do you mean by not really?"

"Marissa is one of the few new girls who is in the popular group. She has another friend from out of town who is friends with Marissa. They're friends with the popular girls. I wouldn't chose Marissa as a friend. I have two friends who are friends with these popular girls. If it wasn't for these two friends I wouldn't be associated with these popular girls."

Ashleigh understood what Julie was saying.

Bob asked, "If Marissa was picking on Susie why were you fighting Marissa?"

Julie assumed Mr. Bob heard conflicting reports.

She answered, "I was unlocking my bike when I spotted Susie and a few girls from the play walking out together. I was happy to see Susie making friends. Then Marissa pulled up to Susie in Marissa's brand new car. A whole bunch of them were in the car."

Julie rolled her eyes, "I biked over and told them to stop picking on em'. All of em stopped except for Marissa. She said I was a rat and should know my place."

Ashleigh was concerned.

Bob smiled, "How did you answer?"

"I told her I'd put a knot in her tail if she didn't get back into the car and leave."

A very serious Julie asked, "Mr. Bob Y'all know what she did?"

"No."

"She laughed at me. And said I was nothing but an ignorant redneck. She said it was their right to do anything they wanted to. To anyone they wanted. The only reason I was allowed to hang with em' on account I'm an acquaintance. She said I should know my place."

"I told her I was walking Susie home and she was to leave Susie alone."

Julie became silent for a moment.

Ashleigh and Bob stared at her.

Julie reluctantly continued with the story, "This is when Marissa shoved me and said she wasn't done talking to me yet. She said she'd kick my ass. Sorry about the swearing."

Mr. Bob smiled, "It's okay."

Julie spotted how relaxed Mr. Bob was, "Instead of my ass being kicked her nose had a sudden nose bleed and she was twisted up like a pretzel. Before she threatens to kick someones ass she should know who she's talking too. Her mistake was trying to pull my hair."

Mr. Bob pushed up his glasses.

"You could have killed her?"

"Not the way I hit her."

Ashleigh mentioned, "What happens if she fell onto the sidewalk and hit her head and died? You could have been charged with manslaughter?"

"It's why I twisted her into a pretzel."

Mr. Bob laughed.

Ashleigh was less enthused.

Mr. Bob became serious, "To receive a scholarship you have to behave yourself. Unfortunately Marissa's father is on our scholarship board and he's the Vice President of Sales. He's actually a good guy."

Ashleigh was unsure if Alvin Cohen was a good guy.

She answered, "Really?"

Bob pushed up his glasses, "You should see his wife. It's the reason Marissa is the way she is."

He turned toward Julie, "I'll settle any issues he has with you."

Julie understood the layers.

"I'm proud of you for sticking up for Susie. She's a good girl. Her Mother is one of our top artists."

"Yes sir."

Bob changed subjects, "Ms. Julie would you write me a report?"

She became excited, "What book do Y'all want me to read this time?"

Bob smiled, "Not a book. I want a thought provoking analysis on what is happening in your school."

"Does this include teachers?"

"You can write about anything you'd like. Please discuss any problems caused by the influx of new students."

She was impressed with this, "Yes sir."

"I want it on this table Monday Morning."

"Yes sir."

He then asked, "Would you like to help me with my things?"

She quickly stood up.

Ashleigh felt a little different about the fight and the work politics.

He handed Julie his bag. He took the paperwork and his jacket.

Ashleigh rolled her eyes when he asked Julie, "In what ways does the political left behave like England both before and during the Revolutionary War? And how are these actions addressed in the *Declaration of Independence*?"

Julie started by saying, "The two easy ones is gun control and taxes."

Ashleigh heard the door open and Bob ask, "What about the more in depth ways?"

The door shut before Ashleigh heard Julie's answer.

Ashleigh mumbled as she cleaned up the table.

Julie enjoyed this political and historical conversation. It ended when she shut the back door of his Ford Escape. She stepped up to the open drivers side window. They both looked at the garage door when it hit the pavement. Bob stuck the garage door opener on his visor and turned toward Julie.

Julie asked, "Why haven't Y'all purchased a better car?"

Mr. Bob pushed up his glasses and asked, "I'm only able to drive one at a time. If there is an emergency I'm able to rent one or I could drive Ashleigh's Jeep."

"Y'all could afford a much better car?"

Mr. Bob pushed up his glasses.

"I own this vehicle. I own the Yacht. I own the complex of my company. I own the land my company is built upon. I own countless pieces of property. I own three vehicles all stored

at my family estate in Wisconsin. The reason I keep my money and the reason I'm able to pay you seventy-five dollars a week to walk Nikita is because I own everything. I could take out loans for a lot of wants and desires. You know who I'd have to listen to?"

"Yes sir."

"Who?"

"The people you owe money too."

"You have your answer."

"You stay out of trouble young lady."

"Yes sir."

He pushed up his glasses, "One more thing."

"Yes sir."

"About today."

"Yes sir."

"The reason I agreed for you to work at my company is because of how smart you are. Working smarter is more important than working harder. Not to say working harder isn't important."

Julie smiled, "Yes sir."

"You learn everything you can from my Sister and your Father."

"Yes sir."

He started up the vehicle and rolled up the window.

She stepped off to the side.

He waved.

She waved in return.

She: watched him back the vehicle, drive to the end of the row of buildings, stop, and turn right.

As she headed back to the yacht she would contemplate everything he just said.

She glanced into the preserve. She felt a chill go up her body.

She studied the sky and turned toward the ocean. She believed the weather forecast. The forecast was for scattered showers in the morning and a high possibility of thunderstorms around dusk. She turned left and stepped onto the first pier. She glanced over at her Aunties section of the pier; it was obvious she was out on a charter. She stepped into the yacht just as the rain started.

Nikita greeted her.

When she stepped into the galley Ashleigh was looking at the sky through the sliding glass door. Julie could tell she was thinking and most likely displeased to hear she was in a fight. She worried Ashleigh would tell her Momma about the fight and then her Momma would ban her from walking Nikita.

January 13, Nervous

Part One of Four

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Ashleigh & Megan
Book I: Friendship

Saturday
January 13

Nervous

Day 10 of Book I

(Nineteen Days after Bob and Megan talked on the pier)

Part Two of Four



Authored By:
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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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January 13, Nervous Day 10 of Book I

(Nineteen Days after Bob and Megan talked on the Pier)

Shelly was silently praying.

Shelly was: underneath the shower, her arms were against the front of the shower wall, her head was down watching the water go down the drain, and was shaking because of the inner conflict within her soul. She was fighting off the temptation to get drunk or high. She was being tempted with thoughts like: *it's only one joint, you have changed, it won't be like last time, you can control it, it would take the edge off, it would make you feel better, one drink is okay, drinking isn't like drugs, you could handle a drink,* and the list went on and on.

It was simply a horrible week. She was struggling with one of her classes and in another class she was caught of guard by a surprise quiz. She was working hard to make up for the poor performance of the quiz and she was working even harder to improve in the other class. Two days prior she mixed up her work schedule and was extremely late for her shift. What hurt was when the assistant manager reminded her of her criminal past and told her she needed to be more vigilant. This happened a day after the store manager complimented her. Through out the week she was in little spats with her Mother; it seemed to take an immense amount of effort to avoid a blow up. A blow up happened with her Step Brother. This was disappointing because she imagined the conversation going so well he would consider breaking up with his girlfriend; a young lady she disliked a great deal. She believed her youngest brother inspected her undergarments. She understood his curiosity but it was annoying to have her privacy breached. She was relieved nothing was soiled or stolen. There was a hurtful conversation with a friend of hers from Church. Finding support during the

week was tough: Naomi was busy with her job and her boyfriend, her sponsor was out of town on vacation, and she missed a faith based substance abuse meeting. Adding to all of this, this was the day of the first supervised visit.

She stood up, closed her eyes, and said in a commanding voice, "Satan. I enjoy being clean and sober. The worst day clean is better than any day high."

She paused. Letting the water hit her.

She said in a demanding voice, "This includes drinking."

She paused again stood there letting the water hit her.

She stood up and said, "In Jesus' name do I pray. Aman."

This made her feel better. The temptation was still there but all at once it felt manageable. What kept her strong was her faith and her Son.

She again leaned up against the shower wall and looked down at the drain. Her mind flashed back to the prison showers. She recalled all of the women who were separated from their children. This was something she never wanted to put Little Bobby through nor did she want to experience herself. She was determined to be the best mother she could be. She knew if she used again she would be a horrible mother. These thoughts caused her to: start praying in the spirit, turn off the water, wrung out her long red hair, slid open the shower door, grabbed a towel, dried herself, wrapped the towel around her body, stepped out of the shower, and started to get ready.

She studied her reflection in the mirror. She had: a diamond shaped face, light colored greenish-blue eyes, reddish colored eyebrows, very light skin, light freckles were on her forehead and on her high cheekbones, her long aquiline shaped nose went perfect with her longer diamond shaped face, her pearlque lips added to her overall look, she had a very noticeable jawline, and her pointed chin had a seductress feel. Her long red hair was wet and flat. When she smiled her lips stretched out, her upper lip moved up, and her high cheekbones became visible; she was forever grateful for very straight teeth. At the current moment she was to serious to show this smile.

She started to use her blow dryer.

Bobby offered to pay for an apartment. The agreement would be: she would have to finish her degree with a B average, would have to finish within a specific amount of time, and she would have to remain clean and sober. What was giving her pause: she just started the new semester, her Mother was helping with Little Bobby, and she felt living with her family was helping her stay clean. She knew she needed to deal with: her younger brother, she would apologize to her oldest brother, she would address the strain between herself and her Mother, she would face the fact Bobby was now involved in Little Bobby's life, and it would be easier to move in the spring.

She set the blow dryer down.

Her Mother presented her with the idea of having supervised visits. At the time it felt like a good idea; she now believed this was mean. She now felt the best person to teach Bobby on how to take care of Little Bobby was herself. Instead of a court appointed counselor, a better idea would have been for Naomi and herself to spent a few Saturday's at Bobby's house; showing Bobby her Son's routine. Remembering Bobby's house, she would recommend items within the house to be moved or hid.

She was suddenly tempted to take pills.

She recalled the day she smoked pot for the first time. After a short time pot became bland. She remembered being at a party where she downed a few pills for the first time. From the moment she smoked pot and until she was arrested; her life was a series of in and out hazes. Being a dancer gave her the ability to pay for drugs and allowed her to move out. She could clearly remember being eighteen, appearing in amateur night at a local strip club, and making all that cash. She used a portion of it to pay for first months rent and a security deposit; the rest she used to purchase drugs. From this night forward dancing was one continues blur.

She felt guilty for using sex as a way to get what she wanted from both men and women. Before prison there were a list of men and a couple women she absolutely hated to have sex with but did so to receive money or drugs. She would have given anything to have these sexual experiences back. She no longer blamed herself or felt guilty for being molested. However; she took responsibility for every sexual act she chose to participate in. The worst sexual experiences were being repeatedly molested by one of her Mothers boyfriends and being sexually assaulted by a woman inmate. She cringed recalling the sexual activity she engaged in while in prison. She used fellow prisoners and guards like she used others on the outside. Once she accepted Christ, she stopped having sex all together; this was why she was sexually assaulted by a woman inmate. In many ways being sexually assaulted by a woman was worse than being sexually assaulted by a male. She was thankful the desire to sleep with women ended with her faith and leaving prison.

She: turned from the mirror, dropped her towel, and focused on the clothes she left on the counter. The five foot eight redhead grabbed her panties and slipped them on. One thing she liked about being sexless was she let her auburn colored pubic hair grow; she always hated shaving this area. She grabbed a pair of brown relaxed fit corduroy pants. She chose these pants because Bobby would find them unattractive. She believed he liked her rear end and legs over her larger breasts. This was completely opposite of every other guy she knew. Most guys focused on her 36d breasts; but not Bobby. She believed this was one of the reason the hazy shell of herself slept with him. She: slipped on a bra, added a white colored long sleeved turtleneck, over this shirt she slipped on a one size larger cinnamon colored cowlneck sweater. The accessories she added were a: simple belt, light amount of makeup, two simple earrings, and plain socks. This outfit would: keep her warm, covered the weight she gained since giving birth, the sweater covered a portion of her wider hips, with it being baggy hid her breasts, and on purpose she went with a plain color scheme. She left the upstairs bathroom and stepped into her bedroom. There: she tossed her sleep clothes into a hamper, went into her closet, and dug out a very plain looking pair of hiking boots.

These boots were more purpose than fashion, this would help with the snow and keep her feet warm, more important Bobby would have been disinterested in these boots. She knew many men and women with fetishes. Some were unable to perform unless these fetishes were indulged. For others, a fetish was a bonus to the sexual experience and could perform just fine; Bobby was one of these people. Shelly sometimes found it cute and at other times frustrating he believed he was without any fetishes. She believed he was most infatuated by a woman who wore denim or really tight pants. The Shelly before finding Jesus would wear tight jeans whenever she wanted his attention. An inside of the bedroom turn on was always lingerie or a sexy costume. He often times wanted her to leave a part of the outfit on throughout a session. Why he refused to believe he had fetishes, especially with how excited

he became when she would roleplay a costume, was shocking to her. A fetish she felt was a hit or miss was footwear. What she believed he liked was: boots with heels, footwear with buckles, high platform shoes (specifically the type of shoes she wore dancing), and Greek or Roman style footwear. There were the times she purposefully bought footwear she believed he would like and he ignored the pair. While other times she just slipped on footwear with no thoughts if Bobby liked them and he noticed them right away. She believed his willingness to go shopping was evidence he had fetishes. He was the only straight guy she ever knew who enjoyed shopping with her; she often felt he would have enjoyed dressing her. She never allowed this, but her closet was filled with items she would have never purchased herself. Many of their more passionate sessions happened after shopping. She thought about the time she dared him to dress as a woman. Based upon his refusal she never felt he was a cross dresser.

She stood up after lacing up her boots.

She felt guilty for being the type of woman who: wore certain outfits so he would take her shopping, had sex with him for reasons other than love, would perform sexual acts to get her way, would perform stripteases to entice him, and how she never blinked an eye doing any of it. The thing she always liked about Bobby, he always respected her boundaries; when she felt uncomfortable with a request he treated her well. There were plenty of men and women who were: rude, disrespectful, and became scary when she refused to perform a sex act.

She wondered how far Bobby would go if he married a kinky woman. A nagging question. If she ever married Bobby: would he want her to dress up like she did before? Would he expect her to be kinky again? She wanted nothing to do with her wild past. She wanted to enjoy vanilla sex based upon love.

The important question; *had they made love?* Sometimes she believed they made love and other times she felt it was just physical. Her memories were filled with very clear moments and a long series of hazy ones. Her clearest memories were the times she was attempting to be clean and sober around Ashleigh. The second level of clear memories were: those times she was temporarily clean at his club, when they hung out at Shooney's, a few sexual encounters, and parts of their trips. The majority of their sexual encounters and their arguments seemed to be one long hazy event. The hazy Shelly knew, if she was sleeping with Bobby, he would never sleep with anyone else; more important she never needed to sleep with someone else. This arrangement was the closest thing to a committed relationship she ever experienced.

She was struggling with her current feelings toward Bobby. She felt they were due to her son Robert. She believed it would be wrong to pursue a relationship with Bobby just because of her son.

She sighed.

She looked over at the digital clock. She knew it was time to go downstairs and be a Mommy. It would be difficult to eat breakfast because of how nervous she felt about the visitation. There was no backing out of it, with it being Saturday they were paying the counselor extra; this counselor would receive this pay if they showed up or not. The second reason, it would have been unfair for Bobby to fly up to Wisconsin and to have her cancel. This was reserved for an extreme emergency. Another concern was his lawyers reply to her mothers paperwork. She hated all of this court stuff.

She heard Little Bobby playing in his crib. Shelly agreed with her Parents, with Little Bobby getting bigger and because he would have to sleep in a bed at Bobby's house; they decided he needed to start sleeping in a single bed. Her Mother and her Stepdad were planning on purchasing a bed while she was at the supervised visit. What her parents were unaware of, she was planning to take Robert to Bobby's house after the supervised visitation. Sex was out of the question. The least thing anyone needed was for Little Bobby to have a brother or sister. She was purposefully avoiding the emotional baggage both Bobby and herself would experience if they slept with one another. Her goal, even though she failed once at this goal since becoming a Christian, was the next time she had sex it would be on her wedding night.

She stood up and headed to her Son's room.

*J*ulie watched Ashleigh back her yellow Sport Edition Jeep Wrangler out of the garage. Julie found it funny how Ashleigh needed a cushion to see over the steering wheel. Julie became concerned they would get rained on without the roof and doors on. Today was the first day she witnessed Ashleigh wear a jacket. She called it a spring jacket. Julie wonder what a winter jacket was like.

Ashleigh: stepped out, hustled to the back of the Jeep, opened the unlocked plastic storage box, and commanded, "Help me with the top and the doors before it rains."

Julie was surprised at how commanding Ashleigh was, but answered politely, "Yes Ma'am."

Julie watched as she pulled out Nikita's leash.

This excited Nikita.

Ashleigh yelled, "Nikita stay."

Nikita whimpered.

Ashleigh: set the leash in the center of the two front seats, Nikita from the back seat sniffed the leash, Ashleigh hurried into the garage, grabbed the soft top, and directed, "We'll put on the doors after."

Julie followed her into the garage. Julie stopped when she spotted the hard top leaning against the wall and asked, "We ain't putting on the hard top?"

Ashleigh leaving the garage said, "I don't need it here."

Julie wondered what it was like to live in a place where the temperature consistently fell below fifty degrees. Julie stepped back to the Jeep.

"I've bought an extra set of tools."

Ashleigh pointed to the back section of the passenger side; "Grab the set over there."

Julie was again surprised at Ashleigh's tone; she listened and grabbed the tools.

"Nikita stay."

Nikita was excited because Strong Scent was going with them. Nikita loved "rides."

"Have you done this before?"

"No Ma'am."

This changed Ashleigh's demeanor. She was more patient and explained each step in detail. What impressed Julie, was how Ashleigh climbed up onto the Jeep to reach what she needed; Julie noted the way Ashleigh secured the soft top revolved around her five foot one self. There were times, Ashleigh stopped and physically showed Julie how to attach different

sections of the soft top. The reason Julie liked putting in the back window was because she teased Nikita. This teasing lasted until Ashleigh yelled at both of them. Just as they finished with the doors the rain started. They quickly stepped into the Jeep. Julie was always impressed with the fact Ashleigh could drive a manual transmission vehicle. It was impossible to ignore the expensive radio.

Julie commented, "The rain sounds funny on the soft top."

Ashleigh turned to her.

Ashleigh exclaimed, "You didn't seal the top!"

Even before Julie could react: Ashleigh was out of the Jeep running around to the passenger side, while running she flipped the hood of her jacket over her head, Julie turned, Ashleigh opened the door, stepped up onto the edge of the Jeep, Julie helped secure this section of the soft top, when this was accomplished Ashleigh ran around the Jeep, and again stepped into the vehicle.

As soon as Ashleigh was sitting she: removed her hood, dug into her purse, took out a mirror, took out her brush, and began to fix her long blond hair.

She commented, "I'm glad I slipped on my spring jacket."

Looking at a wet Ashleigh Julie answered, "I apologize for not securing it."

Ashleigh smiled, "I've made that mistake too."

Nikita disliked what Strong Scent and Best Friend did to moving territory. Nikita stuck her head in front.

Julie pet her.

Ashleigh commanded, "Nikita Back."

Nikita listened.

Ashleigh started to reapply her makeup.

She commented, "I hate coming in on Saturday."

Julie was surprised by this.

Ashleigh mentioned, "The best thing about Saturday I don't have to dress up."

"I like the way Y'all dress to work."

Ashleigh temporarily stopped, touched Julie on the arm, "Thank-you. I worry about my outfits."

This surprised Julie.

When Ashleigh was finished, she put her makeup supplies back into her purse, pulled out her Ipod, and the cord.

Holding the Ipod and cord, "You want to listen to the radio?"

Julie honestly answered, "I don't care."

With this Ashleigh plugged the cord into the Ipod and then stuck the other end into the radio.

"You mind country?"

"It's what Daddy listens too."

Ashleigh smiled.

"You like a certain style of music?"

"No Ma'am."

"Mind a mix?"

Again Julie answered, "I don't care."

Ashleigh realized Julie never once talked about a musician or ever attending a concert. She would have preferred if Julie and Bob talked about music. This would have been better than: their sarcastic laced political conversations, their talks about history, their in depth conversations over books, and their in depth conversations about pro football; a concern was something called fantasy football. Ashleigh was unsure of what this was, but assumed it was something her brother could get obsessed about.

She decided she would play a country mix. "East Bound and Down," by *Jerry Reed* Started to play.

Julie mentioned, "Captain likes this song."

"Have you seen the movie?"

"It was in a movie?"

Julie watched as Ashleigh: turned on the windshield washers, released the parking brake, put her feet onto the clutch and brake, put the gear into reverse, moved her feet, moved the sifter, and made a perfect Y turn. They: went a short ways, stopped, made a right, passed the garages, the storage units, and made another right, and headed to the marina entrance. During this time Ashleigh was easily shifting the vehicle without ever jerking it.

They waved at Barbara and Stan who were running toward their garage.

"It's called, *Smoky and the Bandit*."

"Is it good?"

Ashleigh snickered, "It's corny and political incorrect. This makes it better by the way. I'm sure Jimmy and Captain like it."

They listened to the music as Ashleigh drove.

Julie paid attention to how Ashleigh moved her feet and shifted gears. Ashleigh stopped at the entrance and quickly looked both ways. Ashleigh made a left onto *Bluff Beach Parkway*. Julie enjoyed watching her accelerated the vehicle. It felt weird going through the preserve and passing the look out. She was happy when they reached the sideways T intersection at *Swamp Road*. If they went straight (or north) *Bluff Beach Parkway* turned into IA1. Julie loved the rest stop to the right of this corner. Ashleigh made a left hand turn onto *Swamp Road*. This was the northern part of the preserve. On Ashleigh's drivers side was the preserve on Julie's side it was a swamp. Without maps it would still be considered the preserve because everything was mapped it was considered swamp. Because of this there were a half dozen houses on this side of the road. Once they crossed the *Eastbank River* it was all residential neighborhoods. They stayed on Swamp Road until she reached *Crossway Avenue* where she made a right hand turn.

Julie was amazed at the variety of music Ashleigh listened too.

Julie glanced at the speedometer, "Ain't Y'all driving fast?"

Ashleigh glanced at the speedometer, "We're only going five over. Who's going to pull us over for that?"

Julie shrugged her shoulders. Julie assumed Ashleigh felt this way because she was a leader in the community. This was a clear misunderstanding. Ashleigh's attitude was the general attitude of people living in Wisconsin.

Julie politely addressed a concern, "They might pull Y'all over for having Wisconsin tags."

Ashleigh made a face, "Thanks for reminding me. I'll need to fix that before the end of the week."

Julie heard Ashleigh say this before.

Ashleigh glanced over at Julie. Ashleigh was feeling the same type of affection she felt toward her Little Sister. Ashleigh was impressed with how: Julie showed up every day, she treated Nikita, handled her brother, polite she was, smart she was, and believed Julie was very trustworthy; not a single rumor about herself or her Brother could be traced back to her.

Julie asked, "What should I be writing in the report?"

Ashleigh answered, "Choose what you want but remember two things."

"Yes Ma'am?"

"Mr. Bob appreciates honesty and he'll admire details."

"Yes Ma'am."

"He hates bull shitting."

It always shocked Julie when Ashleigh swore. The adult women in her life never did so.

Julie answered, "I'm feeling Mr. Bob hates it."

"He bluntly tells people he hates it. But people still try."

Julie smiled.

Ashleigh spoke, "Let me address something."

Julie never heard Ashleigh use this tone before.

"I feel Mr. Bob was to cavalier about your fight."

The only thing heard was the song from Ashleigh's Ipod.

Nikita was laying down on the back seat. Normally she enjoyed the feeling of the wind.

She whimpered.

Ashleigh stated, "Quiet."

Nikita listened.

Julie recognized Ashleigh wanted her to explain herself.

"It was self defense."

"You could have killed that girl."

Ashleigh spoke before Julie did, "You don't want to go to prison."

"I ain't landing in prison."

Ashleigh glanced over at Julie, "The way they've written the laws anyone of us could end up incarcerated."

"It'd be self defense."

Ashleigh answered, "What happens if the prosecutor has a different idea? They might charge you with manslaughter."

Julie wanted to mention how her Grandfather was personal friends with the chief of police. Then she thought about her cousin Laura. Laura was serving a six month sentence in county; then she was ordered to go through treatment. Her Uncle was taking a great risk in allowing Laura to go to prison. Julie hoped Laura was smart enough to understand the consequences.

During this time they went underneath Highway One. On the left side of the street was the beginning of the *Eastbank Industrial Park*. A short distance was a large sign announcing it was the *Eastbank Industrial Park*.

Julie read the sign. She wondered if the leaders of her community had any creativity.

A few yards from this sign they stopped at an intersection with a newly added stop light. Julie spotted two more sets of these lights up the road. Ashleigh informed Julie the city installed these three lights because of the car accidents since *Renewed Mastery* moved in.

When the arrow appeared they pulled onto one of the first roads headed east of the industrial park. After a short distance they made a right onto the street where *Renewed Mastery* was located. They stopped at a four corner stop. At one time going south there was just a yield sign. Julie assumed this was changed for the same reasons the stop lights were added. After waiting for a pick-up-truck to cross the road they drove through the intersection. At one time there were three lots with three buildings; all three were now part of one large complex. Something Julie noticed right away was a large sign announcing where trucks should drive into. Then she noticed at the end of the complex was the tall building with the large window in front. As they neared the complex entrance she noticed there were crews working on the strip mall on her side of the street; this was directly across the street from *Renewed Mastery*. Her Daddy mentioned they were putting in a day care center, a doctors office, and a gym. She heard rave reviews of the new Chinese restaurant and the local sub shop that moved into the strip mall; this was now the second Chinese restaurant in Eastbank to deliver. Julie wondered if this would effect *Wong's Authentic Chinese*; it had been there for many generations. She noticed on the far end of the building a digger was making a giant hole. Julie would find out later this was to be a gas station.

Ashleigh continued, "You shouldn't take the chance."

"They wouldn't arrest me."

"Why? Because you're a girl?"

"It'd be one of the reasons."

"A woman friend of mine ended up serving time in a Florida state prison. There are many women who are serving time."

"What was she arrested for?"

Ashleigh glanced at her, "Does it matter?"

Julie made a face.

Ashleigh stated, "Just a second."

Julie wondered who the friend was and what she did to land in prison.

Ashleigh: pulled into the parking lot, to her left was a wooden shack, the arm attached to the shack went up, but Ashleigh stopped next the big open window.

Julie was amazed on how well she drove a manual transmission.

Julie wondered why Ashleigh stopped. Ashleigh was a vice president and was the sister of Mr. Bob. She spotted her Daddy's truck. She noticed the building was starting to be painted. They started on the left side of the building and were about quarter of the way through. It was obvious why they were off of work today.

Ashleigh rolled down the window. Today; the shack blocked the rain.

Julie looked over. She felt the guy in the shack was cute. She liked his dark hair and his bright green eyes.

Nikita pushed her way in front of Julie and blocked her view.

Ashleigh commanded, "Nikita back."

Nikita whimpered but stepped back.

Julie asked Nikita, in her dog tone, "Nikita what's the matter?"

Ashleigh answered, "Bubba-Joe gives her treats."

Nikita heard the word and was again in front. Her tail was banging against the seat; Julie needed to move her head back.

Bubba-Joe, looked into the Jeep, "I better give Y'all your treat."

Ashleigh smiled, "You better."

Immediately: Nikita's back paws were on Julie's seat, her front paws were on Ashleigh's seat, and her tail was a weapon.

Julie shouted, "Nikita!"

Ashleigh was about to command her back but Nikita greedily grabbed the treat and went in back.

Julie watched Nikita devour the treat.

Bubba-Joe looked into the Jeep and said, "Ma'am. It looks like Y'all have a friend."

"This is Julie Steward."

"Your Daddy must be Jimmy Steward?"

Julie recognized his Floridian accent but never met him before. If he was local she would have known who he was. She correctly guessed he would have been a Junior or Senior in College.

"Yes Sir."

Ashleigh smiled. He was a good guy but felt he was too old for Julie. What concerned Ashleigh was the idea Julie would have felt he was the perfect age.

Ashleigh mentioned with a tone, "She'll need a visitors pass."

Bubba-Joe immediately became serious, "Yes Ma'am."

Julie paid close attention to him. He: turned left, made a small step forward, and was now in front of a table. He was wearing: a light jacket, it had a security patch on the upper arm, and gray pants. She noticed his strong arms as he dug into a box. She liked his tight athletic butt. Looking at his front she believed he was average sized.

A lot of the girls in her school were infatuated with big cocks. Based upon the surveys she read a large percentage of women preferred guys who were better at foreplay over a large cock. In these same surveys most women disliked really big ones or really tiny ones; this made sense to her. She believed many of the articles written about a guy's size were written to make guys feel better and to encourage women who were with smaller guys. She could understand why a guy who was smaller would feel awkward and lack confidence. When Julie read real life sexual encounters very seldom did women mention the size of a guy's cock. What she wanted was a guy with stamina. This was why she was believing her first time should be with someone older. To her, older was the cute guy in the shed.

He turned toward the Jeep, "Ma'am this is Ms. Julie's pass."

"Thank-you."

Ashleigh took the pass and quickly handed it to Julie.

Julie took it and hung it around her neck.

Ashleigh asked, "How's college going?"

Julie was paying closer attention. When Julie was talking to Bob and Ashleigh she rarely noticed their Midwestern accent. She found it interesting on how obvious Ashleigh's accent was while talking to Bubba-Joe.

"Ma'am the semester just started."

She answered, "If you end up struggling with any of your classes just tell me. I'll find someone to tutor you."

"I won't be needing a tutor until next year. I'll need help with my last English class. English ain't my best subject."

"Make sure you tell me if you need help."

“Yes Ma’am.”

“When you get your degree don’t forget to see if we’re hiring.”

“Yes Ma’am.”

Ashleigh was about to drive off but Bubba-Joe stopped her, “Ma’am why are Y’all stopping when we lift up the gate?”

“Why are you guys lifting the gate? Why are you surprised when I stop?”

“Y’all are the Vice President.”

“Does Mr. Bob stop?”

“We’re wondering why he stops.”

“Would it be right of us to tell our employees to stop when we didn’t? What happens if someone stole one of our vehicles and just drove in? Wouldn’t it seem odd we didn’t stop?”

“I reckon it would.”

Ashleigh smiled and winked.

“How am I going to know who’s protecting my brothers company if I don’t stop and get to know who our security guards are?”

“Yes Ma’am.”

“Both Mr. Bob and I are serious. You stop everyone who tries to enter this lot. Stop lifting the gate before we stop.”

“Yes Ma’am.”

She was about to drive away but stopped herself.

“Bubba-Joe.”

“Yes Ma’am.”

“Did Gracie have you put up the new signs?”

He pointed to the wall, “These?”

“What’s it say?”

“It says if someone is given us trouble we’re to call Haley or yourself.”

“Are the numbers listed.”

“Yes Ma’am.”

“Don’t forget to be nice.”

“It’s written on the sign.”

Ashleigh smiled.

“I’ll have your backs.”

“Ma’am I have another question.”

“Sure.”

“Is this other sign correct?”

“What does it say? I had her put up more than one.”

He smiled, “I reckon Y’all did.”

He turned and read the sign, “It says. If a government official no matter if it’s Federal or State tries to enter onto this property we’re to stall em’ until Haley, Ms. Ashleigh, or Mr. Bob gives us the okay to let em’ in. But it says we should allow the *Eastbank Police Department* or the *County Sheriff* in without question.”

He silently reread the sign.

She asked while he was reading it again, “Do you trust the Federal or State government?”

“No Ma’am.”

“The Eastbank Police Department and our Count Sheriff protect us.”

“Yes Ma’am. They stop on by every day.”

Ashleigh smiled and said, “You have your answer.”

Bubba-Joe smiled.

He turned toward Ashleigh, “Yes Ma’am.”

Ashleigh winked, “You have a good day.”

“Yes Ma’am.”

Julie smiled.

Julie observed Ashleigh shift the vehicle. She was surprised there was no reserved spaces for executives. She spotted handicapped parking and all of the lines on the parking lot were exactly the same distance. Knowing how construction worked someone spent a lot of time making sure those lines were correct. She was about to ask why there was no reserved parking spaces but she considered what Ashleigh told Bubba-Joe.

They parked.

Nikita was excited. She loved “Work Territory.” What was odd, she was unable to sense Who Smelled Funny. This female human often: gave her treats, greeted her, took her to mark her territory, took her for walks, gave her fresh water, exchanged noises with Favorite Male, and Best Friend. Nikita believed this Female protected Best Friend and Favorite Male because humans exchanged noises with Who Smelled Funny before they stepped into their den. What was different was the moving territory was closer to the Work Territory.

The rain became heavy again.

Julie was about to get out. But Ashleigh stopped her.

“Back to what I was saying. You don’t want to go to prison. It isn’t a nice place.”

“I ain’t planning on it.”

Ashleigh answered, “No one plans on ended up there.”

They both looked at the windshield, the rain was making long wet lines on the window. The rain hitting the soft top was loud but they could hear one another.

“I wrote my friend and I could tell how miserable she was. Oh, she tried to make it sound like it was okay. But she went through a lot. She went through treatment and because of it turned her life around.”

Julie started to say, “I don’t..”

Ashleigh interrupted, “I know you don’t drink or use drugs. But imagine if the girl you hit had fallen onto a rock and died.”

“It’s why I twisted her like a pretzel.”

Ashleigh made a face, “You told us that. What happens if she would have broken a leg or ended up paralyzed?”

Julie believed none of these bad scenario's would happen. What upset Julie was how disappointed Ashleigh sounded.

“Please avoid fighting. I want you around to walk Nikita.”

It was a mistake using the word walk. Nikita went up front. This time her paws were between the shifter. Julie moved herself against the window.

Ashleigh’s tone changed, “Lets get Nikita’s leash on.”

“I’m happy Y’all moved the lease up here.”

Ashleigh answered, “I’ve learned to do this.”

Julie smiled.

She was petting Nikita under the chin.

Nikita liked Strong Scent scratching her.

This stopped when Ashleigh clipped on the leash.

She asked; "You ready?"

"I'm assuming we're running to the door over to the left?"

"If you get there before I do. Swipe your card over the plastic box."

"Yes Ma'am."

"One last thing."

"Yes Ma'am."

"Is that your Daddy's truck over there?"

"Yes Ma'am."

"How's he able to get here so early every day?"

Without batting an eye Julie answered, "He's a Marine."

"My foster Dad was in the military."

"Then you understand."

Ashleigh smiled.

"Yes I do. Make sure the doors are locked."

Julie was checking the locks and avoiding Nikita.

Ashleigh slipped on her purse, and yelled, "I'll get there first."

She: opened the door, pushed the lock button down, yanked an excited Nikita out, and slammed the door.

Julie quickly: grabbed her bag, lifted up the lock, opened the passenger side door, hit the lock button, held onto the ID, slammed the door, slipped her backpack onto her shoulders, and quickly ran passed Ashleigh and Nikita; then waited under the overhang.

Panting Ashleigh asked, "How come you aren't out of breath?"

Julie barely heard her. She was focused on the tear drop glass windows next to the main door.

Once Ashleigh found her breath she said, "She's one of my favorite artist."

"Wow. I wish I was an artist."

"We're going to offer art glasses through the *Eastbank Recreation Department*."

Julie made a face, "Art ain't for me."

The only class Julie never received an A in was an art class.

Ashleigh swiped her badge in front of the gray plastic box next to the door. Julie noticed above the square was a button and a speaker. There was a clicking noise and the door became unlocked; they stepped in.

Nikita sensed, Loud Noise. Nikita really liked this receptionist but despised the noise she made.

Julie stopped when Ashleigh stopped.

Ashleigh refereed to the second set of stained glass windows, "I found out every one of those lighthouses are real."

"Y'all like lighthouses?"

"Mr. Bob does."

"Are they from Florida?"

Ashleigh rolled her eyes, "Nope."

This disappointed Julie.

Ashleigh found this odd herself.

They went through the second set of doors and were in a waiting area. The walls were being painted with museum quality art. 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 other was a marina. Julie focused on the boat section. It was as if someone was looking through ropes of a sailing ship, painted in the distance were native Floridian sea birds. She noticed in the area of the marina a different artist started to paint an old fashioned wooden dock with a large bird sitting on a pillar. In another area someone was painting dolphins; she felt her Auntie Megan would have loved this. Someone else was painting a large rock with seals on top.

In the center of the room was brand new high quality office furniture. What Julie found interesting was the round table in front of the sectional couch. The top of it was glass and underneath was an old fashioned ships wheel. She wondered if the wheel was an authentic antique. On the left side of the room and a few feet from the wall was a sectional couch. On either side were showcase end tables and high backed office chairs. On the right side of the room were four high backed chairs and five showcase tables placed in between the chairs. All of the showcases were the same. 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.

Julie looked forward. Sitting behind a sliding glass window was Andrea. Julie knew who she was. She was an older sister of a girl one grade above hers and a brother who graduated the year before. Andrea graduated from the Eastbank High School five years before Julie became a freshman. Julie noticed to Andrea's left was: a plant, a cactus, and a stuffed dog. She overheard a conversation between her Daddy and her Momma about her boyfriends behavior during the Christmas Eve party.

They approached the door and the buzzer went off.

Julie was startled by this noise.

Ashleigh: quickly opened the door, this stopped the noise, she let Nikita through the door, she held it just long enough for Julie to grab it, Julie stepped through, the door swung, just before it was about to slam the door slowed down, and shut quietly.

Nikita was excited.

Julie took note of the cart next to Andrea's desk. On this cart were different colored plastic badges, photographs, and an opened three ring binder. Julie glanced at the cubicles in front of her, she glanced down the long hallway, and noticed artwork hanging on the walls. She hoped she would have the time to inspect the artwork. Because of the art class she struggled through, she now had an appreciation for art and the artists who created art. She turned from this framed art and focused on Andrea and Ashleigh.

Ashleigh and Julie noticed Andrea cringe when she stood up.

Andrea was an athletic six foot tall woman, she had long blond hair, small breasts, long legs, and a butt just about every woman in the building wanted. She was wearing a dark blue loose fitting sequin-shoulder blouse with extra long sleeves, over it she was wearing a light blue colored twill jacket with a stand collar, she matched the jacket with light blue long

relaxed fit bootcut denim jeans; these pair of jeans had rhinestone detailing at the waist and thighs. Her only accessory was a white belt and ankle strap sandals.

Ashleigh immediately noticed something was wrong. Normally; Andrea was all smiles and would start talking before Ashleigh had a chance to speak. Even with the rhinestone detailing, this outfit lacked the flare she normally wore. This was the first time Ashleigh could remember her: without makeup, without her hair in a wave, without jewelry, and it was the first time she was wearing baggy clothing.

Nikita was excited. She liked it when Loud Noise greeted her.

Ashleigh mentioned, "You have to register with Andrea."

This is when Andrea put on a smile, "Howdy Julie."

"Howdy."

Ashleigh mentioned again, "With you being a visitor she needs to set your badge."

Andrea asked very politely, "May I have the badge?"

"Ms. Ashleigh what access will she need?"

Ashleigh smiled, "A level above general."

This surprised Andrea.

Ashleigh answered this look, "She's helping with the mail and mailrooms. I need her to be able to get everywhere she needs too."

Andrea took the badge.

Nikita was disappointed. The routine was for these two human females to make noises, while they made noises; Loud Noise greet her.

Andrea: took the badge, sat down, turned toward her monitor, and opened a screen.

Julie paid close attention to the security screen Andrea opened.

Ashleigh asked, "I appreciate you coming in today."

While looking at the screen Andrea answered, "It's no problem."

"When we're done with the move you won't need to come in on Saturday."

Andrea turned toward Ashleigh and mentioned, "I don't mind. It gets me out of the house."

Julie and Ashleigh felt her tone was odd.

Andrea stood up and gingerly moved to the cart.

Julie believed Andrea was concealing an injury.

She handed Julie the badge.

With a smile stated, "If Y'all are having trouble with the badge get back to me."

"Yes Ma'am."

Both Ashleigh and Julie felt the smile was put on for their benefit.

Nikita whimpered.

This is when Andrea changed her voice and asked, "How's my girl?"

Nikita loved the attention she received.

It was obvious Andrea was truly joyful greeting Nikita.

Ashleigh mentioned, "Thank-you for helping with security. Soon you won't have too."

She smiled, "I don't mind. It's good to feel needed."

Ashleigh and Julie glanced at one another.

Ashleigh quickly answered, "Everyone likes you here. Don't ever feel like you aren't needed."

While holding in tears, "It's nice to hear."

Ashleigh out of habit went to comfort her with a touch.

Andrea flinched.

Julie witnessed women react this way before; chills went up her spine.

Ashleigh asked, "Are you okay?"

Andrea defensively, "I'm okay. I..."

Julie was unsure of what she should do.

Ashleigh interrupted, "Are you sure?"

Andrea put on a fake smile, made herself appear as though she was her normal self, and answered, "I'm fine."

Julie and Ashleigh disbelieved her.

Ashleigh said, "If you ever need anything let Gracie or I know."

"I'm fine."

Julie and Ashleigh had no choice but to turn around and head to Ashleigh's office.

Ashleigh glanced back and believed Andrea was holding back tears. When she pulled the cart close to her desk it was apparent she was cringing in pain.

*J*ulie watched Ashleigh step out of the main mailroom.

Julie was shocked at all of the white United States Postal Service mail bins filled with mail and all of the boxes filled with supplies. She realized her goal of getting all of the mail done in the morning and after lunch sorting all of the office supplies would be a challenge. Ashleigh's instructions were: to first separate all of the junk mail, her next step was to sort out all of the important mail, before lunch and at the end of the day she was to distribute the mail to the proper departments or other mailrooms.

Julie reviewed the long list of employees and what departments they worked for; she took special notice of the executives. The executives were to receive their own mail; the list indicated where the executive wanted the mail. Ashleigh told her in a few weeks they were implementing a consistent way of distributing the mail.

Julie was relieved to see a stack of empty bins.

She: moved boxes of supplies from the large center table and set them neatly in the back corner of the room, she went through a series of boxes and drawers to find a variety of different colored posted notes, she wrote a name or department on each posted note, she colored coded departments, she stuck each note onto an empty bin, she placed these bins on the center table or the floor, she sorted them by the way she planned on delivering the mail, stacked all the empty bins in front of the table on the floor; she assumed she would need these for junk mail. This is when she started to sort the mail.

This task was harder than what she thought. What helped her was her ability to memorize and her ability to speed read. A consent companion was the list of employees Ashleigh gave her. She was surprised at all of the junk mail the company received.

*N*icole: was without makeup, her hair was in a pony tail, she was wearing an old pair of light blue jeans, an old denim long sleeved button shirt, she was without a bra, and she was in comfortable socks. Using a spray bottle she created a mist to wet her plants. In front of her was the dinning room table: all of the chairs from the dinning room table were neatly against

the wall, the inside sleeves of this table still needed to be removed after Esters birthday party, the table cloth was neatly folded and was set on the arm of the couch, the table was covered in newspapers, on top of the newspapers were house plants, near the plant she was working on was a pile of leaves, and near this pile of leaves was a planting sheers. She was listening to a Christian Praise and Worship CD; the CD player was plugged against the wall and was sitting on one of the dinning room chairs.

She: set down the spray bottle, turned the plant around, picked up the spray bottle, lightly sprayed the plants, set down the bottle, and picked up the sheers. Before she started to prune the plant she glanced over at the rain hitting the window.

While cleaning the house the radio station predicted rains in the morning, a small window of sunshine in the afternoon, and a high probability of thunderstorms. The station made a point of telling listeners to avoid any recreational activities on the ocean. She prayed three things: Megan would return safe from her current charter, the evening charter would be canceled, and this same group would reschedule at a later date.

After praying for Megan in English she began to pray in the Spirit. While praying in the Spirit she was thinking about Megan and Christopher. Nicole was excited to hear they had a date planned. She prayed Christopher would be loyal and it would be a life long match. She then prayed; if they were a horrible match the relationship would end quickly without anyone getting hurt. She believed her Sister-in-law was a very monogamous person. Nicole felt Megan was only capable of having one committed relationship in her lifetime. Just for good measure, she prayed her Sister-in-law would remain a virgin until she was married; she strongly believed Megan would wait.

She trimmed more of the plant.

Nicole hoped she was doing well. She was grateful Julie's friend Hannah came over to the house. She believed Hannah was a good girl. Nicole was grateful her Daughters relationship with Jennie was on the skids. Nicole felt Jennie needed to accept the responsibility of her poor behavior. Nicole hoped her daughter would stop hanging around Jennie and Jennie's friends. Nicole prayed Jennie would accept Jesus as her savior and turn her life around.

The only friend Nicole liked who hung around Jennie was Amanda. It saddened Nicole to observe Amanda in the beginning stages of an eating disorder. Amanda and her Daughter were friends since they were toddlers. With how much time Amanda spent at the house, Nicole felt she was an adopted child of her own; what was equally difficult was the conversation Nicole had with Amanda's Mother. To hear the pain and worry Jane was going through made their conversation very emotional. Nicole made a point to pray for Amanda and her parents.

She prayed her daughter: would avoid an eating disorder, her faith would grow, would continue to do well in school, and she would continue to dislike drugs and alcohol. She then prayed these same things for her two other children. She added for good measure all three would be virgins on their wedding night. With Jeff she prayed he would avoid pornography. She prayed Ester was behaving herself at her best friends house.

It was easy for Nicole to pray for Danielle and her Mother Jennifer. Their beloved father and husband passed away within the year. Nicole believed her prayers and the prayers of their church were helping Danielle and Jennifer get through this tough time. Nicole heard Jennifer was receiving a raise before the end of the week.

She again turned the plant she was working on.

The CD stopped. She: went through the CD's she had on a nearby chair, picked one, exchanged CD's, started the new one, and put away the old one. She was enjoying the rare day by herself. Her only wish was for better weather. If the weather would have cooperated she would have enjoyed working on her garden.

Megan and Jake were both wearing rain gear. The earlier charter was cut short due to the weather and the water conditions. They were trying to get everything put away before the thunderstorm hit.

With how rough the ocean was and with the reports on how severe the thunderstorm was going to be; her plan was to cancel the charter. She was grateful when the people who scheduled the evening charter canceled themselves. This was a hit to her budget but safety was more important than money. Her Daddy taught her this, she witnessed first hand why her Daddy believed this, and she lived by this philosophy. She hoped these people would reschedule for later in the week but based upon what they told her this was a long shot.

She was putting the poles away. Jake approach her with the last of the poles. She set them into a storage compartment built into the starboard side of the vessel.

Megan asked, "Is it all of them?"

"Yes Ma'am."

"Lets secure it."

Megan commanded, "I think we should add another rope. I'm wanting her secured for the storm."

"Yes Ma'am."

Before they did so, Megan went to a different storage area and pulled out a rope.

As she was doing this Jake asked, "Ain't this to be cleared up?"

Megan's dimples flashed.

"About an hour ago."

"Like Shorty says. Imagine that."

Megan mentioned, "Y'all didn't pronounce that the way she does."

They chuckled.

Jake added, "Like Y'all are always saying she pronounces her C's and T's funny."

They smiled.

Jake became serious, "She's the best Yankee I've ever met."

"I agree. Lets secure this vessel and Y'all can get home."

"Real early tomorrow to set up?"

"Yup."

They looked at one another and made faces. This is when Megan in a hurry jumped from her vessel to the pier.

She pointed to the East, "It's clearing up."

"It ain't lasting long."

Jake mentioned this because of another set of clouds further away.

Megan put up her arm.

Jake tossed the rope.

Megan answered, "You ain't peeing down my leg."

She caught the rope.

*A*shleigh left the mailroom with an agenda.

One of the things she liked about Saturdays was the feeling she could wear athletic shoes throughout the building. She was well aware without high heels she was her five one self. She reasoned, almost everyone observed her running around the offices without her shoes on or in flats. She stopped going barefoot when Gracie and Haley pointed out she was breaking a variety of safety codes every time she left her office without shoes. The least thing Ashleigh wanted to be was a poor example. Since this conversation she kept three pairs of shoes under her desk: pink steal toed boots (a pair she special ordered), the pink athletic shoes she was currently wearing, and a pair of hiking styled sandals for when she took Nikita for a walk. This excluded the one to two pair she brought with her to work. Whenever she was spending any length of time in her office her shoes came off and they remained off while she was in her office area.

The first place she went was back to her office. The oddest thing about Saturday was the big empty desk where Haley sat. She: walked passed this desk, opened the glass door to her office, and went directly to her desk.

Like always she reassured Nikita with her voice, unlike other times she avoided petting her; she was in to much of a hurry. She glanced at Julie's backpack; it was on the window sill next to her purse. This was the same one she gave Julie for Christmas. What touched her heart was the patch Julie added of a Siberian Husky on the front zipper pocket. Ashleigh was tempted to check the contents of her backpack. She suspected Julie kept more in the backpack than just clothes, books, beauty products, and feminine products. The only reason to justify going through this backpack was if Julie was showing signs of a drug addiction. To Ashleigh's relief she never showed any.

She turned and looked at the posted notes attached to the screen of her monitor. She read them. She grabbed a clipboard she hung on the side of the desk. Her brother informed her maintenance could have installed the nail. She felt this was foolish because it was faster if she hung it herself. She removed each posted note in the order she believed would be the most efficient way to complete these tasks; she added a few more of her own. With it being Saturday it was impossible for her to complete some of these tasks because of the limited staff.

She glanced over at her Brother's Office door. It was odd to be here without her Brother. Her heart went out to her Brother and her Nephew. She hoped and prayed everything would go well.

She blocked out her thoughts and feelings and focused on the posted notes.

One of the first tasks was one she wrote.

She stepped out of her office to find Gus and an old radio. She assumed a radio was floating around someplace. She wished she would have thought of a radio a few days ago.

January 13, Nervous

Part Two of Four

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Ashleigh & Megan
Book I: Friendship

Saturday
January 13

Nervous

Day 10 of Book I

(Nineteen Days after Bob and Megan talked on the pier)

Part Three of Four



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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January 13, Nervous Day 10 of Book I

(Nineteen Days after Bob and Megan talked on the Pier)

*M*egan's new office was in a caged in area of her newly rented storage space. The office was rectangular in shape. She was currently sitting at her desk. The long wall in front of her was against the outside wall of the storage unit. This wall and the wall to her left was concrete block. To her right was the short caged wall and behind her was the long wall of the cage. Attached to this cage was plywood making this a wall. (Her plan: was to find some cheap frames, cut out pictures from calendars she saved, insert them into the frames, and hang these frames on the walls). There was a square metal gate within the short side of the gate. The gate was unlocked because Megan was sitting in the office; but the large metal door to the storage unit and the regular door next to it was shut. The raised heavy duty floor with the nice top was designed to be removed; otherwise Megan could loose her lease if she ever moved. With Jimmy having connections building this office was a fraction of the coast.

She was: sitting in a slightly used leather computer chair, in front of her was a used solid wood executive computer desk, it was up against the concrete wall, attached to the desk was a movable arm desk lamp, on the left side of her feet on a hand built wooden box was her new desk top computer, on the floor was a plastic chair mat, she was looking at a brand new monitor, and to the right of her monitor was her new land line phone. A clock was hanging above the desk. A few feet above the desk and a few feet to the right of the clock was a new electric box with four new outlets. A brand new surge protector was plugged into one of these outlets; the cord was attached to the wall with plastic U shaped staples. This surge protector was attached to the wall above and in front of the computer desk; all of the cords plugged into

this surge protector were neatly tied and plugged in. To her right along the concrete wall were two slightly used office chairs, they faced into the office space, in the middle of the chairs was an antique lamp and a used end table. The lamp was plugged into one of the new outlets. To the left of the desk and against the wall was a wooden cabinet. On top of this cabinet was a brand new business combination laser color printer and fax machine. The wires from this printer were neatly attached to the wall. They went to the surge protector, computer, and her land line phone. Just to the left of the printer were four gray well used but still lockable metal filing cabinets. Neatly placed on top of these cabinets was a stapler, a hole punch, one box of regular file folders, a box of colored file folders, two boxes of hanging file folders, and two full cases of printer paper. In between the last filing cabinet and the plywood wall was an antique stand up lamp; she purchased at the thrift store. She was grateful her Daddy changed out the wire so it could reach one of the four outlets attached to the electric box.

Outside of the caged area, laying on the floor, were the disassembled metal pieces to make a very sturdy shelf; this shelf would go around all around the outside wall. When Jimmy, Jeff, and herself were finished installing this shelving she would move everything related to her business from her garage into this unit.

She appreciated: her Daddy, her Brother Jimmy, and her Nephew Jeff for installing the cage, attaching the wall, and putting in the gate. She was thankful for the friend of Jimmy's who installed a better electric box, the extra outlets attached to this box, and a few more outlets outside of the cage.

She was overjoyed when Ashleigh gave her the: metal shelving, plastic mat, executive desk, leather computer chair, slightly used office chairs, metal filing cabinets, all of the file folders, two cases of paper, clock, arm lamp, brand new desktop computer, brand new monitor, brand new surge protector, a long printer cord, best office suite available, a photo program she always wanted, and the laser color printer; she already had it set up to receive faxes. She knew the computer, the land line phone, the cables, and the furniture came from *Renewed Mastery*. No matter where these items came from, she was thankful.

Ashleigh told her the computer was part of a misshipment of five computers. Jimmy revealed to Megan what Ashleigh did for her. Ashleigh took one of the IT guys to a computer store in Boca Rotan, where the company purchased five new replacement computers to make up for the five mistaken ones. While they purchased the computers for the company, Ashleigh out of her own money purchased the: office suite, photo program, surge protector, monitor, and the new printer. She instructed the computer tech to fix one of the mistaken computers into a computer designed for a small business. Megan knew if she offered Ashleigh any money this would have offended her.

Megan was overjoyed her business was growing and she received a raise at the YMCA. These two things allowed her to put in this new office, to pay for faster internet, a new phone line, the two antique lamps, the small end table, and the cabinet the printer was on; these last items were all purchased at the thrift store. She enjoyed setting up the electronic calendar and sending out emails. After: she looked over a couple faxes she received, filed some paper work, sent out confirmation emails, and filled her new printer with paper.

She glanced at the clock.

She smiled her big dimple smile.

She was happy to have a few hours to herself before needing to work at the YMCA. Her plan was to preview the NFL playoffs, get caught up on some news; after she planned on

giving herself some relief. It was over three weeks since her last session and she was excited about her date with Christopher.

She logged out of her charters webpage and looked up the latest information on the NFL playoffs. She was pulling for the Bears to win. The only reason she wanted the Bears to win was because it would annoy Bob. Being a Miami Dolphin fan, she wanted San Diego to beat New England; any time New England lost was a great joy for her. She was unable to watch this game because of a scheduled charter. If her date with Christopher ended soon enough she could watch New Orleans versus Philadelphia. She had little interest in the Indianapolis versus Baltimore game.

While reading these articles she became distracted. She was tempted to read erotic stories and view nude pictures of men. She felt terribly guilty whenever she used pornographic material as an aid in her self pleasure. She believed if she masturbated to nude pictures of men or an erotic story one more time she would become addicted to pornography. What disturbed her was the temptation to view a video clip or join the website she found herself visiting. She liked this website because it offered what it called "*female friendly content*". While fighting off the temptation to visit this site she wondered how many women were secretly fighting an addiction to porn. She reminded herself of her own promise to never watch or read anything pornographic again.

She said a silent prayer.

Viewing pornography went against one of her masturbation boundaries.

A masturbation boundary she struggled defining was doing it in private. The nagging question was; *what was private?* On numerous occasions she tried to get herself off in a changing booth, but because of hearing other people; she was unable to finish. She often fantasied about doing it in her pickup truck. The idea of having an accident while driving was horrifying. She imagined parking her truck in a secluded area until she envisioned herself being caught by a police officer. This would be especially embarrassing if she was caught by an Eastbank Police Officer. She knew all but a few police officers and her Daddy was friends with the police chief. She anchored near a secluded island and tried enjoying herself on the deck of her charter. This lasted until she spotted a plane. She rushed herself below deck and into her suite. She tried to finish but the panic of being spotted ruined the moment. The fantasy of getting herself off in a public place was a lot different than the reality.

The easiest boundary for her to maintain was it could never interfere with business or a family function. Like today; she often times scheduled her private moments. Only once was she late to a family function. She was way to responsible to have masturbation interfere with anything important.

She intended to take the principle of her last masturbation boundary into her marriage. This boundary was, she never wanted any of her fetishes to prevent her from enjoying what she considered a vanilla sexual act. So far she could reach an orgasm without indulging in a fetish. She felt it would be rude to pressure a spouse to participate in any of her fetishes. Just as she never wanted to be pressured into an act she disliked. Based upon her research many couples had varying expectations on what their marriage bed should be like. This was the main reason she was looking for a man she felt comfortable discussing sex with.

What made her nervous was: dating, marriage, discussing her sexual desires, and ending up with someone who would cheat on her. Even with this nervousness she: was enjoying dating, wanted to get married, wanted to feel comfortable discussing her sexual

desires, hoped her future husband would at least understand her desires, would be overjoyed if he liked them, and wanted a man who took the vows of marriage as seriously as she did. She wondered if she would ever find a man who enjoyed kinkier type of sex but only wanted it with one woman.

She was looking forward to her date with Christopher. They planned on playing mini-golf and taking a nature hike. With the weather being uncooperative Christopher believed it would be better to go to a movie and out to dinner. It had been years since she went to a movie theater. She hoped they would see an interesting movie. This change in plans allowed her to take on some hours at the YMCA. She agreed to leading a beginner aerobic class, a medium step class, and was willing to help teach a swim class.

This would be Megan and Christopher's fourth date. Their first date was a New Years Eve party held at his church. This was a yearly event to discourage drinking and carousing. They did the customary date at the local restaurant *Lucy's*. The third date was a church outing sponsored by her church; after they went for a walk. So far they discussed many things but Megan felt they never discussed anything personal. She hated the feeling they were avoiding certain subjects. Christopher held many of the qualities she was looking for, but she was starting to doubt his ability to communicate.

The temptation to view pornography was so strong she reread the same paragraph a third time. She: logged out of everything, turned her computer off, turned off the lamp on her desk, pushed in her computer chair, slipped on her rain gear, used the metal door handle to open the gate, stepped out of this caged area, while standing on a platform, locked the lock within the door handle, locked the main gate lock, stepped down from the platform, turned off the main light of the storage unit, opened a door to the unit, stepped out of the unit, standing outside she felt the drizzle, locked the storage unit, and headed toward her houseboat. At this moment she wished her storage unit was nearest the piers and not the last row of buildings; but she was grateful she was the first storage unit of the row. She quickly crossed the parking lot. Behind her was the first mansion, to her left was the Eastbank River, to her right were the buildings of the marina, and in front of her was the piers. Based upon the sky she jogged to her houseboat.

When she stepped into her houseboat she glanced at the wall clock hanging in her lounge. She was so aroused she would skip any of her fetishes. When she reached her galley she quickly took off her rain gear and hung it onto a kitchen chair. She hurried into her cabin where she: secured all the blinds, opened the French doors to her closet, quickly removed her clothes, placed these items into her brown hamper, took down her body pillow, set it on the edge of her bed, laid down on her back, started caressing her small breasts, imagined what it would feel like for a husband to kiss them, soon her hand reached down to her lower region, after a few minutes she mounted her body pillow, enjoyed a guiltless orgasm; it was guiltless and fulfilling because she maintained her boundaries.

She wanted to believe she just avoided an addiction to pornography.

*A*shleigh stepped through the open doorway of Gracie Gessler's office.

Gracie turned her computer chair around and greeted Ashleigh.

Ashleigh acknowledged her own jealousy. She believed if she wore the same outfit as Gracie she would have looked like an elf but on Gracie she appeared attractive. Ashleigh

believed her brother first noticed Gracie because: she was tall, attractive, was smaller chested, had long dark hair, and was overall friendly. Ashleigh felt Gracie carried her Midwestern charm with her. It was impossible to ignore Gracie's: nicely set brunette hair, her glasses were attractive on her diamond shaped face, her green eyes were focused, she was wearing a red and black dot tunic, matching the tunic she was wearing black seamless cropped leggings, and flat black thong shoes with buckles.

They enjoyed some small talk. Gracie became serious and surprised Ashleigh with the news she was stressed out with her current workload. Ashleigh reassured Gracie and gave her permission to hire an assistant. Neither Bob nor herself wanted Gracie to quit. She was an excellent Human Resource Director; it was obvious she truly cared about their employees. Ashleigh made a mental note to talk to her Brother on Monday about adding a part time secretary for them. After encouraging Gracie and making sure she was alright; Ashleigh focused on the task that brought her to Gracie's office.

She asked, "Where are the pamphlets we've planned on putting up in the cafeteria?"

Gracie made a face, "I believe there in the mailroom?"

Ashleigh's body language screamed disappointment.

Gracie pulled off her glasses and asked with concern, "Is there a reason why we should put them up before the cafeteria is finished?"

An angry Ashleigh stated, "I think Andrea is being beaten."

"Oh my."

"Exactly."

Gracie in a controlled voice stated, "As a company we have to be careful."

"Why?"

Gracie made a face and spoke in her Minnesota accent, "Don't you know we could get sued?"

"I was planning on giving her the pamphlet on spousal abuse."

"As a Vice President you can't just give her the pamphlet. But she could find it herself or someone else could give it to her."

"Sometimes I hate being a Vice President."

Gracie's face contorted, "Don't you know we need you around here?"

Ashleigh smiled, "I'm not leaving."

There was a pause.

"It's just."

Another pause.

Ashleigh made a face.

"I would know exactly what I'd do if I wasn't a Vice President."

"Well then. If we put up all of the pamphlets it wouldn't be suspicious."

Ashleigh answered, "Lets make that a priority."

"You betcha."

Ashleigh smiled when Gracie stood up.

Ashleigh followed her out of her office.

Gracie: pulled out a key, locked her door, and flipped over a needle point sign; this side informed everyone she was out of the office and would be back soon.

Ashleigh remarked, "I like the sign."

With a smile Gracie replied, "My Grandma made me the sign."

Ashleigh smiled, "She likes crafts?"

Gracie pushed up her glasses, "Grandpa is always complaining on how much room her crafts take up. He doesn't complain when she makes money at the craft fairs."

Ashleigh found herself asking, "Does he go to them?"

Gracie made a face.

"He drives her there and helps her bring in everything. The family helps her."

Ashleigh could tell she was missing her family.

Gracie recovered, "Lets find them pamphlets."

"Do you know which mailroom they are in?"

Gracie made a face, "The main one?"

They both sighed and headed to the main mailroom.

Julie was surprised by the amount of junk mail *Renewed Mastery* received. Despite filling up many of the mail bins she was disappointed in herself; she believed she should have been faster. She was irritated with herself because she was filling a bin with mail she was unsure of where it went. Many of these envelopes were addressed to employees with just a first name. She wondered why anyone would address an envelope to a company as large as *Renewed Mastery* was with just a first name. Another curiosity was why anyone would address an envelope to someone who no longer worked for the company. Feeling awkward opening envelopes; she decided she would ask Ashleigh if she should open them or not.

Hearing Ashleigh's voice she looked toward the entrance. More than one employee entered the mailroom or walked by. Many of the locals stepped in to acknowledged her. She ended up helping more than one person find supplies. Julie was appalled at the disorganization and was disappointed when she was unable to help someone find something they were looking for. She was happy to help a lady from Wisconsin find a selection of highlighters; they found a pile of used ones in a box. After testing a large selection of these highlighters the lady was happy to have one set of five different colors. Julie tossed out the ones no longer useful.

Julie watched Ashleigh and a woman she never met step into the mailroom. Julie felt this woman had a similar type of figure as her Auntie.

Right away Gracie stepped up to Julie, "I'm Gracie Gessler the HR director. You must be Julie Steward?"

Julie noticed her Midwestern accent but it was different from Ashleigh.

Being polite Julie answered, "Yes Ma'am."

"It's nice having someone sorting out the mail. If you have any questions don't be afraid to ask."

Julie answered, "Yes Ma'am."

Ashleigh asked, "Did you happen to see a box filled with pamphlets?"

Gracie added, "It would have come from a Wisconsin printing company."

Julie remembered it.

She pointed, "Ms. Ashleigh it's over in the corner."

Julie was about to help but Ashleigh stopped her.

"Continue to sort this mail."

“Yes Ma’am.”

Gracie was unable to help herself, “You’re doing such a great job. By any chance have you found any of my mail?”

“Yes Ma’am.”

Julie: set the mail she was holding onto the center table, stepped over to a mail bin, checked her own posted note, pulled out the mail, and walked it over to her.

Gracie was inspecting a bin of envelopes.

They heard a box being pulled open.

Julie set Gracie’s mail into an empty bin and set it near the door.

They looked over at Ashleigh when she declared, “Here they are!”

Gracie pulling a bin toward herself asked, “What’s in this bin?”

A disappointed Julie mentioned, “It’s mail I ain’t sure of where it goes.”

Ashleigh without batting an eye said, “Don’t be afraid to open them up. Write a question mark on them if you aren’t sure of where they go and give them to Andrea.”

Gracie chimed in, “Or send them to me.”

Ashleigh remarked, “The question mark lets everyone know the mail person isn’t sure of what department it’s suppose to go.”

“Yes Ma’am.”

Julie understood why Ashleigh was more demanding at work.

Ashleigh with a face asked, “By any chance have you seen a big display case?”

Julie answered, “No Ma’am.”

Ashleigh asked politely, “Gracie would you help me look?”

“You betcha.”

“You need...”

Ashleigh interrupted, “Keep sorting the mail.”

Julie replied, “I apologize.”

“For what?”

“I ain’t faster.”

This lack of confidence shocked Ashleigh.

“It’s not about going faster it’s about being accurate. I’m not expecting you to sort it all. Make sure you distribute the mail as we’ve discussed.”

“Yes Ma’am.”

“You ain’t minded how I’m sorting it?”

Ashleigh asked, “Is this the best way you are able to sort it?”

“Yes Ma’am.”

Ashleigh smiled.

“We believe there are many ways of doing things. As long as they don’t affect our standards or affect someone else negatively we don’t care how you do it.”

“Yes Ma’am.”

Gracie felt the need to smile and say, “Don’t you know?”

Julie was about to answer.

Gracie beat her to it “Your doing great. With how many people we have here it’ll take some time to sort it.”

Julie answered, “Thank-you Ma’am.”

Grace smiled, “That’s better.”

Ashleigh asked Gracie, "You think Gus would know where the display case is?"

Gracie answered, "I betcha he does. He knows where everything is. He'd be able to help us hang it."

Ashleigh sternly stated, "There's suppose to be a mail cart in every mailroom. Where is it?"

Julie answered very respectfully, "Ma'am I haven't seen one."

Annoyed Ashleigh declared, "I'll find you one."

"Yes Ma'am."

Ashleigh turned toward Gracie, "Lets find Gus and get the display up."

"You betcha."

As they were leaving Ashleigh stopped, pointed to two stacks of mail bins, "What's in here?"

"Ma'am it's junk mail."

"Who gets all this?"

"Ma'am you told me to sort out the important mail first."

Ashleigh smiled, "Yes I did."

Julie was worried she somehow disappointed Ashleigh. She was worried she would never get to this junk mail.

Ashleigh spotted her worry.

"I don't care if you sort this. You keep working on the important stuff. If you don't get to this by the end of the day. Pull out all of the trade magazines and toss the rest into the recycling bin."

"Where's the recycling bin?"

Ashleigh answered, "There's a huge recycling bin in the back of the warehouse. Ask someone they'll tell you where it is."

"Yes Ma'am."

Gracie mentioned, "Please follow all our safety guidelines."

Julie answered very seriously, "Yes Ma'am."

Julie jumped in before they turned, "Ms Ashleigh."

Having Julie call her Ms. Ashleigh was somewhat awkward for Ashleigh but answered, "Yes."

"Y'all want me to sort the magazines?"

Ashleigh made a face, "No."

"Okay."

Ashleigh felt the need to encourage Julie, "The magazines are not a priority. I feel your doing a great job."

Julie would take the compliment but she believed she was performing horribly.

She answered, "Yes Ma'am."

Ashleigh more to herself than Julie, "You'll get a cart."

She turned toward Gracie, "Lets find Gus."

"Alright."

Julie smiled when these two headed out of the mailroom. Julie wondered if this was the same Gus who was a friend of her Grandfather.

She focused. She decided to open all of the envelopes she was unsure of where they went. She was grateful she spotted a mail opener in one of the pencil boxes. This helped her

figure out where these envelopes went. The ones she was still unclear on she wrote a big question mark on these and placed them into Andrea's bin. This was a slow process.

Gus stepped in pushing one mail cart and pulling another one; on one of the carts was a beaten up radio. He was delighted to see Julie. It was well known within his community the Steward's had good hearts. Many times Gus and Julie's Grandfather volunteered at the VFW together and their churches worked together.

"Well I'll be. Ms. Julie Y'all have grown up to be a young lady."

She smiled, "Yes sir."

"You've shot up like a weed."

"Yes sir."

He picked up the radio, "Ms. Ashleigh said Y'all should have a radio. Make sure I get it back now. Y'all hear?"

"Yes sir."

He plugged in the radio. It was set to an oldies station; "*Heard it Through the Grapevine*," was playing.

"Y'all may change the station."

"Yes sir."

He made a face watching her open envelopes.

"Young lady there be an easier way of opening them."

"How?"

"With this here mail machine."

"Oh."

He showed Julie how how it worked. She was disappointed in herself for avoiding the machine.

"Thanks for showing me how it works."

"Ain't nothing."

"Where might this box of pamphlets be?"

"Over there."

She was about to walk him to the box.

"Y'all keep sorting the mail."

She listened, "Yes sir."

"After I'm done helping the ladies I'll come back and help Y'all."

"I'd appreciate it."

She was disappointed she needed help.

He spotted this, "I reckon' you feel you should be done already."

"Yes sir."

"There's a lot of folks who work here. It ain't easy figuring out where they be."

"Thank-you."

"Youngin' don't be frettin'. if Ms. Ashleigh didn't like Y'all you wouldn't be here."

"I just wish I was getting more done."

He purposefully repeated himself, "Don't be frettin'."

"Yes sir."

"I've heard Y'all walk Nikita?"

She was excited to answer, "Every morning. Except Sundays and Holidays."

"Nikita is a good dawg."

“Yes she is.”

Gus leaned into her and whispered, “It be a good thing Mr. Bob and Ms. Ashleigh like Y’all. They ain’t like other Yankees. Y’all understanding?”

“Yes sir.”

He smiled.

He: turned, pulled one of the carts to the three boxes of pamphlets, placed them on the cart, and headed out of the mailroom.

Julie smiled.

She focused.

She was happy Gus showed her how to use the mail machine.

After the first pile, she turned the radio station to one she believed would discuss the stock market.

Shelly left the waiting area and was sitting in a coffee shop across the street. She could see one of the many county services buildings from where she was sitting. Her Bible was open but she was unable to concentrate on it. Her mind was focused on the supervised visit. She was fighting the temptation to get something to drink. Her temptation was renewed because of a liquor store three buildings over. What stopped her was the counselor and Bobby seeing her drunk. Shelly knew if she purchased a bottle she would quickly drink it all and it would take treatment to stop. This honest assessment went against the persistent temptation she could handle a sip. She imagined the consequence of this one drink: this would lead to smoking pot, this would lead to harder drugs, she would loose custody of her son, prison was likely, the withdrawals, treatment, and without treatment an overdose. The worst would be loosing custody. The second worst would be the withdrawals. This was one of the reasons she remained clean and sober. She was feeling helpless but this was better than the consequence of using again.

Her goal was to sit here for the next forty-five minutes.

She put the bookmark into her Bible and turned to the Psalms. She believed this book more than any other would get her through the next forty-five minutes. While reading she was conscience of anyone who stepped into or out of the coffee shop. She spotted a woman approaching her.

Her heart went out to this woman. Her dancing name was Candy; her real name was Jessica. Shelly felt remorse anytime she met a woman she danced with. Many made it through without becoming a mess, but just as many left dancing a mess; it was obvious Jessica was one who turned into a mess. At one time she was a classic brunette beauty with: larger breasts, a slightly curvy backside, beautiful brown eyes, long flowing hair, and a rectangular shaped face. Shelly felt guilty because she was the one who encourage Jessica to take pills to have the energy to go on stage and to feel “up” when handling clients. What upset the present day Shelly, was before she pressured Jessica, Jessica always refused narcotics.

Currently: her long dark hair was cut short, she lost a lot of weight, she was shaking because of the cold and withdrawals, her clothes were disheveled and old, and as she approached it was obvious it had been days since she showered.

Sheepishly she asked, “Shelly?”

Shelly stood up and hugged her friend. It surprised Shelly on how bony she felt and it was difficult to hug her because of how awful she smelled.

Shelly heard from behind the counter, "Hey."

Immediately Jessica pulled away.

"I..."

The manager yelled at Jessica, "I've told you not to come in here."

Shelly answered, "She's with me."

The manager pointed to Jessica, "I don't want any trouble from you."

Jessica managed a, "I won't be."

The manager yelled, "I've heard that before."

Shelly asked, "You want a cup of coffee and a sandwich?"

Jessica answered, "Yea."

Shelly encouraged her to sit down, grabbed her purse; Shelly believed if Jessica stole her Bible and her jacket these items would have helped her.

While Shelly ordered a coffee and sandwich she was praying silently. She kept a close eye on Jessica. Shelly was certain hidden in her green parka were drugs. Shelly again felt terribly guilty for introducing her to narcotics. At the time Shelly believed she was helping Jessica. The now clean and sober Shelly wished she would have never given any dancer pills or her hazy advice.

She took the sandwich and the coffee to her friend.

Jessica greedily took both and quickly started to eat the sandwich.

When Jessica danced as Candy she maintained very elaborate looking nails. Now her hands were dirty and her nails were short. Her hands shook when she grabbed the cup of coffee. Many of the customers were leaving because of Jessica.

Shelly noticed the owner was losing patience.

When she was done eating her sandwich she simply said, "Thanks."

Shelly in a very gently voice said, "I know of an organization that can help you."

Jessica somehow remained calm, "What I could use is a couple bucks."

Shelly held in her tears and became the tough person she could be, "So you can waist it on drugs?"

In an angry tone, "I thought you were my friend?"

"I am."

"A true friend wouldn't lecture me. Just give me the money I need."

The manager looked over.

Shelly stood up, she slipped on her winter coat, and hung her purse over her shoulder; making sure it was close to her body.

"How about if I take you to a place where they could help you."

Jessica scowled, "I see your one of them preachers. I don't need your Jesus. I don't need anyone's help."

The manager yelled, "Hey!"

Jessica turned and yelled, "Fuck off."

"I'm calling the police."

"See if I care."

Shelly was saddened by this.

Shelly tried, "Let me..."

“Shut up.”

Shelly was ready to dodge a punch.

Shelly looked into Jessica’s eyes and said, “Jesus loves you.”

This diffused the situation.

There was silence.

Jessica asked in a calm voice, “Why not give me a couple dollars?”

“How about if I give you this Bible and a ride to a treatment center?”

Jessica snarled, shook her head, took the half cup of coffee, and left.

Shelly felt it was wise to leave. Before leaving she: slipped her Bible into her purse, stepped up to the counter, put a five into the tip jar, thanked the irritated manager, thanked the clerk at the counter, and quickly headed out of the coffee shop. When she stepped out of the coffee shop she spotted her friend at the end of the street holding onto a cardboard sign.

As much as Shelly hated prison she believed prison saved her life. She: pulled out her cell phone, flipped it open, and dialed 911. It was difficult for Shelly to turn in her friend. Just as she closed her phone she spotted a police car drive pass Jessica; Shelly surmised the manager called the police. When Jessica spotted the car she made a run for it. The sirens turned on, the car made a U-turn and sped forward, Shelly watched the car make a sudden stop, two officers quickly jumped out of the car, and the chase was on. Shelly hoped for the best, but was aware; Jessica could easily be back on the street in a few days.

She: turned from what was about to happen, glanced at her watch, was grateful for her coffee, stepped across the street, while walking across the street she heard the police yell, heard Jessica’s awful response, while stepping into the building she heard Jessica screaming and insulting the police; once the glass door shut she no longer heard what was happening to her friend.

The woman at the front desk nodded her head.

Shelly acknowledged this woman.

She: stepped into the waiting area, calmly set her purse onto an empty seat, set her coat on the same chair, sat next to it, and drank her coffee. With how many kids toys were stacked in the corner of this waiting area, it was obvious this place was busy during the week.

She stood up and went to a table loaded with magazines. She spotted a famous woman’s magazine with an actress on the cover. An actress Bob personally knew. He was introduced to her through one of his many southern artist friends. Shelly told herself, *if he wanted to date a high maintenance celebrity he should*. This was an assumption because Shelly never met this actress. She convinced herself the reason she chose this magazine was because of an article on how to wear a dress in any body type; this was a half truth.

She sat down.

She no longer felt the desire to drink or use drugs.

Julie was forced to take a lunch.

She was sitting in what she considered the left half of the cafeteria. Only half of this large rectangular shaped room was available for seating, the other half was filled with office furniture. This area reminded her of a furniture resale store. When she inspected this area the first thing she noticed were white sheets of paper taped to some of the items; there was a name, a department, and a number written on each sheet. She figured out what this number

was by stopping by a long wooden fold out table. On top of the table was: a box of scrap paper, a box of markers, a large map of the whole complex; every available space was marked with a number. Taped on the table was instructions on how to receive any piece of furniture.

Julie chuckled.

In big bold font was a message telling people to write legibly.

There were two sets of doors on every side of the cafeteria. In what Julie considered the front of the cafeteria the doors were painted blue, on the side with all the furniture the doors were green, the doors on the other short end were painted red, and the doors on her side were yellow. Between the blue doors was a huge bookshelf, on this bookshelf were games, puzzles, and books. From where Julie was sitting, to the right of the blue doors was a table, on it was a make shift sign saying *Free*. She hopped to find the time to look at the pile of laptop cases on this table.

On the side of the cafeteria Julie was sitting, near the front of the cafeteria, a hot deli was being installed. Currently this area was sectioned off by wood paneling. She correctly assumed no work was being accomplished because of the silence behind the walls. Just passed this area was a section of vending machines and a long wooden tiered cabinet. On this cabinet were: six microwaves, napkins, plastic wear, paper plates, paper towels, condiments, and storage below. Just passed the table were garbage and recycle bins.

Julie liked the round tables set up on this side of the cafeteria. Each table top was decorated with a large checker board pattern. There were four different colored patterns. Each table had two sets of colored chairs matching the checker board pattern. She was watching two older gentleman playing chess on one of these tables. It was equally fascinating watching four ladies having an intense conversation. She was to far away to hear what they were saying. Other people were scattered about.

The walls on this side of the cafeteria were sectioned off in large evenly spaced squares. Sketches were starting to be placed on the wall. Julie hoped one day she would be able to see the completion of these paintings.

In the center of this large rectangle shaped cafeteria was a garden. This garden reminded her of a terrarium large enough for people. It was surrounded by glass with double doors on each of the short ends. It was easy to tell there were special lights installed so the plants would grow properly. This area was currently closed off because a crew was working in this area. Based upon their uniforms Julie believed this landscaping company worked with the construction company her Daddy used to work for. Julie liked the winding walk way they were putting in. Along the walk way they were putting in bushes, flowers, small palm trees, and there was space to put in benches. Many of these flowers and bushes were her Momma's favorites.

Hearing the drill she turned and looked over at Gus and his helper. Before the first blue door, and a few feet from the vending machines, they were putting up the second of two large plastic displays; it was impossible to miss these displays.

Focusing on the helper, she crossed her legs, and began to experiment with a hands free masturbation technique she read about. She knew the helper was a Floridian because of his accent. She assumed he lived in a nearby town because she never spotted him in Eastbank. He: was tall, muscular, was in his mid twenties, had bark brunette hair, liked his hands, she liked how easily he used the tools, and because of a bulge in his blue uniform she assumed he

had a larger cock. In spite of his wedding ring; she imagined how wonderful his hands would be.

She spotted her Daddy enter the cafeteria, she immediately but casually, uncrossed her legs, sat up, and prepared for her Daddy to approach the table. She watched him step over to the vending machines. He chose a bottled water. Her mother would be pleased he chose a water over a coke. After grabbing his water he stepped over to her table.

“Howdy.”

She smiled, “Howdy.”

He pulled out a chair across from her and sat down, “Momma makes a good lunch.”

She watched her Daddy open the bottle and take a drink.

“Yes Sir.”

He smiled, “I’ve heard good things.”

This surprised her, “Really?”

“What’s with the doubt?”

With a sigh she said, “I ain’t sure I’ll get done.”

He smiled, “Y’all had a lot of bins stacked up on the cart.”

She made a face, “This is a big place.”

“Yes it is. Y’all find everything?”

“Gus was helpful.”

“Sounds like Gus.”

“Yes sir.”

“Y’all shouldn’t be to critical. Them mailrooms are a mess.”

“I won’t.”

He smiled.

“I’m needing to get back on the floor.”

“Yes sir.”

“I’m proud of you.”

This made her day.

“Yes Daddy.”

“You keep up the good work.”

“I will.”

He: smiled, pulled out the chair, stood up, took another drink, pushed in the chair, he stepped over to Gus, they talked, and then he stepped out through the yellow doors.

She glanced at her watch.

She was no longer interested in finishing her technique. Instead she: enjoyed the last fifteen minutes of her lunch by grabbing a *Wall Street Journal* on a table near her, opened her backpack, took out a highlighter, highlighted specific information, placed both items back into her backpack, stood up, cleared the table of all it’s garbage, went and grabbed a paper towel, cleaned the table, placed her lunch box into her bag, zipped closed all the pockets, swung the bag over he shoulder, and headed to Ashleigh’s office. When she reached Ashleigh’s office she was jealous someone else was walking Nikita. She brushed this aside because she knew it was good for a Husky to be active. She set her backpack where she placed it earlier. She noticed a clipboard on Ashleigh’s desk with posted notes. Next to this clipboard was a pad of yellow legal size paper with Ashleigh’s personal notes written on it. She felt it would have been

impolite to read them. She arrived in the mailroom five minutes before she was suppose to be back.

*A*ndrea stepped into the cafeteria. She felt the stiffness of the violence she endured the night before. The bruises her outfit hid were painful, the worst was the hurt she felt within her heart; she wanted to believe him when he said he would never do it again. She felt if she was a better person this violence would have never happened.

She stepped up to the vending machine and selected a 7-Up. She cringed when she bent down to grab the drink; this is when she spotted the displays filled with pamphlets. She stepped over to them. Above the display were two signs. The top one was larger, on it was a number in large font, and the sign encouraged employees to use the number. This was obviously a cooperative effort with the insurance company.

The second sign was smaller and highlighted a serious of pamphlets *Renewed Mastery* produced. These were obviously different from the other set. Andrea suspected the number displayed reached Gracie.

She started to casually read the titles. She focused when she came across the pamphlets mentioning abuse. These covered: abused wives, abused girlfriends, abused husbands, abused boyfriends, abused lesbians, abused gay men, child abuse, molestation of both boys and girls by both men and women, incest caused by both mothers and fathers for both daughters and sons, sexual assault, and rape. This wide ranging selection took her by surprise.

Her impulse was to quit.

What stopped her from putting in her resignation was a memory of her mother carrying a belt and chasing her Daddy to the bathroom.

Tears fell.

Shaking she pulled out the pamphlet talking about abused husbands. This was the first time in Andrea's life she ever heard about a husband being abused.

She asked herself; *Did Momma abused Daddy?*

She flipped through it and put it back, this is when she spotted a thought provoking pamphlet.

She stood there looking at the title.

Tears fell.

The title was, "*When a Mother Molests*". She stared at the title. This was the first time she was ever presented with the idea a mother would initiate incest. She immediately recalled the baths and showers. These showers were filled with guilt, pleasure, dread, and confusion. She was taught a caring mother gives their children baths and showers. The question Andrea buried for years came flooding into her mind, *What mother gives their seventeen year old daughter a shower?* She thought about the times her mother would enter her room late at night and would "cuddle" with her. She was facing for the first time in her life, what her mother called "cuddling" was in fact molestation. She asked herself a series of questions: *Did a mother have a right to see how she was developing? Was it normal for a mother to teach their daughter how to masturbate? Was it "loving" for her to fondle her? Did all mothers do this with their daughters?*

She thought about her Little Brother and her Little Sister.

Shaking she stepped away from the pamphlets.

She stopped just passed the vending machine.

It took great effort to go back and grab: the abused husband pamphlet, the general incest pamphlet, and the specific pamphlet on when a mother is the cause of incest. She hid them in her purse. She collected herself and tried to leave the cafeteria. She stopped. Tearing she went back and grabbed the abused girlfriend pamphlet.

She again buried her emotions.

She liked working at *Renewed Mastery* and felt safe at her desk. Just as she liked: school, school activities, the positive attention she received from achieving goals, how she enjoyed moving away from college, how she enjoyed being single all throughout college, and how she enjoyed living on her own. She was dreading going home to her live in boyfriend like she dreaded going home after school.

Her heart went out to her Brother and Sister. It was one thing for all of this to happen to her, it was another to have it happen to her siblings.

The two questions in her mind were: *What should she do? Where would her siblings go?*

With her Daddy passed away, her Sister would end up in foster care; not that her Daddy would have done anything.

She thought about the philosophy of *Renewed Mastery*; view the big picture then focus on one thing at a time. She thought about Mr. Bob and how he always said, *“Multi-tasking was only helpful in the short term.”*

She decided, mostly because of her Brother and Sister to call the number listed on the pamphlets. She hoped her Boyfriend would be the guy she believed he could be; especially if she would try for custody.

Shelly was grateful this twisting road was plowed. She felt the fresh snow made the forest look pretty. This two lane road ended at a cul-de-sac; with three roads branching off of it. The newest one was off to the left and was a regular two lane road. The other two roads were to the right. One was a lane and a half wide. Bobby’s road, the furthest to the right, was only a lane wide. This first road was put in during the summer of 1933; this was the only one leading to a private residence. She watched Bobby: pull his red eight year old Jeep Grand Cherokee off to the side, stepped out, checked his mailbox, took some mail back to his vehicle, stepped back in, and pulled forward. Shelly was surprised all of the mailboxes were still standing; in the past more than one were knocked over by snow plows. As she drove passed the mailboxes she glanced over at Bobby’s mailbox. His was easy to spot because below the mailbox were four bowling balls. She remembered when he put this mailbox in. He: paid a friend of his to drill a large hole through the four bowling balls, hired a couple employees to dig a huge hole with a backhoe, they secured a metal pole into the ground with concrete, they centered the bowling balls around this pole, they filled each hole with concrete, and then added the mailbox on top of the pole. This mailbox survived many snow storms and a neighbor directly hitting it with his vehicle.

Just as she made the right turn, Little Bobby pointed out the window and said, “Grrr.”

She glanced, “It’s a deer.”

He pointed and said, “Grrr.”

She said, "Grrr will eat the deer."

He tried to show Shelly his rubber cheetah; a cheetah his Daddy gave him during their supervised visit.

Glancing in the rear view mirror she said, "Other grrr. Eats deer."

He showed her his cheetah.

Because she was focused on this tight road she was unable to teach her son the rubber wolf in his other hand hunted deer. Shelly was grateful Bobby was still paying a crew to plow the single road to his house. Even with crews working on the road, there were times when it was necessary to slide a tree off to the side; Shelly hated doing this at night. Light was passing through the trees and it was reflecting off of the snow. Her favorite time to drive down this road was during the fall when the leaves were changing color.

The road made a bend to the right. At this angle she could see: the parking lot, part of the attached garage behind the parking area, the right corner of the house, most of the second floor, the large shrubs planted on the side of the attached garage, and a section of the large blacktop. She observed Bob pull onto the blacktopped driveway, turn completely around; he was now facing the four car garage. She noticed him point to the front of the house. She was grateful he wanted her to park near the front door.

Construction of this white two story six bedroom house house began in the Summer of 1932 and ended in the spring of 1934. There were many renovations and additions but the family always maintained the original design of the house. This house was on the secluded northern edge of a Southeastern Wisconsin lake. The lake itself was on the western edge of Southeastern Wisconsin.

She drove her car onto the large blacktop. Shelly estimated this blacktopped section covered a quarter of the four acre property. This section was in front: of the house, the attached four car garage, the second garage on the back right corner, and in front of the small storage shed right of the house. Shelly loved the dark red roof and the many red triangle peaks. Below each peak was a window and a bedroom behind the window or windows. Only the red tops were visible above the snow covered roof. She liked the rectangular shape of the house and felt it was genius to have the longest part of the house face the lake. She suspected the pier and the boats were docked for the winter. When she turned her car around she was now facing the attached garage. The right quarter of this garage was attached to the house. The garage's roof matched the house with a dark red peaked roof. The main section of the garage was painted white. In between each of the four garage doors were antique looking outdoor lights; lights she always liked. She watched as Bobby pulled into the third section of the garage.

She spotted one of his two covered collector vehicles inside of this garage. She could clearly see a fully restored blue 1969 Chevy El Camino. The one she was unable to see was a WW2 Jeep. She often wondered why he would choose these vehicles to purchase. He could have purchased a far more exotic vehicle. She wondered why he never replaced the eight year old Grand Cherokee. As the garage door dropped she lost the view of the vehicle. The last thing she observed was Bobby's legs making their way around the back of his Grand Cherokee.

The garage door shut as she parked her Toyota Corolla; it was her mother's old car. The back passenger side door was directly in front of a very short walkway. To the right of this walkway was a line of shrubs and a small sidewalk that ended near the garage. She assumed

someone other than Bobby was in the house because the drapes were open in what Bobby called the Family Room.

Little Bobby made some noises and pointed out the window.

Shelly made a face and looked in her rear view mirror, "This is your Daddy's House. He doesn't live here anymore."

With an awful facial expression she added, "He lives on a yacht in Florida."

She sighed.

Deep down she wished he still lived here. At the current moment she was unwilling to face this truth.

She pulled out the keys, slipped them into her purse, stepped out of the vehicle, shut the door, stepped around the car, opened the back passenger door, grabbed the diaper bag, flung it over the same shoulder as her purse, and lifted up her son.

He showed her the rubber cheetah and made a growling noise.

She sighed.

She shut the door. When she turned around she saw the front door open. She stopped. She suddenly felt nervous.

Bob asked, "What's the matter?"

She chose to answer with a half truth, "A flood of memories hit me."

"We spent a lot of time here."

A clear memory was the Christmas Day when her son was conceived. The least thing she wanted was to give Robert another brother or sister. This worry was something she would keep to herself unless she felt it was necessary.

"Bobby you understand we're just friends?"

Robert buried his face into his Mommy's shoulder because of the wind.

"Yes."

It bothered her on how fast Bobby answered this question; she hid this from Bobby.

She was grateful for the salt on the short walkway.

She appreciated when Bobby walked up to her and grabbed the diaper bag.

"Thanks."

He ignored this and opened the door for Shelly and his Son.

Robert watched.

She stepped into the foyer. She quickly scanned this fifteen by fifteen foot room. At a glance she recognized all of the artwork. She always liked this marble tiled floor. The center of this room was in the pattern of a marble green and ivory chess board. Around the board was a perfect black border, then a skinny ivory border, and around this skinny white border the floor was in the same marble looking green as the chess board. In the right back corner of this room was a large walk in closet; the chess and checker pieces were stored there. Just beyond the playing pieces was a long coat rack. Directly across this rack was a series of old fashioned metal cubicles where guests locked their valuables in. To Shelly's right, and to the right of the walk in closet, were two large wooden swinging doors; they opened from the center. Behind this room was what Bobby called the music room. To her left was the family room. Just beyond and in front of the foyer was what Bobby called the center room. Each one of these rooms, excluding the walk in closet and the music room, were separated by an open passageway; on either side were white Roman style pillars. A foot behind these pillars, leading

into the family room, were large windowed swinging doors with handles in the center; these doors were added when Bobby redesigned the foyer.

Directly in front of Shelly and in back of the foyer was the Center Room. Shelly adored the fireplace in this room. On the right side of the Center Room was the opening to the Living Room. This doorway was open and had the same Roman style pillars as the foyer. His Mom's parents and grandparents; called this the Great Room. His mother after becoming a Christian felt this was pompous and started calling it the living room. On the left side of this Center Room were the stairs to the second floor and the basement. The stairs leading upstairs were wide, wooden, and open. The stairs to the basement were concrete. By 1934 standards these were wide stairs; by current day standards these would be considered medium width and slightly steep. These were blocked from view by a simple white door. In front of this door was a hallway. This hallway led to: the back swinging doors of the Family Room, the door to the attached garage, and at the end of this hallway Bob's office. At one time it was his Grandparents then his Mother's bedroom. The wall of this hallway was filled with framed movie posters and tour posters. On the opposite side of the long solid wall of this hallway was the long kitchen. The back entrance of the center room led to the long kitchen and the kitchenette. Similar to the Family Room, there was the open doorway with the Roman style pillars and another set of swinging doors. These swinging doors were carved with an elegant leaf pattern; a pattern designed by one of Bob's favorite artists. An artist who died of a drug overdose.

Dawn stepped out from this room.

Dawn worked for Bob's mother. Amanda was a few years older than Dawn, over time they became best friends. When Amanda hired Dawn she was very talented and attractive. She was a key to the success of his Mother's studio. Dawn knew Bob since he was born, she felt an affection toward him, an affection Bob gladly received growing up. After Amanda tragically died in an auto accident Dawn felt the need to be Bob's surrogate mother. For a short time Bob appreciated this but after some time passed it became troublesome. Because of the love and respect he had for his mother, and how loyal Dawn had been to his mother; he put up with Dawn. There were things he trusted her with and there were other things she had no influence over. Three of these things she had no influence over were: Shelly, Ashleigh, and his money.

Shelly set Robert down. Robert looked up at his Daddy when he stepped passed them, he showed him his Cheetah, "Grrr."

He smiled and said, "It's a cheetah."

Robert then took his rubber wolf and went, "Grrr."

Bob said, "Its a wolf."

Shelly spotted Dawn. Shelly suspected Dawn was again hired as a servant. Shelly clearly remember every word of the argument that led to Dawn being fired. This of course, was one of the reasons the house was a disheveled mess when Shelly arrived on the Christmas Day Robert was conceived. Shelly suspected Bobby would have trusted Dawn with taking care of the house while living in Florida. Having this women help Bobby watch Robert bothered Shelly.

These ladies felt a deep loathing toward one another. The only reason these two women would ever be in the same place is because of Bob. The only reason either one would be somewhat cordial with one another was because of Bob. Given the chance each one would

have exchanged their sentiment of how the other treated Bob. Both would have given anything to have the other out of Bob's life. Both declared their displeasure of one another openly and on a few occasions loudly; the last one was so loud this led to Dawn being excused from serving the house.

This is when they heard Dawn's voice, "May I take your coats?"

Shelly spoke, making sure Little Bobby was a few feet away from Dawn, Shelly snipped; "I can take care of it. I know my way around here."

Dawn looked to Bob.

He answered, "It's okay."

In a nice tone she said to him, "I'll continue to make lunch."

"It's appreciated."

She gave Shelly a glance and was about to say something.

A glare by Shelly stopped any further discourse. Dawn turned and went back to the kitchen.

Shelly felt a tinge of guilt for the way she just behaved. What bothered Shelly was even after being clean and sober she mistrusted this woman.

Shelly refocused and looked down at Little Bobby. She felt the fleeting impulse to grab her son and run out the door.

"I have taken the liberty of removing or moving anything a child shouldn't touch."

She believed she would have to review his work but said, "I'm glad."

There was an awkward moment of silence.

Bob broke it, "I've installed a playroom down stairs."

"You didn't spoil him?"

"No."

She would wait and see if this was true.

"Why downstairs?"

"Since Christmas. The basement has been redone and refurbished."

She suspected he would do something like this. She asked, "Have you fixed the stairs?"

He pushed up his glasses.

"I'm considering my options. Until I decide what my course of action will be I've added a non-slip surface to the steps."

"Let's see what you did with the basement."

Little Bobby pointed to a large painting of a lion, "Grrr."

Bob bent down, picked him up, the way Bobby picked him up made Shelly gasp, but quickly recognized her son was content. She took the opportunity to hang their coats up. She listened intently.

"That is a lion."

Robert pointed, "Grrr."

"This is one of my favorite paintings. One our family bought many generations ago."

Robert looked at his Daddy.

Bob purposely turned him toward the painting, "That is a male lion."

"Grrr."

"That is a female lion. And those are it's babies."

"Grrr."

He reached out to the painting.

Calmly Bob said, "No touch."
Robert looked at his Daddy.
Bob stated, "Lets go downstairs."
Shelly stepped up to them.
Bob asked, "Are you ready?"
"Yes."
She smiled when Bob asked, "You want me to change him?"
"No. I'll get it."
"I'll have to when he is here by himself."
"Lets go downstairs and I'll show you how I do it."
They headed to the basement.

Nicole was in her living room looking at her plant stand. She stepped up to it and rearranged a couple plants. She stepped back. She compared this plant stand with the rest of the plant stands and the hanging plants in front of the window. She was reminding herself which plants needed more sunlight.

She easily spotted Ashleigh's yellow Sport Edition Jeep Wrangler pull into the driveway. She watched as both Ashleigh and Julie stepped out of the vehicle. Nicole noticed Ashleigh was wearing an athletic outfit she spotted in a recent catalog. The catalog advertised the outfit as a two-tone striped sporty styled coordinate. The main color of the jacket and waist pants were dark blue. The stripes on the side were yellow and light blue; with the jacket collar being yellow. With the jacket being zipped down she spotted the yellow matching cami. Ashleigh matched this with the same baseball cap the model in the catalog was wearing; this advertised the catalog in white and red writing. She accessorized with a sports watch and simple stud earrings. Nicole felt a little envious of the yellow top. All it took for Ashleigh to be comfortable was this cami and a sports bra; one Nicole suggested she purchase. Granted it made her breasts look tiny, but based upon Nicole's perspective, she would have given anything to wear the cute tops Ashleigh often wore.

She was envious of Ashleigh's metabolism. Since starting to work out she quickly became toned. What was doubly frustrating was how much she could devour and remain as toned as she was. Granted, she was shapely when she first moved to Florida, but now she was toned with a noticeable rear end. It was no wonder many of the women became jealous of her flirty behavior. Nicole believed she would never go after someone's significant other; but she understood why other women would be suspicious. Ashleigh reminded everyone of the cute innocent looking cheerleader that was less than innocent. Knowing Ashleigh, it was clear she was filled with street smarts and was a leader in her own right. What amazed Nicole was how often she came to her for advice.

Before Nicole reached the front door Julie: unlocked the door, burst through it, and was headed up the stairs. Nicole was disappointed in how her daughter jumped in front of Ashleigh, plowed through the door, and headed up the stairs.

As she ran she started to say, "Auntie is leading aerobics. She's invited us to her..."
Ashleigh calmly shut the door.
"Howdy."

“Hi.”

Nicole turned toward her daughter, “Young lady.”

They heard the sigh.

Ashleigh lightly giggled.

She immediately became serious when Julie turned around.

“Yes Ma’am.”

“You ain’t being proper. Is that any way to treat a guest?”

“No Ma’am.”

Julie turned toward Ashleigh, “I apologize.”

Ashleigh, wanted to make light of it, but because of Nicole she answered, “Your forgiven.”

Julie knew to remain standing on the steps.

“I thought you were working until four?”

Ashleigh answered, “She did a great job. I decided we should leave early. I’m requesting she work again this upcoming Saturday.”

Julie was disappointed in her work until Ashleigh complimented her and then asked her to work on Saturday.

“She may.”

Julie smiled, “May I be dismissed. We’re headed to Auntie’s aerobic class.”

Nicole made a face.

Ashleigh replied, “You could join us.”

Nicole asked, “Which class is she teaching?”

Julie answered, “It’s her step class.”

With a serious tone and a look she asked, “Is it the advanced one?”

Julie sighed.

“Ashleigh ain’t ready for the advanced one. This is Auntie’s medium impact step class with an emphasis on every body part.”

“You wait there.”

Again Julie sighed.

Ashleigh took offense to Julie’s statement.

Nicole asked Ashleigh, “Have you ever taken one of her aerobic classes?”

Julie being impatient answered, “She’s taken a couple of her classes.”

Nicole in frustration turned toward her daughter, “Was it a low impact class?”

She sighed.

“Megan always starts someone with the low impact class.”

Nicole as a mother answered, “Her beginner classes are a lot different than her step classes.”

“Ashleigh can handle this medium impact class.”

Ashleigh was confused with this answer. Just a couple seconds earlier Julie said she was unready for a class.

“Let me call her.”

Julie protested, “We’re staring in an hour. We talked about stretching.”

“You wait there.”

“Yes Ma’am.”

Ashleigh witnessed Julie’s eye roll.

Nicole turned toward Ashleigh, "Have you attended any of Megan's step classes?"

"She's been wanting me to go to one."

Slight pause.

Ashleigh because of Nicole's tone asked "Should I?"

Julie answered, "Y'all will like it. Y'all will be able to handle this class."

Nicole and Ashleigh turned to Julie.

Julie answered, "It ain't like it's her advanced class."

"Is she using weights and jump ropes?"

Ashleigh's eyes went large.

Julie sighed, "You need em' if Y'all want to work out every muscle."

All at once Ashleigh felt the need to back out.

Julie seeing Ashleigh's reaction stated on purpose, "Maybe you ain't ready."

This irritated Ashleigh, "I'm ready."

Julie smiled.

This is what Julie expected Ashleigh to say.

Nicole wondered if this was a good idea, "Don't be showing Ashleigh your crazy stretches before class."

"Yes Ma'am."

Nicole looked over at Ashleigh, "Are you sure?"

She made a face, "I guess."

An excited Julie mentioned, "You like Ashleigh's cute outfit?"

Ashleigh made a face.

Julie corrected herself, "It's a great outfit."

Nicole looked toward Ashleigh, "It's great."

Ashleigh smiled, "I was surprised how comfortable it is."

"It's one of my favorite catalogs."

"I ordered a top too."

Julie interrupted, "Momma you attending the class?"

"I could."

"I'll change."

With this she ran up the stairs.

Nicole ignored the fact she did so without being excused.

Ashleigh feeling some doubt said, "Should I go?"

Nicole stated in a whisper, "Don't feel bad if you ain't at the same pace as everyone else. It's alright to take the less impact choice."

Ashleigh made a face.

"Okay."

Nicole asked, "I thought Christopher was taking her on a date?"

"Because of the rain they made it for later. They plan on going to a movie and out for dinner."

"She's actually attending a movie?"

"Yup."

They both smiled.

This is when Julie burst out of her room. She was wearing her light blue Adidas outfit.

Nicole directed Julie, "You be a host until I'm ready."

“But...”

“You will wait until I’m ready.”

“Yes Ma’am.”

“I won’t take long.”

Julie made a face of unbelief.

Ashleigh was happy she took Nikita home before coming over to Nicole’s house. She wondered if she was making a wise choice.

Julie turned toward Ashleigh and stated, “Y’all will like it. I bet Y’all will love it.”

“Are you sure?”

“You’ve come such a long way in a very short time.”

“I’ve never heard of ropes and weights being used in an aerobics class before.”

Julie made a face, “You haven’t?”

“No.”

Julie full of energy answered, “Y’all see. It makes the classes more exciting.”

Ashleigh gave a look.

“Y’all feel a sense of accomplishment.”

“Sure.”

Julie excited answered, “I’m so happy Y’all agreed to go.”

“Sure.”

Both were surprised on how quickly Nicole stepped into the living room. Nicole was wearing a new two piece color-block warm-up. The main color for both pieces was a navy blue. The bodice top had sky blue contrasting sleeves, a yellow stripe along the sleeves, zipper pockets, and striped elastic band cuffs and hem; the colors of the stripes were sky blue, navy blue, and yellow. Along both sides of the pull on elastic-waist pants was a yellow racer stripe. With the top zippered half way down Ashleigh spotted the dark blue athletic stripe tank, a top underneath, and the faint outline of a sports bra.

This was the first time she ever worked out with Nicole. It was obvious Nicole was in awesome shape. It was equally obvious Nicole went to great lengths to feel comfortable while working out. Ashleigh wondered if her breasts were as large as Nicole or Julie’s if she would work out. Ashleigh was honestly surprised both Nicole and Julie exercised as much as they did. Ashleigh now understood why Nicole was an expert in athletic wear. She suddenly understood why Julie was worried her breasts would be as large as her Momma. Their breasts were shaped differently but both ladies were on the larger side.

Observing what both ladies went through to be comfortable working out, she again appreciated the size of her breasts, and believed they were the perfect shape for her frame. Ever since she started working out with Julie and Megan; she felt the sports bras Julie and Nicole suggested made her breasts look small. Now, observing what Nicole went through, she appreciated how one decent sports bra was enough for her to be comfortable.

Nicole asked, “Y’all want to take separate vehicles?”

“I don’t care.”

Nicole smiled, “I don’t mind one way or the other.”

“Maybe it’s better if we take separate cars.”

Julie jumped in, “May I go with Ashleigh?”

Ashleigh winked.

Nicole smiled, “Sure.”

Based upon Julie's body language Nicole stated, "Y'all are coming home with me."

Julie answered, "Yes Ma'am."

Julie quickly opened the door and rushed to the Jeep.

Nicole made a face, "I apologize."

Ashleigh smiled, "She's excited."

"She should know better."

Ashleigh gently touched Nicole, "Your a great Mom."

This surprised Nicole, "Thank-you."

"I know both good ones and bad ones. Your a great one."

This touched Nicole's heart.

They heard Julie yell, "We'll be late."

The two ladies smiled at one another. Nicole prepared for the rain by grabbing a coat out of the closet. Ashleigh quickly left the house and ran into the Jeep. Nicole: locked the house door, she shut the curtains, left the lights on, and left through the garage. She decided she would stand close to Ashleigh and go her pace.

January 13, Nervous Part Three of Four

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*Ashleigh & Megan
Book I: Friendship*

*Saturday
January 13*

*Nervous
Day 10 of Book I
(Nineteen Days after Bob and Megan talked on the pier)*

*Part Four of
Four*

*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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January 13, Nervous Day 10 of Book I

(Nineteen Days after Bob and Megan talked on the Pier)

*A*shleigh: parked her yellow Sport Jeep Wrangler in the garage, turned off the engine, lifted up the parking brake, placed her head against the steering wheel, moaned, let her body go limp, and listened to the country radio station.

In a rough voice she said, “It’s a miracle she completed Megan’s Medium Impact Step Aerobics Class with an Emphasis on Every Muscle. I feel every single muscle in my body.”

She sat there.

She wondered what Megan’s high impact step aerobics class was like. Ashleigh felt a little better knowing Nicole at times chose the “low impact” versions of Megan’s exercises. One of Megan’s favorite go to transition moves echoed in Ashleigh’s head, *time to run in place or march*. The other statement Megan would love to yell over the mike was a question Ashleigh now hated, *scream if Y’all mean it*. Many of the ladies in the class would get excited about this and scream chants like: *Get Er’ Going, We’re great* or give out a bellowing noise. So often all Ashleigh was trying to do was breath. The last time Megan made this call, Ashleigh restrained herself from yelling, *I’m going to die*. The worst event in the whole class, was when Megan yelled, *We’re half way, Y’all are great. Lets rest*. Two things bothered Ashleigh about this. The first was they were only half way. The second was; Ashleigh imagined them stopping and taking a break. Instead they sat down on the step platform and moved their legs.

What irritated Ashleigh was how Julie and Megan were not even phased by the step class. Ashleigh was now of the opinion the low impact class Megan led must bore her. She felt the reason Megan looked forward to teaching the low impact class was to encourage people to be active.

When leaving the YMCA Ashleigh gained the reputation of wearing the cutest outfits and being very approachable. After her workouts she: took a shower, made herself look presentable, wore a casual but nice outfit, wore a small amount of jewelry, and went out of her way to socialize. The one rule she was politely insisting on, no matter where she went, was no talking about work outside of work; for the most part everyone respected this.

Today; she planned on wearing a multi-colored pastel colored patchwork skort; with the main color being pink. She would match this with a pink polo shirt with puffed sleeves, the buttons went further down than any other polo style shirt she owned, and it was one of the tightest shirts she owned. She purposefully purchased this top to wear with her sports bra or as a layered shirt; she always kept an extra sports bra in her duffel bag. She planned on adding silver loop earrings, silver bracelets, silver rimmed sunglasses, and matching pink colored wedges. She knew her orange colored duffel bag clashed, but she disliked transferring everything into a different bag; plus she loved the color and the wide shoulder straps. Many people privately joked the bag was bigger than she was.

Leaving today; the only thing she managed was the shower. Her long blond hair was in a haphazard pony tail; it was close to being dry. She: was without makeup, she never bothered to put on the watch she came in with, she left without wearing her bra; the outline of her breasts could clearly be seen through the polo shirt. The buttons were down all the way so anyone could view the top of her breasts. Instead of wearing the tighter skort she was wearing a leaf patterned travel pant with wide legs. It had: a wide blue stripe on top, the pants themselves were white, the leaf pattern was a dark blue, and they were tied on. She was delighted she left them in her duffel bag from a previous workout. Her yellow and blue athletic shoes clashed with her whole outfit. What mattered to her was both the shoes and pants were comfortable. She managed to be polite as she left the YMCA but she was far from her normal self. She was correct to assume she was part of many discussions after leaving the facility. Both Megan and Nicole stopped many of the rumors on why Ashleigh behaved and dressed the way she did.

The country song ended and the DJ announced thunderstorm warnings and rough sea conditions. This was the first time she was ever in a storm while living on the houseboat yacht. She thought about old paintings and old movies showing vessels being tossed around by massive waves. What added to her worry were stories about hurricanes. She reminded herself the houseboat yacht was docked and her brother spent a small fortune helping the owner of the marina replace the old breakers. She was able to recognize a thunderstorm was unable to sink the yacht while docked in the *Eastbank River*.

She mustered the energy to: turn off the radio, put away her Ipod, pull the keys out of the ignition, her hands hurt holding onto them, slowly stepped out of the Jeep, shut the drivers side door, looked into her Jeep, spotted her purse and duffel bag, leaned her head against the window, made a grimace, stood there for a short time, and then moaned. She: reluctantly lifted her head off of the window, walked around the Jeep, opened the passenger door, moaned as she leaned in, grabbed her purse; she held it in her hands. At this moment the purse felt like it weighed one hundred pounds. She easily recalled on why her arms and hands hurt. She was grateful Megan laid out a choice of different weights. Before this class Ashleigh believed she was strong for a woman. After observing the women in the class lifting heavier weights, while she struggled with the three pound weight; she no longer believed she was a physically strong woman.

The sound of the rain hitting the garage and the pavement became louder. She looked out of the garage. The rain was thick and it was pelting the pavement.

This was the reason she opened the main part of the bag, took out a pink jacket; she called this a spring jacket. She reluctantly decided to forgo bringing in the duffel bag. She closed the zipper to the duffel bag and shut the passenger side door. She went to the back of

her Jeep. She unzipped the window, dropped the tailgate, she opened her plastic storage bin, she took out a pink colored rain jacket, put it on, closed the tailgate, zipped up the back window, feeling every muscle in her upper body slipped on and zippered up her rain jacket, stepped up to the open garage door, stopped, leaned against the side of the garage, watched the rain hit the pavement, the marina lights turned on, the wind shifted; she was now being hit with wind and rain. She slid the rain jacket hood over her head.

She hit the garage door button, quickly moved out of the way of the door, Nikita howled; she was so sore to yell at her. She headed to the yacht: she made an attempt to run to the yacht, when she reached the end of the row of buildings she was at a slight jog, her hood flew off, when she reached the end of the parking lot she was walking, she felt like she was going to die when she stepped onto the first pier, she was tempted to sit down on Megan's bench, she grunted when she reached the yacht, and she made a face when she looked up the stairs from the first deck to the second deck. Lightning flash and the sound of thunder rolled in. She stepped near the railing of the yacht and looked at the river. She turned and looked over at the ocean. In the distance were a cluster of even darker clouds and underneath she spotted lighting flashes and rough seas. In one aspect this was awe inspiring. Even so, she now understood why being under those clouds and on those seas would be dangerous.

She looked up the stairs again. She avoided these stairs and approached the first deck door. She opened the door with her key, stepped in, shut it, locked it, and stood there. She was completely soaked: her face was wet, her hair was stuck to her heart shaped face, water was dripping off her pony tail, she was thankful she never bothered to put on makeup, her pants were stuck to her body, her tennis shoes were soaked, and she felt gross.

She heard Nikita's footsteps and the jangling of her collar.

She turned on the light and headed to the bow side of what they called the rec room or first deck. She turned off the light to the first deck and turned on the light to the stairs leading up to the second deck.

Ashleigh waited for Nikita to reach her.

She realized she would have to take her out. She debated if she should go up to the second deck and get her leash.

She spotted the flashing lightning through the windows; the thunder arrived sooner than last time.

She sighed.

Nikita whimpered.

Ashleigh comforted her Siberian Husky.

Ashleigh moaned as she went up the stairs. When she reached the second deck she turned on the light, stepped through the hallway where her suite was, went up the short steps to the lounge, she cringed, once in the lounge she turned on another light, asked her dog if she needed to go outside, Nikita ran to what everyone called Nikita's closet, Ashleigh reached the galley, set her wet purse on the China cabinet, took her phone out, slipped it into a pocket of her pink jacket, turned on the galley light, made her way to the closet, understood why Nikita was whimpering, opened the door, grabbed the pooper scooper, was grateful for the new one, grabbed the leash, put Nikita's leash on, grabbed a flashlight, and left the yacht the same way they came in.

She stopped at the end of the first pier when she felt a foreboding.

The rain pelted her, lightning flashed, and the thunder was immediate.

This area was creepy on regular nights; the storm made it feel worse. She turned towards Megan's houseboat. She wished Megan would have been home. She noticed Frank and Florence's houseboat lights were on. In spite of every muscle hurting she ran to their houseboat. When she reached their door, the rain was blocked because of an overhang; the sounds of the rain pelting the couples houseboat was dominating. She rang the doorbell.

Florence yelled in her Floridian accent, "Who's there?"

Ashleigh yelled, "It's me."

Florence immediately opened the door. Her voice was filled with worry as she asked, "What are Y'all doing?"

Nikita wanted Old Female to greet here.

Frank studied Ashleigh and Nikita from his recliner.

"I'm wanting to take Nikita potty but it don't feel right by the fence. Truth is I've never been through a thunderstorm here."

Frank was already standing up; "Y'all just wait a second."

"Honey come on in."

"Thanks."

Ashleigh and Nikita stepped into the houseboat. Nikita sniffed this area. She wanted to shake the water off but she knew she would get scolded by Best Friend.

Florence with a serious tone said, "Y'all need to be careful around the preserve."

Ashleigh answered, "It gets creepy at night."

"Have you been taking your dawg down there to do her business?"

"Sort off. She goes in front of the fence."

Florence turned to Frank, "You hearing that Pa."

"I'm getting ready."

Florence looked at Ashleigh, "There's a reason Mike put in the fence."

Ashleigh wondered why there was such a tall and heavy fence there.

This Korean war veteran came out of his bedroom. He was: in his hunting gear, was carrying a very large flashlight, wearing military style boots, and over his shoulder was an M-1 rifle.

Ashleigh was surprised: how quickly he changed clothes, was carrying a gun, and owned a bigger flashlight than Megan.

In an angry tone but it was like a Father commanding a daughter, "Y'all shouldn't be nearing the preserve at night or during a storm. Y'all follow me close. I ain't wanting Y'all hurt. You should have your dawg do it's business near the beach."

Florence added, "At least at night or during storms."

Ashleigh found herself asking, "Why?"

The two gave one another funny looks.

Florence answered, "During certain times of the year things live in the preserve."

Frank added, "Yes there be. What no one likes discussing is how people and pets go missing around these parts. I ain't having Y'all be one of them."

"Is there a serial killer living in there? You'd think..."

"Honey," Florence touched her arm, "I ain't saying nasty folks haven't been living in there from time to time. What we're talking about ain't all human."

"There's speculation if it's part human."

Florence mentioned, "If it ain't kidnapped Y'all yet. It might even like ya'."

Frank answered with a serious tone, "We ain't taking the chance. Y'all follow me."

A nervous Ashleigh answered, "Okay."

She let him pass.

Florence smiled and winked, "My Frankie might be old but he's a tough old buzzard. I'll do some praying."

Ashleigh gave her a look, "Thank-you."

"Are Y'all coming?"

Ashleigh commanded, "Nikita lets go."

Nikita wondered why she was never greeted.

Ashleigh felt the storm was stuck over the marina; she recalled the opening scenes of those black and white horror movies she liked to watch when she was a teenager.

Frank yelled, "Y'all better watch the lightning."

"Sure."

She wondered if this was possible.

"Lets get a move on. I ain't wanting to be out there long."

"Okay."

Ashleigh felt every muscle as they sort of jogged to the end of the pier.

Nikita stopped and could sense it.

Frank asked very loudly and serious, "Is she always stopping?"

Ashleigh answered just as loud, "Sometimes she acts funny at night."

Frank stated, "Ain't surprising me any. She's sensing the critters. I'm feeling em'."

They were shouting over the thunder and the noise the rain was creating pelting the marina.

"It's like we're being watched."

Frank answered, "Lets take her over there."

"By the mailboxes?"

"I ain't wanting to be near the fence."

"It's a fence?"

"Y'all see the gap?"

She looked at the gap between the fence and the river.

"Yeah."

"Y'all think them critters can't swim? They'll swing themselves around the fence faster than a Jack-Rabbit running away from a fox."

He asked, "Y'all have the scooper?"

"Yeah."

Ashleigh stated again, "Mike isn't going to like Nikita taking a dump near the mailboxes."

"He ain't saying anything to Y'all. He ain't wanting your brother moving his yacht."

"I suppose...."

The lightening flashed and the thunder vibrated their bodies.

Nikita whimpered.

"Nikita lets go over here."

She led Nikita through the parking lot and onto the area where the mailboxes were.

Frank kept an eye on the preserve.

With this being the first time Nikita left her markings in this area she was picky. Once she was finished Ashleigh acted quickly and picked up the droppings. Frank followed her to the dumpster.

Ashleigh commented, "It feels creepy here too."

"Them critters are the reason Mike built the high fence."

"Oh."

"Lets get back."

Frank watched their back until they reached the first pier.

They heard Florence yell, "I'm making Y'all dinner."

They spotted her. She was: standing underneath her overhang, she was in a long pink flower print rain coat, pink boots, and was holding her pink brimmed rain hat.

Ashleigh told Frank, "I'm not dressed for dinner. I..."

"If you ain't coming over Y'all hurt her Feelings."

"Let me take Nikita up."

"Bring her. I'm sure Florence will have a bone for her."

Ashleigh thought about everything Nicole and Megan taught her about southern hospitality. It occurred to her, if she went over to their houseboat, she would no longer be alone during the storm. The least thing she wanted was to offend her two friends.

"Alright."

Frank smiled and led them to their houseboat. Once Florence witnessed they were coming she quickly stepped into their houseboat.

Ashleigh wondered what was in the preserve and why no one would say what it was.

Once inside of the houseboat: Florence took her raincoat, Ashleigh dried Nikita with the old towel Florence gave her, stepped into the head of the houseboat, when she took off her wet jacket she was embarrassed by the shirt she was wearing, before Ashleigh could say anything, Florence gave her a brush, a towel, and a change of clothes. The sweatshirt, shirt, and the joggers were: in style four years prior, they were slightly big on Ashleigh, but they were designed for someone around her age. The important part, all of the clothes she was now wearing were dry, and she could wear the sweatshirt over the polo shirt she was wearing. Florence insisted on washing and drying her clothes.

After changing; Ashleigh found comfort eating dinner with her neighbors.

Nikita: enjoyed Frank giving her attention, the water she was given, and some food scrapes she received from Frank; this lasted until Florence yelled at him.

Both Frank and Florence were happy when Nicole called Ashleigh. It confirmed their belief the whole Steward family had Ashleigh's back.

Nicole was setting left overs onto the kitchen table.

Danielle and Ester were laying in front of the TV watching a mermaid movie. The girls were quoting the lines and sang the songs as the movie played.

Nicole looked over at Jimmy.

He was standing in front of the sliding glass doors observing the storm.

Nicole was about to ask Jimmy what was wrong.

Jimmy turned and walked to the stairs.

He shouted, "Julie!"

This surprised Nicole. She moved herself in front of the hallway so she could observe her husband.

This peeked both Danielle and Ester's interest. Ester purposely turned down the TV. Ester hoped her big sister was in trouble. She believed this was highly likely because her Daddy used what they called his drill sergeant voice.

Julie immediately opened her bedroom door and hurried to the top of the stairs, "Yes Sir."

"Where does Ms. Ashleigh take her dawg. To do it's business."

"In front of the fence."

"On the marina side or the preserve side?"

"The marina side."

"Is there still the gap from the fence to the river."

"Yes sir."

"Y'all have Ashleigh's number?"

"Yes sir."

"I want you to come on down here and call here."

"Yes sir. But why?"

"You tell her if she needs to take the dawg out she better have it do it's business near the beach. With it storming she shouldn't be nearing the preserve."

She thought about what happened earlier in the day.

Nicole stated, "I'll give her a call on my cell phone."

Jimmy answered, "Good idea."

Ester asked, "Why?"

Very serious Jimmy said, "You two promise me something."

Both ten year old's answered, "Yes sir."

"You never go into the preserve by yourselves and never go at night."

"Mr. Steward why?"

With intense eyes he answered Danielle, "There are things in the preserve that'll kidnap little girls."

Nicole pulled the phone down and scolded, "Jimmy!"

They all heard Nicole say, "Sorry."

A pause.

"Howdy. Ashleigh?"

Jimmy looked at the two girls, Julie was interested in what her Daddy had to say; so she stayed in the living room instead of going into the kitchen.

"The native people warn everyone to stay out of the preserve. I believe Y'all should listen to this advice."

"Why?"

He answered Danielle, "Honey. They have a legend of a creature in them woods. I've heard of many people who've gone missing stepping into the preserve."

He turned toward Julie, "Y'all are staying on the road when walking Nikita?"

"Yes sir."

The way she answered caught Ester and Danielle's attention.

Jimmy asked, "Something happen while walking her?"

Nicole stepped into the living room, "Did something happen while walking Nikita?"

Julie bluntly lied, “No Ma’am.”

They were unsure if Julie was telling the truth or not.

Jimmy answered, “I’d say stop walking her on the preserve side.”

“I never walk her on the beach and I’m always careful.”

Nicole mentioned, “I’ve heard of homeless people living in there. I do get nervous when Y’all walk Nikita alone the preserve.”

“I stay on bike path. From now on when I reach the look out I’ll turn around instead of hanging on the beach.”

Jimmy nodded his head, “I’m sure nothing will happen to Y’all if you stay on the bike path. I’d say it’s wise avoiding the beach near the lookout or the rest stop.”

“Yes Sir.”

Again Ester and Danielle looked at one another.

Jimmy turned toward Nicole, “Did Y’all talk to her?”

“She’s having dinner with Frank and Florence. Frank walked them out.”

Lightning flashed and the thunder rumbled.

Jimmy turned to Julie, “Does she take her to the fence every time?”

“I believe so.”

Jimmy mentioned with a tone, “I’ll talk to her on Monday.”

Nicole again moved the phone down, “She told me she found a different spot.”

“Good.”

Nicole and Ashleigh resumed talking.

Jimmy again turned toward Julie, “Young lady Y’all be careful walking Nikita.”

Based upon her earlier experience she stated very factually, “Nikita protects me.”

“I believe you.”

This concerned Nicole.

“Just a second.”

Nicole again lowered the phone, turned toward her daughter, “She ain’t about to bite someone is she? I ain’t wanting anything happening while Y’all are walking the dawg.”

Nicole listened to what Ashleigh was telling her while Julie gave her answer.

“She’s a good dawg. She wouldn’t bite anyone unless they deserved it.”

Jimmy confirmed what his Daughter just said, “She’s a good dawg.”

The conversation stopped as they listened to Nicole say goodbye to Ashleigh and they watched her shut her flip phone.

Nicole asked, “She still taking it to work?”

Jimmy answered, “The dawg is more popular than anyone in the company.”

Julie answered, “She gets taking for walks all the time. There are sketches and paintings of Nikita everywhere.”

Nicole answered, “Ain’t that the berries.”

Julie added, “Ashleigh needed to stop people from giving her treats on account she was gaining weight.”

Ester asked, “Can a dawg get fat?”

Serious Nicole stated, “Even pets should eat right.”

Danielle and Ester gave one another looks.

Nicole added, “Y’all need to get ready for dinner.”

The two ten year old's lifted themselves up off the floor, they threw their pillows on the coach, and answered, "Yes Ma'am."

Jimmy looked up at Julie and said, "This means you too."

The least thing Julie wanted was to have dinner with her family. It was unacceptable to argue with her Daddy. She headed into the kitchen to wash her hands. The two ten year old's were already running out of the bathroom and headed into the kitchen. They knew it was a casual night when they spotted the food on the counter and what was set on the table. They asked Nicole if they could eat in the living room. Nicole reclined their request. She instructed them to turn off the TV and DVD player. Ester did so and came back into the kitchen.

Nicole met her oldest daughter by the sink, "You have any plans?"

"Hannah should be calling."

Nicole smiled, "I'll take you over to her house if she calls."

Julie smiled in return, "Okay."

Nicole and Julie watched the two girls walk around the table filling their plates. Nicole whispered, "Hannah is a good girl."

Julie smiled, "I know Momma."

They stepped over to the table as a loving momma and daughter.

*M*egan tried on a variety of different outfits. Most of the outfits felt wrong for a date with Christopher. She completely avoided anything she considered her special clothes and avoided any type of slacks. What she settled on was: a white ultra-feminine ruffled blouse, underneath she was wearing a white u-neck shirt, she matched this with a long light blue denim skirt, and a conservative looking blue jean jacket. She accessorized with: blue flats, a wide blue belt with a large silver loop, a simple silver chain necklace, the best watch she owned, and a small purse she recently purchased at the thrift store.

Megan reminded herself the current hostess of Lucy's no longer wanted to be called Deedee but wanted to be called Dee. She was: average height, was in her early twenties, her long brunette hair with blond highlights was neatly pinned up, she had a diamond shaped face, soft blue eyes, a long thin nose, high cheek bones, a high forehead, a pointed chin, and a delightful smile. What made her lips appealing was her thin upper lip and her more luscious lower lip. She was wearing: a white fitted pintuck stretch shirt, black and thin white stripped high waisted slacks, a thin matching belt, a nice pair of black flats, a light amount of makeup, and simple post earrings. This outfit highlighted her smaller chest and her padded rear end; neither appeared inappropriate. In her hands she was carrying two menu's.

Megan's family and Deedee's family knew one another from the local VFW and the many revival meetings they attended. The two families went to different churches but both churches often times held revival meetings together. Megan was glad to hear Dee was on her way to getting a degree in nursing. Megan felt being a nurse was perfect for how smart she was and how well she worked with people.

Dee hoped the rumors of Megan being a lesbian or bisexual would end with Megan dating Christopher. Dee never believed Megan was a lesbian. Dee strongly believed if Megan was indeed a lesbian, and someone asked her if she was, she would have admitted to being one. Dee believed it was outrageous to believe Megan would have been bisexual. Based upon

Megan's personality Dee felt she would have chosen one or the other; but never both. Dee felt Ashleigh had no desire to be with a woman.

The restaurant was only a quarter full. The staff closed the blinds so the lightening would stop flashing into the restaurant. The thunder was still making its presence known. It seemed to everyone in the restaurant the storm was hovering over Eastbank.

Dee led Megan and Christopher to a more secluded area of the restaurant. Christopher pulled back a chair and Megan sat down; she was impressed with his gentleman qualities. Christopher pushed in the chair and sat himself down. Dee waited for both to be settled.

Dee asked while setting down the menu's, "Y'all want to start with something to drink?"
"I'll take a water."

With a friendly smile Christopher stated, "I'll take a Coke."

Dee smiled at Megan.

Megan caught the meaning and showed her dimple smile.

"I'll be back with Y'all drinks."

Megan replied, "Thank-you."

Dee stepped away.

Christopher missed this exchange because he was studying the menu.

Megan studied him.

Her dimples flashed.

She picked up her menu. She knew what was in it but she felt reading it helped her decide what to order. Earlier she politely declined his offer of taking her to a more expensive restaurant; she declined because she believed the restaurant he suggested was too expensive. She appreciated the movie and if she had the money she would have paid for her own dinner.

Dee brought them their drinks. Both thanked her.

Megan watched him: study the menu, set it down, and take a drink of his Coke. Megan: decided on what she wanted, set down her menu, and took a drink of her water.

He smiled at her.

She purposely waited to see if he would say anything.

It seemed like an eternity before he asked, "Did Y'all like the movie?"

"I liked how positive the coach was. It was noble of him to take over as head coach."

"It'd have been a difficult situation."

She asked, "Would you have taken the job?"

He took a sip of his Coke and answered, "I'd have taken a job on his staff."

Her dimples flashed.

"You wouldn't have wanted to be the head coach?"

"I only enjoy being an assistant. I don't have the desire to be a head coach."

"Oh."

There was an awkward silence.

They were grateful when the waitress arrived. By Megan reading her name tag she knew her name was Beth. This was the first time they ever met this seventeen year old. She: was five ten, had a long rectangular shaped face with a very pointed cleft chin, her very dark black hair was pinned up, had dark eyes, very dark eyebrows, a long bumpy nose, a long smile, faint dimples, and very straight teeth. She was an attractive voluptuous girl. Her breasts were large, had a larger bone structure, wider hips, and a backside to match. Living in Wisconsin she felt she was an average sized girl; since moving to Florida she felt obese. She believed she

was surrounded by the prettiest girls on the planet. She felt especially large in the waitress outfit. There were many local boys who were fascinated by her voluptuous figure.

Her Dad moved into the area because of *Renewed Mastery*. She was happy because her Dad liked his job and was excited about a change. Beth hoped her Dad would find a nice woman to marry. Beth was grateful she found a friend at school right away. She was delighted this friend introduced her to a group of good girls; this was very important to her. She always disliked snobs and party girls. She missed her best friend from Wisconsin.

She spoke to Christopher and Megan, "Hi. My name is Beth. I'll be your waitress. Would you like an appetizer?"

Megan immediately recognized the Wisconsin accent.

Megan felt compelled to ask, "Where are Y'all from?"

She politely answered, "I'm from Waukesha Wisconsin."

Before she was asked the follow up question, "We moved here because my Dad works at the maintenance department at *Renewed Mastery*."

She left out he was the lead mechanic.

Megan asked, "Has the move gone well?"

"We're liking the warm weather."

Christopher asked, "I believe Y'all have gone to my church. If I'm correct your father is Tom."

She lit up like a Christmas tree, "That's my Dad."

"He attended our Men's Bible study last week."

She smiled, "What's your name?"

"Christopher. If Y'all were attending middle school you might have me as a teacher. Besides teaching I'm an assistant on the football team."

"I played high school football."

Megan jumped in right away, "You did?"

"Until sophomore year."

Megan asked, "What positions?"

"Linebacker and offensive line. I was better at linebacker."

"Are Y'all trying out for the Eastbank team?"

Megan caught out of the corner of her eye Christopher's look; she put this into her memory.

"No. Playing against the boys was too hard on me. I'm thinking about trying out for the girls flag football team."

Christopher stated, "The team could use a good player."

She answered, "I'm thinking about it."

Megan reassured her, "Lucy's always works with athletes."

"They will?"

Christopher added, "They will."

Beth smiled and asked, "You ready to order?"

Beth: took down their order, grabbed the menu's, and hurried their order to the front. Working as a waitress in Wisconsin if she talked too much management would scold her. She was surprised when Dee complimented her on how well she was doing and how friendly she was to customers.

Megan smiled at Christopher.

He took a drink of his coke.

Megan waited.

The only noise at the table was the thunder.

She watched him take another drink of his coke.

After a while, Megan broke into the silence by asking; “How’s teaching?”

He smiled, “I’d prefer to teach high school students.”

“Why?”

“Middle school students are more rambunctious and have shorter attention spans.

Overall I have a good class.”

Again silence.

Her dimples flashed and she made a face.

He took a drink of his coke.

This was frustrating to Megan. She was told by others he was an outgoing teacher. As a coach he was known to be serious; but was able to engage the players. She witnessed him have conversations with the men in his church and observed him talk to the guys at the Christmas party. He was always polite to any woman they came in contact with. She was starting to feel something was wrong with her.

They were pleased when Beth brought them their meals.

He asked, “How’s business?”

This was the first time he ever asked. She was excited to tell him about her contacts, how she was receiving great online reviews, how many French speaking Canadians were scheduling charters, and she briefly talked about the retired group who scheduled a regular charter with her. Megan was disappointed he only asked a few short questions. During this time Beth refilled their drinks twice and took their plates away. The thunderstorm passed over the town and the rain ended. When the storm was a far enough distance Dee and the waitress staff opened the blinds. After Beth helped raise the blinds she checked on them and left the bill. Megan and Christopher combined their money to give Beth a good tip.

In silence: they went to the front of the restaurant, he paid the bill, and as a gentleman led her to her truck.

This is when he smiled and surprised Megan by stating, “I had a great time.”

She was even more shocked when he asked, “I’d like to take Y’all to play mini golf or maybe go on a hike?”

“I’d have time on Thursday night?”

“Great. I’ll give you a call and work out the details.”

She smiled her big dimple smile.

“I’ll look forward to the call.”

She was happy he opened the truck door, he shut it when she was settled in her seat, and he waved as she drove away.

Megan hoped a more active date would help him open up more. She was grateful to see the yacht lights were on.

Shelly, Bobby, and Mike were standing in an empty apartment; Mike was the owner of the building.

She was: angry at herself for standing in the apartment, was angry at herself for accepting the two year old Subaru Outback with very low miles parked in the parking lot, and was annoyed she felt pressured to give Bobby and the owner an answer. The conflicting emotion was the appreciation she felt toward Bobby.

The two men starred at her.

Her phone broke the silence.

She said, "Just a second."

Bobby answered, "No hurry."

She glanced at him.

She pulled her flip phone out of her purse. She used the call as an excuse to step away from the two men. Based upon the caller ID on the phone it was her Mother. She correctly assumed her irritated mother was calling about: her Mother's car being dropped off at her house, dropping Little Bobby off without an explanation, and how all of this looked. She was certain there would be a discussion when she arrived home in a new car; a car she wanted ever since it first came out. She: never bothered to answer the phone, turned off the ringer, and dropped it back into her purse.

"Bobby would you come here."

She glanced at the landlord, she felt he was a very nice guy; she decided at this moment it was better if he was out of the apartment.

Bobby stepped over to her.

"What's the matter?"

She looked at the landlord, "Could you give us a few moments?"

Mike answered, "Sure. I'll step into the hallway."

Bob looked at him, "Thanks."

Mike smiled, "No problem."

This little exchange reaffirmed Shelly's feeling they worked with one another before.

He stepped out of the apartment.

Bob asked Shelly, "You like it."

She decided to take her sponsors advice, and the advice from an older couple she respected from church; and be blunt with Bobby.

"I'm angry at you."

"Why?"

His surprised look annoyed her; her impulse was to yell at him. Instead she took a deep breath. She was honestly surprised he waited for her answer.

"I like the apartment."

"If you like it why are you angry?"

She managed a calm voice, "Why didn't you ask me first?"

He pushed up his glasses.

"Your the mother of my son."

"This is true."

"I know how you feel about your mother."

With a blended look of compassion and frustration she stated, "These things don't give you the right to try to control me."

"I'm in no way trying to manipulate you. I'm trying to be a good father."

This was both sweet and annoying.

He continued, "What type of father would I be if I didn't help his mother? Until we get the support settled I believed this would help you."

She was hit with a mix of emotions. She thought of all the women she knew who needed to battle for support or never received any.

He broke the silence, "Like I offered before. If you took the apartment I'd pay the rent until you graduated tech school. I'd ask you'd never use again."

Her greenish-blue eyes focused, "Bobby I'm never going to use again."

"I want to believe you. But you have to understand why I'd have this as a stipulation."

"It's frustrating you'd demand that."

She made a face.

"I understand why."

She took a calming breath.

"But, isn't this an example of how you try to control people?"

"I'm trying to help out my son and his mother."

"How long have you rented out the apartment?"

He pushed up his glasses.

"A year."

If she would have been using this would have led to an argument.

"You didn't even ask me."

She again calmed herself and in a stern but controlled voice said, "It isn't right of you to choose my car and pick out an apartment for me without even asking me."

She was ready for him to yell at her.

"If you don't like it I'll work out something with Mike. You've always liked the car. I could give you a list of apartments to look at."

She assumed Mike owned more than one apartment complex.

Again, taking the advice from her sponsor and the couple she knew, she reached inside of herself and addressed what she felt was the elephant in the room.

I hope you understand I'm not sleeping with you."

"I'm not expecting you to sleep with me."

This was a relief. She suddenly became bothered by the fact there was no sign of disappointment.

"So are you taking the apartment?"

"It's okay if I wait a couple days to decide?"

He pushed up his glasses.

"Of course."

"You promise you'll talk to me before you ever do something like this again?"

"I don't think..."

With a tone she knew he'd accept he interrupted, "I'm his mother. It isn't right of you to control everything."

She expected a debate.

She was surprised when Bobby called out, "Mike."

He stepped into the apartment.

"Shelly might not take the apartment."

He gave a face, "Okay."

Bob looked over at Shelly, “Shelly do you want to take the keys until you decided or do you want Mike to hold them?”

Shelly thought of a dozen ways to handle the situation.

She took the mature route, “If I could have the keys so I can show my parents the apartment. I’ll call you within a few days.”

Bob stepped in, “Let me know what you decide. I’ll honor your wishes either way. I hope you keep the car.”

“I will do so.”

“You promise you’ll talk to me next time?”

“Yes.”

“I’ll let the two of you work out the details.”

This surprised Shelly. She believed he would have wanted to go out to dinner. This was a relief; but then it stung a little.

“Yes Bobby.”

Mike and Bob shook hands and Bob stepped out.

Mike answered a list of Shelly’s questions. They exchanged phone numbers and he gave her a copy of the lease. She focused on how Bobby was paying for the lease. She briefly read the list of the things she was responsible for, at a glance it all looked reasonable; she would go over the whole lease in more detail later. Mike handed her the keys and stepped out of the apartment.

After he shut the door is when she allowed herself to cry.

What stopped her tears was another phone call from her mother.

There were a dozen ways to answer the call; she took the option of ignoring the call and putting the phone back into her purse.

She set her purse on the floor, took off her jacket, knelt down, and prayed.

After praying, she again explored the apartment but this time imagined what she could do with it. She liked the fact: there were two bedrooms, she liked the kitchen, she believed the bathroom needed more shelving, she liked the old style living room with the high ceiling, and she enjoyed stepping out onto the balcony. To get onto the balcony she needed to open a very large door like window, this door window was in the far corner of the living room, it stayed open until she stepped back into her apartment; she felt this gave the apartment character. The wooden rails were new. Looking over the wooden rails she could look straight down onto the sidewalk. Based upon a pile of snow Mike shoveled the deck before Bobby and herself arrived. If she leaned forward over the wooden railing and turned to her right she could see the street in front of her building. Turning left and looking over the wooden railing it was easy to see the parking lot behind the apartment. Six feet in front of her was a red brick building. The window was closed and the blinds were down. She heard an argument. She stepped back into the apartment partly because of the argument and she was getting cold without her coat on. She correctly assumed this building was one of the first buildings ever erected in Falls Town.

Her one concern was her son falling fall down the steep stairs outside of the back bedroom. The stairway was outside of the building. It was about five feet away from a door attached to a back bedroom. At the bottom of the stairs and to the left was a tattoo parlor and a small parking lot. In a direct line from these stairs was a one way street, there was another small parking lot, grass, then a large bank parking lot; the bank was the largest in Falls Town.

To the left of the parking lot was a street with a line of three two story houses. The one way street, the back of the municipal lot, and the street with the houses created a four corner section. In direct view of the back door of the apartment was: the stairs, the parking lot for the tattoo parlor, the one way street, most of the bank parking lot, another road, and a section of a river park way. To the right on this parkway was a very old dam, the dam created a four story waterfall; because of this waterfall citizens voted for the dam to be repaired instead of being removed. In front of the dam was a modern bridge, this bridge was a short ways from the entrance of the bank and was part of Main Street. Continuing up the river and in a wooded area were very small waterfalls, people could easily walk across them in the middle of the summer; this is where the name Falls Town originated. She was certain her son would like any wildlife in the park and along the river park way.

She sighed.

She: slipped on her jacket, picked up her purse, put on her hat, slipped on her gloves, and stepped out of the apartment. She locked the brand new deadbolt and the new door handle lock. She glanced at the other two apartment doors, their deadbolts were older, and the door handles were without locks. She believed Bobby insisted on new locks.

She turned went down the L shaped stairs, there were more steps on the top section, the landing was fairly large, there were a few short stairs at the bottom, a space, and directly left was a metal door leading outside; she pushed open this door. The street in front of her was the second main road through the small downtown area of Falls Town. She always liked the small diner across the street; she knew to avoid it because of the drug addicts and drunks who frequented the place. She turned right and walked passed the entrance of the sports memorabilia store and the hair dresser.

When she passed the metal trash can she turned to her right and was facing the municipal lot. She spotted her green Subaru Outback. The worst part about living here would be moving the car from the side municipal lot to the back parking lot across from the tattoo parlor. She correctly believed she would receive a ticket if she left her car parked in the municipal parking lot over night.

She believed this apartment was Bobby's way of testing her. She was certain if she remained clean and finished tech school he would purchase her a house.

She asked herself the question out load, "Do I love you?"

She felt she could wait to answer this question. If old patterns remained consistent he would purpose. Except; his patterns were changing. In the next few months she would find out what was causing these changes. Planning on what she would tell her Mother caused her to push any concerns about Bobby to the side.

She stepped into her new vehicle. She turned on the engine and made a left out of the back entrance and onto the one way street. Five things she liked about this location: she was close to the freeway, she could easily drive to her technical college, it was a quick drive to any store she needed, her parents house was one town over; this was close enough to get there but far enough away to keep her distance. She hated to admit she loved the vehicle. With this being the station wagon version it was exactly what she needed.

Ashleigh: led Megan and Nikita through the bridge of the Yacht, stopped, turned on a few sets of outside lights, made sure there was enough light to see but was dark enough to enjoy the night sky, she carefully opened the door to the third deck, this caused all of her muscles to scream at her, with the door against her back, she motioned for Megan to step out; they smiled at one another. Ashleigh was carrying a pitcher of sweet iced tea and a bowl of grapes. They felt like they weighed a hundred pounds. Megan was carrying two empty glasses and a rug for Nikita.

Ashleigh changed out of the clothes Florence let her use. She was wearing a pair of old faded jeans, she pulled them up and wished she would have worn a belt, pink tennis shoes, matching pink socks, she was wearing a lemon and bubblegum colorblock shirt with quarter inch sleeves; the sleeves were in the bubblegum color. With it just being Megan she was without a bra; if she believed her best friend was a lesbian she would have worn one. Draped over herself was an unzipped pink hoodie, she was without makeup, and her hair was in a pony tail.

Megan removed the small amount of makeup she wore, changed into a pair of khaki colored cargo pants, was wearing a blue white green and light blue striped oversize fleece hoodie with long sleeves and drawstrings; underneath she was wearing a long sleeved blue t-shirt without a bra. With the hoodie being oversize and her breasts being small she felt she was being modest. If Bob was around she would have worn a bra and a different top. She would avoid the possibility of a breeze causing her erect nipples to be noticeable. Her dark blond hair was in a pony tail; the pony tail was sticking out of a Miami Dolphin baseball cap. She was wearing blue shoes she often wore on wet surfaces.

Nikita stopped when Ashleigh stopped. In her mouth she was carrying a new bone. What was odd for Nikita was Woman Friend was with them on this part of the “yacht” territory. In this area Best Friend made noises with Favorite Male.

Megan mentioned, “You have an awesome bridge.”

Ashleigh smiled and answered, “This doesn’t surprise me any.”

Nikita could sense where Favorite Male spent most of his time. Nikita was banned for ever entering Bob’s office suite.

There were two ways into Bob’s office suite, one was through a door between the bridge and the suite, and the other was a very expensive glass door overlooking the stern of the third deck. Currently all of the blinds were covering the windows and the door to the office suite.

In the last quarter of the third deck was a white built in metal table and two white built metal recliners. Ashleigh set down the pitcher and grapes onto the table. She stepped over to a storage box on the starboard side of the yacht; this box was against the railing of the third deck. Megan quickly set down the two empty glasses onto the metal table, she stepped over to the starboard side recliner, and carefully laid down the rug. She stepped over to Ashleigh.

Nikita laid down on the rug and focused on the bone.

Megan grabbed one of two cushions Ashleigh took out of the storage box. They: walked the cushions over to the white metal recliners, they attached the cushions onto the recliner, Ashleigh took off her tennis shoes, they sat down at the same time, Ashleigh with a grunt pushed out the recliner, Megan poured ice tea into the cups, Megan set her recliner to a second setting, and they started to enjoy the grapes.

In front of them was: a few feet of open deck, after was a white railing, two palm trees were tied to this railing, one was on the port side and the other was on the starboard side, they could see the end of the pool, and the bow edge of the second deck. The marina was spread out before them; the marina was lit up by its lights and the docked vessels. In front of them they could see the marina, the river, a boat was speeding down the river, the bridge crossing the river, and where the Warrior River was. On their right was the town of Eastbank and further south was the bridge crossing the Warrior River. From here it was easy to see headlights crossing the river. To their left they could see the tops of the mansions and the ocean.

Nikita was enjoying her bone. She would listen for a human noise she understood.

Megan commented, "It's beautiful up here."

Ashleigh answered, "Yes it is."

They took drinks of their iced tea.

Ashleigh asked, "This doesn't taste anything like Nicole's? Does it?"

Megan's dimples flashed.

She looked over at her friend, "No."

They looked at one another and giggled.

"Give me a second."

Megan answered, "Okay."

Ashleigh: sat up, made moaning noises, took off her socks, stuffed them into her tennis shoes, made another grunting noise as she stood up, moaned again, stretched, moaned again; immediately Nikita stood up.

Megan smiled as she turned and watched them enter into the bridge.

Megan focused on the bridge crossing the warrior river. Her thoughts were focused on the date with Christopher. Megan heard Nikita's chain approach her from behind. Megan looked up at Ashleigh. She was carrying four bottled waters.

"Here."

Megan took one.

"I'll dump the iced tea later."

Megan's dimples flashed, "Okay."

Ashleigh: grunted as she set down the water bottles onto the table, grunted again sitting down in the recliner, and grunted again when she used her legs to kick out the recliner.

Nikita laid down on her rug and again enjoyed her bone.

Megan's dimples flashed.

She was surprised her friend was in bare feet. Megan worried her best friend would catch a cold. In contrast the hoodie she was wearing was the warmest one she owned; next time she would bring a jacket.

They opened the bottles and took a drink.

"Y'all are careful with plastic?"

"Yes. Especially after what you told me."

Megan smiled her big dimple smile.

Megan's smile quickly faded and she looked over the marina.

Ashleigh suspected her best friend was contemplating her date.

Ashleigh: remained quiet, ate a couple more grapes, and took a sip of her water.

"I like em'."

“Well that’s good.”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

In a somber tone, “He asked me out again.”

“I’m assuming you said yes?”

“Yes.”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

She took a sip of her water.

She repeated herself, “I like em’.”

“Uh huh.”

“It’s just he doesn’t say anything.”

“Uh huh.”

“We saw a great movie.”

“Which one?”

“*We are Marshall.*”

“It’s had mixed reviews.”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

“I don’t know why?”

“I haven’t seen it.”

Megan turned toward Ashleigh and stared at her. When Ashleigh faced her friend she felt every muscle in her body.

“The coach was so positive. After the plane crash everyone was talking about shutting down the program. I liked how a player and the coach kept the football program going.”

“I do like the actor.”

Megan smiled, “I’ve never seen him before.”

Ashleigh was happy when they both went into a more relaxed position.

“He’s great in anything he does. I’ve heard he’s a good guy too.”

This shocked Megan.

Ashleigh answered the pause, “Bob has connections.”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

“We met a lot of entertainers when he owned his club.”

“Makes sense.”

They grabbed more grapes and took more sips.

Megan broke the silence, “If the actor played was like the coach in real life. The coach was a good man.”

“The coach took over after a plane crash?”

“Yes.”

“It must have been difficult.”

“It was. The coach and the people in the community were talking about shutting down the whole program.”

“Sounds sad.”

“It was.”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

“But the coach saw the news and wanted to coach there.”

This caused Ashleigh to turn toward Megan and exclaim, “Wow!”

“Y’all are seeing it.”

They were again looking at one another; Ashleigh was feeling everyone of her muscles.

Ashleigh made a face, "What?"

"You haven't watched the movie and Y'all are more excited than he was."

Ashleigh shook his head.

Megan asked, "What?"

Ashleigh sighed.

"There's guys who just don't want to talk about anything."

"All he sad was he liked the movie."

"Did he say anything else?"

Megan's dimples flashed.

"One thing."

"What?"

Megan sighed.

"He said he'd have wanted to be on his staff but wouldn't want to be the head coach."

"Was it hard to fill the staff?"

"Yes Ma'am."

"Maybe just being on his staff shows he's a good guy."

They again went back to a relaxed position on their recliners and looked out over the marina.

Megan broke the short silence, "I'd feel better if he wanted to be the head coach."

"Some people wouldn't like coming into a situation like that."

"He ain't interested in ever being a head coach."

"Some people don't like leading."

"I wish I'd know if he liked leading."

"Just because he doesn't want to be a head coach doesn't mean he doesn't lead with other things."

They turned their heads toward one another.

Megan stated, "I've heard he's a good engaging teacher. I've observed him talk to others. He ain't talking to me."

"Some guys don't talk a lot."

Megan's dimples flashed.

She turned toward the marina.

Ashleigh trying to be encouraging said, "Maybe after a few more dates he'll open up."

Megan liked this and smiled, "I hope so. We're mini golfing or going on a hike on Thursday. I hoping being active will help him open up."

"You might not like this question?"

Megan turned to Ashleigh, "Ask it."

"Do you feel comfortable talking to him?"

Megan's dimples flashed.

They again looked at one another.

She answered honestly, "I ain't sure."

"That's a key."

Megan answered, "I'm feeling it'll start after a couple more dates."

Ashleigh smiled and touched her friend on the arm, "I'm sure it will."

They heard Nikita making noises.

They looked over.

Megan stated, "She's dreaming again."

"It's funny how her legs twitch."

Megan stated, "I'd bet she's dreaming about them walks Julie takes her on."

"You mean runs."

"You ain't minded Julie running her?"

"Nope. It keeps her calm. With everyone walking her at work she's even more calm."

"Ain't you worried something will happen?"

"Nah."

She waved her hand.

"Everyone loves her."

Megan smiled.

They both took drinks of their waters and ate some grapes. They were enjoying watching vessels cruise the river.

Megan broke the silence, "We need to come up her more often."

"You want Bob listening to our conversations?"

Megan's dimples flashed.

"The cabin is his office."

Megan made a face and her dimples flashed.

Megan found herself asking, "What's it look like?"

"It's a lot like his office at work. He has a large wooden desk. His computer is in there. He has artwork hanging in there given to him by past employees. A few movie posters. I've only seen his office when I'm talking to him or his blinds are up. When I do come up here he often shuts the blinds."

Megan made a face.

Ashleigh stated, "There are two places I never go into. His office and his suite."

Megan respected this.

Megan blushed.

"Is he shutting the blinds because he's watching porn?"

Megan blushed again.

Ashleigh honestly never thought of this.

Megan blushed and said, "I apologize for asking."

"It's okay. We're adults. I trust you."

Megan quickly answered, "I'd never say anything."

"Until now I never even thought about it."

This surprised Megan. With how conservative her family was she knew her brothers touched themselves. She caught her brother Timmy enjoying himself; he never knew it. She was taught good girls never touched herself. After catching a college roommate watching porn, hearing her college friends talking about it, and reading about it was the reason she tried it. She never understood what the big deal was. This ended when she received her first orgasm while riding a horse.

Ashleigh and Megan looked at one another.

Ashleigh broke the silence, "We've never really talked about sex."

"You think he watches porn?"

Ashleigh's awkward feelings surprised her. Because she looked up to her brother she wanted to believe he never did. She speculated he masturbated. She honestly wanted to pretend he never did so; but it would be ignorant to think he never did.

She answered, "In all the years I went over to his house I never found a stash of magazines or ever found a video tape or a DVD."

She turned toward her best friend, this pulled at her muscles.

She stated very seriously, "Unlike the times I found porn at places I babysat. Or stashes of porn friends and I found at their houses. When my brother writes about porn he always talks about the consequences. I want to believe he doesn't watch it. If he does he's kept it from me."

Megan commented, "Porn is everywhere."

"Our IT department has installed some of the strongest porn blockers in the country."

Megan's dimples flashed.

"In your office?"

"Yup."

Megan found herself asking, "I ain't understanding why someone would watch it at work?"

"To get off."

This bluntness shocked Megan.

"You'd think they'd be afraid someone would catch em'. I'd die if someone caught me enjoying myself. Much less watching porn."

"Some people get off by the idea of being caught."

Ashleigh made sure to say, "I'm not one of them."

Megan thought about her attempts at masturbating in public places. What stopped her was the idea of being caught. What turned her on was getting herself off in a public place but no one knowing she was enjoying herself.

Megan decided to ask, "Would Y'all masturbate at work if Y'all knew you'd never be caught?"

"I'd be to uncomfortable."

They sat back down in more comfortable positions.

Ashleigh continued, "I'm sure people have. We just can't have people watching porn or sexually harassing someone. We'd have to fire someone if they were caught getting off. By themselves or with someone else."

Ashleigh sighed.

"What?"

"I hate firing people."

"It ain't surprising me any."

"To fire someone for watching porn would be horrible."

There was a brief silence.

Megan stated, "Some believe only guys watch porn."

Her dimples flashed.

Megan while blushing said, "I believe women are addicted to porn too."

They looked at one another.

Ashleigh said, "Because of my Step Dad and a boyfriend having me watch it I find porn disgusting."

Megan's dimples flashed.

Megan decided to be honest, "I never knew they made porn for gals."

"Did you look for it?"

"When I was looking for answers I'd click on porn sites. Honest I wasn't trying. I was surprised when I started running into porn sites dedicated to women. I ignored these advertisements for a long time. My started reading erotic stories written by gals. Many of these sights have links to naked men. I made the mistake of clicking on one of these links. I'd take it back if I could."

Ashleigh stated, "I've run into these sites too."

Megan's dimples flashed.

They both blushed.

Ashleigh broke the silence, "I started to visit all the sites with erotic stories. I felt these stories were changing me and I stopped reading them. Seeing a guy nude hasn't ever done anything for me."

Megan blushed.

Ashleigh touched Megan on the arm, "Women are visual too. It's just women don't like to admit they enjoy looking at nudes and like watching hard core stuff. I'm sure there are a large portion of women who are addicted to porn. It's just women don't want to admit they watch it and I'm sure even less want to admit they are addicted to it."

Megan blushed.

"Y'all enjoy yourself to the stories?"

Ashleigh looked at Megan and smiled. She understood how naive Megan could be with sex, and answered honestly, "Yes. But I felt guilty after."

Blushing Megan answered.

"I'm feeling guilty when I'm enjoying myself to em'."

Ashleigh stated, "Some say we shouldn't feel guilty about watching porn or getting off to a story."

"I ain't feeling guilty when I masturbate on my own. But I feel guilty when I'm looking at pictures or reading a sexy story. I was tempted to watch a clip the site advertised as female friendly."

Ashleigh was blunt, "I don't believe anything good happens from watching porn."

"I was having trouble stopping myself from clicking onto the link."

"Imagine how difficult it is to stop having sex after having it."

Megan's dimples flashed.

"Y'all ain't the only one to say it."

They became silent thinking about what pornography meant to them.

Megan broke the silence, "I feel like such a hypocrite when I'm looking at cocks."

"Why?"

"For years I ridiculed men for watching porn. I've chastised men for looking at swimsuit models. And getting excited for looking at gals with big boobs. What I'm finding myself looking at are guys with big..."

She trailed off and blushed.

"Members?"

"Yeah."

Ashleigh stated, "Real big ones can hurt."

“Y’all told me.”

She stated, “Real little ones aren’t great either.”

“What bothered me was the idea I was becoming like a guy who’d only like a gal with big boobs. But I’m becoming a woman who’d only like a guy if he’s large.”

“There’s a difference.”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

She asked sincerely, “What’s the difference?”

Ashleigh answered, “You don’t know a guy’s size until you see it.”

“Depends on the swimsuit.”

Megan blushed at her own statement.

Ashleigh was unable to hold in the laughter.

Megan’s dimples flashed and she laughed too. Megan felt a little childish for laughing but it seemed to make her feel better.

Ashleigh touched Megan on the arm, “For some women big cocks are their thing. For others size doesn’t matter.”

She pointed to herself, “I love how a cock feels. But I want foreplay and I want the guy to be patient.”

Ashleigh blushed.

They both laughed again.

They stopped laughing.

Very serious Megan stated, “With my reading. And what everyone is telling me it’s all about communication.”

Ashleigh agreed, “It is.”

“Does love make a difference?”

“I believe so.”

There was a slight pause.

Ashleigh asked, “Are you in love with Christopher?”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

“I ain’t sure.”

Very sternly Ashleigh stated, “Don’t sleep with him to find out.”

Megan answered sternly, “I’m planning on waiting until my wedding night.”

Ashleigh smiled. “Easier said than done. That being said I wish I’d have waited.”

Megan sighed.

“I’m sure it ain’t easy. It seems everything worth doing is difficult in some way.”

Ashleigh answered, “So true.”

They relaxed and looked out over the marina.

Megan turned to Ashleigh and asked, “Hows the move going?”

“It’s busy.”

“I’ve heard.”

Ashleigh said with respect, “Your brother is trying to encourage me.”

Megan shown her big dimple smile.

“Don’t tell him.”

Megan became excited, “What?”

“We’re going to promote him.”

Her dimples flashed.

“Promise you won’t say anything.”

“I promise.”

“We have to work something out first. Bob is going to talk to him during the week.”

“He does like working for Y’all.”

“We believe that.”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

“A lot of people have moved into this town and the surrounding area’s since Y’all moved here.”

“We’re aware of it.”

Megan made a face.

“Bob keeps tabs.”

Megan asked, “Connections?”

Ashleigh nodded, “Yup.”

They looked out over the horizon.

“The ocean is so beautiful at night.”

Megan asked, “How was the storm?”

“Florence made me dinner.”

“Y’all were safer on the yacht.”

“I know. I felt better being around someone.”

Megan smiled her big dimple smile.

“Good idea.”

Ashleigh pushed up the recliner and stared at Megan, “What’s in the preserve?”

Megan’s dimples flashed.

“They say if Y’all talk about it they show up.”

Ashleigh gave her a face.

“It depends on who Y’all talk to.”

“Have you seen anything?”

“No.”

Megan thought back to certain incidents.

“I’ve seen strange things and heard odd things. But I ain’t saying what they say is living there ain’t there.”

Ashleigh wondered why Megan was being vague.

“You feel I should have Nikita go by the mailboxes or by the beach.”

Immediately Nikita sat up, her collar jangled, and she gazed at Best Friend.

They snickered and Ashleigh rolled her eyes.

“It’s a good idea.”

Ashleigh asked, “Want to escort me over?”

“I’d be pleased too.”

Nikita whimpered.

Ashleigh answered, “We’re leaving.”

They worked together to put everything away. Ashleigh always appreciated it when Megan grabbed her large flashlight and escorted her to where Nikita did her business.

Hannah, Zoe, and Julie were in a back room of Hannah's house. In this room were: two couches, a TV, a coffee table, a couple end tables, and a two old green chairs with wooden handles. There was no door to this room. As long as they were quiet none of Hannah's family would hear them. All of the blinds were down. If someone glanced into the room they would have assumed they were asleep.

Hannah's Mom embarrassed Hannah but set up a night light in the room they were in and in the hallway bathroom. Her Mom insisted they needed them because of Julie and Zoe. Julie was laying on one of the couches, Hannah was on another, and Zoe volunteered to sleep on the floor. She reassured Hannah's Momma as long as she was using a sleeping bag she would be fine; Hannah's mother believed her because of all the camping trips Zoe's family took.

Hannah was awake but her eyes were closed. She was excited because her two best friends were staying over night. It seemed like an eternity since Julie spent the night over at her house. This was causing her to think about all her friends and what was happening at school.

There were three girls Hannah worried about. The two friends she worried about the most was Brenda and Julie. On occasion she worried about Amanda. She worried Brenda would kill herself because of the teasing she endured. Hannah felt Julie was having difficulty seeing the consequences of her behavior. Even though Amanda no longer hung out with them and even took part in teasing Brenda and herself; Hannah believed Amanda was struggling with an eating disorder. Hannah blamed both the eating disorder and how Amanda behaved on the Snob Club. Hannah was unsure of how to help her friends. She felt the best thing she could do was pray for them. She strongly believed if both Julie and Amanda would stop hanging around Jennie and the rest of the Snob Club this would be a great start. This was a major reason Hannah was happy Julie stayed over night at her house.

She thought about what happened during the evening. She was overjoyed Julie and her new friend Beth liked one another. Hannah was delighted Monique, who was also a transplant, was accepted by everyone. She was happy when Beth volunteered to take Monique home. Hannah's only concern was the potential competitive spirits between Monique and Julie. The best part of the night was when Zoe and Julie made up. Hannah felt stuck in the middle when Brenda refused to come over because Julie was there. Hannah would make a point to talk to Brenda after church.

Hannah was happy to combine new and old friends. This was happening with many of the groups in school. Hannah believed there were many positives with the influx of so many students: the schools band increased, there were a lot more art type students, the school added an orchestra, there were a couple new art teachers, and for the first time the school was organizing a large play. There was talk of having this be a combined play with the schools band and the orchestra; this was the first year there was enough students to have a combined play and an orchestra. Hannah was happy to see Julie encouraged Beth and Monique to join the volleyball team. With the influx of population there was talk of moving the school to division one. This was exciting to everyone who followed the football team.

What bothered Hannah were the girls who joined the Snob Club; this made this popular girl group even worse. This only increased her concerns for Brenda. Hannah believed this was the reason Julie was over at her house and was spending more time with Zoe and

herself at school. Everyone knew about the physical fight. Just as important were the verbal confrontations she was having with the snob club. What bothered Hannah most of all was the overall increase in drama and rumors.

This caused her to consider Julie's plight. Hannah believed the reason Julie was dominating the rumor mill was because she stood up to the Snob Club and openly disagreed with its leaders. The only reason she was allowed to be on the fringes of the Snob Club was her friendship with athletes and because of Melissa. As long as Melissa was the leader of this group Julie would be welcomed. Both Melissa and Julie's brother kept Julie from receiving severe backlash for standing up to the elite girls. Everyone believed the reason Melissa protected Julie was the speculation Melissa wanted a relationship with Julie. Melissa's little sister Chelsey was terribly jealous Julie was protected. Things would change when Melissa graduated at the end of the year. Hannah strongly believed many in the Snob Club, especially Chelsey, were looking forward to a shift in power.

Hannah believed many of the rumors about Julie were a blend of truth and exaggeration. Everyone knew Julie's nickname was Fingerpainter. Hannah believed just about every student in the school masturbated. She felt a nickname based on a behavior most students participated in seemed hypocritical. Hannah also believed it was unwise of Julie to masturbate in school and go to group sex parties; even if she was only filming and getting herself off. She suspected this was why everyone was accusing her of being a tease and a bitch. She heard the rumor, at the last party, Julie performed three handjobs and allowed them to finish on her breasts. What was interesting to Hannah was the boys she performed this act on were the three guys no girl wanted to be with and were often teased; they were acquaintances of the popular kids. Hannah believed the reason Julie performed these sex acts was to prevent something bad from happening to her. Hannah disbelieved the rumors she was sleeping with guys outside of the parties. Hannah felt if she was sleeping with guys outside of the parties she would be sleeping with guys at the parties. Hannah wanted to believe Julie when she stated she would only go all the way with a guy she loved. Hannah correctly surmised Julie felt the guys at her school were childish. Hannah believed it was only a matter of time before Julie would lose her virginity. Hannah knew there was the possibility Julie would sleep with someone without being in love. Knowing Julie, Hannah worried, once she had sex; her friend would fulfill the rumors.

Hannah believed with all of her heart it was Jennie who started Julie down the path of being oversexed. She felt this was possible because Jennie asked her to watch pornography with her. Hannah refused. This was when Jennie ostracized Hannah and became a wedge between Julie and herself.

Zoe and Jennie disliked one another from the very beginning.

While thinking on these things she heard the couch make a soft squeaking noise.

She opened her eyes and was shocked at what she saw.

Hannah was unsure of what she should do. The only person she ever watched masturbating was herself. The only reason she watched herself was because of the large mirror attached to her antique dresser. Hannah felt guilty watching her best friend but it was like watching a car accident; she wanted to turn away but it was difficult to do so. Hannah became mortified at the idea Julie wanted Zoe and herself to wake up and watch her. Hannah quickly discounted this idea because: a blanket covered the lower part of her body, it appeared as though her hand was underneath her joggers, her other hand was under her sleepshirt,

based upon Hannah's own exploration it would be easier for Julie to pull up the sleepshirt, and it was obvious she was trying to avoid making noise; it was impossible to stop the soft noises of the couch and a few random soft sounds she made. Hannah became nervous someone in her family would spot her Best Friend. It occurred to Hannah if Julie heard anyone she could casually remove both hands without anyone seeing.

She glanced at Zoe.

Zoe shook her head and put a finger up to her mouth.

This surprised Hannah.

Hannah gave her a look.

Zoe smirked and shook her head no.

They looked at one another.

Zoe made a facial expression and shrugged her shoulders. It was obvious she could have cared less.

Hannah gave her a look of worry.

Zoe rolled her eyes and made a face.

They heard Julie make a restrained noise.

Hannah and Zoe looked over. To Hannah's mixed emotions she spotted: Julie's legs stiffen, her body shuck, Julie bit her lower lip, this caused a small squeaking noise, her body convulsed a couple more times, and then it was over. Hannah watched: Julie lay there relaxed, Hannah closed her eyes when Julie lifted her head to see if Hannah and Zoe were awake, both Zoe and Hannah pretended to be asleep, Hannah opened them to see Julie tying her joggers underneath the blanket, turned onto her side, grabbed her backpack, quietly zippered open a pocket, took out hand lotion, rubbed it on her hands, smelled her hands, put the lotion away, laid back down on the couch, became comfortable, and quickly fell asleep.

Hannah looked over at Zoe and to Hannah's shock Zoe was sleeping.

Hannah was grateful none of her family caught her friend masturbating. Because of this, Hannah stayed awake for an hour contemplating what she just observed. She fell asleep out of exhaustion.

The next day Zoe and Hannah privately talked about what they observed; neither one added to the rumors related to her friend.

January 13, Nervous

Part Four of Four

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