

# Buried Lies, Surface<sup>©</sup>

Casey Bell

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*Acknowledgments*

God.

*Dedications*

I dedicate this to all who can relate to this story.

*Thank You*

**CHAPTER ONE**

*On a warm day in March the past of many lives resurface and a family has to finally face the harsh reality of the truth.* Sarah is in the den of a beautiful big home in the suburb of Bridge Way, NJ. Sarah is a nineteen year old who lives with her parents Gregory and Madeline Dawson. She is setting up the den for a party to take place within thirty minutes. She has decorated the room and has a tray of food and refreshments on a table. As she continues to work Madeline enters the den, “Wow, Sarah, you did a pretty good job by yourself. What time did you get started?” Sarah looks at her watch, “About an hour ago.” “Do you really need all this food?” “No, but I figured it’s better to have more than enough than not enough.” “So, did Kenneth tell who he invited, because he failed to tell me?” Sarah ignoring the question, “Do you think I should put the drinks out now or later? I was afraid that they might get too warm.” “Later, I guess. So, who did your brother invite to this party?” “Maybe I should bring them out now, I mean we don’t want them to be too cold, besides we do have

ice.” “Sarah, are you avoiding the question?” “What do you mean?” “I asked you a question, twice, and you keep talking about these drinks, as if they are that important.” “I’m sorry; I am just trying to be a good host. What was the question?” “Did Kenny tell you who he was inviting?” “Why, didn’t he tell you?” “No, Sarah. If he did I wouldn’t be asking you; now tell me, who does your brother have coming to my home?” “Mother, Kenny told me not to tell you okay. He has my word.” “He has your word? I’m your mother and your word to your brother means more than that?” “Mom, I promised him I wouldn’t tell.” “Alright, that’s okay, I only carried you for nine months and took care of you and this is the thanks I get.” “Thank you mom.” Madeline leaves the room; Gregory walks through the door, “Hi dad.” “Hey, Sarah this place is beautiful.” “Thanks dad.” “Where’s your mom?” “She just went upstairs.” “Oh, what time is Kenny coming over?” He should be here in about thirty minutes. Jillian should be here soon as well.” “Why is Jillian coming over?” “Kenny invited her.” “Wow, this must be some big

announcement. Well, I'll be upstairs washing up and getting ready. Call me when he gets here." "Okay". Sarah goes into the kitchen to get the drinks, the door bell rings. Sarah runs to the door, opens it and screams with joy. She grabs Jillian with a big hug. She then hugs Matthew James. "I haven't seen you guys in a while. How is everything?" Jillian responds, "I am doing well, thanks for asking. And how are you?" "I am much better now that you are here." Referring to Matthew "M.J. look at you, you've gotten taller since I've seen you last. You are growing up to be one handsome man. How old are you now?" "I'm ten years old." "Oh, my gosh I feel so old." "So where are your parents?" "They're both upstairs getting ready. So have a seat, and eat anything you want. This special reception was prepared by yours truly." "It's beautiful. So, what's this big announcement your brother has?" "I don't know, he wouldn't say. He did tell me who he invited. He said he wanted the most important people in his life to be here for his announcement. Guess who else is coming?" "Who?" "Matthew." "Matthew who?"

“Matthew, Jillian, Matthew Jacobs.” “Are you serious? You have to be kidding.” “No, Kenny told me that he invited him and that he is actually coming.” “I don’t believe this. How long has it been?” “Ten years”, she looks at M.J., “how could you forget.” “Right, you know when I had M.J. all I could hear Matthew say was, I told you so. I never had the guts to tell him.” “How could you, he left so fast and didn’t tell anyone where he was going.” “I knew where he was going. It’s just by the time I tried to call him he had left.” “Where did he go?” “He went to Michigan to live with his aunt and uncle.” “I never understood why he didn’t stay with his parents.” “He told me he couldn’t stay in this town in longer, and his parents didn’t want to leave, so, he left.” There’s a short silence in the room. Sarah breaks it, “Did you believe him.” Jillian thinks trying to answer, “I really don’t know. It was a very difficult situation. It must have been hard on you. I know this is a stupid question, but, did you believe him?” “Believe it or not I believed him. I know it’s hard to believe it, being the situation I am in, but Matthew never lied to me,

so I had to believe him.” Another silence crosses the room, Sarah breaks it again; “So, M.J. what grade are you in now?” “I’m in the fifth grade.” “I don’t believe it. You were in the third grade the last time I saw you. Has it been two years already?” Madeline enters the room. “Is that Jillian?” “Yes it is. How are you?” They hug, “I am doing just fine.” “Oh my goodness I don’t believe it, is this little M.J., he’s getting bigger by the minute. So, how is everything? It is so good to see you. So, how long has it been?” “About two years now, everything is fine.” “Well, I am so happy to hear that. Well, Sarah I see you haven’t brought out the drinks yet. I’ll be in the kitchen.” “Did you need help?” “Oh, no thank you Jillian, sit back and relax.” “Oh, come on momma Dawson let M.J. help you out.” “Well, okay. Come on M.J. I just don’t believe how big you’ve gotten.” They exit to the kitchen. “Your mother hasn’t changed a bit.” “Tell me about it.” I’m surprised though.” “Surprised about what?” “That she would let Matthew in her house. You know how much she hated him.” “According to her she didn’t hate him,

she just disliked him. And she doesn't know he's coming. She didn't even know you were coming." "Oh, why didn't Kenny tell her?" "I don't know. He just didn't want her to know anything." "So, Matthew is coming over and she doesn't know?" "Yeah, that's pretty sums it up." "This can't be good." Madeline and M.J. enter the room with a tray of drinks. "Sarah, you were right, it was a good thing you left the drinks in there. Now they are nice and cold." Gregory enters the room. "Papa Dawson", Jillian runs to him, they hug. "Jillian, how are you doing?" "I'm doing fine. You remember M.J.?" "Oh, wow, when did he get so tall? Do you remember me M.J.?" M.J. nods yes. "Well, of course you do." Gregory picks him up. "Whoa, you're getting too heavy for the old man." He places him down, the door bell rings. Madeline responds, "I wonder who that is?" "It's probably Kenny", replies Gregory. Sarah and Jillian look at each other, Sarah then opens the door. "Oh, my god". She embraces Matthew and begins to cry. "It is so good to see you. Well, how are you? I haven't seen you in ten years and

you don't speak to me." "Exactly Sarah, what am I supposed to say?" "Well, you could start with hello." "Hi, Sarah, it's good to see you too." Madeline walks towards the door, "Who is at the door?" "Hi, Mrs. Dawson." "Matthew? What are you doing here?" "Mother could say hi first." "Hi Matthew, what are you doing here?" "Mother, he's a guest alright. Kenny invited him." "This is why he didn't want me to know." She walks away from the door. Sarah responds, "I don't believe it, ten years later and she is still upset. I'm sorry Matthew." "It's okay Sarah." "Well, come in. There's someone I want you to meet." Sarah and Matthew walk in the den. Jillian runs towards Matthew and embraces him. "Matthew, it's so good to see you. Look at you." She looks at him then she hugs him again. "I don't believe this. I am so happy to see you." "Hey, Matthew, whoa, long time, no see." "Hey, papa Dawson. It's good to see you again." They hug. Gregory responds, "Wow, this is something. It's like a reunion. Now all we need is Kenny." Sarah walks over to Matthew. "Remember I told you I wanted you to meet

someone. She walks toward M.J. “Matthew this is Matthew, Jillian’s son. We call him M.J. though, because his middle name is James.” Matthew shakes his hand. “It’s nice to meet you M.J.” “It’s nice to meet you too Matthew.” “How old are you M.J.?” “I’m ten.” Matthew looks at Jillian, she hangs her head. “Wow, that’s great, that’s beautiful.” She lifts her head up. “You look just like your mother. You have your father’s eyes.” Jillian looks at Matthew in confusion. “You know my dad?” “Yeah, I went to school with him, your mom too.” “Oh, cool.” The door bell rings, Sarah runs to the door in excitement, she opens it, she embraces Kenneth, “Kenny, it’s so good to see you.” She hugs Darryl, “hey D, how are you?” “I’m doing just fine.” Sarah looks at Kenneth, “Come on in, everyone is here.” “Everyone?” She stares in his eyes, “Everyone.” He walks past her leaving Darryl at the door, they follow him in the den. “Matthew”, Kenneth cries. Matthew turns around and runs to him. They embrace. Everyone looks on, Gregory breaks the silence, “Come on; share the love. “Oh, dad”, Kenneth responds, he

hugs Gregory, then Madeline, “Mom, it’s so good to see you. Jillian walks towards him, they embrace, “Jillian, how are you?” He walks towards M.J. “Is this little Matthew?” He hugs him, “Hey, M.J. you got so tall. You all remember Darryl right?” They all agree and say hi to Darryl. Matthew responds, “No, I don’t remember him.” Kenneth responds, “That’s because I haven’t seen you in like ten years. This is Darryl, he’s my partner.” “Oh, okay.” Matthew shakes Darryl’s hand, “It’s a pleasure to meet you.” Madeline interrupts, “So, what’s this big announcement you couldn’t make over the phone?” Kenneth responds, “Everyone, take a seat.” Darryl stands next to Kenneth. “After some consideration and much talking and thinking, Darryl and I have decided to get married.” A silence has hit the room, after a few seconds Jillian speaks, “Congratulations.” “Thank you Jill. Well, what does everyone else think?” Madeline responds, “How are you guys getting married?” “What do you mean mom, the same way you and dad did.” “But, how?” Sarah interrupts, “I think what she means is how,

being that you both are men.” Kenneth responds, “We’re getting married in Massachusetts, where it’s allowed.” Matthew responds, “So, are you going to do that like, now?” “No, we’re getting married four months from now.” Sarah responds, “Four months, isn’t that a bit fast with the wedding arrangements and all?” “Everything is set; we’ve been planning it for the past two months.” Madeline responds, “How are you going to get everyone to go all the way to Massachusetts? Air fair is not cheap.” “The people we are inviting won’t mind going?” Madeline responds, “Oh, really, I’m sorry son, but I am not paying over a thousand dollars to go to some God forsaken place and see my son get married to a man.” “Mom, chill out, I’m paying for the plane tickets, and it’s not even close to a thousand dollars.” “Son, no. What are you trying to do to me, put me in an early grave? I put up long enough with this game you’re playing. I accepted your little boy toy here, but I am not accepting marriage. That is out of the question.” Sarah interrupts, “Mother please we have guest.” “What is your point in saying that

Sarah? Huh?” “All I am saying is keep your composure. This is supposed to be a happy occasion.” “What is so happy about this occasion? I got my son here, who I haven’t seen in about six months pull a fast one on me. He invites people to my house without letting me know. Jillian I don’t mind, but.” Sarah interrupts, “mother please don’t do this.” “Don’t do what Sarah? I’m going to my room.” She leaves the room. “I’m going to go check on her and see if everything’s okay. Congratulations son, congratulations Darryl.” Gregory leaves the room. Sarah responds, “Well she ruined another occasion. I’m sorry guys.” Jillian replies, “No need to apologize”, looking at Kenneth, “someone should have warned every one of what this was all about ahead of time.” “I don’t understand, I thought she was happy for me and Darryl.” Sarah answers, “She’s not upset about you and Darryl. You should have told her Matthew was coming.” Matthew responds, “You didn’t tell her I was coming?” Sarah says, “Why are you surprised? You saw how she treated you at the door.” “I thought she was just treating me

that way on purpose. I honestly did not think she wasn't aware of my coming here. Kenny, what were you thinking?" "Matthew, I haven't seen you for a long time. I wanted you to share my joy. You were...you are my best friend. If I told her you were coming she wouldn't have let you in. I needed to see you." Jillian asks, "Well, what do we do now?" "Well, we might as well eat. I didn't prepare all this food for nothing." After an hour of eating and communing Sarah begins to clean the kitchen.

Darryl, Kenneth, and M.J. are in Kenneth's old room playing video games. Jillian and Matthew are in the den sitting on a couch together. "Matthew it is really good to see you." "Same here." "Where are you living now?" "Maryland." "Wow, that's far. Did you take a plane?" "No, I drove." "How far is the drive?" "About three hours, it's not too bad." "What's it like?" "It's really nice. It's a lot different than Bridge Way." "What part of Maryland do you live." "Baltimore." "Wow, how did you end up in Maryland?" "I

went to college in Maryland then moved to Baltimore to work after college.” “Well, where did you go, what was your major, where do you work?” “I went to The University of Maryland. I majored in Theater.” “Oh, of course, you were always involved with the shows in school. So, what are you an actor?” “No, I work as a lighting designer at a couple of the theaters.” “Well, that’s good. So, is it better or worse?” “What?” “Living in Baltimore. Is it better or worse than Bridge Way?” “It’s different. It’s a lot louder and more crowded. It’s not a quiet little suburb. So, how about you? You still live here?” “Yeah, it’s hard to leave this place.” “Where do you live?” “I live in Cedar Gardens.” “No you don’t. Not those luxurious apartments we always said we wanted to live in when we were kids.” “Yeah, but there not so luxurious anymore.” “Oh.” A Silence hits the room, Matthew breaks it, “Does he get to see his father?” “How did you know Brian was his father?” “Because he looks just like him.” “I thought you said he looked like me.” “He looks like both of you.” “How can he look like both of us?”

“I don’t know he just does.” Another silence hits the room.

“Does he still live in Bridge Way?” “Who?” “Brian?” “No, he moved to Long Branch. He’s married and has two kids. Matthew spends time with him every Saturday and some holidays.” “Well, I think it’s good that Matthew gets to see his father. I’m kind of flattered that you named him after me.”

“I’m surprised you haven’t said it yet.” “Said what?” “I told you so?” “Jillian, what’s done is done, no need in me bragging about how right I was.” “I was so upset with you for a long time. Most of it was because you were right. The other part of it was when you left. I had no one to talk to.”

“What about Kenny?” “I can’t talk to him the same way I talk to you. I needed someone to hold me when I found out.” Matthew asks, “So, tell me what happened.” “Well, the night we talked, I went over to Brian’s house and, well, nothing happened. I told him no, he told me okay and then he took me home. It was two days later that he took me out to the movies and then he bought me back to his house and then it just happened. He told me that if I loved him.”

Matthew interrupts, "I told you he would say that. There all the same. A man who cannot wait until marriage doesn't love you, he lusts you." "Well, I know that now. I wish I would have listened to you. After I told him I was pregnant he told me that it wasn't his and never spoke to me again. I was so upset because I remembered you said that's what would happen. I left him alone until M.J. turned two. I remember how you used to always say that children, especially boys need their fathers in their lives. I found Brian and told him if he didn't take care of his son that I would take him to court. We finally settled on him seeing him once a week. He also spends Christmas Eve with him. I was very happy that I solved that problem, but I was still upset with myself for not listening to you." "When did you find out you were pregnant?" "Three days after you left. It was the reason why I was sick during the last week you were here." "I thought that's what it was. I just didn't say anything because I knew I was leaving and I didn't want our last conversation to be an argument." A short pause "Well, it wasn't that bad. I, mean,

you got a cute son out of it.” They both laugh. “Yeah, he’s my pride and joy.” It’s silent for a moment before Jillian speaks, “Did you ever think about moving back here?” “Yes, a couple of times. Every time I thought about you and Kenny and Sarah and Billy, John, Francine, Dina, and all the old times. I thought to myself, could I ever go back to Bridge Way and live the same way? Every time I asked the question the answer was no. That’s why I never came back. I knew it would never be the same.” A slight silence hits the room. “So, do they all still live here?” “No, just about everyone moved out that we hung out with. Too many bad memories I guess. I myself just couldn’t leave.” “Where did they all move to?” “Well, Francine met some doctor in Illinois. She got married and moved in with him.” “What was she doing in Illinois?” “She attended Robert Morris College in Chicago. John went to California Culinary Academy and stayed there. Dina went to college in France.” “France? What college?” “Parsons Paris, she studied fashion design. She moved back, but after a couple of months she moved to Pennsylvania. She

was the last one to leave out of our group.” “What happened to Billy?” “He left before college. It was during his senior year.” “Why?” “He went through the same ordeal you did.” “You’re kidding.” “No.” “Are you serious? Be serious Jill.” “I am being serious.” “I don’t believe it. They didn’t believe him?” “No, they said that he was just doing it because you told him to. They found Frank not guilty, and he left within a month.” “This is crazy. Did you keep in touch?” “I did for a while, but, I don’t know. Things were changing.” “Did Kenny invite them to the wedding?” “I don’t know. I only know as much as you do.” “When was the last time you saw Kenny?” “About two years ago. Sarah invited me to a Christmas party. She pauses. “Are you coming back?” “No, it’ll never be the same. Besides everyone left, why should I come back?” “Because I miss you. Ten years, Matthew, ten years. You should have written me.” “I’m sorry, I was angry at everyone, and by the time I got over it, I figured it was too late, so I put my past behind me and moved on. I thought about everyone, but that’s all I thought you guys would ever

be, sweet memories. I never imagined coming back.” “Well, I am glad you did.” Another silence is in the room until Matthew breaks it, “Do you believe me?” Jillian looks away from him, “I don’t know that I can answer that. I mean I did at first, but I don’t know.” Tears begin to roll down her eyes. “I mean I should believe you, I mean you’re my friend. But, I trusted him; I didn’t know what to think. I was afraid, because I could never answer that question, but I should be able to because I am your.” Matthew interrupts her, “I understand.” He embraces her, Jillian begins to cry, “No, it’s not okay, I should be able to believe you, why can’t I believe you. I want to, but I don’t know that I can. That’s why I hated myself for so long. Not only did I get myself knocked up, but you left me and I couldn’t believe you. You know I almost killed myself, but I couldn’t do it. I thought about M.J. and how he wouldn’t have a mom and I decided to live for him, but I never forgave myself for not trusting in you the same way I trusted Franklin.” “Jillian, it’s okay.” A silence fills the room. Jillian breaks the silence, “So, what do you

think of Kenny and his new bride?” “He’s crazy, and he knows it.” “What do you mean?” “I can’t talk about it right now. It’s weird though because it’s an unexpected expected surprise. You know what I mean?” “I think. I mean, I knew he was dating Daryl and all, but I honestly did not think he was serious about the relationship.” “That’s not what I was referring to.” “Oh, what are you talking about?” “Never mind, it’s not important, well, not now anyways.” Kenneth enters the room. “Hey, guys, what are you doing?” “Playing catch up”, responds Jillian. Matthew responds, “I see you haven’t grown out of the video games yet.” “Oh, no, and I never will.” Daryl and M.J. enter the room. “Hey baby, you had fun with Uncle Kenneth and Darryl?” “Yes, I did mom. Uncle Kenny plays pretty well, but he’s no match for me. I beat him like crazy.” Sarah enters the room with pocketbook, Kenneth asks, “where are you going?” “To the mall, I need to relax. Shopping always helps me relax, anyone want to go with me?” Jillian responds, “We’ll go, we need to get some fresh air.” Sarah responds, “Okay, so Jillian and M.J. are

going, anyone else?” Daryl responds, “I don’t mind going. I don’t know that I can stay in this house all day.” “Why don’t we all go”, responds Kenneth?” “No, you guys go ahead, I’m going to go back to the hotel and relax a little”. “Come on Matthew, come out and hang out with us”, says Kenneth.” “No thank you, I’m really not in the mood for the mall.” “Well, then how about you guys go. I’ll stay here with Matthew”. “Kenny you don’t have to do that”. “I know I don’t have to, but I want to. Besides I haven’t seen you in ten years. I want to spend some alone time with you. You know, catch up. You guys go ahead; Matthew and I are going to stay here.” “Okay, see you guys later”, says Sarah. Jillian, M.J., and Sarah leave, Kenneth kisses Daryl on his way out, “Bye baby, have fun.” Kenneth closes the door then turns towards Matthew, “Wow, Matthew it is so good to see you.” “What are you doing?” “What do you mean?” Matthew looks at him, “Matthew, why are looking at me that way?” Matthew continues to stare. “Matthew, I truly don’t know what you are talking about?” “Kenny, do you know why I

am here?” “Yes, because I invited you.” “Not exactly, Kenny. I came here under the assumption of knowing what your big announcement was. I came here to support you in your decision to finally tell the truth. If I thought for one second your big announcement was anything else I would not have come.” “I don’t know what you mean Matthew. What did you think my big announcement was?” “So, I see you’re deciding to play stupid with me.” “Matthew, please inform me. What did you think the big announcement was?” “Kenny, I’ve been gone for ten years and you know why. I came back hoping you were ready to tell the truth about Frank.” “Oh, that.” “What the fuck do you mean, oh, that? It’s been ten years Kenny, ten mother-fucking years and I come back and nothing has change. That is sad. I don’t care what you do with Daryl or yourself, but I am not staying around to see this shit.” “What are you talking about?” “Kenny, I am not going to your wedding, in fact I plan on returning to Maryland next week, and if you have not changed your mind by then, well, then our friendship is

officially over. You'll never see me again." "I thought you got over it Matthew, it was ten years ago. Are you going to let something that minor stop you from celebrating one of the happiest moments of my life and even end our friendship?" "Minor, what do you mean minor?" "Matthew, I have missed you ever day that you were away; I don't want to argue with you. I have nothing, but love for you." "That's a lie. If you really loved me you wouldn't allow me to look like a liar in front of a whole neighborhood because you worried about your reputation." "My reputation has nothing to do with the decision I made." "Oh, no, then what was it?" No response from Kenneth. "Exactly, Kenny; who the hell do you think you're kidding?" "Well, could you at least go to my wedding, and then that could be our last day as friends. I want you to be there." "Why would I do that? You know how I feel about that, especially you." "You are such a hypocrite, Matthew. Did you forget that you once had a relationship with a boy? What are you now a homophobe?" "Don't play dumb. The only reason why you're gay is

because of what Frank did to you and you know it, but you're to afraid to admit it because once you do you have to admit that Frank did what he did. And that's too hurtful for you. You just can't admit it, you can't think it and you can't speak it. But let me tell you something Kenny, you can't ignore it forever. It will eat you up; it will affect every relationship you have, including the one with Daryl. Because sooner or later every time you get into bed with Daryl he will remind you of Frank and you will be disgusted. You can't hide Kenny, you can't hide forever. I came here because I thought you were ready to confess. And you know what I think you're close. That's why you invited me. I mean you haven't talked to me in ten years and then all of a sudden you find me. You're ready Kenny, I know you are, and I am not leaving here until you spill your guts. You don't want to marry Daryl, you're just crying for help, and I will help you, but I can't until you are ready to speak the truth." "You don't care me Matthew; you just want me to talk because you want your name to be clear. This is all about you and your reputation." "This has

nothing to do with me and you know it. When you're ready Kenny you call me." He takes out a business card and hands it to Kenny. "Hope to see you soon." Matthew leaves the house. Kenny takes the business card and puts it in his wallet. Gregory enters the room, he walks towards the kitchen. "Hey son, where did everyone go?" "Um...Matthew went back to the hotel, and the rest went to the mall with Sarah." "Oh, why didn't you go?" "Well, Matthew didn't want to go, so I staid here to talk with him, you know play catch up. He just recently left, he had to leave." "Oh, okay." Gregory continues to walk to the kitchen. "Dad." "Yes, son." "I need to ask you a question." "I'm listening." I need help in making a decision. At the moment I am withholding some information. Now, to make you understand it better, the information that I am withholding is making a person "A" look bad, but person "B" look good. However, if I tell it will make person "A" look good and person "B" look bad. I'm trying to figure out do I tell to help person A or keep it to myself to help person B."

“As crazy as that sounds I understand what you’re saying. Let me tell you a story. When I was about twenty, I was in college and my roommate, Bobby, was in trouble. One of his classmates, Jack, came to our room with alcohol. We told Jack that he couldn’t bring it, but he didn’t care. So, the next day Bobby went to dispose of the alcohol and got caught. Now, I had a choice I could shut up and let Bobby get in trouble or let the authorities know that it was actually Jack who brought it in. I decided to keep my mouth shut because Jack was known to fight anyone who told on him. About two weeks later another student got in trouble for the same thing. His name was Henry. Henry told me that it was Jack who brought the alcohol on campus. I then thought if I keep quiet people are going to keep taking the blame for Jack, but if I speak up and get Jack in trouble, then Jack won’t be able to get anyone else in trouble, thus ending the line of people on campus getting in trouble over Jack’s alcohol. So, I told and I was afraid, but I knew that no one else could be affected by Jack. So, you have to ask yourself which person is

causing continuous problems for people, and then make the decision. Does that make since?” “Unfortunately yes.” “What do you mean?” “It just means I have to do what I don’t want to do.” “Life is like that sometimes, son. Did you need help, did you want to talk about it more. I mean give me the specifics?” “No, not yet, I’m not ready.” “Well, when you’re ready son, I’ll be ready to listen.” “Thank you dad.” Madeline enters the room. “Gregory, what’s taking you so long? All I asked for was a glass of water.” “Oh, I’m sorry. I was talking to Kenny about something. I’ll go get it now.” “Never mind, I’m already down here.” She goes to the kitchen. “Dad.” “Yes, Kenny.” “Do you think mom could ever hate me?” “Kenny, what kind of question is that?” “Just answer it.” “No, of course not, she loves you. She may dislike some things about you, but she could never hate you.” “Are you sure.” “Son, what’s going on?” “Nothing, just forget it.” “You want me to ask her?” “No, thank you. I’m fine.” “Remember Kenny, I’m here when you’re ready to talk.” “Thanks dad.”

**CHAPTER TWO**

Two months have passed and Matthew despite his wishes has returned to Maryland. Kenneth is in his apartment talking to Daryl. “What do you mean, Kenny?” “It’s not forever, it’s just temporarily. I need some time to think about some things. We’re still going to get married, it’s just I don’t want to rush into this and have regrets.” “Regrets, what do you mean regrets? Don’t you love me?” “Yes, Daryl, I do love you, it’s just ever since Matthew left I’ve thinking about what he said and I really need to do some things before we get married.” “Are you in love with Matthew?” “No, it’s just that...I haven’t seen him in ten years, and it’s my fault. I just finally owe it to him to come clean about something, that’s all. I just need some time to think about what I’m going to do. I just need some alone time. I hope you understand.” “No, I don’t, but I will give you space. How long will it take?” “I don’t know. I’ll call you when I’m ready.” They kiss and then Daryl leaves. A knock is heard less than a minute later. Kenneth answers the door. “Hey, what are you

doing here? Come in.” “Hey, I just saw Daryl leave, is everything okay?” “Yes, so, what brings you here, and where is M.J.?” “He’s at my mom’s. You won’t believe what I just did, hell I don’t believe it myself.” “Jillian, what did you do now?” “Oh, it’s nothing like that, it’s a good thing. In fact it’s something I probably should have done a long time ago.” “Well, what is it?” “Okay for past two months I’ve been planning something. Ever since Matthew left I thought to myself, what happens if one of us dies tomorrow? I mean, we have allowed so many years go by and not even contact each other. I mean we’re supposed to be friends, right?” “What are you talking about?” “Believe it or not after much hard work I set up a vacation for us. I contacted all of them and they all agreed. It took them a while though, it was like pulling teeth.” “Who are you talking about?” “The crew, Matthew, Billy, Francine, John, and Dina.” “You’re kidding me?” “No, I’m serious, even your sister is coming. I made reservations in the Bahamas, plane, hotel, everything. They all agreed to have a get together, like a small class reunion.”

“How did you do this?” “Well, it took me a while, but I had to find out where they were, then I called, then I convinced them that this would be the best thing to do. I mean I don’t want the next time I see them to be at a funeral. So I decided that we should see each other again. I miss all of them, I don’t know about you, but I have to see them once more.”

“So, they all agreed?” “Yes, all of them.” “Even Matthew?”

“Yes, even Matthew. He said he wanted to see everyone again. He sounded kind of funny though when I mentioned you. He asked some weird questions. Is everything okay between the two of you?” “Yeah, I guess. What questions did he ask you?” “I don’t know, he kept saying, did he say anything, did he tell? What was he expecting you to tell?”

“It’s nothing.” “Well, he said in spite of, he would be delighted to see everyone again. So, what do you think? You’re the last to RSVP.” “Well, sure, definitely, consider this my RSVP.” “Great, we leave two weeks from now; I hope you have a passport.” “Yes, I do.” “Great see you in two weeks.”

**Two weeks later**

Sarah is sitting in the living room with her bags packed and ready to go. Madeline enters the room. “What time is it?” Sarah looks at her watch, “It’s 1:15.” “I thought they said they would be here at 2PM.” “I know, but I just didn’t want to be late.” “Seems like someone is excited.” “Yes, I am very excited. I’m going to the Bahamas, one of the most talked about places in the world. And I am going with people I haven’t seen in years. I can’t wait to see them.” Gregory enters the room, “seems like someone is ready to go.” “Yes, I am very ready. I wish they could get here earlier, I don’t think I can wait much longer. What time is it?” Gregory responds, “It’s 1:18. What time are they supposed to be here?” “2PM.” “I think you’re a bit anxious.” “Of course I am, wouldn’t you be dad? I haven’t seen these guys in a really long time, and it’s the Bahamas.” Doorbell rings, Sarah jumps up, “I’ll get it.” She opens the door. “Hey, Kenny. Hey, Daryl.” “Hi, hi dad, mom.” Gregory responds, “I see you’re all ready for the Bahamas.” “Yes, I am. Most

importantly, I am ready to see the crew.” Daryl responds, “Here are your bags, have fun.” They kiss, and then they hug. “Bye, Daryl.” “Bye, Kenny. Mr. and Mrs. Dawson it was nice seeing you again. See you later Sarah.” Sarah responds, “Bye Daryl”. “Drive safe”, says Gregory. Daryl leaves, “I thought you said you and Daryl were separated”, responds Sarah. “We are. I told him I was leaving and he said he wanted to see me before I go.” “Is everything alright son?” “Yes, dad, it is.” Door bell rings, “I’ll get it!” Madeline responds, “Sarah calm down.” Sarah opens the door. She stares in shock for a quick moment then she screams; she grabs her in an embrace. “It is so good to see you. Wow, you look good.” “Thank you, so do you Sarah and you haven’t changed a bit.” “Who’s at the door”, asks Madeline? They walk in the living room, Kenny runs towards her and they hug, “Francine, how are you?” “I’m doing fine and yourself?” “I’m great. I couldn’t be better.” “Mr. Greg, Ms. Madeline, it is so good to see you.” They greet each other with laughs and hugs after a few minutes Gregory

responds, “So, Francine, how’s Illinois?” “It’s great. I love it there. It’s a change from Bridge Way.” Sara asks, “How’s the husband?” “I don’t know, we’re divorced.” “Oh know, that’s horrible”, responds Madeline”. “It’s okay, we just weren’t meant for each other.” The door bell rings, Sarah jumps and runs to the door, “I’m so excited!” She opens the door and screams, “Oh my goodness, I don’t believe my eyes, give me a hug”. “Who is it”, Kenny responds? “Hey, Kenny. “John my man, what’s up?” “The sky man”. They both laugh. “It’s the same o’ John”, responds Kenny. John greets everyone in the house the converse amongst themselves four a minute before the door rings again, Sarah screams. Sarah, now calm down before you give me a heart attack”, says Madeline. She opens the door. Billy enters and the same festive meet and greet continues. Not seeing each other for about six years is making everyone emotional. Sarah speaks up, “Oh, I can’t wait until everyone else gets here.” John asks, “Who else are we waiting for?” Sarah answers, “Well there is Billy, Jillian, Dina, and Matthew”. A silence hits the

room. Francine breaks it, “Matthew? Matthew is coming?”

“Yeah, didn’t Jillian tell you?” “No, the only thing she mentioned was that it would be a couple of old friends, she didn’t mention any names.” John responds, “It has been such a long time. I can’t wait to see him.” The door bell rings. Sarah runs to the door. “Jillian!” They hug. “Here she is the girl of the hour. The one who put all of this together”, she sees M.J., “Hi M.J. Sarah, Jillian, and M.J. walk in the rooms with the others. They hug each other and enjoy each others company. Jillian speaks, Mr. and Mrs. Dawson, thank you so much for babysitting M.J. I had no clue what I was going to do when my mother at the last minute cancelled. You are a lifesaver.” “Oh, no problem. We are going to have fun taking care of him”, replies Madeline”. John speaks, “Jill, why didn’t you tell us that Matthew was coming?” “It was my surprise, who told you?” “I’m sorry Jill. I guess I got a little too excited.” “That’s okay Sarah.” The door bell rings one last time. Sarah runs towards the door and opens it. “It’s Billy!” The rest of them respond by calling his name and

going towards the door. “It is so good to see you”, says John. “Well, now that we are all here, I guess we better get going”, Jillian says. Sarah speaks, “Wait a minute, what about Dina and Matthew?” “Matthew is going to meet us at the airport and we have to pick up Dina at a bus stop”. “Well I hope you kids have lots of fun. Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do, ‘responds Madeline. “I can’t promise that mom”, replies Sarah. Everyone laughs. “By guys have fun and be safe”, adds Gregory. Jillian hugs M.J., “Now you behave yourself for me, okay?” “Yes, mom.” As they leave Madeline grabs Sarah, “Behave yourself”. “I will mom.”

## CHAPTER THREE

### Day One-Monday

In their hotel room Jillian and Sarah begin to unpack. “Jillian, I can’t thank you enough. I was really surprised and shocked when you asked me to come along. When we were growing up I always thought I was the annoying little sister.” “Not at all. We all loved you. You were like one of us. Just a little younger that’s all. You went through all the ups and downs that we did. So I had to invite you. This reunion is so that we reconnect and finally put away the past. That way we can build a better future together. It’ll be like the old times, but better.” “How were you able to pay for all of this?” “I did over time at work, took some extra jobs on the side as well.” “You’re amazing. Not only that, you were able to contact everyone and convinced them to come.” “I really didn’t have to convince them. I told Matthew was coming. They all wanted to see him so much that they agreed right away.” “How did you convince Matthew to agree to the reunion?” “I don’t know it had to be fate or something. I thought for

sure he would say no, but he agreed. I think this whole reunion is God sent.” “Well, I am glad everything went well. I think that this is going to be one of the best times that we will have together.” “I agree.”

In their hotel room Kenneth and John unpack. “I don’t believe it. I am actually looking at you. This is amazing. How long has it been?” Kenneth replies, “I don’t know I think seven years.” John replies, “What happened to us? Why didn’t we stay in touch?” “I don’t know. Well, we’re together now and that’s all that matters.” John agrees, “Yeah, you’re right. So, what have you been up to? What did you do after college?” “I’m a scenic designer for Giggly Studios.” “Oh really, what do you do there?” “I draw some of the scenes for the stations cartoons.” “That’s awesome. Where did you go to school?” “I went to the University of Maine and majored in studio art.” “That’s awesome.” “Thanks, what about you?” “I went to the California Culinary Academy. I’m a chef at a restaurant in LA.” “Wow, you’re really far away.” “Yeah, I guess.” “Why, did you move so far

away?” “I had to get away. You know, from Bridge Way. It just wasn’t the same after Billy left. Even coming into town and stopping by your parent’s place made me feel uncomfortable. There’s just a presence about that place that makes uninviting.” “Yeah, I guess so.” There’s an uncomfortable silence that hits the room, John breaks it. “I hate to ask this question, but who did you believe?” “What do you mean?” “Your uncle or Matthew?” Kenneth very annoyed ignores the question, “I don’t want to answer that.” “Sorry, man, I’m sorry. I’ll never ask it again.” Another silence. They continue to unpack. Kenneth turns the television on. John speaks, “I always believed Matthew, he was never the one to lie.” Kenneth doesn’t respond, he continues to unpack. John realizes it is time to drop the conversation. After they are done unpacking they both sit on their beds and watch TV.

In their hotel room Francine and Dina unpack. Francine in laughter, “I’m sorry Dina, but I can’t get over your French accent.” “It’s okay.” “How come you still have that accent?”

I thought you moved to Pennsylvania.” “I did, but I still visit France often, and how did you know I moved.” “Jillian told me.” “Oh. You know, after all these years I not sure why all of us only stayed in contact with Jillian. How come we didn’t contact each other” “I think it’s because she was the only one still in Bridge Way. She was like our bridge from wherever we went to.” “Yeah, I guess you’re right.” “So, Dina, tell me all about Paris.” “It’s beautiful; when I went I had no intentions on going back, but it was pulling me to stay.” “You went to school there, right.” “Yes, I did. I went to Parsons Paris. I studied in Fashion Design.” “So, what do you do?” “Well, first I was working in Paris at one of their Louis Viutton stores.” “Really? Why did you leave?” “I left for little while to visit my family in Bridge Way. When I realized how much I missed them I decided to move back to the country, but I couldn’t stay in Bridge Way. I had to get far away from it. I didn’t realize how much I hated the place. I stayed with my parents until I got a job in Pennsylvania as a fashion designer.” “That is awesome. So, where do you

work?” “I’m a fashion designer for a department store called Lorelei’s.” “Really, I love that store. I shop there all the time.” “That’s cool. So, what about you. Last I heard you got married to some doctor.” “Yea, well, it didn’t work out”, she shows Dina her wedding finger, “We divorced five months ago.” “Oh, I’m sorry to hear that.” “Don’t be, it wasn’t meant to be. I must admit it was a mistake from the beginning.” “Did you love him?” “I don’t think either one of us love each other. On my part he was a very attractive and sexy man. I think it was more of lust than love. And he was great in bed. That’s all I really enjoyed about him. He spent way too much time at work. We worked at the same hospital; that was the only time we really saw each other, was at work.” “Where at?” “Chicago. I went to school at Robert Morris College and majored in nursing. I later got at HartGrove Hospital. I met Dillon about three months after I started working there. We dated for about two years and then we go married. We had some fun times, but I knew it wasn’t going to last. He cared about his work more than me. So,

what about you did you get married?” “Almost, when I was in Paris, I met this beautiful guy.” “Well, you know, European guys usually are beautiful.” They laugh. “Yeah, well, he was beautiful and very kind.” “Well, what happened?” “I don’t know. I think I got scared. At the time I wasn’t ready to settle down any where. I was traveling a lot from state to state, county to country. I thought to myself if I marry him, then I am going to have to stay here forever. I wasn’t ready for that.” “What made you think you have to stay?” “Well, we would have had to live somewhere, and I knew he wasn’t going to move to America with me. I guess I was just too young, not ready for a commitment. I still speak to him, we write to each other, and I visit him when I go to Paris, but, I’m just not ready to live a life in Paris. And I’m not sure if I ever will be.”

In their hotel room unpacking. “I don’t believe this. It has been ten years since I have seen you last. I never thought in my wildest dreams that I would ever see you again Matthew. It is so good to see you. So how have you been?” I’ve been

well. I can't complain." "So, what did you do after you left Bridge Way.?" "Well, I moved to Michigan to live with my aunt and uncle. After High School I moved to Baltimore and attended the University of Maryland and studied theatre. I now work in a couple of theatres as a lighting designer." "That's pretty cool." "What about you? What did you do after you left?" "What do you mean?" "Jillian told me what happened to you." A silence occurs. "No one believed me Matthew. It was horrible, I felt horrible. They made me feel like a horrible person, as if I made it all up. I mean they were bullying me. Some of the kids were calling me a faggot and others were calling me a man lover. The parents were worse. Some of them called me a liar in my face, they told me that I should be ashamed of myself." "I completely understand. Remember it happened to me first." "Yeah, I know. I'm sorry Matthew." "Why are you apologizing to me?" "Because I didn't believe you, I should have, but I didn't. I'm sorry." "No need to apologize." Another silence fills the room. "So, what did you do after you left?" "My parents

moved to Burlington, NJ. I graduated high school and then I went to the University of Wyoming where I majored in accounting.” “Wyoming? Why so far away?” “I had to get away. As far as I could go, I had to make sure that the past of Bridge Way could never catch up to me.” “You can never run away from your past. I don’t care what anyone says, I, we will be vindicated. Too many bad things have happened in Bridge Way, and not just what happened to us. That town won’t be able to hide its flaws any more. One of these days they are going show. The truth will reveal every lie they told.”

### **Day Two-Tuesday**

In the hotel room of Billy and Matthew. “Billy, Billy, wake up.” No response. Matthew takes a pillow and hits Billy with it. Billy wakes up, “Man, what are you doing?” Matthew laughs at Billy’s response, “come on man, get up or we’ll be late.” “What time is it?” “It is eight thirty.” “Why are you waking me up so early? Isn’t this a vacation? I should be able to sleep in. And why will we be late, where are we

going?” “I don’t know. The only thing I know is that Jillian wants us all to meet her in the lobby at nine ‘o’ clock.” “What does she want?” “I don’t know man.”

### **In the Lobby**

Sarah, Kenneth, John, Dina, Francine, and Jillian are in the lobby conversing amongst themselves about the old times. Matthew enters from the elevator. Jillian walks towards him, “Matthew, what happened, you’re five minutes late.” “I know, I was waiting for Billy.” “Where is he?” “He’s still upstairs. It took him a while to get out of bed.” “Well, come with me.” She walks towards every one else. “Guys follow me.” She takes them to a huge dining room area. In there are tables, buffet style, full of breakfast items. They all look amazed. “Guys go get a table; I’m going to wait by the elevators for Billy.” They walk to a table while Jillian leaves. “Would you look at this spread, it is amazing”, says Sarah. John replies, “I think I’m going to eat all day.” Francine asks, “Should we wait for Jill and Billy?” “That’s a good question”, replies Dina. “I don’t know about you guys, but I am going

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to eat”, Kenneth replies. He walks toward the buffet and begins to dig in; Sarah, John, and Dina follow Kenneth while Matthew and Francine wait at the table.

### **At the Elevator**

One of the elevator doors open, Jillian runs to it and a couple exit it. Realizing it's not Billy she walks back towards the entrance. Waiting she hears another elevator door opening, she walks towards it and three people exit, none of them being Billy. She waits some more. Finally two elevator doors open she looks at one and a woman exits. When she goes to the other one two people exit then finally Billy exits. “Finally, where have you been?” “I was in my room getting ready. Why did you need us to get up so early? I wanted to sleep in today.” “I didn't want to miss the complementary breakfast. Besides, we'll be here for two weeks; you have plenty of time to sleep in. Now, come on, the others are waiting.”

### **Dining Room Area**

As they walk in, amazed at the spread, Billy stops. “What's wrong, Billy?” “This is amazing.” “And you wanted to sleep

in.” “Not any more.” “Billy walks to the buffet while Jillian walks towards the table. “Why didn’t you guys get something to eat?” “We thought we should wait for you”, replied Francine. “No need, let’s go pig out.” Francine, Jillian, and Matthew go to the buffet. After every one returns Matthew speaks, “Do you mind if I say a prayer?” “Not at all, Matthew”, replies Jillian. “Dear Heavenly Father, I come to you in thanksgiving. I thank you for bringing us together one more time. Thank you for allowing to reconnect with each other, to regain what was lost ten years ago, and to rebuild our forever loving friendship, and of course thank you for this food, we ask that you bless it, this hotel, this reunion and for Jill for putting this together. Thank you God for all of this and more in Jesus’ Name, Amen.” Everyone echoes his Amen. “Thank you, Matthew that was beautiful”, says Jillian. “Now let’s eat”, says Sarah. Everyone laughs. They all enjoy each others company remembering the times they had with each other. After an hour or so they return to their rooms

for some leisure time, a few hours after that they return to the lobby area.

### **Lobby Area**

“What time is it”, asks John? “It’s three fifteen”, replies Jillian, “Where can they be?” An elevator opens and Billy and Matthew exit. “There you are, you’re late...again”, says Jillian. “I know, sorry, it won’t happen again”, says Billy, “where are we going?” “We’re going to island hop. There’s this cool show going on at another island.” “Why didn’t we just stay at a hotel over there?” “A friend of mine suggested this hotel, okay. Now, would you quit complaining and come on, we’re already late.”

### **Evergreen Takeaway**

“I thought you said we were going to see a show”, says Billy. Jillian replies, “We are, but I thought we get something to eat first. I heard this was a nice restaurant.” Everyone is viewing menus and conversing amongst themselves in private conversations. “So, how is everything with you”, asks Jillian. Francine replies, “Things are going well. You know, I must

admit I thought it was a joke when you called. I never thought I hear from any one from Bridge Way again. Thanks for calling.” “You’re welcome. So, how’s Dillon?” “We’re divorced.” “I’m so sorry to hear that.” “Don’t be, I’m okay with it.” “How about you? How are you doing?” “I’m doing well.” “What did you do after high school? You know, to this day I can’t believe you graduated on time after having a baby.” “I was determined. I went to Devry and majored in business administration. I couldn’t go far, you know with Matthew and all.” “Matthew?” “Matthew, Jr.” “He, right, I forgot you named your son after Matthew. Does he know?” “Yes, I told him.” “When?” “It was about two months ago. Matthew came to Bridge Way and I told him.” “Why was he in Bridge Way?” “Kenny invited him and me to come to hear him make a special announcement. Actually neither one of us knew what the announcement was.” “What was the announcement?” “A wedding proposal to his boyfriend?” “I didn’t know Kenny was gay.” “I don’t think he is. I think he’s confused. At the moment Kenny

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and Darryl are separated due to Kenny. I think Matthew said something to him, because Kenny blew off the wedding after Matthew left. There is definitely something that the two of them are hiding between them.” “I know, ever since the whole, well, you know”. Changing the subject. “So, how is Brian doing? Do you see him much?” “Not really. I see him to drop off M.J. on Saturdays, that’s it. We don’t talk or anything. He’s married and has two daughters.” “Wow, that’s weird. I never thought he would marry.” “Yeah, well, I guess people change.” “So, what do you do?” “I’m a general manager at the Hilton in Newark.” “Really, that’s pretty cool.” “Yea, I had to work my way up. I started out as an administrative assistant.” “Well, I’m glad everything is okay with you. Believe it or not, I thought about you on a daily basis.” “Believe it or not I thought about you as well.” The waiter comes and takes their order for drinks after he leaves they all continue to fellowship. “Wow, that’s amazing, working and living in Paris. I think it’s every girls dream.” “Yea, I enjoyed myself for the time being. So, how about

you, Sarah? Are you in college?” “Yes, I just finished my second year at Rowan University.” “Wow, isn’t that a distance from Bridge Way?” “Yes, but every one was leaving Bridge Way, basically. Not only did all of you leave, but all my high school friends left. Most of them went to college out of state or left the country. I don’t understand. I mean sort of, but I didn’t realize it was that bad.” “Lies can do that.” “Yeah, you’re right.” The waiter returns with the drinks and then takes food order. Once he leaves their private conversations continue. “Wyoming is pretty far Billy. Out of all of the states why Wyoming?” “I honestly don’t know. I had a couple of choices far away from Bridge Way and I just chose Wyoming. I can’t say there was a particular reason. I was just crazy minded. I just had to get away from Bridge Way and New Jersey all together.” “I understand.” A short silence occurs before Billy breaks it. “Did you believe me?” “I believed Matthew?” They smile at each other and then continue talking. Matthew abruptly gets up and leaves the table. Jillian asks Kenneth, “What’s wrong with him?”

What did you say?” “Nothing, he’s just not feeling well. I’m going to check on him.” “You want me to go with you”, asks Jillian? “No, I’m fine, I’ll be right back.” Kenneth leaves the table and walks towards the lobby of the restaurant. When he doesn’t see Matthew he goes to the bathroom. He walks in and there’s no one there. He walks by the stalls and sees Matthew’s feet in one of them. “Matthew I know you’re in here.” Matthew sarcastically replies, “Wow, you’re observant?” “Why did you do that? Every one thinks there’s something wrong.” “Why shouldn’t they?” “Matthew, don’t do this now. Can’t it wait, we’re on vacation?” Matthew bursts out of the bathroom, “It’s waited long enough, ten years damn it, ten years. Don’t you care.” “I thought you said you put it behind you.” “I did, but it came back, okay. Why didn’t you tell me about Billy? How could you do that to him?” “I wasn’t there this time.” “But you knew Kenny, you knew. That’s all that matters. You knew he wasn’t lying. How could you let him go through the same shit I went through? What kind of a friend are you?” Someone walks in

the bathroom. Kenneth walks to the sink and pretends he is washing his hands. Matthew just stands at the stall. Once the man leaves they continue. “Must you do this now, in public?” “Does it matter, because there is never a good time for you?” “I’ve thought about it okay. I even held off the wedding. Yes, okay, you’re right. I’m only searching for what my uncle did to me; okay, but I like it. So, why can’t you just leave me alone.” “Because it’s not you and you know it. And you know the only way you’re going to find your true self is when you tell the truth about your uncle. Not just for me, but for Billy and for you. Do you know how many boys he could be hurting right now? Do you even know how many he has hurt since me?” “It was only Billy. After Billy I begged him to stop.” “Oh, and you think actually did, just because you asked. Did he stop with you?” No response from Kenneth makes Matthew furious. “You see, just because he didn’t do it in front of you doesn’t mean he stopped. Don’t be so stupid, Kenny.” “Can we just finish this vacation without any drama, and I promise when we get

back I will tell the truth. I will tell everything.” “Why don’t you tell now? You have your sister and six of your closest friends waiting at that table for us. What are we going to tell them when they ask what’s wrong? Or do you want me to lie?” “I’m just not ready.” “When? When will you be ready?” A silence hits the room. John walks in. “Is everything okay?” Matthew walks out. “Kenny, is everything okay?” “Yes, everything’s fine.” They both leave the bathroom. All three men return to the table. “Is everything okay”, asks Sarah? “Yes, all is well”, replies Kenneth. Sarah continues, “John?” “I don’t know. By the time I got in there they were leaving.” “Matthew is everything okay?” “I can’t talk right now.” No one responds. Every one just looks. They continue the meal in silence. Once in a while Jillian tries to spark up a conversation, but it ends as soon as it begins. She finally gives up and they finish their meal in silence. Towards the end of the meal Jillian looks at her watch, “We have to get going. We don’t want to miss the show.”

**Hotel Lobby**

Every one enters the lobby talking amongst themselves when Sara speaks out, “That was amazing, Jazz on the Beach.” “I know, listening to native jazz music on the beach, very soothing”, adds Francine. “And relaxing, I could have taken a nap. This place is awesome. I don’t think I want to leave”, adds Kenneth. “That would be convenient”, adds Matthew. Kenneth looks at him angrily. “So, what do you have planned for tomorrow Jillian”, asks Dina? “Nothing. Every one is pretty much on their own for the next couple of days. However, come Friday we’re going to club.” “A club? I haven’t been to one in ages”, replies Francine. They all walk towards the elevators and go to their rooms.

In the hotel room of Billy and Matthew. “That was fun, jazz on the beach; and that food was delicious. What was the name of that restaurant, evergreen something”, as Billy continues to talk Matthew interrupts him. “Was Kenny with you?” “What?” “Was Kenny with you?” “What do you mean?” “When you were with Frank, was Kenny with you?”

“No, why are you bringing this up?” “That’s what we were in the bathroom for. He knows how upset I am with him. Every time he talks I just want to strangle him. He said some stuff to me at the table and I couldn’t take it so I left. He came in the bathroom and we talked. He told me he wasn’t with you, but I thought he was lying. Are you sure?” “Yes, Matthew, I am sure. We were alone. It was just me Frank. I don’t want to discuss this any more.” “Sorry, I’m just testy. I don’t know if I can continue this little reunion. I might explode.” A silence fills the room. Billy asks, “Did you like it?” “What?” “I know it was wrong, but I would be lying if I said I didn’t enjoy it. Did you enjoy it?” Another silence spills through the room. Billy waits for Matthews answer. “That’s why I think I am upset with myself and Kenny, and everyone else. Of course it felt good. It was sex. He made me feel guilty and ashamed of myself. I hated myself for a long time. You know, I tried to commit suicide three times, but they all failed. After the third time I gave up.” “Oh my goodness, Matthew, how could you do that to yourself?” “I

couldn't live with myself. Knowing in my mind I enjoyed having sex with Kenny's uncle made me sick. I knew it was wrong, that's why I spoke up so that it would stop. It stopped, but not in a good way." "What did you do?" "What do you mean?" "The three times you tried to kill yourself." "well, the first time I took a bunch of Advil, but it didn't work. I woke up and my body threw them up. The second time I tried to hang myself, but I used this cheap rope. I jumped off the chair and before I could die the stupid thing ripped and I fell. The third and last time I tried to drown myself, but some idiot came out of no where and saved me. I almost got caught the last time. That's why I stopped. I really hate this." "Hate what?" "Living and knowing that the man who abused me is not in jail. It's not fair, and it's all because of Kenny." "How is its Kenny fault?" "Because he wouldn't testify against his uncle." "What would he have to testify about?" "You didn't know?" "Know what?" "Kenny was with me the first time Frank did it. In fact, Kenny was the first one he did it with. Frank told Kenny to bring one of

his friends and he invited me. Kenny and I were his first victims. Then again we could have been his twentieth for all I know.” “I don’t believe it. His own nephew, how could he do something like that?” “I don’t know, but Kenny was too afraid to tell on his uncle, so, he didn’t say anything and I looked like the liar. I feel really bad about it though, because as many times I said to myself that I forgave Frank and Kenny, deep in my heart, I’m not sure that I have forgiven them.” “I’m still in shock. I was completely unaware that Kenny was doing it too.” “It wasn’t his choice.” “In way it was. you know, we were all old enough to say no.” “Please don’t remind me, it just makes me sick.” “How old were you the first time.” “I was ten. Kenny said he was eight.” “Oh, I guess not. Well, I know I was old enough.” “How old were you when Frank first approached you?” “I was fifteen. I was old enough to say no.” “Why didn’t you?” “I was scared, surprised. I didn’t think Frank was like that. I didn’t know what to do. I was afraid he would hurt me if I said no. So you were ten, Matthew?” “Yep. My life ended that

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day...mentally, all my innocence was gone. I didn't have a chance discover things on my own. I didn't realize until now that I still have some hurts and pains that need healing." "Me too." A silence feels the room. The two of them get into bed and just lay down. Not speaking or not moving, just lying down in silence.

### **Day Three- Wednesday**

Jillian, Francine, Dina, and Sarah are in the lobby communing amongst each other. "I don't believe the time I am having. It feels so good to get away from everything and just relax", says Sarah. Jillian responds, "I am sure everyone agrees. You know, when I started putting this reunion together, I thought to myself, you must be crazy. I had no clue that I would actually be able to contact you all." "To be honest I only came to see Matthew. I thought for sure I would never see him again", replies Francine. "How did you get him to agree to come? I thought he hated us. You saw the way he left. Didn't say good-bye to anyone", adds Dina. Jillian answers, "I really don't know. I thought for sure I would have had to

really convince him, but he was ready and willing. I think he just really missed everyone.” A pause between them occurs as everyone is thinking of what to say. “It’s so weird. We used to can talk to each other forever. Now we can’t think of anything to say. I guess times have changed”, says Dina. “I actually have a question”, Jillian intervenes, “this may be the wrong time, but I really need to know. Did any of you not believe Matthew?” “I knew he was telling the truth..” “That’s shocking Sarah. I’m surprised. Why didn’t you believe Frank?” “Because Matthew never lied to me, he was always honest with me. I figured, why would he lie now? What about you guys?” Jillian answers, “I feel so bad, I don’t know if I can answer that with a straight answer.” Dina speaks, “I was in between at first, but there was always something in me that told me he was telling the truth.” “Must we talk about this now”, Francine asks? “I mean, we came here to have a good time. I really don’t want to go down memory lane right now. I left Bridge Way for a reason.” Jillian responds, “Well, what do you want to talk

about?” Francine pause to think. “Each other. I mean we haven’t seen each other in a long time. Let’s get to know each other again. I am sure there are many things we don’t know about each other since we seen each other last.” Jillian replies, “Then let’s start with you, how’s Chicago? You know, I’ve always wanted to go.” “It’s nice. I like the change.” “Is that it, is there anything else? Talk about everything you’ve done since you’ve left Bride Way”, says Jillian. “Well, I went to Robert Morris College and majored in Nursing. I was there for four years.” “Did you join a sorority”, asks Sarah. “No, I’m not into those types of things. I pretty much just went to school. I worked in a cool diner near by, as well as a bar. And once I graduated I started working at HartGrove Hospital. That’s where I met Dillon.” “How did you meet”, asks Jillian? “I met him on the elevator. I had been working all day and didn’t eat much. And I wasn’t getting enough sleep at home. We were on the elevator and when it when up it just caught me off-guard and I passed out.” “That must have been embarrassing”, adds

Dina. “Well, I wasn’t aware of what was going on until I woke up. He told me that I passed out, and he took me to the emergency room, and they did some tests and just realized I needed to rest. He stayed with me until I awoke.”

“That sounds so sweet”, replies Jillian. “That’s not all. My boss made me take three days off to get better and each day he sent me flowers.” “Oh, that is so sweet”, replies Sarah.

“He sounds like the romantic type”, adds Jillian. Dina asks, “How did he know your address?” “He took me home the day I passed out. He said he wouldn’t feel safe knowing I would be driving alone. He took me home and I guess took notice of my address.” “How did you get back to work after the three days off?”, asks Dina? “He picked me up, and we started dating after that. it was really nice at first. He was gorgeous and a really nice guy.” “Do you have a picture”, asks Sarah? Francine takes a picture out of her wallet. “You kept his picture”, asks Jillian? “Yeah, I miss him still.” “Oh my goodness, this guy is hot”, replies Sarah. “He is pretty cute. He has beautiful eyes”, adds Jillian. “Wow, you gave

this up”, asks Dina? “I know it seems stupid, but we just weren’t meant for each other. I mean we still speak to each other, and we’re still friends and all, but the only that really attracted me to him was his looks.” “Well, isn’t that enough”, asks Sarah? “No, it wasn’t. He was at work all the time, we barely saw each other, and we didn’t have much to talk about. Not to mention, he didn’t want any kids. I’ve always dreamed of having children. It just wasn’t working out.” “How was he in the bed department”, asks Dina. “He was glorious.” They all laugh. “No, I’m serious, he knew what he was doing, and how to do it, and it wasn’t a minute man.” They respond to the comment in laughter. “He is really a good person, but he’s just not my match.” “Whose idea was it to get a divorce”, asks Jillian? “I don’t know. I think both of ours. I mean I think I thought of it first, but I never said anything. But one night we were at the table eating in silence and I asked and he said yes without hesitation.” “That must have hurt”, replies Sarah. “No, it didn’t’ because we both knew that our relationship wasn’t going anywhere. We both

felt the end before it ended.” “What made you finally make that choice”, asks Dina. “My parents. I lived around them knowing there was nothing between them. They stayed together, I think only for their children. I saw their relationship, and it wasn’t much to see. They barely saw each other and they barely talked to each other. I used to ask myself, why are they even married? You could tell there was nothing there. One day I vowed that I would never stay in a relationship like that. So, when I realized our relationship was like my parents, I had to end it.” Sarah says, “Well, I guess it was easier for you than for your parents. I mean you didn’t have any children involved.” “That’s because he didn’t want any. I had an abortion.” “What”, responds Jillian? “You can’t be serious”, exclaims Sarah! Dina adds. “He made you get an abortion?” “No. He thought I had a miscarriage. That’s how I knew it wasn’t meant to be. We didn’t even know each other. When I told him I was pregnant, I thought for sure he would be happy, but he wasn’t. He tried to pretend to be happy, but I could tell he wasn’t. His exact

words were. Wow, that's strange. I wasn't expecting you to get pregnant. Then he asked me if I was taking my pills." "You were taking birth control pills", asks Jillian? "Yes, he asked me to, but I didn't think he meant forever. He finally said, that's okay, but I never really desired children. That really hurt me. So, I got an abortion and later told him I fell and had a miscarriage. I knew right then and there it wasn't going to last. I knew if I was willing to lie to him to save our marriage, it wasn't worth saving. I was sad for a little, but I got over it." A brief silence is amongst them. Sarah breaks it, "Wow, that's an amazing story. I would have never thought anything like that happened to you." "I'm completely speechless", adds Jillian. Francine speaks, "So, Jillian, what about you? What have you've been up to since graduation?" "Well, as you all know I stayed in Bridge Way, I have a son." Dina interrupts her, "How old is Matthew now?" "He's ten years old." "Has it been that long", asks Francine? "Yes it has", continues Jillian. "After high school I went to Devry and majored in business administration. During and after

college I worked at the Hilton Hotel in Newark as an administrative assistant. I pretty much moved my way up to general manager. I pretty much have been working and taking care of M.J. since everyone left.” Dina asks, “How is Brian doing? Do you guys still talk?” “Not really. I see him every Saturday, he takes Matthew on the weekends.” “That’s good; a son needs his father”, adds Francine. “Yes it is. Other than that we don’t talk. We used to though, but I think his wife was getting jealous.” “He got married”, asks Dina? “Yes, and he has two daughters.” “So, how’s the family? They still live in Bridge Way”, asks Francine? “My mom does. My dad died.” “No, I’m sorry to hear that”, replies Francine. Dina asks, “What happened?” “Lung cancer, he just wouldn’t quit. It hurt me much. I asked him to stop for me, but he didn’t. I felt like I didn’t matter to him.” “No, it wasn’t like that, it was just difficult for him to quit”, Sara responds, “You know if he could he would have, just for you.” “I know, but it hurt me. Matthew barely got know him. I was glad though that he got to see his grandson

before he died.” Another silence fills their circle. After a small pause Jillian asks, “What about you Dina? Tell us about France.” “Well, it is a beautiful place to be. I only wish my family and friends could be there, because then it would be perfect. I only left because I was missing my family.” “What made you pick Parsons Paris”, inquires Sarah?” “It was between Parsons and a school in California. I had a scholarship to both so it was a bit difficult, but I thought to myself, will I ever have another chance to get to Paris? So, I packed my things got a passport and left. It was a fun time there.” “What did you do other than school”, questions Jillian?” “I worked at a couple of places. First I worked at this little restaurant, and then I worked at a boutique shop. The last place I worked at was at a Louis Viutton store.” “Did you get free merchandise”, asks Francine? “No, but we did get discounts.” “Did you meet anyone cute”, asks Jillian? “Yes, I did. “His name is Jacques Godenot. He is gorgeous.” She takes out a picture and shows it. “Wow, he is gorgeous”, replies Jillian. Sarah adds, “He’s hot. Where were

you guys in this picture?” “His friend took it at a club. We went out that night. It was a lot of fun.” “What happened? Are you still seeing him”, asks Sarah? “No. I left Paris to visit home and I felt so home sick. I couldn’t leave to go back forever, and I knew that’s what I would have had to do.” “You couldn’t spend half the year in one country and half in the other”, asks Jillian? “That’s too much back and forth. But I’m still unsure; I mean I think I love him. I really wanted to stay with him, but I don’t know if I can.” “Is he good in bed”, asks Francine? “We haven’t had sex yet. Neither one of us wanted to. He wanted to wait. He thought for sure we were going to get married, but I backed out.” “Did he propose”, asks Jillian?” “We had the wedding day set and everything, but I just couldn’t see myself living in France.” “That’s so sad. Did he understand”, asks Francine? “I don’t know. I don’t think so. He said he would wait for me.” “So, then what’s the problem? You think you love him, he said he’ll wait, you both decided to save yourselves, what else do you need”, asks Francine? “I was thinking about my

family, my mom and dad. I don't know that I could get married without them there. I mean, my dad has been dreaming of the day that he can walk me down the aisle. I didn't want to take that away from him." "Can't they fly in? I am sure they would love to go to Paris. Besides it could also be like another honeymoon for them, and your siblings can have a nice vacation", replies Sarah, "I'm sure you could work it out, I mean, that's a lot it seems like you're giving up for not much in return. You have to move on, you can't be with your family forever." "And you guys can come visit the US during the holidays", adds Jillian. "And we can even go to Paris to visit you", adds Francine. "I would love that", says Sarah." "Yeah, I guess you're right. I guess I have more thinking to do." "Yeah, don't give up on him. It sounds like you have something there", adds Jillian. It gets silent for a moment, "It seems like you're next Sarah", says Dina. What have you've been up to?" "Well, when you guys graduated high school I was still in middle school, but I think I'll fast forward because I rather not talk about those years."

Francine asks, “Why, were they that bad?” “No, it’s just I hated those times because Matthew wasn’t around. He was a great person to talk to when you needed advice.” All three agree with her. “It was just weird to not have him around. So, anyways after graduating high school I enrolled at Rowan University. I am majoring in Education and Math. I want to be a math teacher.” “I am not surprised”, says Dina. “I know”, adds Francine, “I remember how you used to always tutor your friends.” Jillian adds, “I remember how you used to tutor your brother.” They all laugh. “Hey, you guys remember Freddy”, asks Francine? Dina adds, “Of course, that was Sarah’s little boyfriend. Whatever happened to him? Is he still in Bridge Way?” Sarah hangs her head. “What’s wrong, Sarah”, asks Francine? Jillian answers, “He, well, about two years ago he went to some party and had a little too much. He over dosed, he was D.O.A.” “Oh, you can’t be serious, please tell me you’re joking”, asks Dina? “I wish. It was a horrible thing that happened. Bridge Way wasn’t the same after that”, replies Jillian. “It wasn’t the same after

many occasions”, adds Sarah. “You guys just don’t understand. I don’t know whether or not Jillian told you, but after you all left, Bridge Way got worse. More crimes, problems, people being forced to leave. You remember Dr. Carver?” “Of course, how could we forget him”, asks Francine?” “He was arrested for drug possession. He was making and selling it in his own home, and Carla Roberts, the florist down the street, she was jailed for prostitution, oh, and Kevin, Kevin Guild, he almost killed his own mother during a drunken rage. He got into the car and smashed it. You don’t know how much I wanted to leave Bridge Way. I couldn’t see myself leave New Jersey, but I had to get out of Bridge Way. That’s why I chose Rowan it was far enough. I also had to get away from home. I can just feel the tension between my parents. I don’t know when, but I can feel the separation coming soon. As much as I hate to say it, but I can just feel it. A silence fills their circle once again, this time for good. The ladies just sit in silence for the rest of the time. Jillian briefly breaks the silence, “Well, I’m getting tired, I’m

going to go to my room.” “I think we all should do that”, replies Dina. They take the elevator to their rooms.

#### **Day Four-Thursday**

Matthew is sitting in the dining room area alone eating breakfast, John enters and sees him. John waves and Matthew returns the wave. John fixes his plate and then sits next to Matthew. “Where is everyone? Why are you alone”, asks John. “I think they’re still sleeping. I know how much Billy wanted to sleep so, that’s why I am down here by myself.” “Oh. Do you know whether or not Jillian has anything planned for today?” “No, she said tomorrow is the next day for us to be together. We’re going to a club.” “Oh, that should be fun.” “I guess. I’m really not into the club scene.” “Well, seems like we’re the only ones up at the moment. You want to do something together?” “Sure. Is there anything in particular you would like to do?” “Want to go to the beach?” “I don’t know. I don’t want to have to go back upstairs to change.” “Why would you change?” “I don’t want to get these clothes wet, beside their not

swimming wear.” “We don’t have to go swimming, we could just sit and enjoy the view.” “Well, then in that case I guess it’s not a problem.” “I guess we’ll leave right after we’re done eating.” “That sounds like a plan.” John and Matthew finish their breakfast and then leave to the beach.

### **On the beach**

“So, what have you’ve been doing lately? I haven’t seen you in ten years. I am truly glad to see, Matthew.” “Thank you, same here; and to answer your question nothing much.” “Did you go to college after high school?” “Yes. I went to the University of Maryland.” “What did you study?” “Technical Theatre. What about you?” “I went to the California Culinary Academy.” “That’s pretty cool. Why so far away?” “Do you need to ask?” “No, I guess not.” “You know, after Billy left I couldn’t stand it anymore. You know Matthew, I believed you from the very beginning.” “Did you really?” “Well, not at first. I thought you were fooling around in a bad way, but there was something about you that let me know that you were serious.” “What was it?” “I don’t

know it was your presence I guess. I just felt your seriousness through it and felt bad because I couldn't do anything to help you." "There was nothing for you to feel bad about, you didn't do anything." "I know, but as a friend I felt like there should be something I could do to help, but, I don't know." "Well, there was only one person who could of helped, but he didn't, and it wasn't you, so, don't feel bad." "Who? Who could have helped" "No one." "You just said that there was someone. Who was it?" "Nothing, just forget I said anything." A short pause. "So, how is California?" "The parts I've seen are pretty cool." "Have you seen any Hollywood stars?" "Yes, every now and then you see one walking around, it's pretty cool." "So, where do you work?" "I work at XYZ; it's a restaurant in San Francisco. What about you?" "I work at a couple of theatres in Maryland. I'm a light designer." "Cool. Do you talk to your parents? Do they still live in Bridge Way?" "I don't know. I haven't been able to talk to them since, well, you know. I don't think they believed me. It was difficult for me to rekindle our

relationship, I was very bitter for a long time.” “That’s not good.” “No, but what’re you going to do? How about you? You still talk with your parents?” “Yes, I visit them during the holidays?” “Are they the same way they were?” “Yes they are. A bunch of love birds. They still manage to go on a honey moon once a year.” “Believe it or not I was jealous of you when we were growing up. It seems like you had the best parents compared to all of us. I remember wishing I could share your parents.” “No, you’re kidding.” “No, I’m serious, and I don’t think I was the only one who felt that way. You are truly blessed to have parents like that.” “Thank you, Matthew. So, did you hear about Jillian’s baby boy?” “Yes, I did, in fact I met him. He looks exactly like Brian.” “Doesn’t he though? So, when did you meet him?” “About two months ago. Kenny contacted me and invited me over for a surprise announcement.” “What announcement?” “I’d rather not say.” “What made you accept the invitation; I mean, ten years later.” “I thought he was announcing something else entirely.” “What?” “Nothing, it’s not

important at the moment.” “Why do I feel like you’re hiding something from me?” “I don’t know.” Another silence occurs between them. Matthew breaks it, “So, did you meet anyone while in California?” “Kind of sort of; her name is Cynthia. We dated while in college, but a couple of months after college we fell apart; nothing serious. What about you?” “No, I can’t date yet.” “Why not?” “I have too much baggage I need to get rid of first.” “When are you going to get rid of it?” Matthew pauses and thinks about the question and then he answers, “I don’t know. I really don’t know.” “You can’t hold on forever, Matthew. That was ten years ago.” “You really don’t understand, John, it’s more than you think.” “Matthew.” “Yes.” “Make me understand, talk to me.” “I can’t. I want to, but I can’t.” “Matthew, I know we were never as close as you and Kenny was, even Billy, but I want you to know that I am here for you. Don’t be afraid to talk to me.” “Thank you John.” “I guess I would be a hypocrite if I kept this from you, so I think it is time.” “What do you mean?” I lied to you. I didn’t believe you in the

beginning. In fact I didn't believe Billy either. About a week after Billy left Kenny called me over to his house. He said he needed someone to talk to. He said he was depressed with Billy gone and all so I understood, so I thought. I went over there and to my surprise Frank was there. Both of them were half naked. I almost cried, I almost through up; only because I finally believed you. I knew you weren't lying. Frank asked me, but I told him no. Kenny told me not to worry, that it'll be okay and that I would like it. They raped me Matthew. I'm so sorry that I didn't believe you. They raped me." Both Matthew and John embrace each other, both with streams of tears flowing from their eyes. John pulls away, "we have to help him Matt. He's sick; his uncle did that to him. He like's it when he does those things and the worse part is no one knows how many others there were...there are. He needs help.

#### **Day Five- Friday**

"How did you hear about this club", asks Matthew? "What did you say", asks Jillian? "How did you hear about this

club?” “One more time.” “How did you hear about this club?” “Oh, from the Bahamas website.” “Oh, cool”, he speaks to John; “this is why I don’t like the club.” “Why not?” “Because you have to yell to be heard?” Jillian moves to the dance floor and enjoys herself. A man comes up to her and asks her to dance, she agrees, her friends notice, “You go girl”, yells Sarah. “Show him what you working with”, says Francine. They all laugh. “You girls are crazy”, responds Billy. Sarah continues, “I have to use the bathroom.” “I’ll come with you”, responds Dina, “you coming Francine?” “No, you guys go ahead.” Dina and Sarah leave to the bathroom; Francine moves to the music where she is standing, “Whoa, I am thirsty.” “You want me to get you a drink”, asks Billy. “Sure, why not?” Billy responds, “Bartender, get me a martini, stirred, not shaken, and a”, speaking to Francine, “what did you want?” “A strawberry daiquiri, please.” “Where did Kenny go”, asks Matthew? “Last I saw he was in the bathroom”, responds Billy. “I’m going to check and see if he’s okay.” Matthew

walks towards the bathroom squeezing through people annoyed that he's even at the club. He enters the bathroom and finds Kenny kissing another man. Matthew clears his throat. The man and Kenny notice, Kenny responds, "Matthew, hey what's up?" The man leaves; Matthew asks, "What are you doing?" "Minding my business." "You don't even know that man and you're all over him like that? What happened to Darryl?" "I told you the wedding is off." "So, if you truly loved him you wouldn't be in here with another man, you don't even know." "Why do you care?" "Kenny, do you hear yourself?" "Matthew, what do you want? Apparently you came in here for something?" "I wanted to make sure you were okay. I just wanted to make sure you didn't fall in." "Well, as you can see I am fine. You can leave now." "What is wrong with you?" "Nothing, Matthew, there is nothing wrong with me." "Don't you think it's wrong to do what you're doing?" "What are you homophobic?" "It's not about that and you know it." "Than what is it about?" "You tell me. What did you do to John?" "What are you talking

about?” “I’m not stupid Kenny, I knew that your uncle wouldn’t stop with me, I told you that. I guess Billy wasn’t enough you had to have John to.” “I don’t know what you’re talking about.” “yes, you do, you raped him.” “We did not, John came over freely, he knew what we were doing?” “Kenny you can’t be serious. Listen to yourself Kenny. You don’t sound well.” “I sound just fine. I don’t understand you Matthew. You said yourself you enjoyed it. Why did you stop?” “The same reason why you stopped?” Kenny doesn’t respond; Matthew inquires, “Kenny you did stop, right? Kenny you and your uncle are still...that’s disgusting.” “What I do with my life is my fucking business. I don’t know where you came from, but you need to go back. My life was fine until you came back.” “You’re the one who invited me back stupid.” “I know that, and I thought you would be happy for me, not ruin my life.” “The only one who ruined your life was your uncle. You can hide all you want, but it won’t last for long.” Matthew leaves the bathroom, he walks past his friends and tries to leave the club. “Matthew, where

are you going”, asks Billy? “I’m leaving.” “Wait a second, you can’t just leave.” “Why not?” “We came here together, we leave together.” “You guys can stay; you’re having more than I am. I’ll see you at the hotel.” Dina and Sarah walk over, “Are you leaving, Matthew”, asks Sarah? “Yes.” “Why”, asks Dina? “I’m not having fun, I’m going back to the hotel; don’t worry about me.” Jillian walks over, “What’s going on?” Matthew frustrated responds, “There is nothing going on.” “He’s leaving”, responds Sarah. “Why are you leaving”, asks Jillian? “He’s not having any fun”, responds Billy. “Then we’ll all leave”, responds Jillian. “No, please stay, you guys are having fun so stay, I’ll leave. You don’t need to leave on the account of me.” Kenneth walks towards the rest of them, “Are you all leaving?” “Yes”, replies Sarah. “Why”, asks Kenneth? “Because Matthew wants to leave”, responds Sarah. Kenny says, “Then let him leave.” “Thank you”, responds Matthew, “You guys stay, enjoy yourselves”. “No”, responds Jillian, “We came together, we’re leaving together.” “I told you”, Billy responds. “I’m not ready to

leave”, responds Kenny. “You don’t have to”, says Matthew. “If we’re not all going to stay there’s no need to stay”, says Francine, “Besides, the music is getting corny and the people are getting annoying; we might as well just leave.” “I’m staying”, replies Kenny. “What’s wrong with you”, asks Sarah. “Nothing, I’m just not ready to leave.” Matthew really frustrated, “Would you please just stay, damn it, I’ll be fine. Just stay.” “No, we’re all leaving”, replies Jillian. “I’m staying, I’m not ready to leave”, Kenneth dances away. “Kenny, Kenny come on”, replies Jillian. Matthew walks out. “Just leave him alone”, Dina replies, “He wants to stay.” “What about Matthew”, asks Jillian? “He already left, just let him go”, replies, Billy. “Well, I’m ready to go anyways”, says Francine. “Someone needs to stay here with Kenny”, says Jillian. Billy replies, “I’ll stay”. “Me too”, replies Dina. “Okay, you guys look after Kenny, we’ll go see what’s wrong with Matthew.” Sarah, Jillian, Francine, and John leave the club. Dina, Billy, and Kenny leave the club three hours after.

**Day Six-Saturday**

Billy walks by Kenneth's hotel room; attending to knock he raises his hand. Before he knocks he rethinks and then walks away and returns to his room. About a few minutes later he returns to Kenneth's room and hesitantly knocks on the door. Kenneth comes to the door, "Hey, what's up?" "Nothing much, can I come in?" "Sure, what's on your mind?" "Is John here?" "No, he went out to eat with Dina and Francine. Why did you need to talk to him?" "No, actually I wanted to talk to you privately. I wanted to make sure we were alone." "What's the problem?" Billy hesitantly asks, "What's been going on with you and Matthew? It seems like you've been at each other's throat since we've come here. Is everything okay?" "I think you know why he's upset." "Is he still upset with you?" "Apparently, I don't think he'll ever forgive me." "What happened at the club?" "He came in the bathroom and started up the same shit he did at the restaurant." "What?" "He's still bitter, okay. As soon as he gets over it everything will be fine." "I think it's

more than that.” A short pause follows Billy’s last statement. Kenneth asks, “Why did you tell him?” “Tell him what?” “You know exactly what I am asking.” Billy sighs, “I didn’t tell him anything. Jill told him.” “Did you tell him about-?” Billy interrupts him, “No, I told him nothing.” “Good. Is that all you wanted to talk about?” “Yes, I guess.” Billy begins to leave, but decides to continue to inquire, “Why didn’t you say anything?” “What do you mean?” “Why did you let Matthew, your friend, look like he was lying; how come you didn’t say anything?” “There was nothing to be said.” “You knew he was telling the truth.” “How would I have known that?” “Weren’t you there?” “What makes you think I was there?” “Kenny, do you realize who you’re talking to?” “Yes.” “I know you were there. You had to be.” “Why, I wasn’t there with you.” Billy looks at him in disbelief, “I have to go. Look, I don’t know who you’re trying to protect, but it won’t last. The truth will be revealed.” Billy walks out of his room. Kenneth responds, “Whatever.”

**Day Seven-Sunday**

Jillian, John, Kenneth, Matthew, Dina, Francine, and Sarah are in the lobby awaiting Billy. “Why is he always the last one”, asks Jillian. Billy exits the elevator rushing, “Sorry, I’m late. It’s pretty early don’t you think?” “So, what plans do you have for us so early on a Sunday morning”, asks Dina? Jillian replies, “Guess, it should be an easy guess.” “Where are we going, church”, asks John? “You guessed it”, responds Jillian, “Have you heard of Dr. Myles Munroe?” “No, who is he”, asks Kenneth? “He’s the Pastor of Bahamas Faith Ministries International. He’s well known amongst Christians. He’s even been honored by Queen Elizabeth herself.” “Really”, asks Sara, “that’s interesting.” Jillian continues, “I read about him and his ministries online and thought that we should all go. I haven’t been to church in such a long time, I figured why not?” “Well, then what are we waiting for”, asks Dina?” “Off to church we go”, responds Billy.

**Bahamas Faith Ministries International**

The entire crew arrives at the church, Jillian rushing in says, “Come on guys, we’re already late.” They enter and are seated. “I hope we didn’t miss much”, says Sarah. They sit quickly and listen to the preacher who has already begun. Words from the preacher, “I don’t know who it is, but God told me this morning as I was getting ready that this message was for someone out there. You’ve going through for a very long time. There are people out there who hate you, you dislike you, who don’t trust and it’s all because of a misunderstanding, a lie, a mistruth that has effected your life in a negative way. You’ve tried hard to get people to believe you, but it hasn’t worked. Well, I want you to know the end is near. You see, a lie can never live forever, but the truth will always reveal, it will always reign, it will always live forever. I want you to turn in your bibles to Genesis chapter twelve and we are going to read verses eleven through twenty, when you have say amen. Let’s begin: *And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold*

*now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee. And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels. And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife. And Pharaoh called Abram and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way. And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had. Isn't that something, not only did he lie he asked his wife to lie for him. But if you noticed God stepped in and said, oh, no. You're*

not going to lie and get away with it. You see, lies cannot last forever. No matter what that lie is, when you believe in God and all that He is, He will make sure to shed light upon all those who have believed that lie. Let's go to Genesis 20: *And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar. And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife.* Again, Abram made the same mistake. He lied the same lie only to a different person, but God stepped in and made sure that that lie would not live. You see, it doesn't matter how many times you tell a lie, whether it's the same person a different person, when God is in the picture truth has to reign, truth has to live. Now lets go over to Genesis chapter 39 and begin at verse seven. Are we getting anything out this message today?" The congregation responds positively. "Good. Let's begin: *And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon*

*Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her. And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out. And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out. And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home. And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast*

*brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me: And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out. And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled. And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison. But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.* Now here is this women trying to commit a sin and when she's rejected she goes for revenge. Joseph an innocent man of God is thrown in prison because of someone else's lies. Maybe not physically, but some of you have been thrown into prison, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, all because of someone else. Maybe it was revenge, or fear, or lack of knowledge, but whatever it was someone lied about you or to you and it causes you to face a life of prison. But the bible does say that the Lord was with Joseph, meaning just as long as you stay truthful, don't worry about everyone else around you, just as long as you keep the truth around,

when everyone else has left you, the Lord your God will stay and keep you and make sure that you're okay. Let's continue reading; Genesis chapter forty-one, let's start with verse fourteen: *Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it. And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.* And in verses 17 through forty Pharaoh tells his dream and Joseph interprets it, but now let's look at verses forty-one through forty-three: *And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.* Pharaoh the same guy who kicked Joseph into prison calls him out, because Pharaoh needed him. You see

those same people who laughed at you, scorned you, talked about you, and are going to be the same ones that in the end are going to need you for something. When you stick with God and stay humble those same people who were against you will be calling you for your help and then it's God that gets the glory. You become ruler over land, and have authority, but sometimes you have to hold on. It says that after two full years Joseph got out of prison. Sometimes it won't be right away, sometimes it will take time, but know that lies cannot live forever. God wants you to know that those lies in your life are coming to an end. They're running out of breathe. The truth is about to regain all energy and show forth all those lies and hidden truths. You thought it would be forever, but the truth can't stay hidden forever, it has to come forth." Sarah looks over at Matthew who is crying she asks, "Is everything okay?" He replies, "Everything is wonderful." "Those lies, they're dying, they're ceasing to live, and they're running out of time, it is only a matter of time."

**Day Eight-Monday**

In the hotel room of Jillian and Sarah; Sarah is on the phone; “Hi mom, I just called to let you know that we are having a great time. Well, so far we went to a couple of cool restaurants, we went to this cool concert called Jazz on the Beach. We also went to the club and yesterday we went to church. The message was really good. Matthew was crying. Today we’re not doing much, but sitting around. Oh, tomorrow we’re going to the Rand Nature Centre and go on a nature walk. I was looking the brochure and it looks really interesting. Oh, Jillian wants to know how M.J. is doing”, speaking to Jillian, “she said he’s behaving, she said he’s a joy to be around. Oh, mom, Jillian wants to talk to him. Oh, that sounds cool”, talking to Jillian, “My dad took him to Looney Adventures, well, mom, I’ll see you when we get back okay. Oh, Kenneth is fine, I’m not sure where he is now, but I’ll tell him hi for you. Okay, love you too. Bye.” “You know, Sarah, this is the longest that I have left my son alone. It’s starting to hurt.” “Every mother has gone through the same

feelings you're witnessing. It's apart of life. You'll have to get used to it you know. You won't be able to be around forever. He's going to grow up and he won't even want you around." "I know. Where does time go? I remember when he was first born. You can't get those days back. He's growing so fast. He's not a baby anymore." "I'm sure he's fine. Nothing to worry about." "I guess you're right."

In the hotel room of Matthew and Billy, Matthew is sitting on his bed with a smile on his face, Billy asks, "What's the smile for?" "I'm still glowing from yesterday. Do you feel it? Billy, do you feel it?" "Feel what, what are you talking about?" "I can feel it, I can feel it, it's about to end?" "What?" "What that preacher was talking about yesterday. It's about to end, all of those lies, each and everyone. Kenny won't be able to lie anymore. I don't know how, but something is going to happen, I can feel it, the truth is about to be revealed and all those lies, they're going to die." "How do you know?" "because I can feel it. There is a feeling within me that I can't describe, but I think it's telling me that it's almost over."

Aren't you happy?" "Why, should I be?" "Because everyone is finally going to know that I was telling the truth, that you were telling the truth, that we were telling the truth. That John was telling the truth." "How did you know about John?" "He told me. You knew already?" "Yeah, he called me when it happened. I told him to tell, but he said he was too afraid." "Why did you keep these things from me?" "how were we supposed to tell you Matthew? You moved away." "but you knew were I was. why didn't you get my contact information from my parents?" "You left without saying good-bye to us. We thought for sure you didn't like us anymore. We figured if we even tried to write you or call, you would reject us." "I was upset. I guess I should have left better than I did." A short pause in the room. "Well, it doesn't matter", says Matthew, "because it is all going to end, and soon, very soon. I'm happy. Aren't you?" "I don't know. I mean it may be a good thing, but, I'm just wondering if you're right, if the truth is revealed, how will it be revealed. I don't want anyone getting hurt." "You were

hurt, I was hurt, and John was hurt, damn it Kenny was hurt and he still is. The truth won't hurt anyone." "How do you know?" "Because the truth and lies are complete opposite, one cannot do what the other does. These lies have already hurt enough; the truth can't come around and do the same. I don't know about you, but I can't live anymore with these lies, I need the truth to be revealed.

### **Ninth Day-Tuesday**

In the lobby they await Billy, "Why is he always late", asks Jillian, "Matthew can you go upstairs and see what's taking him so long?" "Sure thing", Matthew responds. As Matthew walks toward the elevators Billy exits from the dining room area, "What took you guys so long; I've been waiting for you?" "What are you talking about; we've been waiting for you", replies Jillian. "I was in the dining room area eating breakfast; I thought that's where we were meeting before we left." "No, Billy, I told you we were going to eat after the nature walk." "Oh, I'm sorry. I guess we can leave now." "Guys let's go." "Where are you taking us today" asks Dina?

“We are going to Freeport, Grand Bahama Island. We are going to the Rand Nature Center.” “What are we going there for”, asks Francine? “It’s a nature walk; you get to see native plants, birds, and other type of animals. It also has a pretty cool gift shop, so I hear”, responds Jillian, “now, let’s go, I want to see everything the brochure shows.”

### **Rand Nature Centre**

“So, what do we do, we just walk”, asks Kenneth? “It’s more than just walking, Kenny”, replies Jillian, “Sarah has the brochure so she is going to explain to us everything we see.” They begin to walk the trail. “Well, according to this brochure we will see West Indian flamingos, which are the national bird of the Islands of the Bahamas. The birds nest and mill around a pond located about a half-mile inside the park and other birds such as: Antillean Peewee birds, Red-legged Thrushes, Stripe-headed Tanagers, the endangered Bahama Parrot and, occasionally, a Kirtland's Warbler. We’ll also see about 130 Bahamian plants such as: the Whiskbroom Fern, which, is believed to have been the first plant in the

world to stand upright; the Uniola, the sharp-pointed Agave, the Love Vine and much more. The Rand Nature Center has a Gift Shop, featuring local art, books, nature jewelry and gifts. Educational exhibits include island ecology, plants and their uses, cultural and natural history of Grand Bahama Island.” “If we came here to hear her read a brochure we could have done that at the hotel”, replies Kenneth. “Would you stop it”, replies Jillian, “Now look at those flamingoes.” “wow, they are so beautiful”, replies Dina.” “Oh, my goodness, it’s so cool to see one up close”, says Billy. “I wish I could take one home as a pet”, says Francine, “they’re so pretty.” “Let’s keep moving”, says Jillian. As they walk a bird flies by them and lands near them. “Oh, my gosh what is that little thing”, asks Matthew, “It’s a bird”, replies Kenneth. “Well, I know that.” “According to the brochure”, Sarah intervenes, “it looks like a key west quail-dove.” “Oh, what’s that one, it’s pretty, I like the green color”, says Dina.” “It is a...um...” looking through the brochure, “it’s a Cuban emerald.” “Cuban? Shouldn’t it be in Cuba”, says John. “Ha

ha, ha, funny”, replies Sarah. “Sarah, what is this tree”, asks Jillian? “This is a Coccoloba or a Pigeon Plum. This common tree has small, edible black fruit. The leaves are used to make a tea which is used to stop diarrhea. This is an interesting place. I have never seen nature look this good.” “Matthew responds, “That’s because you’ve been in Bridge Way for so long.” Everyone laughs at the comment. They continue to walk the trail and talk in mirth amongst themselves about the past and present. They end the trip at the gift shop in laughter. They return to the hotel enjoying each other’s company. They all return to their rooms

The hotel room of Matthew and Billy. “He’s not that bad, is he?” “What?” “Kenny, he’s not that bad is he? I saw you talking to him; you actually had a smile on your face. You know Matthew, at some point you’re going to have to forgive him.” “It’s not that I don’t forgive him.” “Then what is it?” I don’t know Billy. Today at the nature walk I realized how much I used to like him. There something weird about him. He’s two different people, and the Kenny at the nature walk

was the Kenny I like. But then, there this other person that comes out of him, I know it's not him, but when I see him, I hate him. I like Kenny, we will always be friends, but I can never see him the same way as I used to until he tells the truth. I lost him as friend the first day it all happened. I didn't realize that there was another guy in him that I don't like." "It's his uncle." "You're right." "Does this mean you plan on keeping in touch after we get back." " I don't know. I think there still some issues I need to deal with. I was a bit broken that none of my friends believed me. As long ago as it was, it's going to take some time, but it doesn't change anything. I still believe that one of these days it's going to break, and then maybe we can all continue to live as we were." "Well, let me be the first to say I'm sorry. As a friend I should have stood by you and I didn't. Will you please forgive me?" "Yes, I will, I forgive you." They embrace crying.

In the room of Kenneth and John. "I saw you and Matthew talking today. Is everything okay between the two of you?"

“I don’t know. Out of no where we started talking. It was like old times. I thought I hated him, but today for the first time I realized what I did to him. I always knew he had every right to be angry with me, but I was always afraid for my life. You know, I’ve been thinking about what the preacher said on Sunday about lies. You think he was talking to me? You think he was talking about us?” “I don’t know. Maybe, I mean I don’t think it’s a coincidence. Think about it. Out of all the messages he could have spoken on he talks about lying and the truth. Kenny, I know you were hurt, but we all were. And yes he’s your uncle, but you can’t protect him anymore. It’s about time you showed Matthew what a real friend you are.” “I know.” There’s a knock on the door, John answers it, “Hey, Matt what’s up?” “Nothing, is Kenny here?” “Yeah, come in.” “Hi, Kenny.” “Hey, Matt, what’s up?” “I need to talk to you?” “Okay, what’s up? Is everything okay?” “In private, I need to speak with you alone.” “Oh, no problem, I will just leave”, says John. John leaves the room. “So, what’s on your mind?” “I wanted to apologize to

you.” “For what.” “For everything. The way I have been treating you lately is horrible. I mean, I haven’t seen you in ten years and I can’t even treat you like a decent human being.” “It’s okay. It’s completely understandable.” “No, it’s not. I have every right to be angry with you, but it is still not an excuse. I want you to know that I forgive you and I really mean it this time. I’m sorry that it took so long for me to forgive you and I am sorry for having hatred towards you for so long. I hope you can forgive me.” “Of course I can, but it should be me apologizing. Matthew, I haven’t been the friend I should have been. I’m sorry for hurting you for tricking you into having sex and for lying about it. I was scared. I didn’t know what I was doing. Please forgive me.” “Kenny, you’re forgiven, I love you.” They embrace both crying like children finally happy that the tension between them has been broken.”

### **Day Ten-Wednesday**

Jillian knocks on the room of John and Kenneth, Kenneth opens the door, “Hey, Kenny.” “Hi, Jill, what’s up?”

“Nothing much, I’m just going door to door to see who wants to go the casino. “ “The casino? That sounds like fun”, replies John. “You want to go?” “Sure.” “What about you Kenny?” “No, you guys go ahead. I’m going to stay here. I have a lot of thinking to do.” “Man, you can’t be serious”, replies John, “this is a vacation, no time for thinking.” “No, I’m good, you guys go ahead.” “Is anyone else going”, asks John? “Yes, I already asked Sarah, Matt, and Billy. So far only Matthew is going, everyone else either doesn’t care for the casino or just wants to stay at the hotel.” “What a bummer.” “Yea, I’m about to go ask Francine and Dina. After that we can leave. You sure you don’t want to go, Billy?” “Yes, I’m sure.” “Okay, John let’s go.” John and Jillian leave and go to Francine and Dina’s room. “Hey, guys, what’s going on”, asks Dina? “Nothing much, a couple of us are going to a casino. You guys want to go?” “Sure, why not. However I don’t think Francine wants to go. She’s stuck watching some movie.” “You want to go to the casino, Francine”, asks John. “Shhh. I’m trying to hear”, talking to

the TV, “girl can’t you see, that man is trying to kill you.”

“Francine, you want to go to the casino with us”, asks Jillian?

“No, ya’ll go ahead; I’m going to finish watching this movie.”

“Who else is going”, asks Dina? “Just us and Matthew”,

answers Jillian. “Cool, what are we waiting for”, asks Dina?

“Actually we’re waiting for Matthew; he said he had to get

ready.” “Are you guys leaving or what”, asks Francine, “Your

talking is interrupting me.” “Sorry”, says Jillian. Jillian, Dina

and John leave, as they leave the room they run into

Matthew. Jillian asks, “Oh, are you ready to go?” “Yes, are

we the only ones going?” “Yes, no one else wants to go.”

“Which casino are we going to”, asks Dina? “It’s called

Atlantis its on Paradise Island.

### **Atlantis - Paradise Island Casino**

Dina and John are sitting next to each other at the slot

machines. Dina says, “I wonder if they rigged these things so

that no one could actually win.” “I think they rig some of

them, but not all of them. There is actually, like, a one in,

like, two million chance of someone winning jackpot.” “So,

how is California?” “It’s pretty cool. It’s different from Bridge Way, its really nice though, I like the change. I must admit though I did miss everyone.” “I did too. The whole time I was in Paris all I could think about was the crew, especially Matthew. I always wanted the chance to say a proper good-bye.” “Maybe you won’t have to now.” “Maybe.” “So, how is Paris? Do you plan on going back?” “Paris is Paris. It’s a wonderful place to be, and to answer your question, I don’t know if I’ll every go back, for good. There’s apart of that wants to, but then there’s that other part. And it got stronger. Being here with you guys makes me want to go back to the way it was. You know, back in time when everything was okay, we all had great times together and there were just no problems.” “Yeah, I know what you mean, but I don’t think there was ever a time when no one had problems, they were just hidden.” “Yeah, maybe you’re right, but the time was still good. Remember the time we went to Looney Adventures and we went on that rollercoaster.” “Yeah, and Billy through up afterwards.”

They both laugh, John continues, "What about the time we snuck in the movie theatres." "Oh, that was so much fun; I remember we almost got caught too." "Yeah, those were good times." "Where did they go?" "I don't know." A silence comes between them, John breaks it, "Yes I do, I do know where they went, they're right here. It may have been over five years since we've seen each other last, but the most important thing is we're here, together, sharing once again." "You're right. Maybe we could all get together and visit each other once in a while. You know, we could go to California and see some celebrities, go to red carpet event or something like that." "Or we could go to Paris for tour." "I don't live in Paris at the time, but Pennsylvania is just as fun." "I'm sure you'll be back. You can't run away forever. You belong with him. When we went on the nature walk and you were talking about him, I saw your eyes. I've never seen you so happy talking about something, talking about someone." "Was I really that obvious?" "Yes, you were." They laugh. As they continue to talk they hear a joyous scream and then a

crown applauding. “What was that”, asks Dina? “Sounds like someone just won some money.” “Well, it must have been a lot of money.” They continue to talk and play the slot machine before they hear it again. “Whoever that is they sure are having much luck tonight”, says Dina, she continues, “So, what about you. You haven’t said much about relationships. Do you have any?” “No, not really. I was dating this girl named Cynthia while I was in college, but it’s over now.” “Why, what happened, if you don’t mind me asking.” “Well, I really don’t like talking about it.” “Is it that bad? Come on, we’re friends, right? You can trust me. Besides I spilled my guts about me and Jacques.” “That’s different.” “How?” “Your relationship is actually good.” “Well, if I can’t run forever, neither can you. You’re going to have to talk about it at some point. You can’t suppress feelings.” “To be honest there is nothing much to tell. I met her in a class I took. We began to talk, and then we started dating. After some time we decided we weren’t meant for each other.” “Well, when did you meet her?” “It was my first year. We did a project

together. We started talking and realized that we enjoyed each other's company." "When did it go bad?" "I don't know. I thought everything was good." "Oh, she broke up with you?" "Not exactly. We were dating, and when we would go out everything seemed fine. We would spend a lot of time together." It wasn't until around the time I was graduating. I went over to her place to surprise her. It was our anniversary. I guess I should have called first." "What happened?" "Well, I knocked, she opened the door and apparently tried to keep me from coming in, but the man she was with came to the door and that was that. She said she was sorry, and that she didn't know how to break up with me, because I was too nice. She said she didn't want to let me down. I was so hurt. The worst thing about it was that the guy she was with was a classmate. So, every time I went to the class I had to see him. He apologized, saying he didn't know we were dating, but it didn't help." "Wow, that's horrible. Sorry to hear that, but maybe it was for the better. At least you know now, I mean you could have married her.

No need to be disappointed, because all it means is that she was not appointed to you.” “Wow, I never thought about it like that before.” “I don’t think anyone has.” They hear the screams again. “I really want to know what’s going on”, says Dina. She gets up. “Where are you going”, asks John? “I’m going to find out who this person is and ask to touch them so I can get some of their luck.” They both leave the slot machines and walk towards the noise. When they get there they realize that it is Matthew and Jillian making all the noise. Dina walks up to them, “What is going on?” Jillian answers, “You are not going to believe this, but ever since we’ve been at this table Matthew has been winning. I mean he just throws the dice and boom. It’s totally amazing.” Matthew throws the dice, and the stickman calls out, “seven”, the crowd cheers. “How long has this been going on”, asks John? “I don’t know, maybe about five minutes now”, responds Jillian. “This is amazing”, responds Dina. Matthew rolls again and gets seven the crowd cheers. “How long are you going to do this for”, asks Dina? Matthew responds, “I

don't know, I should probably stop, shouldn't I?" "I don't know", replies Dina. "No, don't stop", says John. Matthew rolls the dice, "Seven", cries the stickman, and the crowd cheers. "I think this will be the last", says Matthew. He throws the dice, "seven." The crowd cheers. "Okay, that's it, I'm finished." He takes his chips and the crowd responds negatively, he responds, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, but I don't want to lose all of this. I'm not sure when my luck will run out." The four of them walk away from the table. "This is awesome, wait 'til we tell the others", says Jillian. "What are you going to do with all that money", asks Dina? "That's a good question, I'm not sure yet." Matthew goes and cashes the money. "I guess we could leave now", says Jillian. "I think I'm going to need a bodyguard", replies Matthew. They all laugh.

In the room of Matthew and Billy. Everyone is in the room talking about Matthew's win. "I don't believe you actually all that money", says Francine. Sarah asks, "So, what are you going to do with all that money?" "I finally thought about it.

I'm going to give half of it to Dr. Myles Munroe's ministry.

His message really touched me on Sunday, and then the rest is going in my savings account." "That's a nice thing to do", says Billy, "I still don't believe you won all that money though." "You could have won more if he kept playing", says John, "He kept rolling sevens. It was amazing the luck that was rolling out of him." "I don't know that it was luck, more than it was a blessing from God." "Well, I am happy for you, but it's getting late, I'm going to bed", says Sarah. "Yeah, we all better get to bed, I have a great day of shopping planned for tomorrow", says Jillian. "Ohh that sounds like fun", says Francine, "I'll definitely be up early for that." "Good night everyone", says Billy. They all say good night to each other and leave the room. "Well, congratulations, Matt. I think it is really cool you winning and giving to the church. You know most people wouldn't do that. They would keep it for themselves." "Yes, I now, but I really felt something on Sunday from the message preached. I feel like I owe him. I'm telling you Billy, the day is almost here.

## Day Twelve-Friday

In the room of Jillian and Sarah. Jillian and Sarah are getting ready to leave. Sarah can tell that Jillian is worried about something, but not sure about what, she asks, "Is everything okay? You seem tense." "Yes, I'm okay." They continue to get ready for the day. As Jillian moves around the room Sarah becomes worried. "Jill, what is wrong, I can tell there is something wrong with you. What is it?" "I don't know." "I just feel, I feel, weird" "Well, how do you feel, what is it?" "I don't know. Ever since I awoke I've been having this feeling. In fact, it woke me up early this morning, it was like four o'clock this morning. I don't know what it is." "You want to go to the doctors?" "It's nothing like that. I just have this crazy feeling like there is something wrong with M.J. I had a dream last night and he was calling me, asking for help. That's what woke me up, and ever since then I've been having this uneasy feeling." "Oh, I think you're just homesick. You haven't left him away this long, you said so yourself." "Maybe; can you call your mom and just check for

me?” “Jill, I am sure everything is okay, there is nothing to worry about.” “Would you please just call her?” “Okay, if you want me to.” Sarah takes her cell and calls her mother. “No one is picking up. They probably went out to eat or something.” “This early in the morning.” “I don’t know, there’s no answer.” “Well call again.” “Jill I think you’re worrying over nothing.” “Would you just call again damn it.” “Okay, calm down.” She calls again, after a couple of rings Madeline picks up.” “Hello.” “Hi, mom, it’s Sarah. Yes, everything is fine. Oh, nothing much. We’re actually about to go to a festival, it’s called Junkanoo. It’s like an all day block-party with food, music, performances and a bunch of other stuff. It sounds like a lot of fun, I can’t wait to go. Oh, yesterday, we went shopping. It was so much fun. We went to all these cool stores and little boutique shops, oh, and I brought you and dad some surprise gifts, I hope you guys like them.” Jillian looks at her in anger. “Oh, yeah, the reason I called is because Jillian wanted to check up on M.J. She wanted to know if everything is okay.” Speaking to Jillian,

“Jill, she said all is well.” “I want to talk to her.” Sarah hands Jillian the phone, “Hi, how’s everything? Good. How is he? Are you sure? Okay, thank you Mama Dawson. I really appreciate you looking after him. Can I talk to him? Oh, this early in the morning. Oh, okay. Well, tell him I called when they get in okay? Thank you.” She hands Sarah the phone, “Okay mom, see you soon, love you too, bye”, talking to Jill, “see, there’s nothing to worry about.” “There’s something wrong.” “What do you mean?” “She said your father took him golfing.” “So, what’s wrong with that?” “Doesn’t your father work on Fridays?” “Yeah, but I think he took some days off to spend time with M.J.” “Oh.” “Jill, stop worrying. Look, there’s only one more day and we’ll be back in Bridge Way. And today is our last day out together so we must enjoy this.” “You’re right. I’m sorry; I’m just a bit edgy. I miss my son.” “Any mother would.”

### **Junkanoo**

Sarah, Jillian, Dina, Francine, John, Billy, Kenneth, and Matthew are at the festival, eating, drinking, and being merry.

“This is so much fun”, says Matthew dancing to the music, “I ma having the time of my life.” “You know, Jillian, I must thank you for putting this together”, says Francine,” I think this is the best time we have ever had together.” “No, thank you, thank you all for coming.” “I never thought we would ever get together again”, says John, “But here we are.” Dina raises her glass, “To us.” They do the same and toast. They continue to dance and watch the parade. “Oh my gosh, look at those costumes”, says Dina. “They’re so colorful”, says John. “They’re unique”, says Sarah. “You’ll never see anything like that in Bridge Way”, says Billy. “This music is awesome. I can’t stop dancing”, says Matthew. “I don’t believe it”, says Dina, “these two weeks have gone by so fast.” “I know, where did the time go”, asks Jillian? “You know not much has changed, we spent this time together like always”, says Sarah. “Like what, in bickering and laughter”, replies Matthew. They laugh at the comment. Jillian responds, “No, seriously though, Sarah is right. It’s like we were never apart. I want to know if I can get you all to agree

to stay in contact with each other. To make sure we never let anything or anyone come between us again.” “I think I can agree to that”, says John. “Me too”, replies Kenneth. Sarah says, “I will defiantly keep in touch. “To keeping in touch”, toasts Matthew. “But we have to mean, saying is different than doing”, replies Jillian. “I don’t know that any of us can forget this time we had with one another. I think it brought us closer together. I don’t know about everyone else, but I am definitely not going to lose you guys again”, says Francine. “Here, here. Here is to an everlasting friendship”, toasts Kenny. “An honest friendship”, toasts Matthew. “A happy friendship”, toasts Sarah. “A friendship that will stand the tests of time and no matter what happens we will make sure to trust each other, communicate with each other, laugh with each other, and cry with each other, but most of all love each other”, toasts Jillian. They all raise their glasses and toast each other. They drink and then continue to dance. “Let’s go walking, I want to try some of everything”, says Billy. “they have so much food here, I don’t think you will be able

to try everything”, replies Sarah. “Well, I am definitely going to try. They walk around the area enjoying the entire festival. They end the day with happiness, peace, and pure love of one another.

### **Day Thirteen-Saturday**

Everyone is in the room of Jillian and Sarah. “I just want to thank you Jillian. This was an amazing time”, says Dina. “You’re welcome and thank you all for agreeing to do this. I have a one more thing to ask. I was wondering if you guys would, well, on our way home before everyone splits and goes their separate ways, I wondered if we could go to Looney Adventures, just one last time.” “Oh, I don’t know”, says Matthew, we all have planes to catch.” “It shouldn’t interfere. All of your planes leave on Monday. We leave tomorrow and we will be back in Bridge Way by afternoon. They’ll be plenty of time to go. Come on, this may be the last time we see each other.” Sarah asks, “I thought we agreed to keep in touch?” “Yeah sure, we’ll call, write, or email, but we may never see each other again. Let’s face it, we all live so far

way from each other.” “She does have a point”, says Dina, “once I go back to France, I don’t know when I’ll return to the states.” “You’re going back”, asks Francine?” “Yes, I finally made my decision.” “That is great”, says Sarah. Everyone congratulates her. “See, we have to go now. Besides, I don’t know if you remember, but when we were in middles school we agreed that before we go off to college that that would be something we would do together, but it never happened. I mean after Billy and Matthew left we all grew apart, and we never spent that time together like we all agreed.” “I forgot about that. I forgot we made that promise”, said John. “Well, I haven’t forgotten”, continues Jillian, “I thought about ever since we gradated. This might be the last time we’ll have together. Let’s not lose it again.” A small silence enters the room, Matthew breaks it, “Well, if everyone else goes, I’m in.” Jillian smiles and then looks at everyone. Each person agrees to go, “This is awesome”, says Jillian. “You know this reminds me of a lot of things we agreed to do and never did it”, says Sarah, “remember when

we all agreed to get a tattoo with John?” “Oh, yeah, I forgot about that. How come we never went”, asks Dina? Billy answers, “Because John got scared at the last moment.” “I didn’t get scared, I got concerned.” “Right”, replies Billy, everyone laughs. “What about the time we agreed we were going to run away from home and go to New York City and go to an audition”, says Matthew? “Oh my gosh I remember that, whose idea was that”, asks Jillian? “It was Francine’s idea”, says Kenneth. “That’s right, we were going to audition for the Radio City Music Spectacular”, says Matthew, “Remember she wanted to be a Rockette.” “Oh yeah, I remember now”, says Jillian, “How come we never went?” “My sister overheard us and told my mother”, says Francine, “She grounded me for a week for thinking about running away.” They all laugh. “What about the time we were supposed to sneak out and go camping”, says Dina? “Right, because we were going to find a camp sight and have an “are you afraid of the dark” night”, says Kenneth. “What happened there, how come we never did that”, asks Francine?

Sarah answers, "Because that was a few days before Matthew went to court. After they found Uncle Frank not guilty, Matthew left, and pretty much you know the rest." "Oh yeah, I completely forgot that was right before the whole incident", says Jillian. An uncomfortable silence fills the room. After a couple of minutes Sarah breaks it, "Matthew." "What." "I don't know about everyone else, but I want you to know that even though he is my uncle, I believed you from the start. There was never a doubt in my mind. I just wish there was something I could have done." "That's okay." "How could you have known", asks Francine? "Because, Matthew has never lied to me. As long as I have known him, he has never lied to me." Another pause hits the room. "Besides, he's a friend, how could I not believe him? Didn't you all believe him?" No one responds to the question, Matthew gets up, "Well, it's getting late; I think I'm going to go to bed. We have an early rise tomorrow." "No, don't go", says Sarah, "I want to know, was I the only one actually believed him? Billy, you had to have believed him?" "Not at

first. I know how bad that sounds, but no, not at first. Not until Frank did it to me.” “Well, what about everyone else?” Kenneth responds, “It was difficult to believe him, I mean it was my uncle.” “Kenny you can’t be serious”, says Matthew. “I’m sorry Matt, but I’m just not ready.” “Ready to what”, asks Jillian?” “It’s nothing”, responds Kenneth. “Well, since we’re asking, what about the rest of you, did you think I was lying?” “I believed you”, says Dina. John quietly answers, “So did I.” “No offence, but, I was never too sure”, replies Francine. “I don’t believe this”, replies Matthew. “I’m sorry, Matthew”, says Francine, “But let me be honest, at first I thought you were getting back at Madeline by lying about her brother. I mean you always expressed how much you didn’t like her.” “No, she didn’t like me, and I would never look for revenge on anyone. How could think something like that?” “What about me? Did you think I was lying”, asks Billy? “I honestly thought you were sticking up for Matthew”, says Francine. “I did too, at first”, says John. “What made you believe” asks Jillian? “I don’t know, I just did.” “you can tell

them you know”, replies Matthew. “Tell us what”, asks Sarah. “Nothing. There’s nothing to tell”, says John, “What about you Jillian?” “I already know how she feels. She’s not sure.” “I’m sorry, Matthew, but it’s hard to know when I wasn’t there.” “You don’t have to be there to know”, says Dina. Kenneth asks, “And why are you so sure?” “Because he said so; a real friend doesn’t need proof, just words and a look in his eyes, let’s you know.” “It’s no that easy, Dina”, replies Jillian. “What the hell”, says Matthew, “What happen to our toast? Friendship of love and trust, is this what you call trust? How are we suppose to have an everlasting, loving relationship and we can’t even trust each other. True friends are suppose to know when their lying to each other, right? Do you think I would keep up a lie all these years? I lost a relationship with both my parents all my friends and everyone close to me. I cried days to get it back. Do you think I would keep a lie and lose of that? No! If I was lying I would have told the truth years ago to regain everything I lost. You know sometimes things can’t go back to the way they were.

I'm sorry Jillian, but can forget Looney Adventures. This time we had was fun, but that's the end of it. I'm taking a cab to the airport and never shall I see any of you again. Our life together ends tonight. Good-night." "Please don't walk out like this, Matthew, not again. You can't walk out on us twice", cries Jillian." "Let him go", says Kenneth. "No. I let him go last time, I won't do it again", replies Jillian, "Matthew please, let's just talk about this, please." "There's nothing to talk about. This is the end." Matthew walks out of the room. Everyone follows. Jillian speaks, "Matthew, please, please don't do this to me, I can't bare it a second time." Matthew hugs her, "Thank you, Jillian, I really was happy to see you again and everyone else, but people are put in our lives, but for a season. I'm afraid our season together is up." Matthew walks to his room and closes the door. Jillian cries, "Matthew, please don't." "Jillian, give him some time, he just needs to cool off", replies Francine, "I'm sure he'll be fine in the morning. Come on, everyone out, we've had a long day, it's time to go to bed, we have an early rise." Everyone walks

out of the room. Francine sits Jillian on the bed, “Take it easy okay, Jill. Don’t make yourself upset.” As she walks out she speaks to Sarah privately, “Make sure she’s okay, alright?” “Yes, I will.” “Thank you. See you in the morning.” Francine leaves the room.

In the room of Billy and Matthew. “Can you believe them, and Kenny, what the hell happened to him? He went back to being his uncle. I don’t know what’s wrong with him, but I can’t play see-saw with him. He keeps going back and forth.” “I think you were right.” “About what?” “This season, it’s over between all of us. It wasn’t meant for us to continue to be friends. I think tomorrow I’m going to go back to Wyoming and forget about everything. It’s time to move on.” “But you can’t. Your mind won’t let you forget what Frank did to you. Don’t you understand you can’t hide the truth forever, it will reign whether you want it to or not. These lies are dying. I told you I can feel it.” “Feel what? What the hell are you feeling, because I feel nothing. Just hurt and pain. Don’t think I feel the same way as you do. I

was in that room, I saw how Kenny reacted. I was just as upset, because when he lied about you he lied about me. I knew he did everything you said he did. Don't you think I know? I went through the same exact things you did, or did you forget?" "I thought you said Kenny wasn't there? It was just Frank, right?" A silence comes upon them. "I promised Kenny that I wouldn't tell anyone he was there. He said no one would believe me anyway. We agreed that if I told the story would be that it was only Frank and not Kenny." "Are you stupid?" "No, okay, I was afraid. I thought for sure everyone would think that I asked for it. I didn't okay. Kenny had a way of making me think that it was my fault. I knew it wasn't, but every time I was around him I couldn't think any different." Tears flow down heavily upon his face. Matthew embraces him. "I told him no, I really did." "Its okay, its okay Billy, I promise you, its coming. I can feel it. You, I and John are going to be able to finally live with our truths known, and everyone will finally know that we weren't lying. I promise you, it's coming. I can feel it.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

It has reached the end of their reunion. They all leave their hotel rooms barely speaking to each other. As Jillian checks them out they all go to the van, she stops Matthew, “Matthew, come here.” “What is it?” “Please ride back home with us, there’s enough room in the rental.” “Did you forget, I didn’t ride to the airport with you guys? How am I supposed to get home?” “Your plane doesn’t leave until tomorrow. Ride home with us and tomorrow morning I will drive you to the airport. Please don’t leave like this again.” “Do what?” “Leave out upset. You should never leave things alone like this.” “Why not, things are exactly as last time. No one else changed so why should I. You didn’t believe me before and you don’t believe me now. So, why not leave like before?” “I never got say good-bye. I never got the chance to speak with you. I can’t deal with that again. What if you just up and died, I would never get the chance to do things the right way. You have every reason to be upset with me, but please don’t leave out like this. You owe it to all

of us to at least say bye.” Matthew hugs her. “Good-bye Jill.”

He walks away. “Wait, what about everyone else?” “What about them? You’re the only one that really cared. They didn’t care that I left. You heard of all them. They didn’t believe me at first.” “What about Sarah and Dina; they believed you.” “I must go.” Matthew leaves not looking back. After Jillian is done checking out she walks to the car. “Where’s Matthew going”, asks Sarah? “I don’t know”, replies Jillian, “He said he needed to leave. He had to catch his flight” “But his flight doesn’t leave until tomorrow.” “I know. Let’s just go.” They finish packing the car and leave. “You think we could stop by a coffee shop after we get off the plane”, asks John? Jillian responds, “Well, I don’t know, we have to drop off Dina at the bus stop. I don’t want her to miss it.” “I thought we were going to Looney Adventures”, asks Dina.” “Without Matthew”, asks Jillian? “Hey, it’s been ten years now, if he hasn’t forgiven us by now, then we don’t need him. I mean, I believed him and he knew it, but that wasn’t enough for him. I don’t know when I’ll be back

in the U.S. so we need to spend our last time together in fun.” “Well, just as long as everyone else is for it, I guess we can still go”, says Jillian, “What does everyone think?” Everyone agrees to go to Looney Adventures, happy Jillian responds, “Well, then Looney Adventures we’ll go.” After traveling to the airport they safely arrive at their port and get back home to the airport. Getting off they are happy with the times they had, but sadder that their time together is almost up. Jillian gets another rental to drive home. Everyone gets their bags and packs it, Jillian says, “So, I guess we are on our way home.” They drive home talking in mirth, going down memory lane and every now and then entering into an uncomfortable silence about Matthew. As they reach closer and closer Jillian feels it again. She completely stops talking and concentrates, John asks, “What’s wrong?” “I feel it again.” “What do you feel”, asks Francine? “The same feeling I had a couple of days ago. Sarah knows what I am talking about.” “Not again Jillian”, replies Sarah, “You’re almost home, you’ll see that he is just

fine.” Billy asks, “What are you two talking about?” Sarah answers, “She had some feeling that there was something wrong with M.J., and I guess she’s feeling it again.” “What is it like, mother’s intuition”, asks Dina? “I guess so, and it’s getting stronger and stronger as I’m getting closer to the house.” “I think it’s because you miss him and you’re just happy and excited to see him”, says Kenneth. “Well, whatever it is I hope it goes away soon.” As they get closer to home Jillian feels it even more. She becomes withdrawn from their conversations. As they get closer to home Francine hears something, “You guys hear that?” “What”, asks Billy? “You mean the sirens”, asks Dina? “Yes, the sirens, where do you think it are coming from?” “I don’t know”, says Billy. Jillian speaks, “I knew it. It’s coming from your house Sarah.” “Why would there be cops at my house?” “I told you already, there is something wrong with M.J.” “I am sure he is fine.” “No, he’s not, I can feel it. He probably burned himself on the stove, or he probably fell running down the stairs”, she continues as if she is talking to him,

“How many times have I told you not to play around the stove and to walk down the stairs? You don’t listen M.J., why are you so disobedient?” “I think she’s losing it”, says Francine. “No, I think she lost it”, replies John.” As they pull up to the house they see what’s going on. “Oh, my gosh, you were right”, says Sarah. “I wonder what’s going on”, says Billy. “Why are the cops here? What could have possibly happened”, asks Kenneth? As they pull in they see two cops walking Frank in cuffs to a cop car. “Oh my god, no”, replies Jillian, “What is he doing here?” “I don’t know”, answers Sarah. They all exit the van; Kenneth and Sarah run inside the house, as Jillian runs to a cop, “What’s going on? Why are you taking him to jail?” “Ma’am, are you a relative of his?” “No.” “Then I can’t tell you. Please step aside.” Sarah comes back out and calls Jillian, she runs inside. When she goes inside she sees a cop next to M.J., “What is going on here?” The cop asks, “Are you his mother?” “Yes, did he do something wrong?” “No, we have to take him down for questioning, but we can’t take him without a parent.” “What

did he do?” “He didn’t do anything.” Sarah answers, “Frank was caught having sex with him. Do you believe Matthew now?” Jillian grabs him and cries, “This can’t be, please say this isn’t so.” “I am really going to need to take him now. You can ride with us.” The cop, Jillian and M.J. leave. Sarah looks at her mother in disappointment and leaves. As she exits Dina, Francine, Billy, and John walk up to her, “What happened”, asks Dina. “Frank was caught molesting M.J.” They all respond negatively. “They have to take him down for questioning.” “Well, I guess this is the end of the lie”, says Billy.

### **Three Months Later**

In the town of Bridge Way the case against Franklin Baker has finally began. Matthew, John, and Billy have returned to testify against Franklin, and Dina and Francine have returned for moral support. It is the day before day one of the case. Because requested, Matthew stops by Kenneth’s place. “Hey Matt, come on in.” “I saw Darryl leaving; are you two still together?” “No, he came by to see if the wedding was still

going on, I told him no.” “So, why have you asked me over this time? Apparently it’s not another engagement announcement, or is it?” “No, Matthew. I need to talk to you. I want to let you know that I’m sorry, and I mean it this time. I truly apologize to you. I’ve realized that this is my fault. All of this could have been avoided if I would have said something. I feel so bad, so guilty about M.J.” “Are you going to testify?” He begins to cry, “I don’t know.” “What do you mean you don’t know?” “I don’t want anyone to know. I feel so guilty for what I’ve done, I’m ashamed. I did those things too you know.” “But you didn’t know any better. Your uncle manipulated you into thinking it was okay.” “But I enjoyed it. What if they ask me that? I’m going to look like I did it all on my own.” “There is nothing to be ashamed about. You were a child. Of course you’d enjoy it, anyone would. Sex is very enjoyable, your uncle knew that. He made you enjoy it, before you could realize it was wrong. There is nothing to be ashamed about.” “I just don’t want anyone to know that I was.” “Was what, molested by

your uncle? Kenny, you're not the first person to be molested by a family member. You have to get over this shame and guilt. It is not your fault, remember that. Kenny, you have to do this, you need to do this for all of the kids out there being molested. You have to stand tall, because one day God is going to send someone your way that is going through the same thing, and they are going to need someone who understands what they are going through. You understand; you have to be strong; it's time to end this once and for all. If not for me, or Billy, or John, or even yourself, at least do it for M.J. You had two chances, two chances to make things right, don't let the third chance pass by you." Matthew gets up to leave, "I'm leaving now, and I hope I will see you in the court room tomorrow, ready to make that stand. Bye Kenny." Matthew walks out the front door. Kenny sits crying unaware of his decision.

### **The next day-Court Room**

Jillian is outside the court room, Sarah walks by and see her, "What are you doing out here? The case is about to start."

“I’m waiting for someone.” “Oh, you want me to wait with you?” “No, thank you. You go ahead in, I should be in soon.” Jillian continues to wait; she looks at her watch, “Where the hell could he be?” Brian comes in running down the hall. “There you are; where were you? You’re late. I’m sorry. I had to drop off the girls at their grandma’s. Is he okay?” “Yeah, he’s inside with the prosecutor.” “How could this have happened?” “I don’t know. I left him with Madeline, I thought she had everything taken care.” “For how long?” “Two weeks, I went to the Bahamas with a couple of friends.” “Why didn’t you leave him with your mom?” “She couldn’t keep him the whole time she had some last minute things pop up.” “Well, why didn’t you leave him with me?” “I don’t know. I wasn’t thinking.” “Do you ever think of me? Like it or not I am his father. You can’t act like he’s only yours.” “I am sorry, Brian. I can’t change the past, okay. I wasn’t thinking of you. Besides how am I suppose to trust you? Don’t forget you left me while I was pregnant with him and if it weren’t for me you wouldn’t even have

anything to do with him. I don't know why all of sudden you're trying to be a father." "Because I can. He's my son too." "Brian, I don't want to argue with you right now. Let's just go inside." They walk inside and sit on opposite sides of the court room. Jillian sits next to Sarah and asks, "Where's Kenny?" "He decided not to come." As they talk the case begins. "Quiet in the court; case number 01-A-02-0509-CR-24153, The State vs. Franklin Baker; Mr. Baker how do you plea?" "Not guilty." "You may be seated." Frank's lawyer stands, "My client is not guilty; I will prove that all alleged victims are trying to seek revenge because he rejected them in one way or another. I will further prove that Frank is an all around kind-hearted gentleman and could never perform any of the alleged acts." Judge speaks, "Thank you Mr. Aaron Reynolds. Ms. Catherine Madison." The prosecutor stands, "The state will prove that not only is Mr. Baker guilty of molesting Matthew Landon, but has been molesting boys for over forty years with testimonies from five of the victims, which includes Matthew Landon." "You may call your first

witness.” “The state calls Matthew Landon.” M.J. walks to the stand. “Do you swear to tell the truth the whole truth so help you God?” “I do.” “Hi, Matthew, how are you”, asks Ms. Madison? “Okay.” “I’m going to ask you some questions and you’re simply going to answer them as honestly as you can, okay?” “Okay.” “Can you tell me and the court what your name is?” “Matthew Landon.” “Good job. Do you know the defendant, the man sitting right there?” “Yes.” “What’s his name?” “Uncle Frank.” “Is he your uncle?” “No, but that’s what he told me to call him.” “Okay. When was the first time you met him?” “It was a while ago. Sarah invited my mom to a Christmas party and he was there.” “Let the court know that Sarah Dawson is Franklin’s niece”, she points to her, “Who introduce you to him?” “Mrs. Dawson. He saw me and asked who I was. Mrs. Dawson told him and said hi. That’s when he told me that I could call him Uncle Frank.” “How long were you at the party?” “I don’t know. It was a long time. We got there pretty much before everyone and was one of the last to leave.” “Now,

you called the cops on Sunday, June 10, correct?” “Yes.”

“Why did you call the police?” “Because, he was hurting me

and he wouldn't stop after I said no.” “When did you call the

police before or after it happened?” “After, I wasn't going to

at first, but he said we were going to do it again and that it

wouldn't hurt this time, but I didn't want to.” So, you called

the cops and then what happened?” “I called them and I told

them that a man was about to hurt me. I gave them the

address and they showed up?” “Where was Madeline

Dawson?” “She had to go to the supermarket to get some

things. By the time she came back the cops were already

there.” “Do you want to describe what he did to you?” He

puts his head down, “No, I don't want to, do I have to?”

“No you don't. Not, if you don't want to. So, this was the

first time he molested you, correct?” “No.” The court room

responds, the judge bangs his gavel, “Order, order please.”

“No? When was the first time?” “At the party?” “What

party?” “The Christmas party. He took me upstairs.” “Did

anyone notice?” “I don't think so. He said that I would like

and to be calm.” “How long did it last?” “Not long. He heard some people coming upstairs so he stopped. He told me not to tell anyone. He said if I did that I would get in trouble for letting him do that to me.” “How many times has he touched you Matthew?” “Three times.” “When was the second time?” “The second and third time was during the time I was staying at Mr. and Mrs. Dawson’s house. They were babysitting me. Uncle Frank came over on a Thursday I think it was. Mrs. Dawson asked him to watch me while she went shopping. He did it again then. And the last time was the day I called the police.” “Is there anything else you would like the court to know?” “No.” “Thank you Matthew.” “You’re welcome.” “Mr. Reynolds, your witness.” “Matthew, when Mr. Baker took you upstairs what did he show you?” “He showed me Kenny’s video game system.” “Did you play any games?” “Yes, we played a couple of them.” “Is it true that you asked Mr. Baker if you could play *Murder on the Streets*?” “Yes, but he said no. He said it was too graphic for someone my age.” “And you got upset, right?”

“Yes, a little.” “so, mad that you made up this story to get back at him?” “No, I wouldn’t lie. It’s only a game.” “Then why did you wait so long to tell?” “Because I was afraid he said I would get into trouble.” “I think he took you up there to play a nice video game and you wanted to play something else. He told you no, and got upset. And I think that day you called the cops he disciplined you for misbehaving and you got upset, am I right?” No, that day at the Christmas party he touched me and when he heard people coming up the stairs he turned on the game to make it seem like that we were playing video games and he told me not to tell anyone. When I asked him if I could play the other game he said no. That’s what happened, honest.” “No further questions your honor.” “You may step down.” Jillian walks toward M.J. and embraces him and takes him back to where she was sitting. Brian walks over to her and sits next to him. He hugs him as M.J. cries. “The state calls our next witness, Lukas Maynard.” A tall man who looks to be about fifty years of age stands and walks to the stand. “Do you swear to tell the truth the whole

truth and nothing, but the truth?” “I do.” “Can you state your name for the court?” “Lukas Maynard.” “Thank you. Can you tell the court how you know the defendant?” “We went to school together and we were on the same little league team.” “Thank you. Can you please describe to the court why you are a witness?” “His father molested me when I was ten years old.” “Objection your honor relevance”, speaks Mr. Reynolds. “I will explain the relevance.” “Overruled, continue.” “Thank you. Can you please explain to the court your first encounter with the defendant’s father?” “It was a dafter baseball practice. Frank had asked me to come over his house to play some games. I asked my mom and she agreed. I went over to his house and only him and his father was there. We played some board games and then it happened. His father started to massage me. I asked him what he was doing and he told me to relax. He began to take my shirt off and I told him I didn’t want him to do that and he told me to relax again. Then Frank told me to be calm and that it was okay. I was scared, really scared. I told them

I don't think we should be doing this, but they assured me that it was okay. As Frank's father was massaging me Frank started to unbutton my pants. I told him no, but he said, relax everything is okay, you'll like how it feels, I promise. I wanted to scream, but I just didn't know what to do, I was nervous, and frightened. I really didn't know what to do. As I tried to make them stop Frank started sucking me and I will admit it felt good. I felt good, scared, guilty, a shamed, nervous, I was a emotional wreck ready to explode. Once he stopped he Frank's father told me to do the same to Frank, but I didn't want to. I told him no, but he kept telling me to do so, so I did. As I continued Frank's father began to rub my anus area and he", he pauses and closes his eyes; like a water fall tears flow from his eyes, he continues, "He said, now, this may hurt at first, but you'll like it in the end. He then continued and stuck his", he pauses, his legs begin to shake uncontrollably, "He slowly put his penis", he pause once again, "I'm sorry, I thought I got over this." "It's okay. Take your time." "He", he stops, "I can't do this anymore."

“Are you sure.” “Yes, yes I’m sure, I can’t do this anymore.”

“That’s okay. How many times had this happened?” “Only once. After that day I never saw Frank again. He would ask for me to come over, but I told him no because I knew what he was going to do.” “Did you tell anyone?” “No, his father told me that if I did he would make it look like I was lying and he also said he would hurt my parents. I was too scared to say anything. I just ignored Frank for the rest of my life.”

“Thank you. No more questions your honor.” “Your witness, Mr. Reynolds.” “Mr. Maynard, you said you didn’t tell anyone, right?” “Yes.” “So, how do we know that anything you said was true? You don’t have any witnesses?”

“I would not come to a court room, swear on a Holy Bible and then lie.” “And how do we know that? We don’t know anything about you.” “I promise you everything I said is true.” “According to you and only you; like I said you could be making this all up. No more questions your honor.”

“You may step down. Please call your next witness Ms. Madison.” “The state calls, Matthew Jacobs.” Matthew

walks to the stand, as the bailiff speaks Matthew looks at the prosecutor, “Oh, excuse me your honor, this witness has asked not to be sworn in.” “Why” asked the judge?” “He feels it is against his belief.” “What is his belief?” “Matthew you can address the judge.” Matthew speaks, “I am a born-again believer.” “You mean you’re a Christian?” “I guess you can call me that.” “How is being sworn in against your belief?” Matthew takes the bible and opens it. He flips through and reads, “Zechariah five and three: *Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it.*” He flips through it again, “James 5 and twelve: *above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.*” “One last time he flips through the bible, “Matthew five and thirty-four: *But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne.* He returns the bible to the bailiff and then turns the judge, “If you actually read the

thing instead having people swear on it, you would have known that.” “Well, he can’t testify without being sworn in”, says Mr. Reynolds. Matthew puts his right hand on his heart and his left hand in the air, “I vow that I will speak the whole truth and nothing, but the truth, and if I should tell one lie, I pray that God makes an ass out of me.” “You may be seated”, says the judge. Ms. Madison begins, “Matthew, I see you have the same name as the witness before. Is that a coincident?” “No, his mother named him after me.” “How do you know his mother?” “We went to school together.” “Oh. How do you know the defendant, Franklin Baker?” “He’s Kenneth’s uncle. Kenneth introduced me to him.” “Do you remember the first time you met the defendant?” “Yes.” I remember it perfectly. Kenneth had invited me to his house to play video games. I came over and we were in his room. About maybe an hour later his uncle came in, he introduced himself to me and told me that I could call him Uncle Frank. As we continue to play the game Frank began to massage me. I backed away and he told me to just relax.

That everything was okay. Kenny looked at me and smiled and said relax, it's just a massage. I continued to play the game with Kenny and Frank continued to massage me. As he continued I became more nervous, and then he began to rub my chest. He then began to pull of my shirt. I told him not to, but he continued. At that point Kenny told me to stay calm and he started to unbutton my pants. I told him to stop and he told me to chill out, that I would enjoy it. He then proceeded to perform oral sex on me. As he did that, Frank began to take the rest of my clothes off. Once my clothing was off Frank continue to massage me. After a few minutes Kenny stopped and Frank continued. As good as it felt I was scared. I began to cry and Frank told me not to cry, he said there's nothing to cry about, but I continued to cry. As I cried Frank continue and Kenny got some tissue at the request of his uncle and he started wiping my tears away and he said, please stop crying, it's okay, really it is. About a few minutes later it stopped. I went home and I didn't know what to do. I was scared." "How many times has this

happened to you?” Countless times, it started when I was ten and ended when I was fifteen.” “What made it stop.” “I went to the police and told them everything.” “What happened after that?” “I went to court I witnessed against him and the jury found him not guilty. They made me look like I was lying. As if I made it all up.” “What made you say something after five years?” “Well, actually, no one knows this, but, I got a little sick and my mom took me to the doctors. The doctor diagnosed me with gonorrhea. When my mother asked me how I got it I told her. She took me to the police and the rest is history.” “Do you know who you got gonorrhea from?” “No, either Kenny or Frank. They were the only two people I ever had sex with.” “What happened after the court case?” “Well, Frank’s lawyer made it look like I got the disease from someone else and that I was making the whole thing up. The court and town and even my parent’s believed him. I felt so stupid I couldn’t stay in Bridge Way anymore. I moved with an aunt and uncle in Chicago and never came back until recently.” “Thank you

Matthew. No more questions.” “Mr. Reynolds your witness.” “Matthew is it true that you and Kenny were having sex on your own at times?” “Yes.” “So is it possible that you could have gotten it from Kenny?” “Yes, but, I wouldn’t know.” “In the case back in 1995, is it true that you only testified that Frank was with you?” “Yes.” “How come you didn’t mention Kenny?” “Because he made me promise that I wouldn’t mention him.” “Is it true that you and Kenny were having sex and didn’t want anyone to know so you made up this story about Frank after you caught the disease?” “No.” “Is it true that you and Kenny were having sex since you were kids and continued until you were teenager by yourself without any influence from Frank?” “No, that is not true, it is false.” “How do I know that you are not lying?” “Because I am not.” “In 1995 you swore on a bible and you lied in court, and now you don’t even have the guts to swear on it because you knew that you would be lying.” “No, that isn’t true. So then why did you swear in 1995 and not now.” “I told you why, I read it to you.” “You didn’t read it in

1995.” “I am a different person then I was in 1995.” “Oh, are you really?” “Everything I have said has been completely true.” “So, you said that Frank molested you; did you enjoy it?” “What kind of question is that?” “Well, did you?” “Whether I enjoyed it or not doesn’t matter. Whether I enjoy having sex with a man or not never gives the right to an adult to have sex with a ten year old.” “If you were so hurt, why did you wait until five years?” “I told you already?” “Why did you continue to go over to his house?” “Because he was my friend.” “Why did you continue to go over to his house, if you knew what he would do to you?” “I thought that it would stop.” “If you knew what they were doing to you why did you continue to visit them?” “Because I wanted it, is that what you want to hear? Yes, I admit it, I enjoyed it. I kept going over there because I wanted it, but it doesn’t change the fact that if Frank would have never started it I wouldn’t have wanted it. Frank was an adult and was supposed to make the right decisions and he failed. Why are you making it seem like it was me? Frank needs to take responsibility for

what he did.” “No more further questions.” “Call you next witness please.” “The state calls forth William Newsome.” Billy walks to the stand. “Do you swear to tell the truth-”, Billy interrupts, “actually I didn’t realize those scriptures were in the bible, I’d rather not. Can I just make a vow?” “Yes, you may”, says the judge. “I vow that everything I say will be the truth the whole truth so help me God.” “Can you please state your name for the court?” “William Newsome.” “Thank you. William-”, Billy interrupts, “actually you can just call me Billy.” “Okay, Billy, do you know the defendant?” “Yes, he’s my friend’s uncle.” “When was the first time you met him?” “I don’t remember. I met him a couple of times. He used to come over Kenny’s house very now and then.” “Have you experienced the same or similar things as the other witnesses?” “Yes.” “Can you please tell your story to the court?” “Sure. Well, it started when I was fifteen. Kenny and I were working on a school project. He told me to come over his house so that we could work on it. When I got to the house he barely had any clothes on. It was weird. I

asked why he was undressed and he said no reason, just relaxing.” “What did he have on?” “He had on underwear and a t-shirt. I asked him if he was ready to start the project and he told me not now. He took me to his room and when I got there Frank was there.” “What did you think?” “I wasn’t sure. I was scared because for the first I started to believe Matthew.” “What do you mean?” “Well, I didn’t actually believe Matthew. I thought that him and Kenny got the disease from each other, but when I saw his uncle in the room wearing close to nothing, I began to realize maybe he was right.” “What happened next?” “Well, he told me to sit down on the bed, so I did. And then his uncle started massaging me. I asked what he was doing and he said don’t worry, just sit back and relax. Frank continued to massage me and at the same time Kenny began to undress me. When he got to my pants I felt nervous so I told him to stop. Kenny told me to relax and to enjoy it. I told him no a couple of times but I was too shocked to really think things through. Once Kenny had my pants off he began to suck my

penis. Frank asked me if I liked it and I answered I don't know. He then asked me if I wanted to do it and I told him no. He laughed and said sure you do. He took his pants off and told me to try it. I told him I didn't want to, but he persisted. He forced my head down and I finally just gave in. Once it was all over I left and immediately went to the cops." "What happened after that?" "I went to court and the same thing that happened to Matthew happened to me. They made it seem like I made it all up. They said that I was just trying to get revenge for Matthew." "Did you mention Kenny in your testimony?" "No. I know I should have, but Kenny had a way of convincing you. I told I didn't want to hurt him and I even told him that he should testify, but he didn't. A couple of months later I just left town and never returned." "Thank you, Billy. No more questions." "Your witness." "Billy, is it true that you and Matthew were good friends?" "Yes and we still are?" "Is it true that Matthew called you and asked you to lie for him to put Frank in jail?" "No. When Matthew left he didn't even tell me where he was

going and he never called.” “So, even the more reason for revenge.” “What are you talking about?” “Is it true that you were so upset that Matthew, your best friend, got kicked out of town ,so you wanted to get back at the guy who did, so you made up the same lies as Matthew?” “Where are you coming up with trash you speak? Everything you’re thinking of is wrong. Frank molested me and he molested Matthew and M.J. and even Kenny.” “Who, is not even here. Apparently, he doesn’t think his uncle did anything wrong.” “That’s because he’s ashamed of himself. Wouldn’t you be if your uncle manipulated you into molesting your friends?” “No further questions your honor.” “You may step down.” “The state calls, “John O’Brian.” John walks to the stand and speaks, “I vow to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help me God.” “Thank you; please state your name for the court.” “John O’Brian.” “John, how do you know the defendant?” “I’m friends with Kenny.” “Do you know Matthew and Billy?” “Yes. We all grew up together.” “When Matthew and Billy came out told about Frank, did

you believe them?” “I really don’t know. At first I did, but the lawyer made it seem like they were lying. I was kind of indecisive at the moment.” “Did you ever have the same encounter with Uncle Frank?” “No, it wasn’t the same.” “Really, I thought you said you were molested as well.” “No, I was raped.” “Really, can you please explain?” “Well, Kenny called me one day and asked me to come over. I didn’t think anything of it. I came over and we went into his room. We played some video games and looked at some magazines and, you know, just hung out. About an hour later Frank knocked on the door. I scared because there was no reason for him to be there.” “What do you mean?” “He usually only comes over during the holidays. He’s from out of town so it was weird to see him there. My mind began to think of Matthew and Billy, but I wasn’t sure whether to believe them or to think that maybe Frank wasn’t such a bad guy.” “What happened next?” “Well, Frank came in and he began to massage me. I got up and I told him no. He said just sit and relax. He tried to massage me again, but I got up.

Kenny said sit and be cool, there's nothing to get upset about.

I was so scared, because at that moment I realized Kenny was

in on it too. Frank tried to massage me again, but I pushed.

He fell and said what is wrong with you? I told him to leave

me alone; I called him a pervert and a molester. I told him

what he did to Matthew and Billy was sick. He replied with a,

what do you care, you didn't even believe them. When I

realized he was correct I began to cry. I try to leave, but

Frank grabbed me. I tried to let go, but he pulled me. at that

point Kenny held me down and said just be calm, please,

don't do this, just cooperate. He said its okay, you don't have

to fight it, you'll like, I promise, just please do what he says. I

tried to get up, but I couldn't. Frank then pulled my pants

off and I knew what he was about to do, so I yelled as loud as

I could and Frank hit me, he hit me hard. Kenny said, don't

hit him he doesn't deserve it. Frank said; tell him to calm

down and stop fighting", as he continues his story he freely

allows his tears to clean him. "Kenny kneeled down to me

and said, Johnny please don't fight, just enjoy it; it will be

fine, you'll see. At that point I just let him do it. I cried and cried while Frank had anal sex with me. Kenny had tissue and was wiping my tears. I just laid there wishing I had believed them, wishing that Frank was in jail. Once it was all done, I just laid there for a while. Frank left and Kenny just held me. After that day I never spoke to Kenny again. He called me, but I wouldn't answer his calls, at school I would avoid him and I would ignore him any time I saw him." "Did you tell anyone?" "No." "Why not?" "Frank told me that if I did he would make sure I was lying. After Matthew and Billy had to leave town I figured why bother, no one would believe me. So, I kept quiet and after high school I moved to California in hopes of forgetting all of it." "Is there anything else you would like to tell the court?" "Yes. I know Mr. Reynolds is trying hard to make us look like fools, but I tell you the truth, this man needs help. Frank is not a well man, and you can't let him walk out of here a free man." "Thank you, John. No further questions." "John", says Mr. Reynolds, "Why did you go over to Kenny's house?"

“Because he asked me over. He said he needed a friend to talk to. He said after Matthew and Billy left he felt like he didn’t have many friends left, he was sad, he said and he needed someone to talk to.” “Is it true that you went over there to tell him the feelings you had for him?” “No. He called me over.” “Sure you did, you went over there to tell him that you loved him and when he turned you down not only did you try to fight him, but when Frank came in to stop the fight you got upset with him.” “Are you serious?” “You know it’s true, all you want is revenge?” “Why would I have waited six years to get revenge?” “Perfect timing, he gets arrested, why not lie to get him in jail.” “I am not lying. The only one around lying is Frank. And you’re a jackass for making up stories just to win your case.” “you know every word I speak is true.” “No, I know that Frank is a child molester and a rapist. He hurt me. I can never be the same because of him.” “Oh, please kill the drama.” John stands, “Look, asshole, I don’t appreciate your attitude.” “Oh, sit down and continue lying your story for the court.” “It took

me everything in my mind, body, soul, heart, spirit, and emotions to come up here relive the most horrible moments in my life and you treat me like some slut who asked for it.”

“Who’s to say you didn’t?” The judge speaks, “Watch yourself, counsel.” John gets up and tries to attack Aaron, the guards in the court room stop him, the court room reacts to the scene, “Order in the court, order in this court, Ms. Madison talks to your witness.” Catherine walks over to him, “Come on man, it’s not worth it.” John walks away and Aaron gives him a dirty look, John tries to attack him again. The police take John away. “Okay, order in the court, we will have a fifteen minute recess so everyone can calm themselves. Francine says sarcastically, “What are we supposed to do massage ourselves.” Dina says, “I don’t believe that lawyer, he’s making all of them look like a bunch of jerks.” “That’s what they do to win their case”, says Francine. “It’s terrible, and I can’t believe Kenny was being molested too, why didn’t he say anything?” “It’s not hard to figure that out, he was just to ashamed and guilty.” Dina continues, “I wonder how

Mr. and Mrs. Dawson are doing? This must be tearing them apart.” “It must be embarrassing. Where’s Sarah.” “She said she was going to the bathroom.” “Well”, Francine says, “You want to go get a snack or something. Seems like everyone else left.” “Sure, why not? Did you see Brian?” “Yes, I did. He looks exactly the same.” “He still has those same beautiful eyes.” “Can you believe it? I mean our lives. It’s so different from how I thought we would be living. I mean thinking about of how I thought we would be when I was little is so different. It’s just so weird how things change. Sometimes I wish I could just hit a rewind button and do things over, differently, you know.” “I know exactly what you mean.”

### **During the Break**

Catherine is waiting outside the courtroom. She is sitting looking through her files when she hears a voice, “Cathy”, she looks up and smiles, “Oliver, what are you doing here?” “I had to come and tell you something.” “You could have just called.” “Oh, no, I had to do this in person; it has to do

with your case. So, how is it going?” “Oh, you are not going to believe what happened in the court room. Mr. Reynolds is being the usually ass that he is and John, one of my witnesses tried to attack him.” “Wow, that’s crazy.” “Yeah, I’m scared thought, because Mr. Reynolds is doing a good job of making my witnesses look bad. He may just win.” “No, he won’t, that’s what I came here for. You think you can get an extension from the court for more research.” “I don’t know. All you need is like an hour tops. I already did most of the work. You are not going to believe the evidence I dug up.” “Really, you think it will convict him.” “It will put him away for a long time, and one more thing.” “What?” “I got another witness.” “Oh, like I need another witness for Mr. Reynolds to chastise.” “No, he won’t be able to chastise this one.”

### **The next day**

In the court room Catherine is sitting awaiting the judge with a huge smile on her face. Every now and then looking at Mr. Reynolds with a look on her face that says you are going

down. The judge enters and every one quiets down, "Is the prosecution ready to begin?" "Yes, we are your honor." "Call you first witness." "The state calls Kenneth Dawson." Kenneth appears from a back row; Francine says to Dina, "Oh my gosh, I didn't even know that he was here." Kenneth walks to the stand and makes the vow he sits and Catherine begins, "please state you name." "Kenneth Dawson." "Kenneth, do you know the defendant?" "Yes, he's my uncle." "Kenneth, is it true that you contacted my office to witness today?" "Yes, it is?" "Why did you wait so long?" "I went to the Bahamas about three months ago. I went to this church service the speaker gave a powerful message. I knew it was for me and I decided that it was time to allow the truth to destroy some lies so that innocent people may be vindicated." "Can you please explain to the court how you are related to this case?" "I was molested by my uncle as well." "Can you please explain how it all began and when it ended?" "I don't know when it began. I guess when I was three or four. Ever since I can remember Uncle

Frank was playing his massage game with me.” “What massage game?” “That’s what he called it. He would always start by massaging and then move into more serious stuff.” “What stuff in particular?” “Sex. Oral, anal, anything. I was eight when he first asked me to invite a friend over. I remember I asked a friend from my baseball team. That lasted a while, but he finally stopped.” “Do you know why?” “No, he never said, but Uncle Frank would always say, when one stops coming you have to bring another friend.” “Do you know how many boys you brought in?” “Not at all. Countless.” “At what age were you when you stop playing the massaging game?” “The last time was”, he hangs his head, “I don’t know if I can say, I’m too ashamed.” “Kenneth there is nothing to be ashamed about; none of this is your fault.” He takes a couple of deep breathes before continuing, “the last time was two years ago.” “Two years ago?” “Yes. I know, disgusting, right?” “I didn’t want to do it, but Uncle Frank made me feel bad if I told him no. I tried to stop constantly, but I just couldn’t. I’ve been doing since I

was a kid, before I even went to school. I couldn't stop myself." "Do you remember the times you had with Matthew, Billy, and John?" "Of course I do. I remember every time. It replays in my head over and over and over again. It's like a tormenting movie that just won't end. I told Uncle Frank on a couple of occasions that I was getting to old for it but he insisted. He would always say things that would make me feel guilty or okay to continue to do things. He would even teach me how to say the right things to the boys so that not only would they do it, they wouldn't tell. I hated myself, but at the same time enjoyed. I felt worse than a murderer." "Were you there at any of the times Matthew Landon was molested?" "No. Uncle Frank never told me about those times. He knew I wouldn't do it. Jillian is a good friend of mine. I could never hurt her son like that." "Before you leave can you please explain to court exhibits A and B the evidence you provided for us?" He pauses and takes some more deep breathes, Ms. Madison responds, "Are you okay?" "Yes." "Take your time." He takes her advice,

after a couple of minutes he continues, “Exhibit A are videos taken by Uncle Frank. He had a hidden camera in my room. He would”, he pauses, “he would record the massages of me and the boy that was there at the time.” He pause again, Ms Madison continues, “and exhibit B?” “Exhibit B is an address book. He would make copies of the videos and sell them to the people in the book. He made me swear to him that I would keep it a secret. I’m so sorry Uncle Frank, I know I wasn’t supposed to tell, but you hurt M.J. I told you not touch him.” “What do you mean?” “The first time M.J. came over he told me that he wanted to massage him, but I told him he couldn’t, I told him we couldn’t. He asked me on a several occasions, but I just couldn’t do that to Jillian. I am really, really sorry, this is all my fault. I should have said something. I should have said something. Please forgive me.” At this point Matthew, Sarah, Gregory, Madeline, Dina, Francine, Brian, John, Billy, Jillian, Frank, and Kenneth are flooding in tears, can’t and won’t hold them back. Matthew all though crying is smiling, realizing the feelings he had

about the truth were real and is relieved that the lies are finally becoming lifeless. “Thank you Kenneth is there anything else you would like to say?” “No, I just want to leave.” “Thank you, no further questions.” “Mr. Reynolds”, the judge says, Mr. Reynolds answers, “No further questions.” “The judge asks, does the state rest?” “No your honor, the state has one more witness. The state would like to call forth Madeline Dawson.” Madeline not aware looks around, she stands and goes to the stand, she swears in, and sits. “Can you please state your name?” “Madeline Dawson.” “Thank you. Mrs. Dawson, can you tell the court what happened on November 11, 1965?” “Oh, that was so long ago, you don’t expect me to remember do you?” “Of course I do, it was a very serious time in your life. I don’t think anyone can forget something like that.” “What does this have to do with anything?” “Please answer the question.” She starts to cry again and pauses, “My father was arrested for molesting a boy at his job.” “What was his job?” “He was a school teacher.” “Is it true that your father was

also caught molesting Frank?” “Yes.” “Who caught him?”

“The police.” “Who else?” She sighs, “Why are you doing this?” “Answer the question please.” “Me, I caught him.”

“How many times?” “Countless times. I’ve caught them countless times.” How come you didn’t say anything?” “I did, but Frank would never testify so they would always have to cancel the case.” “So you knew that your brother had issues?” “Yes.” “In fact, you tried to get him help?” “Yes.”

“How?” “I signed him up for counseling on a couple of occasions.” “Did he go?” “No, he would always tell me that he didn’t need a shrink, he said shrinks are for psychos.”

“What else did you do?” “ I signed him up for group counseling, I took him to a catholic priest, I took him to a Baptist minister for counseling, a Jehovah Witness, a Christian, a Muslim, I tried everything, but he didn’t want any help, he was too far gone, the damage was already done, and he just couldn’t be fixed.” “Why did you keep trying so hard?” “Because I knew that he might be capable of repeating the same acts.” “So, you knew he was capable of

molesting another boy as his father did him and you still left him on numerous occasions with your son.” “I didn’t think he would molest his own nephew.” “Did you know he was molesting Kenneth?” She hangs her head and begins to sob. “I told him to stop, but he wouldn’t.” “Why didn’t you say anything?” “Because I didn’t want people treating him like a criminal. He’s not a criminal, he’s hurt. Hurt people hurt people. He just needs help. He’s damaged, but he can be fixed.” “What kind of a mother are you?” “Don’t, you dare ask me that. I tried everything to help him.” “But it wasn’t working. Once you realized it wasn’t working you should have called the police. You knew your son was being molested and you did nothing. No further questions.” Madeline hangs her head in guilt and shame, Mr. Reynolds responds, “No further questions your honor.” Catherine speaks, “the state rests.”

### **Closing Arguments**

Mr. Reynolds stands, “Men and women of the jury it is obvious that Frank did these deeds. Yes he was wrong, but

he did not know of his wrong. His father instilled these acts into his, mind, and body and that's all he knew. So, I ask you to come back with a not guilty verdict so that he can go into counseling and finally get the help he needs. Get the help his father should have gotten for himself. The help he'll need to finally realize everything he did was wrong. The help that will finally make him a moral human being that will be able to differ from right and wrong and choose right. I ask you to do this man a favor and help him return to the man he was supposed to be today." He sits, Catherine stands, "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, Frank Baker is a man that was let down by his family, the village, and his neighborhood. He is hurt and needs help. Mr. Reynolds thinks that jail might not be the answer. Well, I agree. I agree that rapist and molesters don't need jail they need help. They need help that only professionals can give them. I believe all sexual assaulters should be given the choice to go to counseling instead put in jail. However, Frank had his chance to go to counseling, and he refused. His sister pressed hard to get him

to get the help he desperately need, but he didn't want it. So, counseling is out of the picture. This man has raped, and molested over twenty boys in time span of ten years. No one knows how many he has molested in the fifty something years he has lived, except for him, those boys and God. Just remember M.J., John, Lukas, Matthew, and Billy when you go back there. And don't forget about the boys weren't here. They have a voice too, and they need to be indicated just as much as the witnesses who showed up. And most importantly don't forget about Kenneth, his nephew. Not only has he corrupted his own nephew he has helped his nephew corrupt countless boys. This man needs to be in prison. It is the only place for him to be. If you don't do it for the boys here, then do it for your sons, nephews, cousins, grandsons, friends, and neighbors, because I guarantee you if you let this man go, it won't be long before he strikes again, and I am sure you don't want it to be one of yours. So, I say to you make the right decision, before Frank makes another wrong decision." "Thank you", says the judge, "The jury will

leave now and deliberate. Court will be back in session once they return.” Everyone leaves the court room. Gregory leaves and Madeline follows him. Gregory returns in anger, “What are you doing?” “What do you mean?” “Why are you following me?” “I don’t know, I guess I was going to sit with you until the jury returns.” “I can’t even look at you at the moment.” “Honey, you don’t understand.” “Don’t understand what? The fact that you allowed him to defile my son, or maybe the fact you didn’t even trust me to tell me. What the fuck were you thinking?” “Gregory, don’t use that type of language.” “Madeline, there is nothing you can do or say to make me want you. I can’t be with you anymore.” “What do you mean, baby?” “Oh, come on, our relationship has been dying for a while now, and now I see why. You’ve tainted this relationship by hiding things. What else is there? Is there anything else you’re not telling me?” “Baby, no. I just didn’t know how to tell you.” “Well, I sure as hell know how to tell you this.” “What?” “We’re getting a divorce.” “Baby, no, please, don’t.” Gregory exits the building,

Madeline chases him. Matthew and Kenneth exits the court room, Kenneth speaks, "Matthew I am so sorry." They embrace, "Kenny, I am so proud of you. I'm really sorry you had to hear your mother's testimony." "I can't talk about that." "Yeah, I'm sure you can't. Kenny, as much as it hurts, I promise it's going to get better." "Thank you Matt, I am truly sorry, for everything I did to you. I was a horrible person and I hope you can forgive me." "Of course, I will." They embrace again. Brian, Sarah, M.J., and Jillian are out in the hall. Jillian takes Brian aside, "Brian I apologize for what I said earlier." "No, I apologize. I guess I was just so upset, I was just trying to find someone to blame." "I 'm really sorry for withholding M.J. from you. You are his father, and I have to apologize first, and I also need to forgive you. I've been very bitter ever since you left me and I haven't been able to forgive, but keeping your son away from you is not the way to deal with it. As ask that you forgive me." "I do. I accept, and I ask that you forgive me. I should have been there for you and M.J. in the beginning, I shouldn't have left you. Can

you forgive me?” “Yes, I forgive you.” They embrace.

Jillian speaks, “can you take him out for ice cream or something, I want speak with Sarah.” “Sure.” “Thank you.”

Brian walks to M.J., “Hey, M.J., I just wanted to let you know that you did a great job in that court room. Don’t worry about that lawyer, he’s just upset because he knew he is going to lose.” “Yes, momma’s baby was wonderful. Daddy’s going to take you out, okay.” “Where are we going, daddy?”

“We’re going to get some ice cream and then we’re going to go to the park and play some baseball. Would you like that?”

“Yes.” “Good”, says Jillian, “you behave for your father, okay.” “Yes, mom.” Brian and M.J. leave the building.

Jillian walks to Sarah, Sarah see her and they immediately embrace. “Sarah, I am so sorry.” “It’s okay. I knew Matthew and Billy we’re speaking the truth, but I had no clue about John and Kenny. This hurts, more than I thought it would. And I am furious with my mother right now.”

“There’s nothing wrong with anger, just make sure you don’t do anything stupid.” “Jillian, I want to apologize to you.”

“Why?” “I feel like this is my fault.” “Why?” “Because I completely shut you down. You knew your son needed your help and I made think you were crazy.” “Sarah, you didn’t know.” “No, but you knew. I completely ignored your feelings. I know I didn’t understand them, but it was no excuse to just brush it off like that. If you were able to talk to him none of this would have ever happened.” “First and foremost you don’t know that. Secondly, this needed to happen or Frank would have just hurt more. Lastly, it was too late. Those feelings were too late”, she starts to cry, “Why didn’t I feel them earlier. I will admit thought something told me not to go to the Christmas party, but I thought I couldn’t ignore your invitation like that. No offence, but I wish I would have not gone. I should have listened to that voice.” “None taken. I heard that same voice. It told me not to invite you, but I missed you so much I decide to anyways. It is times like these that make me want to hit the rewind button and do things over.” “I know exactly what you mean. I feel horrible right now. My son

needed me and I failed.” “No, you didn’t, you had no way of knowing.” “I feel like a terrible mother.” “Don’t say that. You’re a wonderful mother.” “I just hope I’ll be able to talk to him about it. I hope he doesn’t repeat the same patterns. I can’t have him hurting anyone else.” “No, he won’t. We’ll get him help now. He’ll be okay. It may take some time, but he’ll be okay.” They embrace. Francine and Billy are in another part of the building, Francine speaks, “Billy, I have to apologize to you for not believing you. I know I can make up a million reasons why I didn’t believe, but as a friend there are no excuses as to why I did not believe you. I should have been there on your side the whole time. I failed you as a friend. And I hope you can forgive me.” “I forgive Frannie.” She laughs, “Frannie? You haven’t called me that in a long time. I’m so sorry.” They embrace. John and Dina are outside sitting on a bench. “John, I’m so sorry about everything. I just wish there was something I could do, something I could have done.” “It’s okay, no need in thinking of woulda, coulda, shoulda.” A small silence enters, “John,

why didn't you tell me? Do you remember that talk we had about Matthew? I told you I believed him and that I was on his side. How come you couldn't trust me?" "I don't know. I think I was too ashamed. It's not everyday that a man gets raped. I felt like I was less of man. I didn't feel worthy of anything. I just was too ashamed. I really didn't think that I would be able to look anyone in the face if they knew." "Well, I want you to know that if you ever need to talk about anything, you can trust me. Okay?" "Yes. I will." "Even when I'm in Paris, you can call, write, email, anything. Don't ever be afraid to talk to me. We're friends. If you can't talk to your friends, then who can you talk to?" They embrace.

### **The courtroom**

Catherine exits the court room, "Guys, the jury's back."

At this point everyone has returned, nervous and unsure of what will happen, not only with the case, but with their feelings, emotions, and their lives. They all sit back in the court room. As they sit awaiting the judge Matthew smiles,

Jillian asks, "What are you smiling about?" "I can feel it again." "Feel what?" "The truth, it's coming, it's coming, it's coming, the truth is coming, the lies are dying, they're breathless the lies are dead. It took ten years, but it has been worth it all." The judge comes in followed by the jury. The judge asks, "Has the jury reached a verdict?" "Yes. We the jury, find the defendant guilty of endangerment of a child in five counts." The entire feel of the room is bitter sweet, happy that the truth came forth, but still sad, knowing Franklin's hurt has caused him to caused pain for him and his family. Matthew throws his hands in the air and says, "Thank you Jesus." Two cops take Franklin away in hand-cuffs. Madeline watches in despair wishing she had another chance to change things. Gregory exits the court room, Sarah follows him out, "Dad, I don't expect you to stay with mom. I can already tell that your relationship is decreasing, but no matter what happens before you leave this earth, you must make sure you find it in your heart to forgive her." She hugs him, he kisses her on her head, "Thank you baby, I will, in

time, I will.” He leaves, while Sarah returns to the court room. Matthew walks towards Catherine. “I need to thank you. I’ve been waiting ten years to hear that word, guilty. I really want to thank you for taking this case all the way and not giving up no matter what. Thank you.” “You’re welcome, Matthew.” They embrace. Jillian, Brian, and M.J. leave the court room. Jillian speaks, “M.J. how would you like it if you spent the rest of the day and tomorrow with your father?” Brian asks, “Really?” “Yes, really.” M.J. says, “I would love that, thank you mom.” “Thank you Jill”, says Brian. “You’re welcome.” Brian and M.J. leave. Madeline leaves the court room and sees Jillian, “Jillian, I don’t know if you’ll ever to forgive me, but I am really sorry. I have done the most stupid thing anyone can do. I really thought that I could change things, but I guess we can’t help those that don’t want it.” “We all make mistakes.” “Not as big as this.” “Don’t measure your mistakes, learn from them.” They embrace, after Madeline leaves. Sarah, John, Dina, Francine, Matthew, Billy, and Kenneth exit the court room and leave

the building. “So, I guess that’s the end of this chapter”, says Billy, “It has finally come to its end”. “You remember what that pastor said, lies can’t live forever”, says Dina. John responds, “I’m glad that he was right.” “And he sure was right”, says Kenneth. “Well, I guess this is the end of our journey together”, says Francine. “Why do you say that”, asks Jillian? “Well, what’s left? We’re going back to our lives far away from Bridge Way.” Jillian responds, “Well, there is still one more thing we have to do.” “What’s that”, asks Sarah. “I think I know”, says Matthew. “What is it”, asks John. “Looney Adventures”, says Matthew. “Let’s go right now”, says Jillian. “I don’t know, I’m not dressed for a theme park”, says Francine. “Then we’ll stop by a department store on the way, buy some shorts and sandals and whatever else, and we’ll go”, says Jillian. “That sounds like a plan to me”, says Matthew. Jillian speaks, “everyone on three, one, two, three”, they all say, “To Looney Adventures We Go!”