



# EXPOSED SECRETS

FROM SHADOWS INTO THE LIGHT

## ANONYMOUS

*A true story that promises to change your life,  
as the powerful light shines on the secret shadows,  
revealing many hidden treasures for all of us to ponder.*

# **E X P O S E D**

# **S E C R E T S**

From Shadows into the Light

Anonymous

*Sample eBook*

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***I dedicate this book to my sons,  
whose love shines forth like a  
beacon in the dark night.***

**“By this all will know that you are  
My disciples – if you have love for  
one another.” JESUS**

**John: 13:35 (NKJV)**

## CHAPTER ONE

The beginning of enlightenment to this insidious hate crime, that would prove to be the most challenging time of my life, was starting to unfold in a meticulously savage manner. Coincidentally, another kind of enlightenment, one of a loving nature, would present itself first introducing a new awakening into my life, which started on Christmas day in 1996. The secret of life has revealed itself in a profound way beckoning me to listen to the clues, in order to escape the wrath of my adversaries grip. This newfound faith is part of the survival skills I will need to endure what lies ahead for me. My survival kit includes the essence of Gods love that will ultimately guide me safely through the violent storm, which lurks in my future.

My husband and I had a brief separation. I felt very lonely. I was working full-time and

caring for our two children. My life was very hectic, but I felt independent from my husband. Our lives as a married couple were intertwined into one, as each of our problems became the others. We both had lost our separate identities. I found myself being suffocated in a marriage where my husband overshadowed my identity. This was my own fault, since I took on his problems and owned them, instead of lovingly offering help without attachment. My loneliness was accelerated by the holiday season and I felt there was something missing. We always spent the holidays together as a family, but this year our separation was causing depression to set into my mind like a cloud of doom.

My children were not happy, which added to my depression. They wanted their father home. My children begged me to let their father stay over on Christmas Eve so he could share in their excitement on Christmas morning. I felt very uneasy about having him over. As much as I did not want their father to stay over, I simply could not say no to my two boys. Ben stayed over and slept on the couch.

Christmas morning was typical whereas our children had us up very early, excited about the

prospects under our Christmas tree. Josh ran to the kitchen table to see if Santa ate the cookies we left for him. He was delighted to see the cookies were half eaten and especially elated to see all the presents Santa had left under our tree.

We all gathered in the living room around our Christmas tree, which was surrounded by presents of various shapes and sizes. Josh ran to the tree with childish wonderment in his eyes. As I looked at his expression, I could tell he was trying to figure out how Santa got some of the presents into our living room. It was still dark outside and the noise of our happy gathering seemed to be awakening the whole neighborhood. The boys were sitting by the tree trying to soak it all in. The scent from the tree filled the room with a sweet aroma of holiday cheer. I observed the joy on their faces filled with childlike anticipation. The wait was over. Christmas was finally here.

Josh was overly excited, as he opened the first present. His blond hair was ruffled. Kevin was filled with excitement, as he reached for another present. Kevin loved to play Santa, as he gave out presents to his brother. Kevin was ten years old, which is six years older than Josh.

This age difference had its advantages and disadvantages. One thing was certain. They really loved each other. They were both happy. I was glad Ben was here to share Christmas morning with them. My boys got their Christmas wish to have their father home with them, even if it was just for one day.

My heart burned with grief for my children whenever I thought about the misery this separation has inflicted on these innocent bystanders. I could not erase the hurt they felt over the separation, as I struggled to overcompensate with my love. Josh was responsive, but Kevin was older and could not be persuaded very easily.

Josh was overly excited about a hot wheel's garage he got from Santa, as he raised it high in the air for all of us to see. Kevin was equally excited as he unwrapped a Sony Walkman I bought him for Christmas. Both boys gave me handmade presents. Josh gave me an adorable pencil holder he made out of a coffee can. He decorated the outside with construction paper, which he drew a colorful design on. Kevin painted a beautiful wooden plaque with pink acrylic paint. He pasted a picture of himself and Josh in the middle of the plaque under the

word, “Mother.” It was a beautiful gift. They both were. Ben unwrapped gifts’ from the children. One was an adorable painting of a father bear and mother bear sitting next to two little bears. Josh made this in school. Kevin gave Ben a blue sweatshirt and a New York Met coffee mug.

After the last present was unwrapped we had our traditional breakfast of birthday cake, since my birthday is on Christmas day. Ben was nice of enough to buy me a cake. The kids set candles on this chocolate over chocolate cake and everyone sang happy birthday. After I blew out the candles, Josh wanted to know how old I was. I told him I was too old. He persisted and Kevin answered that I was thirty-seven years old.

Josh conceded, and said, “You are right Mom, thirty-seven is very old.”

I was comfortable with Ben being home, since he was always here on Christmas morning for the past 14 years. There was still a conflict I could feel, since Ben resented me for separating from him. I could feel his anger and I was not going to give into it. We both had to bite our tongues, in order to keep us from arguing with each other. We had a bitter argument on

Christmas Eve and I did not want to repeat the mood this morning. I had to keep in mind this separation was necessary, since we were both becoming independent of each other. This was an extremely important lesson to learn.

After our Christmas morning ritual of opening presents, I decided to take my children to church. I was not dedicated to going to church on a weekly basis; however, I did attend church regularly as a child and before I was married. This was more an obligation than a desire to go to mass. We always went to Christmas mass each year as a family. This year, however, I needed to feel the warmth and support of my church. The boys were not thrilled about going to mass. They wanted to stay home and play with their new toys. I had a slight struggle, but I was able to talk them into it. My husband decided not to come with us. I did not protest, because I didn't want an argument this morning. I wanted to preserve my children's happiness for as long as I could.

There was a brisk December breeze in the air, as we drove up to the church. I noticed there was a small patch of snow on the lawns of some of the houses we drove by. This community is tucked away in an obscure part of

New York. Many of the homes are low brick ranches and sprawling colonial homes, in this thriving neighborhood. We live in the second floor apartment of a two family attached brick house. This apartment is spacious with two bedrooms. We lived here for the past ten years. The school system is one of the finest in the country. There are many fully equipped playgrounds for children to frolic in. This community is the ideal place to raise a family.

As I drove into the parking lot of our church, I noticed it was almost filled to capacity, as it usually is on Christmas day. Many Christians only venture to church on Easter and Christmas and we were no exception this year. I managed to find a parking spot, in the crowded lot, then hurried my boys into the church. We found a seat near the aisle of the pew in the middle of the church.

The church was decorated with a Christmas tree and many beautiful red poinsettias, which were set on the edge of the gold-carpeted steps leading to the altar. The altar looked festive with many white lilies encasing their branches around the holy table.

In the center of the altar was a large wooden crucifix set against the wall high above the

altar. The crucifix always intrigued me. I remember, as a child, looking upon the crucifix and seeing the image of Jesus' death vividly coming to life before my naive eyes. I would cringe with sorrow for Him wondering what it all meant. Jesus death was for the salvation of all people. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. The church wants us to always remember this, as I also contemplated his birth on this festive Christmas morning.

I noticed there was a blue spruce lit with bright white lights, on the right side of the church giving off a sweet aroma, which reminded me of childhood holidays of long ago. It was a truly beautiful church, decorated with many religious statutes.

The stained glass windows caught a glimpse of the shining rays of the sun, as I watched the many facets of colors become brighter with each gleam. The luminescence sparkled on one of the windows giving a warm glow to the image of the last supper.

A magnificent statue of the Virgin Mary stood on the right side of the altar with her husband Joseph by her side, as she lovingly cradled the infant Jesus in her arms. Mary was

dressed in a sky blue tunic with a gold color cape. The sculptor captured the essence of serenity in her beautiful young face. He also captured the maternal love that radiated from her eyes.

There was a large wooden nativity in the back of the church, with the traditional farm animals and the three wise men surrounding the newborn King. The infant Jesus was wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in the manger. The nativity depicted the birth of a King, which was the reason of celebration at mass today. There was truly a wonderful spirit to this glorious church.

The church was filled to capacity with many people standing in the aisles, dressed in their Christmas best. The sermon was inspiring. The pastor spoke about a young woman who was abandoned by her husband with her young son to care for. This abandonment caused much grief in the woman's life, as she struggled with the judgment of society, in the early 1800's. She also struggled to financially support her young son. The story depicted the image of; a forgotten woman; a scorned woman.

I felt as if our separation was a reason to feel ashamed. I could relate very much to this part

of the sermon. I sat there listening to the pastor; unable to hold back the tears, as I felt the pressures of my separation from my husband become a reality. It was no use trying to suppress the tears. They just flowed down my cheeks and I wasn't sure whether they were tears of joy or sadness. I also felt alone in the world with my two sons. Our separation was difficult on all of us. It was starting to take its toll out more on my children, who are always the innocent victims in a divorce or separation. Fortunately, my children did not see me crying.

As I sat there feeling sorry for myself something came over me, which was overwhelming. I felt a mysterious presence that was missing since childhood. I could sense a definite force of energy enter my being. This invisible force seemed to swirl across the church and forcefully enter into my very heart. I felt instantly moved by some mysterious energy that seemed to be overtaking my soul. This powerful force was Gods love. My soul felt as if it was awakening from hibernation. It was the strangest sensation I had ever felt. I felt a strong feeling of belonging and of being home.

A warm thought came over me prompting me to realize, that no matter what was

happening in my life, no matter what struggles I had, being in church for an hour was a nice break from my worries. For the brief amount of time I spent in church, I realized it gave my mind a peaceful feeling and a well-deserved rest from the chaotic pace of my life.

The music was enchanting and uplifting. When the whole congregation sang, Silent Night, I felt the most peace I had ever felt in my entire life. The voices from the choir sounded like little cherubs from heaven. With each chord, with each word, I felt happier, but more importantly I could feel a deep sense of serenity fill my heart.

I was not sure what this feeling was, which had overcome me. I knew in my heart I needed to explore the depths of it, in order to fully comprehend the implications it represented. The feeling was similar to the Christmas Spirit many enjoy at this time of year; however, this consciousness was to stay alive in me way beyond Christmas.

We continued going to church every Sunday. There was a feeling of awe that defined the essence of this holy rejuvenation. I rediscovered an incredible devotion to God, which was alive in me when I was a child. This

discovery rekindled feelings of peace, joy and love into my heart. My devotion or faith was resurfacing. It was entering my life again, which made me feel elated. I was convinced this was a gift from God and I was equally sure that my life would never be the same. I imagine this experience could be closely related to being born again, or a reasonable derivative of the same spiritual awakening. It was similar to the unfolding of a rose, glorious in simplicity, yet profound in the scheme of nature's many wonders.

I wanted very much to explore this new awakening, but I did not feel worthy. I felt as if I would not be able to live up to the demands that might be made upon me in the months to follow. I wasn't sure I could turn away from earthly conformity to live a life of a true Christian. How could I ever be holy, I wondered as I contemplated my imperfections? I still had the deepest feeling of wonderment. I wanted desperately to know what awaited me on the other side of this fence. There was a giddy feeling of the unknown, beckoning me to follow this narrow road. I felt a strong desire to help others and find my purpose in life.

In a few weeks, my whole outlook on life had dramatically changed. I felt more at peace knowing what I wanted in life. I felt a deep confidence, which I never had before. I knew I was not alone as I traveled through the many hills and valleys that awaited me on this journey I call life. I was awakened from the hectic pace of everyday living, into a consciousness that slowed the pace down long enough to recognize another aspect of life, another aspect of myself. This revelation made me wonder how I ever let the spirit of God become dormant in my life as I felt gratitude overwhelming me.

A few months later, I went to the park to pick up my boys. Ben had taken the boys to the park to play baseball. As I drove up to the playground, I spotted the three of them tossing the ball around. I got out of my car and stood there staring at my family. As I stood watching Ben playing ball with our children, an incredible notion came over me, which I could not explain. A feeling of total unconditional love was overpowering me. Ben stood very tall and proud next to our four-year-old son Josh. His broad shoulders were strong and I noticed a confident look on his face. His deep blue eyes seemed to be filled with his own peace. He

looked ten years younger than his forty years and he is very athletic. He just got a haircut making his sandy brown hair look very shiny from the distance.

I was seeing Ben in a totally different light, and I can't exactly explain it, but I instantly knew that we belonged together. I was starting to think our separation was a mistake, although, the break away from each other helped us both to grow. I realized how much I loved him, as I watched him chase a ball that scrambled past his legs, as Josh giggled with delight. Ben looked different. I could not put my finger on it, but as I tried to figure out what was different I noticed he was a very confident, loving, devoted father. The longer I pondered these thoughts the more I wondered why we ever separated. Had Ben changed or had I changed? Perhaps we both changed a little. We both matured in the last year, and I was starting to think that we might be able to appreciate each other more than we had in the past.

There was a magnetic force pulling me toward my husband that was invisible, yet very powerful. This loving magnetic pull was now guiding my decisions, which was similar to the moon's influence on the changing tide. As I

stood frozen in this moment, I realized that within a few seconds this moment would be a distant thought in the past that could no longer be captured. We only had now, today. Yesterday is gone and tomorrow is not promised for anyone. Our present moments should be precious, sacred, if you will. Our thoughts need to be nurtured and made audible above the chaotic chatter of daily repetition concerning daily issues. I felt an urgency to listen to the whisper within me, which was my intuition telling me to reunite with my husband.

This intuition has been described, by enlightened people, as the whisper of Gods voice beckoning us to follow his will. This whisper guides us on our journey, on the road we have chosen, as we exercise our free will. This loving intuition was the awakening of God's love within me.

As I gazed upon my family, Josh caught a long fly ball. He looked adorable with his light blond hair and his big blue eyes. He is tall for his age and very athletic. Kevin is also extremely tall for his age. Kevin is on the thin side, but muscular, with sandy blond hair and blue eyes. Kevin resembles me, while Josh looks like Ben.

My children finally saw me staring at them and our son Josh came over for a hug and kiss. Kevin is ten years old and does not kiss his mother in public; after all one of his friends could see him and he would be branded for life. Josh, on the other hand, is only four years old and loved hugging his mother. We shared a giant bear hug together. We snuggled together. I kissed his sweaty cheek. He was so mushy.

Everything he does is focused on ball playing. He tosses objects in the air and plays catch with them. He loves watching baseball on television. His favorite clothes are New York Mets shirts. When we take him to a Met game, he sits still for the whole game, even though he is very active. He is the best catcher on his Little League Team. He is enthralled with this all American sport.

Kevin also loves baseball, but is not as passionate about it as Josh is. He is also an excellent player and his team just won the equivalent of the Major League World Series. Actually, I think Josh' passion had spilled over to Kevin's way of thinking. Kevin is totally into handball and golf. This is where his passions lie.

When I approached Ben, I could not help staring at him and he noticed this.

“What are you staring at?” Ben asked in a defensive tone.

“Oh nothing.” I answered, as I tried to look unconcerned.

Our children ran off to continue playing ball. Our boys knew they only had a few precious moments left before I took them home.

I looked at Ben again, and as I caught his eye I found myself saying, “I want you to come home.”

Ben seemed cautiously surprised, as if I was toying with him. When he did not respond immediately, I thought it was possibly too late to reconcile with him. Maybe he didn’t love me anymore, I thought with sadness filling my heart. I just assumed he wanted to come home and I was taking him for granted.

“Are you serious?” Ben asked.

“Yes, I am very serious. I think that we’ve both grown. Maybe we can give our marriage another chance. I miss you. I think our marriage deserves another chance. The boys miss you.”

“I have to think about it,” Ben replied.

Ben was still filled with resentment over our separation. Ben would not give me his answer right away; in fact he waited a whole day before he made his decision. I deserved the 24-hour waiting period and it made me appreciate Ben even more. During this 24-hour period I wanted Ben more than anything else.

I called him that night to tell him why I thought our marriage could work. I felt like a politician who was presenting all the issues in favor of pro-marriage; describing all the benefits our reunion would have on our family. I confided in him that I was worried about the possibility that he found someone else to love. I was so upset that I was crying. He assured me that he did not find someone else.

“I just need some time to think about this. This is very sudden,” he said in a very loving way.

He was gentle enabling me to feel somewhat relieved. We hung up feeling secure in our thoughts.

I still felt a nagging sensation of doubt. I cried silently to myself, as the thought - what have I done - entered my mind like an unwanted visitor trying to intrude on my peaceful thoughts. I tried to assure myself that

the separation was necessary, because of past problems, as the guilt continued to plague me. I knew our marriage would be better if Ben decided to come home.

I still could not shake that nagging feeling of guilt, as I lay awake thinking about an uncertain future. I was sure Ben had stopped hoping for this day to come, because he wanted nothing more than to be home with his family, and as the months went on he lost hope. I felt remorseful, as I continued to try to convince myself that the separation was necessary.

The next day Ben called me. He told me he missed his family and wanted to come home. I was so happy, but I knew it would take some work and time to regain the trust we once had between us. We were on our way and we felt like newlyweds on our honeymoon. I felt a renewed respect and love for Ben. I was determined not to take him for granted. My husband felt as if he had a second chance to redeem himself.

My husband has struggled for the past 18 years with a drinking problem, but was now sober and on his way into a new life with his family. I was the nagging wife always trying to get him to stop drinking. My focus was on him,

never on me. We both just grew apart. Ben was putting every effort into not drinking, on his own, which is a big step for him. He truly had a new lease on life, which gave him the determination to keep himself sober. Our separation matured Ben and made him realize his family was very precious to him. This is a turning point in Ben's life. Ben was not going to take his family for granted anymore. It was apparent in his actions. He was totally focused on our children.

My children were thrilled to have their family back together. The separation was extremely difficult for them. They could not accept our separation and my older son, Kevin, blamed me for the unhappiness this separation caused everyone. He told me once that Ben and I belonged together. I did not realize it at the time, but Kevin was right. Children have an uncanny ability to see the truth in situations, whereas adults are blind to the most obvious.

My little guy Josh was very upset over the separation, insisting on sleeping in my bed every night. He needed to have extra security and reassurance from me. The separation did accomplish some good. The main accomplishment was Ben and I appreciate each

other more and this is a real blessing. We all appreciate each other as a family, making this another blessing to be grateful for.

The first night Ben came home we were filled with joy. The children were ecstatic and I could see small amounts of forgiveness coming from my son Kevin, who resented me the entire time of the separation. Josh was so cute. He wanted to sleep with me, even though Ben was back, and I knew it would take some time for him to accept his own bed again, so we put Josh in the middle of our bed. I was overcome with love and I knew in my heart that our family would pull together.

The next day was Saturday. We decided to take the kids to the park with their bikes to have a picnic lunch. The weather was beautiful, sunny with a slight breeze. I packed the lunch and got a bag together with our picnic blanket, a Frisbee, and we were off. When we arrived at the park, I set up the blanket. The kids went off on their bikes. We talked about the kids, about our future, and about our life.

Ben was so confident and alive. He was the man I always dreamed I would be with. The man I always wanted as a husband, but was never there, because of the hideous disease of

alcoholism. I was sure our marriage was blessed by God, and equally sure the lessons of our separation would be felt for a long time. The most important lesson was gratitude. We were both grateful for each other and for our children. Gratitude is a gift we receive when we recover something precious that was lost. In my case, I recovered my faith and my husband. Ben recovered his family.

This was truly a wonderful day for all of us. Our love was strong and I felt as if I found a new love, since Ben was so very attentive, loving, caring, gentle, understanding, and warm. Feeling his arms around my shoulders gave me the feeling of a giddy teenager, who had just experienced love for the first time, and is ecstatic by the feelings. The sudden notion struck me that every human being has the power, within us, to have true love awaken in our very beings, regardless of the circumstances in your life. To experience the joys of this wonderful forceful energy, which radiates the very essence of the entire universe. This is God's love that sores from the heavens with a message of true joy. This is the same love that brings unity into a family connecting us all into a peaceful state. This is the same love that

encourages peace in the world, bringing people together in times of crisis. This love was reminiscent of the love our Creator had, when He made the earth in perfect harmony, unfolding nature with the conformity of perfection; the very synchronized natural force that moves uninhibited on a steady course of growth. This love was connecting Ben and me to a close encounter of unity, which I never ever felt with him before. I was convinced, as corny as this may sound, that Ben is my true soul mate.

Our children joined us on our picnic blanket, and we all ate lunch. Josh was so inquisitive, always asking questions about our surroundings. This time he wanted to know why there were little holes around the trees and I explained to him that little animals make their homes there. Kevin told Josh that they gathered food in the fall to store in the holes for the long winter. Kevin and Josh have a very unique relationship, since they are six years apart. They love each other very much, and Kevin is very protective of his little brother. However, like most brothers they have their moments of arguments and Josh does intrude on Kevin's privacy. Josh wants to do everything his

brother does. Furthermore, he wants to have everything his brother has. Kevin sometimes gets flustered because he has to share certain objects of affection with Josh, even though they are not age appropriate for Josh.

Josh and Kevin were finished eating and they both wanted to play baseball. Ben and I agreed to play. We all got a turn to bat, while Ben pitched. Josh was up first. He hit a long fly ball in the outfield, as he darted for first base. Kevin raced to get the ball. Josh continued running until he passed home plate, just as Kevin threw the ball in. Josh was thrilled with his home run and we all congratulated him, even Kevin. After a few innings, the boys were off again on their bikes. We were able to relax for a while.

Our kids keep us very busy. We take them to museums, parks, the zoo, the beach, although our favorite spot is the South Street Seaport. We sometimes take them there on Saturday night for dinner and to watch the boats along the East River, as they lazily sail by the Seaport. The Seaport is truly a very exciting spot in New York City, which is located in downtown Manhattan. The East River is the back drop for this triple tier dock, where people

view such sights as the Brooklyn Bridge, the sunset over the East River, and the magnificent sky scrapers, which are the picturesque sight of downtown Manhattan.

There are mime shows, magic acts and artists displaying their talents on the sidewalks of the Seaport. At Christmas time there is a singing Christmas tree made up of talented people from a church choir. Many tourists visit this wonderful place every day. This one particular artist, who is here every Saturday, design's pictures with spray paint. My son Kevin is completely enthralled with this mans paintings, and he just had to buy one. This old artist has been doing these paintings for many years. He reminds me a little of Santa Claus. These paintings depict New York City in a futuristic, outer-space type of scene. He uses spray paint with different symmetrical shapes, which he can form into moons, suns, trees and skyscrapers. The finished product is a beautiful, colorful, unique picture, which was designed from his mind, in combination with his artful talents.

The docks are filled with people, all year long, and there are quite a number of shops to browse in. There is a continental eatery where

you can sit and have dinner, as you take in the breath-taken view of Manhattan. One very famous landmark is the Statue of Liberty, which you can see in the distance. It is always a treat when we come here. Our family unanimously dedicated the South Street Seaport as our favorite family outing.

## CHAPTER TWO

My newfound faith has given me a feeling of deep gratitude, since I attribute God's love for reuniting our family. Finding my faith has encouraged me to be more giving and more tolerant. My faith was growing stronger each day. I felt the most blissful peace I had ever experienced in my entire life. I knew God was within me, dwelling in that once vacant home, which is my very soul.

I decided I wanted to give something back to the church, so I volunteered to assist with one mass a month. I was grateful for my faith. I wanted to show my appreciation. I had various tasks during the mass to fulfill my obligation as a church assistant. One obligation was to distribute the Holy Eucharist to the parishioners at the Sunday mass once a month. I attended a seminar, in order to prepare me for this very special honor.

I decided to join a prayer group at my church, since Pastor White had suggested the idea to me. This small group of twenty people gathered once a week for a Bible study. It was a nice little group and the people welcomed me with open arms. I eventually became one of the coordinators for this group. Most of the people in the group were of the same nationality.

As the weeks went on, Ben became more involved with the church. We went to prayer group meetings together for a couple of months. Then his position as a coordinator for the boy's group of the church manipulated all his time. I started going to the prayer meetings alone. Ben joined a class coordinated by our church, which would help him become fully initiated into the church. Ben did not have a religious upbringing and subsequently needed to take these special classes in order to be fully received into the church. They met once a week, before the Sunday mass, to explore the Bible and learn more about our religion. Ben enjoyed these classes immensely. He learned a lot about our religion. I was elated that my husband wanted to also find his own spiritual life.

My own prayer meetings were great. The people were very gracious. We had weekly

bible studies, we sang songs, and one of the members would read the scripture for the upcoming Sunday mass. Everyone was encouraged to interpret part of the reading, in order to get various views on the Bible passage.

These meetings were pleasant at first, but as the weeks went on they became strange. There were people trying to heal others of physical affliction, before the meetings started. Other members were speaking in strange tongues. It was like a synchronized chanting sound, supposedly to connect with God through thought instead of actual words. It was weird. My brother John warned me about this. He told me that the writings of St. Paul, in the Bible, do not condone this type of worship. I overlooked all of these obvious signs, wanting to just be a part of the group. I was very naive. I felt a deep love for God and my church. I just figured their way of doing things was part of their own journey.

As the months went by, I became more active with the group and developed a monthly newsletter. The more involved I became with the prayer group, the more I noticed problems among the other coordinators, as tensions grew. Two of the women just did not get along. The

problems stemmed from jealousy to lack of participation. One woman felt burdened with all the work, while the other member did absolutely nothing. I was put in the middle of this conflict. They expected me to take sides, which I refused to do. I tried to balance my opinions, so I would not offend either one of them. The scale, however, was tipping over on one side, consequently causing much friction among the coordinators. It was a very difficult position for me to be in.

I wound up with extra tasks. I found myself obligated to take meeting notes, do my newsletter, coordinate meetings, type up flyers and assist in the monthly sponsored mass. I was getting constant phone calls at home from the coordinators. I was overloaded with work and found very little time for my family. I still enjoyed the meetings, since I felt this was a calling for me.

Pastor White attended some of our meetings and once a month he would enlighten us with the word of God. Pastor White is very personable. All the members respected him, appreciating his quick sense of humor. Pastor White is a tall dark man in his late forties. He is from the Middle East; a very depressed area

stricken by grave poverty. Pastor White has come to America to pursue his studies in theology.

There were many bible study classes Pastor White participated in. I noticed some of the group members would go to Pastor White with personal problems or community concerns. Pastor White loved to help people. It was a nice trait.

One night the group elected me to speak for one of their sponsored masses. The night I was to be lector there was a charade of problems. I was handed the reading at the last minute, with no time to study it. The Holy Book, I was to carry during the procession, was not given to me on time. I had to run back to the sacristies to get it, as the procession to the altar started without me. I was extremely flustered. Then after I did the reading for the mass, I was told I was given the wrong reading to do. Were they trying to embarrass me? My initial reaction was that they were just disorganized. I was very trusting, after all these were people from a prayer group. If I could not trust them, whom could I trust?

After several months, I started to strongly suspect I was being set up to be embarrassed.

Some members also tried to encourage me to leave my younger son Josh outside the prayer group to play with the other children. I didn't think this would be a problem. My older son was with him. Then Josh told me the other kids were teasing him excessively. They were treating him terribly. I started to keep my boys inside the building and I tried to keep them busy playing cards and coloring.

Another big mass came and the group elected me to be the lector for the mass. There were more than 700 people in the church. I was nervous and I just wanted to deliver my reading in a confident manner. However, Pastor White changed the original reading I was given to study at the last minute. Two of the prayer group members helped me study the reading. One person who helped me study the reading is a man name Dick. He is a tall thin man in his late fifties. He is very active with the church and an Auxiliary Policeman for his neighborhood.

His wife, Yanni, is one of the disgruntled coordinators. She wound up giving me her work, refusing to do any work for the prayer group, because of a new job. Yanni is the complete opposite of her husband. She is very

short and stout with long red hair. They are complete opposites.

I was a little nervous, because I had not practiced this new reading, although I tried to keep my composure. As the participants in the mass gathered in this small room adjacent to the altar, I started to glance at the reading, hoping there were no words in it I could not pronounce. There was also another priest, whom I didn't know, who was going to be the main celebrant of the mass. The ceremony was starting and Pastor White and I proceeded onto the altar. I sat in the lector chair and waited for the appointed time of my reading.

There was no time to think about being nervous, since it was time for me to deliver the reading. As I walked up to the pulpit, Pastor White glared at me. His black piercing eyes shot right through me. He then looked away quickly. I tried not to let him make me nervous, as I stepped up to the pulpit and began my reading.

Was he trying to make me nervous, so I would make a fool out of myself in front of all these people? I blocked this thought from my mind, since I only wanted to concentrate on my reading. I was here for a reason; to deliver the

word of God, with genuine love. I felt a deep calling to this church. I glanced up and saw this magnificent church filled with people, many of them standing in the aisles. Ben, my children, my mother and my brother John were in the church. This reminded me of the last Christmas mass I attended with my children.

I was very nervous, but equally determined to deliver my reading in a successful manner. As I started my reading, I felt more at ease. The reading was a short scripture from Corinthians, which is St. Paul's message of spirituality. It was one of my favorite readings, so I felt a deep feeling of hope, as I continued reading. Something just settled in me, which gave me a feeling of calm. I was able to deliver the reading without a problem.

Ben was very proud of me. When the mass ended, I met Ben in the back of the church. Ben whispered in my ear.

He said, "You were so good. You delivered your reading in a very professional manner."

He is so good to me. He instantly alleviated any doubts about my reading. After the mass, one of the parishioners said I sounded nervous. Another woman from our boy's club said I sounded like I wanted to just get it over with. I

disregarded both opinions, since I knew I did the best I could. This reading came from my heart.

My mother and brother John were happy. In fact, my mother never looked happier. She told me she was going to have a very peaceful nights sleep. She also felt the peace of God all around her. The ceremony, along with the music, gave everyone the sense of feeling the joy of God. It was contagious.

However, there were so many mishaps at this mass I was starting to suspect something was very wrong, but I could not accept it. I decided to give these people the benefit of the doubt. The mishaps stemmed from a feeling of intimidation by the other prayer group members, to regular church procedures being changed at the last minute. There was also an underlying animosity I felt with Pastor White. I also distributed the wine at the mass, which is the sacred blood of Christ. Pastor White filled the Chalice to the very top of the glass. I had to walk down several steps from the altar to my designated spot in the church. It was a miracle the wine did not spill everywhere. I decided to ignore all these signals. I did not want to be judgmental. I was still at a very trusting stage,

so I tried not to let any of this deter my thinking. I concluded that these people were inexperienced, therefore, causing many unfortunate mishaps. However, I could not come up with a reasonable excuse for Pastor White's behavior.

The tension was becoming incredible with the prayer group. I was given more and more responsibilities and work. Members were asking me to fax them copies of my newsletter from my office, on company time. There were two members who were over critical of my newsletter, and others who wanted specific write-ups in the newsletter. I was getting numerous phone calls each day. The calls were taking up precious time from my family. Pastor White was also calling me, trying to influence my newsletter. I told him I was going to discontinue the newsletter and he protested. He asked me to continue writing it each month and I conceded.

I was becoming overwhelmed with the group's workload. I started to do some of the prayer group tasks during my regular working hours, in order to meet certain deadlines. This was out of character for me to do personal work on the job. I was beginning to regret having

gotten myself involved in this prayer group, and I was contemplating ways to get out of it.

I was getting physically sick from all the stress and I started developing constant chest pains. It was difficult to determine the extent of the turbulence I was experiencing from an objective point of view, since I was excited about my new ministry and the love I felt for God was so prevalent in my life. My family and I were happy, regardless of the prayer group's friction. A lot of my time, however, was spent on my newsletter.

The next prayer meeting I went to, I decided to arrive a little early. The rectory basement is a large room with many religious pictures on the walls. Other early arrivals were already setting up the folding chairs for the meeting. I started helping to arrange the chairs in rows, when pastor White walked over to me. I was standing in between two chairs I had just set up for the meeting, which was near a door that leads upstairs to the pastor's office.

Pastor White then proceeded to walk past me by squeezing himself between one of the chairs and my rear end. Suddenly, I felt his rear end abruptly brush against mine. I was taken aback, but I did not respond. I always give

people the benefit of the doubt and I reasoned with myself that he must have thought he had more room to pass me than he realized. I thought he was just being clumsy. I had to give him the benefit of the doubt, because he was a pastor and pastors do not deliberately brush against a woman's rear end. I viewed this as a clumsy mistake, because I try very hard not to be judgmental.

It is very hard to be nonjudgmental in a world that thoroughly encourages this. We live in a society where many people judge harshly and then violate the very respect and privacy of others. It was an odd incident, and it stayed in the back of my subconscious mind where I could call upon it, if I needed to in the future.

The anxiety from the prayer group was reaching an unbearable point. I needed to see a doctor. My co-worker Lynn, suggested a doctor in a group she went to. I went to the doctor and he said I was under extreme stress and in much need of rest. He told me the tightness in my chest was from stress that accumulated over the past several months. I also complained about the pain in my back and asked if he would order an X-ray to determine what the problem was. He refused, blatantly asking why I wanted to

know what was wrong with my back. I told him I needed to find out what was wrong, in order for him to treat me. He still refused, saying that the tension was causing all the pain.

I was not happy with this doctor especially since I waited almost two hours to see him. Every time I went to the doctor for my children, or myself, I always wound up waiting at least two hours. He prescribed an anti-inflammatory drug, which he said would relieve the pain. When I got home from the doctor's office, I lie down in bed. I felt such pain in my chest and back I decided to use a heating pad, hoping this would relieve some of the tension. I did not want to take any pain killer, since I heard they have many side effects. I felt much better when I awoke from my nap.

I decided to see Pastor White to complain about the prayer group problems, so I called him and he told me to come by the rectory at 4:00 p.m. When I arrived at the rectory, a young girl brought me into a small office. This office had a large green leather sofa set next to a matching armchair, which was situated next to an old mahogany desk. The floor was hard wood and looked as if it were hand scrubbed, it

shined so bright. I sat on the sofa waiting for Pastor White to come in.

After a few moments he entered the office. We exchanged greetings and I got right to the point. I explained to him that my health was in jeopardy, because of the added stress the prayer group was giving me. I told him about the doctor's visit and the prognosis of severe stress. He was surprisingly unsympathetic. In fact, he was very abusive in his tone of voice with me.

I told him my husband was going to come in to see him if the tension did not end. He said something so incredible I could only sit there with my mouth opened in complete disbelief.

He said, "Ben wants to reveal your shame to everyone so he can strip you naked so the whole world can see your shame."

I was shocked. I thought possibly there was a play on words, because this man was from another country and their traditions are different, or maybe he was exaggerating a point of what our separation might have done to Ben's self esteem. What could I possibly have done to be ashamed of? My husband and I have reconciled, so this would rule out being ashamed because of our recent separation. I was very faithful to my husband during our

yearlong separation, and during our entire marriage.

When I asked what could I possibly be ashamed of, he went into a tirade of stories, trying to get his point across, which I never understood. He spoke so fast my head was spinning.

Then he accused me of being the cause of my husband's excessive drinking. This is when I was finally able to get a word in and I insisted I was not the cause of Ben's drinking. Furthermore, I told him there were many books I had read that gave clear reasons why an alcoholic is responsible for their own sickness. He said if we separated again my husband would turn to another woman. Once Ben had a relationship with some other women, our marriage would never be the same.

I was totally dumbfounded. He spoke so fast when I tried to protest, he interrupted me continuing to ramble on. He told me I must stay with my husband even if there was physical violence, which I assured him there was no violence in our home. Then he settled down and spoke about his childhood, his father, the country he came from, and our meeting came to an abrupt close. I asked him to say a

prayer for me, although I really thought this would have been his own idea and he complied.

Nothing was resolved for me. I was distressed over our meeting. I left feeling more stress than I had before I walked into the rectory. Why would I have anything to be ashamed of, I wondered? He insisted my husband's alcoholism was my fault. Here was a pastor I respected and admired, because of his devotion to his calling. Why did he say these terrible things to me?

I still, however, trusted the pastor, because he was a pastor, and I made many excuses for his harsh words to me. I felt a deep respect for him, because he was the pastor who gave the sermon on Christmas day, when the spirit of God seemed to enter into my soul with a swift urgency. I thought his sermon was inspiring. Many of his sermons were equally inspiring.

I concluded this man was very much a part of his traditions from a strict Middle Eastern upbringing, and I further surmised that this was the reason for his strict and harsh words for me. I was slightly suspicious and I needed more time and information in order to piece together this part of the puzzle.

I could not imagine why this pastor would be so hard on me, especially when I came for advice and in poor health. This whole episode disturbed the peace I felt in my heart. I was hoping time would unveil more to this puzzling turn of events. It was very curious to me that this pastor would be so harsh to someone who came to him for help. I was doing so much work for his prayer group. This had the allure of the worst, “B rated mystery movie.” I was determined to unravel the reasons behind the pastor’s harsh words. Even under the stress I felt, there was still an underlying intuitive notion of intrigue at hand that was drawing me to investigate, in order find answers to many questions, which were swimming around in my mind.

As my prayer group life was falling short of my expectations, my weekly sessions with our marriage counselor were also showing signs of problems. My husband and I went for couple’s therapy a year ago. When I separated from Ben, I decided to continue going alone. As the weeks of counseling ran into months and then a year, I realized there was something odd about this man. Dan was a very serious person with a trusting nature. I guess the prerequisite for any

counselor would be to gain the trust of their client.

Dan is your typical scholar type nerd who was very intelligent. He was extremely controlling and I always had the feeling there was an underlying motive for all the advice he gave me. I could never put my finger on the exact nature of my suspicions, but I knew that I could never fully trust him; although there were many sessions where I simply had to trust the advice he gave me.

When my husband and I reconciled, Dan was rather upset, refusing to let my husband back into the counseling meetings, which made Ben feel extremely left out. My husband dropped out when he was drinking and we were separated. But he was now sober and wanted to continue couples therapy. Ben came to see Dan and he referred him to a counseling service specializing in alcoholism. My husband felt so displaced. It took so much courage for Ben to go back and ask Dan to return to couples counseling. For Dan to refuse him was a real slap in the face. I felt deep sympathy for Ben.

On my next session, I tried to reason with the counselor, explaining to him that Ben

should be let back into therapy, which would strengthen our marriage.

Unfortunately, Dan would not budge from his decision. The next day I went to the library with my kids and I happen to come across a book on marriage counseling. I took the book out of the library and brought it home. The book had a wealth of information about therapy and one chapter focused on couples counseling. The book said, once a counselor refuses to let one of the spouses into therapy this was as good as signing their divorce papers, because the rejected spouse will feel bitter resentment and the marriage would inevitably end.

The next session I told Dan about this book, explaining that he could destroy my marriage by his actions, but Dan would not budge from his decision. Dan's reasoning was that if he saw Ben separately, he would be put in the middle of our arguments. This was not justifiable reasoning and I was angry with him. I wanted to go back to couples therapy, but Dan refused. This was very odd. I would not be able to put this tremendous puzzle together until all the pieces were in place, but as usual I gave him the benefit of the doubt and continued going to see him.

It was difficult to detach from Dan. Every time I told him I was leaving therapy he would manipulate me back into it. I thought at the time that it might be better to stick with the counseling, because of all the problems I was experiencing. Dan would make me feel as if I needed him to help me with my problems. It was difficult to pull away from Dan, since he was controlling and I regarded him as a trusted friend.

My inner secrets were also revealed to Dan, in order to help me gain confidence and learn more about myself. I never held anything back, always revealing myself fully to Dan. Dan always listened intently. He gave me lots of advice, and I often felt compelled to accept some of his advice, because he was a professional. He advised me to stay separated from my husband, which instilled a great deal of confusion in me, because I trusted Dan. I also wanted to be back with my husband. I tried reconciling with Ben, despite Dan's advice, but it just did not work out. Dan was instrumental in causing extreme conflict in my marriage, because of his controlling nature.

The question that remained in my mind was whether Dan was guiding me or pulling my

strings, in order to control me. I felt like a puppet being played out in a marionette show, with absolutely no way to manipulate my own strings.

Dan was very controlling and I needed to put some space between us. I was too attached to Dan, making it very difficult for me to discontinue our sessions. When I told Dan I would not be returning, for any more sessions, he reasoned with me that I needed to stay with the counseling, because of the many problems swarming my life. I conceded, as usual. I was too close to the problem to accurately evaluate it.

My job was also becoming extremely stressful. I work for a small insurance company doing administrative work. One of my co-workers, Lynn, encouraged me to do my prayer group typing at work. She said it would be all right as long as my regular work was done. Lynn is the accountant for the company and really had no right to give me this opinion, since she was not the boss. Lynn is in her late fifties, never married, without a boyfriend and extremely set in her ways. Keeping herself busy with a full time job and going to college at night fills her days, so she does not have to face

her loneliness or her feelings of wanting children.

She was doing personal work on office time, so I figured I would do a little bit of my personal work. All I ever did at work was some minor editing of my newsletter. I even asked permission to use the printer on my own time. I paid for the copies, which were needed for distribution of my newsletter to the other members of the prayer group. I didn't realize that Lynn was actually trying to influence me into getting in trouble.

I was reprimanded for doing the little bit of revisions to my newsletter on company time. In fact, my raise was canceled. After a delay of five months they finally gave me a 3% raise instead of the regular 5% everyone else received. When I questioned my boss as to why Lynn was able to get away with doing personal projects at work, and I was given such a harsh punishment, her response was, "Lynn and I had an arrangement regarding doing her homework on company time."

Amazing I thought, what was good for one was not good for another. My work performance was very good. I did not do a lot of personal work on company time, but I

accepted this, because I did do something wrong.

I also started to suspect that the added prayer group pressure to do more and more work was deliberate, in order to cause strife with my job. My big mistake was putting many of my prayer group files in my computer at work. I didn't have a printer at home, at the time. I had always asked permission to print any personal work on my own time.

One day our computer consultant came in and took the main drive out of my computer. This frightened me, because now I suspected they had something serious against me. When he left our office, there was a document in our printer. When I picked it up, it was a personal document of mine. He had deliberately left it in the printer for me to see. He was the one who printed it, I didn't. I had so many personal files in that drive, I was worried. My boss had the drive taken out, in order to threaten me. With all the personal files in my computer, it looked like tons of personal work was done on company time.

Lynn pretended to be my friend, but I was I starting to strongly suspect that she did not have my best interest at heart. Lynn had

recommended Dr. Katz, so I decided to tell her how rude this doctor was to me. I was angry, as I explained the audacity of his negative reaction to a request to have an X-ray taken. I told Lynn that I might put in a formal complaint against the doctor or possibly sue him, because I had been trying for over a year to get a diagnosis for my back problem, without success. I told her that Ben's cousin is a lawyer and I was going to speak to him about this doctor. She suggested I change doctors, which I was considering doing.

I did not trust Lynn. The worst thing I find hard to accept is someone like Lynn who acts genuinely nice, yet is deceitful and not a true friend at all. It is very hard to comprehend how anyone can be so devious. She is in charge of the financial aspect of our company. When my payroll deposit mysteriously did not wind up in my checking account, she told me I would have to call the bank to retrieve it. She could not help me. I was upset with her, since this was part of Lynn's job.

The year seemed to go by quickly and another Christmas was coming upon us, which was Christmas of 1997. Two weeks before Christmas, I hurried over to the bank on my lunch hour to make a withdrawal at the

automatic teller machine. I often went to the bank at lunchtime, because the bank was right next door to my office building. When I entered the bank there was an older couple fiddling with the automatic teller machine. The woman was quietly arguing with her husband about the mechanics of the ATM and she was trying to figure out how to work the machine. They did not seem to know what they were doing and they were debating about the right way to withdraw money from the machine. After a few more minutes of trying to figure out the ATM they gave up and quickly walked out of the bank.

I was up next. There was a line of people forming behind me. When I approached the ATM I started to insert my card, but before I could get my card into the slot money started pouring out of the withdrawal box. The couple had rushed out very quickly and was already gone. I had no idea how much money came out, but it looked like the many twenty dollar bills that came out of the machine would add up to a few hundred dollars. I turned to the person behind me, who was a man in his twenties with an impatient look in his eye. I asked him to get

the couple that just left the bank, as I stood there frozen with all this money in my hands.

The man replied, “You get them.”

There was no time to argue with him, since I wanted to make sure I caught these two people before they got to their car, so I ran out of the bank, with the money in hand, and caught up with the couple just as they were approaching the bank parking lot. I gave them their money. I asked them to come back into the bank to get their receipt, which was a good thing I did. I was being filmed on a video camera when I took the money. If I had not returned to the bank with this couple, it could have very well looked as if I stole the money.

When we returned to the cash machine the receipt was hanging out of the receipt box and the lady went over and took it out. They were very grateful that I had chased after them and returned their money. It did give me a very warm feeling to be able to help them. I think helping others is a very selfish act, because it gives the helper a very wonderful feeling inside their hearts. Then the older man told me I would have a wonderful year because of the good deed I had done for them. I thanked the

man, made my own withdrawal and left the bank.

Little did I know that the year to follow would be one of the worst years of my life, which would test every aspect of my being, enabling many questions to be answered, surrounding the mystery that was gripping my life. The trials would challenge my very soul. There was a big price to pay to have these questions answered and I was not sure I was willing to pay it.

The intimidation at work was getting worst. A new maintenance man was hired for the building. He is a tall burley man with great big shoulders. This man became a living nightmare for me. After a week on the job, he grew a small beard, just like the one Pastor White has. It was eerie. One morning I parked my car under our building in the parking lot. As I got out of my car I noticed the building manager was lurking in the parking lot; just standing there staring at the wall. Then he maneuvered himself next a mailbox by the entranceway of the building. I walked passed him and he just stood there staring at this mailbox by the front entrance.

Now there are two entrances. I went up the stairs of the front entrance and walked toward my office door. He apparently came in the rear entrance. As I approached my office door I turned to look down the corridor, and there he was lurking in the hallway staring at a door to a vacant office. He just stood there staring at this closed door. I was frightened at first, but when I realized he was trying to intimidate me, I just laughed to myself.

Whenever I saw him lurking around or slamming doors or trying to intimidate me, I ignored him. It is the way he lurks and menaces me, which is unexplainable. One needs to actually see him in action to appreciate the full effect of his intimidation. There is no question surrounding the fact that he is trying to frighten me. The harassment at work was starting to intensify. I was starting to suspect the building manager, Ralph, was part of the plot.

A new employee was hired named Manuel. Manuel is a young man in his early twenties, very daring and cocky. His dark eyes were a clear indication of his foul intentions. He reminds me of a man with a mission. He is a young arrogant type. Before long, he was starting to get in on the harassment at work. He

was now a new player in the whole scheme of things. Each day there is a new scheme planned.

One day I came to work and there were cigarette ashes on my desk. This was suspicious, because no one smokes except me and I smoke outside. Another time my seat was shaky, because someone had loosened the screw on the bottom of my chair. One day I went to get my lipstick mirror out of my drawer and it was smashed in. Broken. One of my children's pictures was taken out of its frame lying aimlessly on my desk.

Another day, someone had turned the power off on my surge protector. This is the unit that assures my computer will stay on if a fuse blows. Unfortunately, a fuse mysteriously blew out in the middle of the day. Consequently, I lost the document I was working on.

Sometimes this extremely irritating woman, named Carla, would spray perfume around the office just to irritate me. Carla would wave her head back and forth, her long red hair would swing from left to right as she sprayed perfume all over herself.

Unfortunately, I am allergic to perfume and they are well aware of this fact. I had

complained many times to my boss, who did nothing about it. I even gave the boss a note from the doctor that said I needed to sit near a window because of allergies, but she refused to change my seat, giving me unwarranted excuses. I do not let anger overcome me, because if I did this would give them the satisfaction of seeing me angry.

One day I didn't have my car. One of the women promised me a ride home that evening. She lives pretty close to my home. I will never forget this. It was Christmas Eve. When I got back from the rest room she had left without me.

Each year the office manager celebrates each person's birthday by buying him or her a birthday cake. This same Christmas Eve there was no cake for me. In fact, they did not get me a cake until January 10<sup>th</sup>. This was 16 days after my birthday. I felt embarrassed by the whole affair, because they celebrated my birthday with Lynn's. Her birthday is on January 10<sup>th</sup>. Our boss Patrick laughed about the whole thing. He is the president of our company. At the time, he was working in our office, but recently was transferred to our main office in England.

This was just another cruel intentional act of mental anguish. After a while I stopped getting angry. In fact, if I got angry it would only eat at my heart and destroy my health. I ignore as much of this childish behavior as possible.

As I contemplated the previous events, I was starting to suspect other people were also trying to give me a hard time. In fact, anyone who was especially close to me turned out to be my worst enemy. There is a family in the neighborhood that is especially close to my family. We used to go on day trips together with their children and with ours. I really thought we were friends. Our husbands are coordinators for Kevin's boys group. I was also a coordinator with this boy's group, a few years ago.

One day, Linda, called me and asked if I wanted to meet her kids at the park with my children.

She also warned me, "Are you sure you want to meet us. Every time we meet with the kids something terrible happens."

I told her I thought it would be fine. Linda has a son and a daughter, eleven and twelve years old, respectively. Linda works in the

medical field. She always reminded me of Little Orphan Annie, with her bushy, curly hair.

When we arrived at the playground, the boys ran off to play hide and seek. Before long, my son Kevin had fallen to the ground screaming in excruciating pain. Apparently, Linda's son stuck his foot out and tripped my older son. He was seriously hurt. Linda flat out told me her son was the one responsible for tripping Kevin. She said it was accidental and she did seem a little concerned when Kevin's ankle started to swell up. I did not realize at the time this was done deliberately. I still didn't instantly judge any of this. I thought it was an accident. I trusted her. We've known each other for the past five years.

I had to take Kevin to the emergency room and he wound up with a sprained ankle. A few weeks later, when all the ugly events started to happen I realized the role this family played in it. How can anyone use their children to do such a terrible deliberate act? They wanted to harm my family. Kevin was in extreme pain and disillusioned by the whole thing. However, he didn't suspect any of this was intentional.

I started to recount in my mind the encounters we had with this family. It occurred

to me there were many unfortunate accidents when we got together. There was a time we were all sleigh riding and a sleigh rider at a very fast speed hit Josh. If I had not pushed him out of the way, the full impact would have killed him.

Another time at their summer home, Kevin almost drowned when her children encouraged him to jump out of their boat into the middle of the lake. Her friend just happened to be swimming right near them and saved Kevin's life. Then I found out her children taught Josh, who was four years old at the time, the meaning of the middle finger. I was enraged.

Then the nightmare continued as I woke one morning and realized these people, whom I trusted for years, were trying to cause physical and emotional harm to my family. I was starting to wonder who else was involved, since Linda's husband and Ben were leaders in the same boy's group together.

This was hard to accept and even harder to comprehend. I am very trusting, therefore, it was almost impossible for me to conceive of such a scheme of betrayal to be directed toward me, at the time it was happening. Especially, since I regarded myself as a loving, caring, and

kind person. Could you just imagine waking up one morning to suspect your close friend is involved in a devious plan of betrayal, in order to harm you and your family? It did not make any sense to me.

During the next session with my counselor, I complained about how Pastor White brushed his rear end against mine during a prayer meeting. I could not understand why he would do this and I was hoping Dan could shed some light on the situation. The counselor suggested that maybe I influenced the pastor's behavior in some way. I told Dan all I ever did was give the pastor an apple pie at Thanksgiving and a fruitcake at Christmas time. Ben and I made the apple pie for him. Furthermore, I told Dan that I was happily married and the thought of seducing a pastor was the most ludicrous thing I ever heard of. He did warn me to be careful around the pastor and I joked that I would not allow myself to be in an empty room with him.

It was getting closer to Valentines Day. My son wanted to give Pastor White a valentine. Ben bought a large red heart- shaped candy assortment for the Pastor from Josh. My younger son loves this man and enjoys being around him. This was a gift from the heart.

Pastor White would always go out of his way to joke around with Josh. He was, however, very short with Kevin. Kevin did not like him.

Pastor White had a gift for humor and loved telling jokes. He was kind to everyone. All the parishioners liked him and could relate to most of his sermons. I assured my counselor that I had the utmost respect for this pastor and he was like a father figure to me.

The next prayer meeting proved to be another harrowing experience with Pastor White. During this prayer meeting around fifteen people were in a circle holding hands. I was on the left of Pastor White holding his hand. As we began to sing the closing prayer, Pastor White's body was up against mine. The left side of his body was pressing hard against my right side. I was completely numb. I could not pull away from him, because there was another man on my right side, and this would have put me right up against him. I really could not get away from the pastors hold. What was happening? Why is he brushing his body against mine, in the middle of a prayer meeting, in the middle of a prayer? This was sacrilegious.

In a dark space in my mind I wondered if there was more to this than meets the eye. I was starting to think that Pastor White was looking for some seemingly harmless cheap thrill. I felt a nagging sensation and a deep curiosity to get to the bottom of these sexual intimidations by Pastor White. The obvious conclusion was to chalk this up to a very bad sexual harassment situation and leave the church, but this was not so obvious to me. There was something lurking in the shadows and I needed more time to expose it. I knew the light would bring out what manifests in the darkest of situations.

On my next session my counselor said something so shocking I could barely believe my ears.

He said, “Maybe you should go with the pastor sexually. He probably does not want to go all the way, but maybe he just wants to fool around.”

My mouth almost dropped to my feet and I could only say. “This is a change of heart. During our last session you insinuated this was my fault, now you are telling me to go with the pastor sexually.”

Dan did not respond to this. I questioned him again, and he retorted with a question of his own. He asked me if I was afraid of Pastor White. I told him I was not afraid of him. I was curious about his intentions. I assured him I would not allow myself to be in a dark room alone with the pastor.

It was at the end of our session. I left feeling overwhelmingly baffled by Dan's comments. I did not have much time to think about this, since so many things were going on at one time. I did, however, get the feeling that Dan was not looking out for my best interest. I was in a semi-state of denial, praying that I was wrong about Dan and just too judgmental. I was fiercely determined to get to the bottom of this. I wanted to know what Pastor White was up to.

The next day I received my contact lenses in the mail from my ophthalmologist, which I order every three months. After wearing them for two days I realized they sent me the wrong prescription. Incidentally, Lynn from work suggested this particular eye doctor. The new lenses were the wrong prescription, although only slightly different, but enough to cause extreme blurring. As I was driving home from work, my eyes became very tired and blurred.

Consequently, I started to swerve into the shoulder of the road. I almost had an accident, as the driver next to me beeped his horn to warn me to stay in my lane.

I made it home without an accident, with the help of God. It was a miracle I was not killed. The next day I went to see the eye doctor to show her the wrong lenses that her office sent me. She insisted it was the right prescription, but when she tested them she came up with an odd prescription, which she claimed was four times weaker than my regular one. She insisted that it was impossible for me to be able to see out of these lenses at all. She put some liquid in my eyes to check them and then gave me natural tears.

When I got into my car, I put the natural tears in my eyes. The combination of the natural tears and the liquid made my eyes very blurry. I was so angry when I left her office, because I was sitting in my car with blurred vision, unable to drive. She did not warn me that the two solutions could cause severe blurring. I had to wait a long while before I could drive home, but I did finally make it home with the grace of God. What was going on?

I could not grasp the implication that all of these incidents were coincidence. I was leading to the definite conclusion that everyone I knew was involved in this nightmare, collaborating together to inflict suffering into my life.

I preferred, at this time, to ignore this revelation, but it had a haunting appeal that prompted me to explore the possibilities in the darkest reaches of my mind.

## CHAPTER THREE

The climax of attack on my family started two weeks before Holy week of 1998. Holy week is the prelude to Easter Sunday. It started in a very methodical calculating way. This was the very height of this devious hate crime, and the revelations that surfaced would answer many of my intriguing questions. The next seven days would prove to be the most challenging time of my entire life, ultimately testing my endurance level and my sanity. The impact will last several months, as I try to unravel the deceit and betrayal of seemingly decent respectable people of my community.

One of the ladies from a religious retreat, I had gone on the previous weekend, suggested I stop going to the meetings for a few weeks, because I was under a lot of stress. I explained to her the horrible problems I was experiencing with Pastor White. This person pleaded with me

to take a break from the meetings. She warned me to be careful of Pastor White. I agreed and was not going to go to this last meeting, but Ben suggested I go to the meeting, since he was taking the kids to the boy's group that evening. I guess Ben thought it would be better to go than be home alone. I told Ben I was not going to the meeting. Ben was insistent, so I changed my mind and went to the meeting.

This was the biggest mistake I ever made. I should have listened to my own instincts. This was the last meeting before my husband's big Easter Vigil induction mass and was the worst experience of my entire life.

After a brief mass all the members gathered for refreshments. It was Friday night. Easter Sunday was coming soon. There were approximately fourteen people in the basement. Most of the members were standing around a table eating and drinking. Some were sitting, chatting among themselves. This was our fellowship night and we all enjoyed talking and gathering around to share food and soda. After a little while, Pastor White arrived. He loved congregating with the prayer group members and being the center of attention.

I wandered over to a table, near the door that had an assortment of religious literature on it when Pastor White approached me and stood next to me. We were the only ones at the table. He started talking to me about the meeting. Our backs were facing the people eating and the light in our area was very dim. No one behind us could actually see what was happening, since we were at another part of the room and our backs were facing them.

I proceeded to pick up the pamphlets of interest, when suddenly, the pastor pressed his left arm next to my right arm, bracing himself against me. We were locked together. With the swiftness of lightening, he raised his other hand and caressed my breast in a very alluring way. I was shocked. This was no simple brush of an elbow. We stood together with our arms pressed. In a split second, with his other hand, he caressed my breast slowly from the top moving his hand along the contour, until he reached the bottom. There was no mistake as to what happened. This time he left no room for me to give him the benefit of the doubt.

I must have lost my breath for a few seconds, because everything went black. I was in complete shock. I felt an icy cold feeling in

my back, creep up my spine and reach my heart. I could not speak. All I could think about was my mother's warning, as a teenager, about the dangers of certain types of men. My mind focused on my mother's words and I somehow felt what was happening was my fault. How could he do this? How could anyone do this, let alone a pastor from a respected church? It was sacrilegious.

Pastor White then looked at me. I could see he was nervous, yet he was trying to keep his composure. He started talking to me casually, as if nothing happened. He started to say something to me about how I was fortunate enough to know how to balance my family and my church obligations, although I did not exactly hear much of what he said, because my mind was blank. I felt as though he had just raped me. I felt as if this man of God had just violated my very soul. I was sure he just reached beyond my breast and put his icy cold hand through my flesh, ripping my soul from my body, tearing it away from its warm home.

I was struck with confusion. Here was a pastor whom I trusted, as if he were my own father, and he just molested me. It was as if the very essence of my heart had been ripped out of

my being and the only thing left was an empty shell. I felt betrayed and degraded. I felt violated, like one feels when their home is robbed or their car is stolen, with the acknowledgment that someone had the audacity to enter their home or car. However, this man entered my very soul and sexually molested me, so the violation I felt was one of great magnitude.

All the respect and trust I had for him instantly vanished. I felt as if in that five-second act of self-centered fulfillment, my entire life was just shaken up, as though the earth was crumbling, with the distinct possibility of closure nearing. I needed to know why he did this, but I was speechless. I felt outside myself, as if someone else was directing my motions. I was in complete shock. I couldn't think. My body was moving toward the door, but I had no idea who was controlling it.

As I drove home, I cried silently to myself. I was extremely disillusioned. The confusion I felt was of great depth and I could not reason why this happened. I trusted this Pastor and he just molested me. This incident was way beyond my realm of comprehension. I could not

begin to understand the implications it presented. When I got home, I went straight to bed and just lie there crying.

Ben was not home from his boys meeting yet. I felt a loss that one feels when there is a death in the family, one of extreme emotional pain, with the critical question hanging over my head like the bleakness of an inevitable death. Why?

I did not tell my husband at first, because I needed to investigate why this Pastor did this to me. Plus, I did not think Ben could handle such terrible news just before his induction into the church. I didn't want to spoil things for Ben. I was not convinced this was purely an act of sexual gratification.

I was scheduled to help out with a mass the following Friday. I decided to go, even though Pastor White sexually molested me, because I needed more clues as to why he did this. It took every ounce of courage to go to this mass, but something was drawing me to the church. An intuitive thought was beckoning me to the church, in order to find answers. I subconsciously knew if I pursued this problem I would find the answers. I was not in the best

frame of mind, but I thought it was very important to pursue this matter.

The children had bought Pastor White some chocolates for Easter. I decided to bring the box of chocolates to the rectory, with a casual note complaining about the prayer group stress. I wanted to leave the chocolates for him, so Pastor White would think I was going along with his sexual advance. I decided I could catch more bees with honey than vinegar. It literally took days of deep contemplation to come to this decision. I was sure this was the only way to get answers.

I then went into the church and sat down. I was emotionally drained and very confused, but I felt an urgent tenacious push to continue with this farce.

Before the mass started I was sitting with some of the women from the prayer group, in church, chatting with them. Dick came over to sit next to us.

When I looked up at the altar there was Pastor White walking from one end of the altar to the other, pretending to miss steps and faking near falls, because he could not take his eyes off me. He was playing out the part of a lovesick teenager. One of the members sitting next to

me was laughing hysterically and I realized Pastor White's motive was to make a fool of me. It was sickening and I could not imagine what could possess Pastor White to be so cruel.

The prayer member who was laughing at me was Dick; the respectable honorable citizen of our community. Dick is heavily involved in church activities. He is the organ player for the church choir, active with several committees of the church and an auxiliary policeman. This man was laughing at me. This was all so sick. They were trying to humiliate me. I felt so lost and alone. I could not comprehend the vicious nature of their actions. It was way beyond my realm of comprehension.

At first I thought the pastors sexual molestation was done as a sexual act, but I somehow knew there was more to it. An intuitive notion was guiding my thoughts. Now I've come to the conclusion this was sexual harassment, in order to embarrass, degrade and humiliate me into leaving the church. Pastor White's motives were to force my family out of the church. In fact, they did not want my husband to be initiated into the church or they did not want me to be there.

How can they take this away from Ben, especially when my children were beaming with pride over this initiation and Ben had worked so hard to get to this point in his life? What could have possessed this pastor to be so cruel? I think possessed is the only word that can describe a pastor who is guilty of a sexual crime, which his soul will be damaged for.

I called the pastor the next morning and I left a message on his machine that said, “I will pray for you.”

The weekend was here and I stayed in bed hoping it would all just quietly disappear. I told Ben I was sick. Unfortunately, when I awoke in the morning, that same feeling of incredible disbelief would awaken me to the stark reality of my life.

The next day continued their rein of terror against me. I reluctantly went to work. I thought if I didn't go to work I would never go back. We needed this income. Ben was only working part-time, since he was caring for our children. I wanted Ben to protect them from all of this.

My co-workers and I went to lunch with our boss, because our sales figures exceeded our projections. There are eleven people working in

my office. They took us to a very expensive Steak House.

At lunch I was seated strategically next to people who were talking during the entire lunch about the O.J. Simpson case. It was the news of the day.

A sudden thought occurred to me. I remember Pastor White saying, at one of the prayer meetings, something odd. I didn't realize what it meant, at the time.

He said, "With all the stress you are having with the prayer group, please do not drag my name through the mud. Do not involve me in any of this." He continued, "If you drag my name into this it will kill me, and you wouldn't want that to happen, would you?"

That same piercing look shot from his dark eyes, like daggers slicing my senses. I felt a terror overwhelm my body. I could not comprehend what he meant at the time. I had no intentions of dragging his name through the mud to begin with. However, this now made sense to me. He was referring to events yet to happen; namely, the sexual molestation at the prayer group meeting.

During our luncheon Lynn started to tell me a story about her best friend. She insisted I listen to it.

She said, “This friend of mine is in a sad situation. Her husband drove her crazy and she is now in a mental institution. She has four children at home. I told her to leave this S.O.B., but she doesn’t have a job. I feel so sorry for her. Can you imagine your own husband trying to drive you crazy? What a loser he is. I would have knocked the hell out of him. How could she let this happen? Her poor children, they will never be the same.” Lynn was very tough.

I just sat there listening, trying very hard to ignore her cutting words. I was now totally convinced she was trying to inflict fear into me. I was not about to become paranoid and suspect Ben of trying to drive me crazy or of wanting to kill me. The question foremost on my mind was why was this all happening to me? It didn’t make any sense.

This is so sick. In fact, telling anyone this sorted intention of malice would surely convince people that I am insane. But, of course, this is their clear intention all along. To make me, and everyone around me, think I am insane. Then I could add to all this insanity the

fact that the pastor sexually assaulted me right in the middle of other prayer group members. They would really have a right to throw a net over my head and drive me to the nearest mental institution.

The problem here was that the other members of the prayer group were in on this whole charade and they would all swear Pastor White did nothing wrong. I am sure they are just dying for me to bring Pastor White up on charges, so they can falsely accuse me of being the one who pursued him. Who would believe me over a pastor of a church? This would surely cause havoc in my family and ruin my reputation. It would definitely trigger Ben to start drinking. Imagine a Lolita who seduces pastors? This could even make the local newspapers.

I could see the headlines now, “Lolita seduces Pastor in order to steal his soul.”

It is so bizarre. I cannot even begin to imagine how they think they can get away with this, although they know at this time I have no recourse. How can I tell anyone what’s going on? Who would believe any of it? Especially Ben. He would not buy one word of it. I was alone in this nightmare and I was determined to

get to the source of it. I will have to be very strong to endure anything they pass my way, because they will destroy my reputation if I retaliate.

The afternoon went by quickly and I drove home without incident. I sat in my dining room chair contemplating all the events in the week. Ben was out with the children. I felt an overwhelming pang of guilt. I wanted to spend time with my family. All I had the strength for when I got home from work was to try to rest. Ben left a note saying he took the kids to the library and would be home in an hour.

All of the incidents in the past week could not possibly be coincidences, yet it was too incredible to be believable. Could you even imagine something like this happening to you? Could you imagine waking up one morning to the stark shocking reality that everyone in your life has been scheming to cause pain for you and your family? God only knows how long this has been going on.

Pastor White cleverly lured me into the prayer group, only to try to inflict embarrassment and grief into my life, unsettling me to a point of total disbelief. They want to ruin my reputation. The teller machine incident

was a way to discredit me. I am convinced they plotted that whole incident with the money coming out the machine in the bank. This was a high price sting. Had I been tempted to take the money, I would have been put in jail. All these manipulative schemes are to wreck my reputation. But, why? Someone was going to a great deal of time and trouble to slander me.

Even I had trouble believing all of this. Unfortunately, Ben would not be able to understand any of it. I wanted answers and I wanted them now. Unfortunately, I was going to have to wait until more of these horrible events unfolded.

I sat there, closed my eyes, contemplating all the events that happened at the office and at the prayer meeting. It was incredible. Someone was going to a great deal of trouble and expense to harass me, but who?

One day my life was seemingly normal, with the average stress and complaints.

The next day, however, I find myself in a world of incredible mind games, harassment and intimidation's. I find myself in the darkest of times and in the most bizarre circumstances anyone could ever imagine. I find myself in a world that exists within the real world. A world

that is secret from the real world, with clever manipulations, causing destruction in its path. A place filled with violence, sexual intimidation, harassment and the powerful force of hate. The paradox is that this place exists, yet does not exist. It is not posted on any maps, yet it dwells in my community. It is a dark dank existence filled with the blackness of hell.

There is an evil instigator, who has somehow managed to involve seemingly decent people, in his wrath of destruction. The main perpetrator is responsible for manipulating the many puppets popping in and out of my life, with the clear intention of causing fear. The thought of the enormous hate swelling in this person sends shivers down my spine. I cannot comprehend such ruthless behavior.

It is totally incomprehensible to me that my co-workers, friends, people from my church, are all out to cause me great pain and suffering. Some of the other mothers in the neighborhood I've known for over three years are now showing me that they are a part of some evil hate crime.

The question still remains. Why? Why on Gods earth would anyone want to hurt me? I am a very loving, caring individual who always

extended myself to anyone in need. I am charitable and God loving. Even if I had been guilty of the worst crime imaginable, the actions of these people would not be justified. I cannot comprehend the manner they are going about to seek revenge on me. I am convinced there is much more to this than I can see at this moment. I am sure of one thing, that someone has slandered me in the most vicious manner. This accounts for the severe punishment I am facing.

I went into my bedroom to check my answering machine. There was a message on my machine that sounded like the clanking sound of a hammer. It was the distinct sound of metal crashing against metal and there were outdoor background sounds accompanying this clanking noise. The background noises sounded like traffic. This was very strange. It frightened me, because I knew it was another clue, but I did not know how it tied into all this. They were trying so hard to scare the living day lights out of me and I was starting to submit to their command.

There was another message from one of the prayer group members. She wanted information about a meeting. I heard the

distinct sound of music playing in the background of her message. It was the theme song from the Titanic movie. During a recent prayer meeting she made a point to ask Pastor White if he would go to see the Titanic movie with her. I thought this was odd for a pastor to be going to a movie that had a nude scene in it. I was convinced both messages were put there to inflict fear in me. I was also receiving hang-up calls, on an average of three each evening.

I suddenly came to the chilling notion that they were trying to drive me mad. But why? There was a shock wave of terror running throughout my body, bringing me to an incredible state of awareness. I felt as though I lost complete control over my life and I could feel the ceiling caving in around me, crushing me into the ground until I could no longer move. The air was now getting thin and I was reaching a point of suffocation.

What did they want from me? Why were they doing this to me? I never harmed anyone in my life and I could not imagine what could have possibly been said to my co-worker's, to the people at the prayer group, or to Pastor White, that could make them become so viciously hostile. No matter what was said,

there is no justification in trying to drive me crazy. Furthermore, there is nothing I could have possibly done to deserve such malicious mind games to be played on me.

How could this be happening, it was surreal? I could not come to any intelligent logical conclusion for this to suddenly be happening to me. I knew in my heart that this was not just going to quietly disappear.

The next day was Tuesday of Holy week. Another day filled with terror. I went to work in a very confused distant frame of mind. I just wanted the day to end. I kept thinking about all that had transpired. I was angry. I decided to confront Pastor White.

I called him at the rectory and told him what he did was wrong.

I said, "I trusted you, as if you were a father to me. My family trusted you. How could you caress my breast the way you did? How could you do that to me?"

For the first time, Pastor White was quiet and he let me do all the talking. I was suspicious of his silence.

I repeated myself, "I trusted you. My family trusted you."

He finally replied in an arrogant tone, “You should trust in God.”

I answered him with an angry tone, “I do trust in God, but I trusted you as a pastor.”

I ended the conversation by begging Pastor White to look deeper into this matter, because someone was slandering me and that he was smart enough to get to the truth. I hung up disilluminated by our conversation, but I vowed to Pastor White that I would dig deep until I got to the origin of this crime. This was my biggest mistake. Ever since I said that to him, I have been simultaneously hit by everyone involved, in order to cause confusion in me, so I would not be able to uncover the real reason behind this whole vendetta. As dismal as the picture appeared, I knew if I did not persevere and find the truth, I would not survive this ordeal.

My workday seemed unusually long. When it was over, I drove home. When I got into my apartment, a sigh of relief filled me. I was glad the day was over. I felt safe. I got into my pajamas and went to my bed. Ben was out playing ball with the kids. I had more time to think. I wasn't sure if this was good or bad. I was focusing all my attention on this vendetta, when I usually spend my spare time with my

children. Ben was happy to have the extra time with his boys, since he came back home. I decided I did need the time alone. I needed to somehow detach myself from its grip, although at this point, that seemed to be an impossible task.

My faith was diminishing into a grain of sand. That Christmas Spirit I felt was no longer present. My inner peace was shattered. Trying to keep my deep faith was like trying to hold onto a snowflake falling from the sky. It lands in your hand and then suddenly disappears. God was eluding me. I could no longer plead with God for help, because he seemed to be a million miles away, without any means of reaching him. Pastor White's actions shattered my faith in God.

Mercy. Yes mercy is what I needed to pray for, but I was in a place where there was no room left for God. My mind was filled to capacity, swirling in a world of deceitful betrayal, with no room for good thoughts of prayer. There was no room for hope. Hopelessness set in like the gloominess of a suddenly shocking untimely death, yet I desperately wanted to live, emotionally live. I felt as if my destiny was now in the hands of

some hateful force, which was pulling me into the depths of hell. I felt as if the rug was pulled from underneath me and I was falling into a pit filled with evil devils, waiting to devour me, as I dropped into their path. These devils were relishing in the notion that I would one day fall far enough for them to grab me into an abyss of endless torture. This vision was hell, yet I was living my own private hell on earth.

I had lost twelve pounds in the last two weeks and I felt a weakness overwhelming me. I was starting to feel very ill.

Then my thoughts centered on my children. They needed me so much. Their love sustains me and helps me continue to live. But this wasn't living; this was just a life of functioning, surviving, existing. I was sure God was punishing me for something I did, which was eluding me. My children gave me the strength to hang on, just hang on, as I struggled from one day to another. I was starting to think I would never have another happy moment again. I thought I would never enjoy my children, my husband, or my life again. I was sure my life was over, as I previously knew it to be. Despair overwhelmed me, as I desperately fought to rid myself of this debilitating emotion.

What happened to forgiveness, I wondered. Even if someone had said I was a mass murderer, aren't pastors obligated to be forgiving. They are spiritually trained to represent the very essence of the church, which is the spirit of God. Pastors must be nonjudgmental. Their role is to represent Christ. They should be compassionate, understanding and forgiving of human faults. What was the matter with Pastor White? I could not understand him behaving like this. He is a man of God and should be representing the church and Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, we should be generous to people who are in need, whether it is spiritual or material need. Pastors are suppose to mirror the life of Christ and to uphold His virtues; to hold the Ten Commandments as sacred and right, but above all to obey them.

One commandment, which has been broken by the pastor and everyone else involved is, "We shall love our neighbor as ourselves."

When Jesus was asked which is the greatest commandment of all here is what he said, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first

commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.” Matthew 22 36-40 NAB.

Jesus said this was one of the most important of all commandments and I can see why. If we all loved and respected our neighbors, our fellow citizens, there would be no wars, no conflicts, no murders, no fighting, no judgments, no fears to walk the streets at night, no vendettas, no harassment's.

This would be the ideal world. Of course, we do not live in an ideal world. Nature is perfect. God's creation of earth is perfect. The synchronization of the planets to align each day is perfect. The sun rising and setting each day, without fail, is perfect. But, people are not perfect. No one is, but we still have a moral obligation to be civil, to be somewhat compassionate to others. Nonetheless, what is happening to me is not debatable. This is a vicious terrorist attack on me, which has no justification attached to it. There is no reason on Gods earth that can justify this kind of behavior.

I still felt as if I was being punished for something I might have done in the past. But,

what? What could I have possibly done to deserve this immense suffering?

The words of our Lord rang in my ears, “Forgive them for they know not what they do.”

I vowed to pray for them, although this was a very difficult task since I felt such resentment at this time. For them to pick Holy week to heighten their harassment against me was deplorable behavior. Holy week reminds us of the path Jesus followed to His death and then ultimately to His glorious resurrection on Easter Sunday. It is a sacred week for Christians, filled with prayer and church services. Their hypocritical behavior is inexcusable and will be the downfall of their existence. I was sure they would be haunted by their own consciousness for many years to come.

The next day was Wednesday. I was beginning to think this week had no end to it. As I drove to my office, I noticed a gray car speeding past me, as I was making a turn down a residential street. He actually cut me off. I proceeded down the block with caution until I caught sight of the gray car, parked on the right side of the road. As I approached this car, at a slow speed, the gray car jumped out in front of me, then stopped dead only a few feet away

from me. I instinctively looked in the rear view mirror and saw another car close behind me, but there was no time to think. I hit my brake hard and stopped short, because I would have hit the gray car had I not stopped instantly. My car stood motionless. I expected the car behind me to hit me, so I braced myself by holding onto the steering wheel. I looked again in my rear view mirror. The car behind me miraculously stopped without crashing into me. It was a miracle the car behind me did not hit me. As my car stood motionless in front of this gray car, I turned to the driver, glaring at him with anger in my eyes. I then drove off. I was frightened.

This was deliberate. He cut me off then parked his car and waited for me to come by. He then jumped his car out to cause me to stop short. He was trying to cause me to have an accident, although I could never prove this. All these horrible incidents are without any concrete evidence. They are deviously executed, in order to cause harm to me, yet protect the perpetrator. All I have is circumstantial evidence. One person against what seemed like an army, out to devour my soul.

I was alarmed at the extent they were going to, in order to frighten and intimidate me. Now they have resorted to trying to cause me to have an accident. There was no doubt that this whole incident with the gray car was a setup. Why would the car make a turn then speed past me, park his car, then jump out in front of my car? It was very clear to me. This was deliberate. They were trying to scare me. This was the devious way they gave messages to me. They tried to inflict fear and anxiety in me, in order to get me to conform to their wishes. Since I was on my way to work, I think they are trying to give me a clear message to resign, because the office harassment has accelerated. I was exhausted. I felt drained.

How much more did I have to endure, I wondered? They were playing games with my life, trying to manipulate and frighten me into doing what they wanted me to do. They were trying to control me with fear. Now, the ultimate intimidation of trying to cause me to have an accident has taken center stage. What kind of sick people are these and how far will they go before they feel a sense of satisfaction? What could the driving force be that keeps them on a steady course of terror?

I could not, in a million years, comprehend the vicious nature behind this vendetta. I can only thank God that I could never be on their end of this spectrum, because if I were to pursue them as viciously as they pursue me, my life would clearly be over. Not only would the hate eat inside my very soul, to a point of never feeling any peace and love, but I would never outsmart them. I am sure it would all backfire in my face. How could I fight, what seemed like an army on a rampage, alone?

When I arrived at the office, I tried to engross myself in my work, trying to clear my mind, in order to concentrate on my job. After a couple of hours, I decided to go outside to have a cigarette, as I often did. As I stood outside, I noticed some men working at the construction sight. They were constructing a new building, a few feet away from the parking lot of my building. One of those assisted living homes. As I stood watching and listening, I heard a familiar sound. The clanking sound of the hammers striking metal was a familiar sound to me. As I listened more intently, I realized this was the same sound I heard on my answering machine. The sound was that of a hammer banging against metal. It was the same

exact sound. This explained the clue on my answering machine, although classifying this a clue somehow had the allure of a great mystery, which I did not want to participate in.

Someone was trying to tie my work in with the bizarre events of the past few weeks. They wanted me to know that the people in my office were very much a part of this nightmare. This realization confirmed all my earlier speculations. I was stunned, because I had worked in this office for two years, never suspecting anything was wrong. Now I see a different aspect of the people in my office whom I like and trusted.

I could not believe that Hillary was part of this. She is a boisterous loud mouth with a keen sense of humor. She is also extremely generous and I like her. Her short brown hair is always neatly styled. She did, however, have her moments of outbursts.

One time I forgot to check the e-mail for messages. Hillary had asked me to keep track of the afternoon e-mails. Manuel complained to Hillary.

They stood side by side, in support of one another, as she said these cutting words. "I am

going to come over there and knock you into consciousness.”

After this remark was made, I immediately went and complained to my boss Hannah. Hannah told me that Hillary should not have threatened me that way. That was all that she said about it. Ever since this incident, Hillary has been trying to protect herself by being nice to me. I have silently forgiven her for this outburst.

My boss Hannah is the studious type. She is your typical single woman. She works hard when she's working and plays hard when she's not. She is a graduate of Stony Brook College. She is serious about her work, yet displays a gentle personality. She could be snobbish at times and I always got the impression she thought she was above everyone else around her. Her antics in recent months have made her look as if she possesses two personalities.

Ginny was always kind to me, although she also had her moments of outbursts. Daniel just had a baby and was exhibiting a natural instinct to motherhood. Her newborn daughter looks exactly like her. However, she also had her moments of cruel behavior directed at me, teaming up with Manuel to give me a hard time.

Maggie reminds me of my mother, because she is loving and concerned, yet a bit temperamental. Her Russian accent is sometimes hard to understand.

Carla is the worst of all of them. She is the one who sprays the perfume around the office. The one who is always throwing innuendos into the air, in order to stun me. She is cunning and manipulative.

And then there is Lynn. Well we already know about Lynn. She is manipulative and always scheming to get me in trouble, even though she pretends to me by friend.

With their little flaws and perfect character traits, combined into one unique being, I decided long ago I really like these people. I cannot understand what motivates them to become so hostile toward me. I refuse to cross enemy line and hate them. I was not about to be sucked into their side of the fence, filling my heart with hate, resentment and bitterness. If I became resentful to them, then my life would be filled with resentment, which would be carried over to my family.

One thing was certain, whoever was doing this was trying to inflict great fear into me. I was becoming very emotionally drained. It was

too much to absorb all at one time. My workday finally ended and I drove home. As soon as I got home, I called our marriage counselor at his office. He was, coincidentally on vacation for holy week. Dan jokingly told me he was taking holy week off, because he was a very holy guy. I asked the receptionist to give Dan a message to call me, if he called in. I was beginning to panic and it was urgent that he return my call. I did not have much hope in him calling me while on vacation. I didn't think this was part of a marriage counselor's job description.

As I sat in my kitchen contemplating all the events, I felt my mind swirling. My brain was now filled to capacity with this nightmare. I needed to stay calm. After about an hour, the phone rang. It was Dan. I was relieved to hear his voice on the phone. Although I did not trust him, at this point, he was all I had. If I confided all that transpired to Ben, he would emotionally fold. He could not handle such stress.

As I spoke to Dan, I found myself telling him that the pastor molested me. As I began to tell him about the clanking noise on the answering machine, I was getting very excited. He suggested I write everything down, send it

to him in the mail, so he could review it when he returned from vacation. Now I was very upset. This sounded suspicious to me.

I snapped at him, “What do you think I am crazy?”

He said he did not mean to imply that.

He said, “I know you are not crazy. I just wanted to evaluate everything when I got back from vacation. I would like to suggest you don’t go back to the church.”

How could I not go back to the church? My husband was going to have the biggest night of his life during the Easter Vigil this Saturday.

I hung up very confused refusing to believe Dan was a part of this. After much contemplation, I finally realized the only friend I thought I had, in whom I could rely, somewhat trust and confide in, was somehow tied into this whole mess. I felt disillusioned, as I tried to rationalize the implications of Dan being involved. I overlooked Dan’s advice to go sexually with the pastor, because I did not want to believe he was a part of this. A thick cloud of denial was evident. After careful consideration, and adding this new conversation to the picture, I realize he is a part of this.

I was so angry I could hardly see straight. A piecing scream instinctively came from my mouth. “Why, Dan? Why did you do this to me?” I was sure the whole neighborhood heard me.

I somehow managed to calm down. Sweat was pouring from my face. This was the worse revelation yet. I had difficulty coming to terms with this new piece to this giant puzzle I call my life. The nagging feeling of mistrust I had for Dan has finally come to the surface. This meant he could possibly be responsible for feeding personal information to these pack of wolves. These vicious wolves who’s clear intent is to devour me. These animals exchanged information with Dan, in order for them to become more devious in their rein of terror. I was sure Dan had given them confidential information about me; information that came from my very soul.

It all made sense. They were exhibiting extremely intelligent schemes. I often wondered how they knew exactly how to manipulate me, as if they knew my every thought. They seemed to know exactly where to push and how far to push me. Now I was sure Dan was feeding them information about me.

I felt such a bitter rage of anger for Dan, because he was supposed to keep our meetings confidential. I was starting to strongly suspect he not only broke his confidentiality clause, but he also used our meetings to manipulate me into doing what these people wanted me to do. He also was very influential in his advice regarding my separation from Ben, which lasted a little over a year. He was downright angry with me when I wanted to reconcile with Ben, four months previous to our reunion. His strong opinion swayed me here and there, causing great strife to enter into our marriage, which kept us separated longer.

I was convinced they were all trying to get us away from the church, so Ben would not be initiated. Dan just said to stay away from the church, a co-worker suggested the same, and so did the woman in the retreat. This is what they were trying to tell me, but I still think they endangered my life with the wrong contact lenses and with the gray car darting out at me.

They want me dead, I was sure of it. I was also sure that my co-workers and the people of the church were not aware of these outside tragic events, which put my life in danger. The evil instigator was responsible for the car

incident. I am sure no one else knew about this. It felt like two evil forces joining together, yet not confiding every detail to every person involved.

I think the church incidents are a clever distraction to cover the real motive and the real culprits. This is a diversion, in order to distract me from finding the truth. The turmoil caused by the people of the prayer group will keep me in a state of confusion, so the real culprits will be protected. I would not have enough time or energy to pursue the real culprits, since all my time was focused on the outer happenings. They were manipulating my thoughts, to keep the focus on the church and office harassment.

During this whole nightmare I changed my children's doctor, because I knew they were not getting proper treatment. I wanted to protect them. I requested their records from this practice, which was affiliated with a very good hospital. I also belonged to this practice, but with a different doctor. They sent Josh' records, but not Kevin's. Instead of Kevin's records they sent my records to me. I never requested my records. This was a clear indication to me that the doctor wanted me out of his office. This was no mistake. This explained the two-

hour wait every time I went to see this doctor. This also explained his rude and unusual behavior.

When I received my medical records, I reviewed my history. I saw the results of a lung X-ray I had taken two years ago. At the end of the report there was a small statement that said degenerative spine detected. Degenerative spine! What does degenerative spine condition mean? The doctor never told me about this. I was very upset over this unfortunate news. My doctor refused to do a spinal X-ray when I told him my back was hurting. Now I knew the diagnosis of my back condition, but what did it all mean? What was going on here? Even my doctor was involved. I could not rationalize this. I could not fully comprehend the implication this new development represented.

It was obvious to me that they were all trying to force me out of my everyday surroundings. They are trying to convince me that everyone wants me out, but I think one place desperately wants me out, for fear of a lawsuit against them. The others are just supporting them. They are all bannig together to show support for each other, in order to hide the origin of this crime. They are trying

desperately to confuse me. The facts are here, but the motive is still very unclear. Yes they want us away from the church, my workplace, my doctor's office and Dan's office. But why?

It was going to take a long time for me to get over the mistrust and the shock of knowing Dan is involved in this. I kept trying to convince myself that Dan did try to protect me from the pastor, at one point, when he warned me to be careful of him. Or was he trying to inflict fear in me?

I could not reach God, at this point, because my thoughts were focused on the bad, the evil. I also felt unworthy to approach God. I felt guilty of some unforeseen major offense. I felt as if I was being punished. I was completely obsessed with finding answers, with no room in my mind for deep prayer and meditation. I needed to feel less confused and more confident, before I will ever be able to reach the point of my strong faith returning. I was starting to question whether it ever would return. I needed to also conquer self-doubt, which had invaded my mind like an army on a violent rage. I was still praying, but the deep prayers and meditations would hopefully come

with time, as I tried hard to regain my inner peace.

I was determined to hold on until Saturday, in order to support my husband with his initiation. Ben had worked so hard in the past year to come to this point in his life, where he feels the love of God all around him. How dare they try to take this away from my husband, especially when the people from the church were the ones who taught him for a year. This was their way of protecting the church. How could anything terrible be happening to me, when Ben was so involved in his preparation for a renewal with the church? This was so hypocritical I could not bear thinking about it.

I had to keep myself together, for Ben's sake, for my children's sake, for my own sake, in order to get through this week, so Ben's initiation will take place as scheduled. Ben knew something was wrong. He kept asking me what was going on. However, he had no idea what was transpiring around us.

My children have helped me to be strong. Their love for me is the only thing that keeps me from losing my mind. They are the driving force in my life, which gives me strength and endurance. When I look into their eyes, I know

the love I see is the image of the love that God has for all of us. I need to focus more on them and not on my problems.

I was holding on, however, by a thin thread. I felt as though I was suspended in midair above the New York City skyline, holding onto a rope and knowing if I let go I would be dead. I felt like I was going to fall into the icy cold clutches of the East River and perish forever. I could feel the earth shaking, as I tried to hold onto one more moment with my children, one more warm embrace, envisioning all the downtown sky scrapers falling in my direction, ultimately smashing me into the pavement.

I tried to hold on, as I remembered the warm bear hug Josh gave me in the park the day I asked Ben to come back home. His warm embrace was lovingly reassuring. This thought gave me a sense of security. His love, Kevin's love, and Ben's love, is what sustains me. My family needed me. I also desperately needed God's love.

I had to hold on for my children's sake, they would not be able to accept something happening to me, and I know they could not live apart from me. Our love is too strong. The love I have for my children was helping me be

strong enough to endure the pain and suffering. Whenever I thought about my children, a renewed strength entered my mind. I knew I had to somehow be positive and keep thinking about my children.

These people, whoever they are, have defied every moral ounce of decency by picking Holy week to accelerate their vendetta, with the increased harassment they have set in my path. And I would venture to guess they would stop at nothing, in order to drive my family out of our church and out of our community.

One aspect of this nightmare was crystal clear. Someone was going to a great deal of trouble and expense to inflict fear into me. Some evil being was lurking in the shadows of a bright sunny day, instigating good people into his plan of horror. This chain gang is growing, like weeds in a garden of flowers, destroying the beauty of God's creation. They are playing God trying to determine my future, as they scheme to inflict suffering into my life.

As the weeds of destruction overcome the flowers, my life is overshadowed by their vicious deeds. The weed is the creation of evil, which destroys life. My destiny should not be determined by them, but by my actions and by

God's will. They have no right to create my destiny. They are cowards lurking where good people cannot see them. They are waiting for the opportunity to see me fold or emotionally die. I refuse to fold; therefore, they inflict more emotional pain, which becomes intensified.

One thing is certain, without a shadow of a doubt, whoever is behind this charade of terror is filled with an enormous amount of hate, which gives me a feeling of extreme uncertainty about my future.

At this point, I did not know how to come to grips with this living nightmare. I felt terror invade my entire body, like a bolt of lightning was sending shock waves into my being. My obsession with finding answers was heightening my anxiety. I knew I had to somehow detach from this nightmare, but I found that impossible to do, at this time. I had to keep thinking that some good would eventually surface from all the suffering. At this point, hopelessness overwhelmed me and I was convinced I would never experience another peaceful moment.

The violent storm was erupting, as if my world was coming to an end. The torrential downpour was overwhelming me, as I desperately tried to seek shelter from the

powerful storm. The gushing rain and winds were blinding me. The cold dark reality of this scheme of betrayal was setting in, like a hurricane joining forces with the ocean. I started to pray to God for an anchor to help me weather the violent waves surrounding me. I knew if I could just focus on my children the love of God would re-enter my life and save me from the turbulence of the torrential down pour. My thoughts, however, were focused on the reality of the storm, which was overpowering my mind.

Tomorrow is Holy Thursday. This is a sacred day for Christians throughout the world; a day to remember Jesus and his disciples last supper. Also, in the evening, we remember the terrible agony Jesus suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane. He went there to pray, knowing his death was already planned for the next day, which is Good Friday; the holiest day of the year. Jesus knew his betrayer, Judas, was coming soon. He would have a number of Religious Authorities with him to have Jesus brought to Pilate to be arrested. He asked his disciples to watch over him when he prayed.

Matthew, 26:38-42 NAB. Then Jesus said to them, “My soul is sorrowful, even to death.

Remain here and keep watch with me. He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me: yet, not as I will, but as you will. When he returned to his disciples he found them asleep. He said to Peter, “So you could not keep watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

The most significant line in the whole Bible, one in which has tremendous impact on me, was when Jesus said, “My soul is sorrowful, even to death.”

It shows the human side of Jesus. He tells us that he was filled with agony and sorrow. He must have felt so much emotional pain. What suffering and trials he went through on this fateful night. The sadness must have been tremendous for Jesus, knowing he faced an inevitable death the following day.

He told his disciples to, “Watch and pray, that you may not undergo the test.”

I think Jesus was telling them to pray that they are not tempted to conform to the way of the world, but to stay close to God during trials of great magnitude, such as this one for the disciples.

Jesus told them that it was written that “I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be dispersed”

Jesus knew that the shepherd would fall and the flock would wander, but He also knew that they would only wander for a short time, due to intense fear. The disciples were frightened when Jesus was finally arrested and taken into custody.

I feel as if I am going through this testing of the soul. My faith is almost dormant, at this point. I am also in a trial of great magnitude and I abandoned God, just like the disciples did, because fear had overcome them. I refuse to conform to the way of the world and completely wander from God's love. I wondered whether that glorious Christmas spirit would ever return. I refuse to cross enemy lines. I will not conform to their tactics of terror. I will not fight my enemies, because they would love a good fight. They would relish in their power over me.

I knew more despair and suffering lurked in my path, which made it all the more painful. Knowing my fate only further accelerated the anxiety I felt. In the darkest corner of my mind I could feel an intuitive thought beckoning me to persevere, in order to find the answers that

would eventually surface, hopefully bringing me to the end of the storm. The end of the storm, where the rainbow of freedom from this insidious hate crime will emerge. That rainbow was only a fleeting thought, since I was without hope.

I always envisioned hope as a power coming from God. I did not have a connection to this power. I could not imagine a solution to this problem. I was in a dark depressing place, which had no room for mercy. I could not fight this hurricane. I could only try to survive it; weathering it, until the lifeboat of hope re-entered my life. I needed shelter from the storm. I knew the only shelter I could pray for was God's love.

I knew that my tomorrow brought the same fate as my yesterdays, but deep down inside, I also knew if I did not weather the storm, I would not pass the test of the soul. The light that guides me through this journey was very dim. I had to face the bleak despair of more hate and bitterness. I suspected the rest of Holy week was going to be the most vicious part of this hate crime. I could only hope that I would be strong enough to endure.

Jesus agonized over his fate of death. His agony was great. His soul was sorrowful.

My soul was also filled with agony and sorrow. There was an intense, almost panic feeling inside that was begging me to pray.

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