

Pro and Con
Part One: The Incident
1. The Date

Georgiana:

Georgiana sat on the floor of the shower, letting the steaming hot water sluice over her head and body. She had used the hot water bottle, with its solution of vaginal douche, several times to flush her vagina. Now she just sat in the scalding spray, her skin red from the stinging heat, crying as if she'd never stop, adding her tears to the flood of liquids washing down the drain.

Blaine:

Blaine sat in the front seat of his car, his life having just made a turn into darkness. He hadn't meant to do it, but his date, Georgiana, had driven him to it. He had just ended a long stint on the drilling rig—nearly a month offshore—and, from the moment he had laid eyes on her, she revved his motor. One of those fully-packed women, Georgiana's tee top and shorts seemed barely able to contain her womanly assets, as if the material would burst from the strain, to leave her revealed like a peeled grape.

All through dinner, he gazed in awe at her. To make matters worse, she had an easy, comfortable way about her, laughed often and had the disconcerting habit of reaching out to lay her hand on his arm, touch his shoulder and brush his hand with hers.

In the car, they necked some and he took full advantage of the situation. They kissed until his lips hurt and he slipped his hand into her top, gradually working it up and off, until she sat only in her frilly, pink bra. Trembling, he worked at the clasp while he kissed her some more, until he opened it and released the wonders within. Then it all went wrong.

He fondled her breasts for a while and then started to unbutton her shorts. Georgiana resisted, telling him she wouldn't go any further. He coaxed and cajoled, cajoled and coaxed, working her shorts down the whole time. That's when it happened. She yelled "STOP!" and he saw red. He tore off her shorts, ripped her frilly, pink panties from her body and took her by force, his long-denied passion fueling his desire for her lush body. She tried to scream, but he clamped his hand over her mouth. She tried to fight him off, but years spent on oil rigs had made his muscles like steel and she soon lost the uneven contest. She fell limp and he satisfied his lust on her.

He had gotten his way, but the cost proved too high.

Georgiana:

"I should never have accepted the invitation," Georgiana said to her friend, Lucy, "but Blaine's brother knew you and he said his brother was a nice guy."

"Yeah, I've known Blair since high school and I've always trusted him. I had no idea his brother would be such a brute. We'll go to the police first thing in the morning."

Georgiana shook her head. "I'm not so sure I—"

"Georgie, listen to yourself! He *raped* you!"

"Yeah, but I was halfway out of my clothes and I led him on and—"

"When you said stop, it meant *stop*. He had no right to do that and you know it. We're going downtown and make a report. They take rape very seriously these days.

"I don't know..."

"*Stop it!* We're going and that's that!"

Blaine:

“What am I going to do, Blair?”

“Dear Lord, Blaine! You *raped* her! What were you thinking!”

“I didn’t think. She drove me crazy, man! The minute I saw her I couldn’t get my thoughts straight. It started off all right and I got way past first base, but she said no and I just couldn’t stop. She has this amazing body and...” Blaine brought his hands to his face and heaved a huge sigh. “What have I done?”

“I hate to say this, but what you’ve done is get yourself into a lot of grief. Were you into those porn magazines out there on the platform again?”

Blaine wouldn’t meet his brother’s gaze. “They’re practically all there is to read out there. We’re away from women for weeks at a time. It helps to relieve the longing.”

“Some help. You get your libido all amped up with that filth and, when you’re actually with a real, pretty woman like Georgiana, all you can think of is some sexual fantasy. Look where that got you!”

“When you put it that way, it sounds terrible.”

“It *is* terrible! You raped a sweet woman who trusted you. My God, Blaine! How *could* you?”

Blair’s harsh words cleaved Blaine’s heart like a sharp ax and he broke down and sobbed like a child. Realizing he came on especially strong, Blair sat next to him and his little brother grabbed hold of him and cried torrents onto his shoulder.

“W-what am I g-gonna do, B-Blair; what am I g-gonna do? My l-life is over!”

“It’s not over, little brother, God will provide a way.”

As Blaine sobbed out his grief and remorse, Blair cast a prayer up to God.

Dear Lord, please show me a way to make this right.

Georgiana:

The day after the rape, Georgiana and Lucy went downtown and reported it to the police. The desk sergeant called in a female officer, who brought in a “rape kit,” but since Georgiana had showered and douched, it ruled out any accuracy in evidence collection. The officer, trained in its use, took her into an exam room anyway, had her disrobe and put on a paper gown, and went through the motions. She minutely examined her body, took pictures of the small bruises on her arms, breasts, mons veneris and thighs, took swabs from her mouth, vagina and anus, and took scrapings from under her fingernails. She also collected samples of her head and pubic hair and took some blood. By the time she finished, and as gently as she treated her, Georgiana had broken down and cried throughout the whole process, with the rape replaying in her mind.

“I know this is tough, sweetie,” the officer said as soothingly as she could, “but it’ll be over soon.”

After the exam, Georgiana gave her statement and signed a formal complaint. She cried softly, but managed to get through it with few interruptions, though tears streamed down her cheeks the entire time. Lucy took her home and made some tea.

“I’m sorry you had to go through that, but we need to be proactive about this, so that creep gets arrested. When you feel better, I’ll call Blair and see if he can get his brother to go to the police and confess.”

Blaine:

Blaine went downtown the next day, at Blair's urging, and confessed to the rape. The stone-faced officer, after explaining that Blaine had a right to an attorney, which he waived, sat him down and had him describe, in as much detail as possible, what occurred the night of the rape. Blaine, his voice trembling from shame, described that night in vivid detail, leaving out no damning detail. The officer turned off the recording, had it transcribed, printed it out and had Blaine sign the confession. Afterwards, they fingerprinted him and brought him to a cell.

Through his own doing, Blaine's life had turned a corner into hell.

2. The Aftermath

Georgiana ~ Two months later:

"Lucy? It's Georgie," Georgiana said over the phone. "The test came up positive; I'm pregnant!"

"Oh, my God," Lucy said, almost under her breath. "I'll be right over."

Georgiana cried the whole time it took Lucy to get to her. *Why has this nightmare happened to me?* she thought. Finally, the eternity of waiting ended and she heard the buzzer.

"Oh, Lucy, this nightmare will never end!" she wailed, as she fell into her friend's arms. "What am I going to do?"

Lucy gently rubbed her friend's back as she cried. "Go ahead, cry it out. I'm going to help you make this right.

"I'm taking you to the clinic for an abortion."

Blaine:

"How are you holding up?" Blair asked Blaine.

His brother smiled wistfully. "It's a lot like being on a rig. A couple of the guys in here tried leaning on me, but I leaned back and they pretty much leave me alone now, but this is jail, not prison. I'm not looking forward to that. Surprisingly, rape isn't the bugaboo in here that it is outside. Most of the guys think the woman deserves what she gets and look at the beef as a badge of prowess. There are a lot of men in here for abuse; it's screwed up, but there you are."

Because he made a complete confession, they didn't have to empanel a jury and the case went directly to a judge for sentencing. After what seemed like a whole lot of unnecessary waiting, Blaine stood before a judge to hear the bad news. The judge looked down from the bench at Blaine, standing before him in a new suit and looking as presentable as possible. Blaine stood, his head bowed, his hands cuffed in front, with a bailiff on one side and a Sheriff's deputy on the other. Blair sat in the front row. Georgiana and Lucy sat several rows back to witness the sentencing, their expressions impassive. They had come for justice.

"Mr. Downes, look up at me," the judge ordered and his head snapped up to meet her gaze. "I'm Judge Sarah Hornsby and I suppose you're thinking you'll get the harshest punishment because I am a woman. I want you to erase that thinking from your mind. You're before me because I have a reputation for objectivity in these cases. I will judge according to the facts alone. Having said that, let us proceed. She banged her gavel for emphasis and everyone in the courtroom jumped.

"Your full confession has obviated the necessity for a jury trial, so you stand before me to hear your sentence. Under Statute Seven-ninety-four-dot-zero-one-one, Sexual Battery: Rape, you could face a maximum sentence of life and a minimum sentence of nine years."

Blaine winced at the word *life*.

“Having read your confession and the victim, one Georgiana Willits’s statement, and having interviewed the officers involved, who said you surrendered peacefully, acting in exemplary fashion, I’ve weighed all these facts carefully. After long deliberation, I’ve determined that you didn’t intend malice to her before the night in question, nor did you intend to deliberately rape her.” Judge Hornsby paused and looked down at Blaine.

“Mr. Downes, I want you to look straight at me as I proceed.”

Blaine looked up and met her penetrating gaze and it reminded him of the sharp scrutiny of an eagle, or hawk.

“Having said that, you nonetheless forced yourself on her, taking advantage of your greater strength, to have sexual intercourse with her after she had said no. That is unconscionable, a violation of the social contract. Having said that, rape is one of the hardest cases to adjudicate, due to its sensitive and emotionally-charged nature. In too many instances, a woman will cry rape when she, herself, is partly culpable for her partner’s actions.

“In considering the facts of this case, I’ve determined that Miss Willets had encouraged you to some degree. Considering the fact you had been on an oilrig for a month, without female companionship, you were in a highly charged state. Nonetheless, when she said no, she had every right to expect you to stop, yet you forced yourself on her and continued. That, sir, is why you stand here.

“I’ve also taken into consideration the fact you willingly confessed to your offence, indicating a high degree of remorse for what you have done. Yet, you perpetrated a rape, a physical act of violence against a weaker person and you deserve punishment. Will the plaintiff and her companion approach the bench?”

Looking uncertain, Georgiana and Lucy walked slowly to the front. Standing next to Blaine, flanked by the two guards, Georgiana looked tiny and vulnerable and he imagined that he must look like a huge thug. His heart sank.

“Please turn the defendant so he faces the plaintiff,” the judge ordered.

Blaine turned, met Georgiana’s eyes, but couldn’t hold it and stared at the floor.

“Mr. Downes, I want you to look into the eyes of your accuser.”

He returned his gaze to Georgiana’s face and could see the tears there. The magnitude of what he had done hit him with full force and he began to tremble. *I can’t believe I’ve done this!* he thought, wishing he could just drop dead on the spot.

Mr. Downes, I’m going to sentence you to the minimum of nine years for your offence.”

Blaine’s face fell, as the import of the sentence—nine years, one-hundred-eight months, three thousand, two-hundred-eighty-five days out of his life—sank in.

“However, I’m also adding that you will be eligible for parole after an undetermined period, subject to good behavior. Do you understand this sentence?”

Blaine nodded.

“Good. Miz Aptel, do you understand the sentence?” Georgiana nodded. “Are you satisfied that justice has been done? I urge you to speak out, if you have questions, objections, or concerns with my verdict. I want no one to leave this court thinking justice hasn’t been served.”

“I have a problem with your verdict, your honor,” Blaine said, surprising everyone.

“You take issue with my sentence? Aside from the fact my question wasn’t directed at you, I’d like to hear what it is.”

Blaine looked up at the judge. “Yes, ma’am. I should have gotten life.”

No one spoke and he could see what might have passed as a slight grin cross the judge’s lips, then vanish as she impressed her judicial demeanor on her face..

“Mr. Downes, your remorse at what you’ve done is commendable. In the past, when a woman’s person was considered sacred and inviolate, you would have gotten the death penalty. However, in this much more permissive society of ours, the lines are blurred. You assaulted Miz Aptel and have confessed to it. It was my job to determine where the blame rested and it rested mostly on you. However, in her statement, she indicated prior intimate contact, to which she didn’t object. It was not my task to determine *when* she should have told you to stop, but, the fact is, you didn’t when she wished not to proceed. I’ve taken this into consideration in this case, thus my sentence. Pending appeal, which is her right, my sentence will stand. Case closed.” Judge Sarah Hornsby banged her gavel and left the bench.

As Blaine turned to leave, he shot a quick glance at the women. With hateful eyes, Lucy glared at him. Georgiana just looked sad, confused and wounded. Lucy’s look didn’t faze him.

Georgiana’s look went through him like a molten arrow.

When Blair heard of Georgiana’s pregnancy, he gave her a call. “Hello? Georgiana? This is Blair Downes, Blaine’s brother.”

“I know who you are. What do *you* want?”

“I heard from Lucy that you’re pregnant.”

“Yeah, not only did your brother rape me, he made me pregnant.”

“What are you going to do?”

“I’m going to abort it. I have an appointment set up at the clinic for next week.”

Blair’s heart sank. “I’m sorry to hear that. I was hoping you would have it. I’ll take care of all prenatal care and birth expenses, of course.”

“I don’t want this baby! It’s only in me because of your brother!”

“The baby’s an innocent; don’t end its life.”

“But I don’t want to have it! For nine months, it’ll remind me of what your brother did!”

“Look, do you think we could meet? I’d like to show you some literature and I have a contract that bids me to helping you with all expenses.”

“I don’t want to meet with you, read your literature, or sign any contract. I just want this behind me.”

“*Please?* I just want to talk. I consider this extremely important and I’m fully aware of your sensitivity on the subject. Why don’t we meet at Rosie’s, downtown? I’ll buy you lunch. Please, let me make my case. I promise I won’t browbeat you; you can leave anytime you feel the least uncomfortable.”

“I don’t know....”

“I’ll come pick you up if you like. *Please*, I’m begging you.”

Georgiana heaved a huge sigh. “Okay, I’ll meet you there; one o’clock, but I’m only going to listen. I’m not promising anything.”

“Fair enough. See you there and thank you for understanding.”

“Don’t thank me.”

3. The Plea

Blair:

When Blair entered the diner, he spotted Georgiana sitting in a booth. She looked ravishing. Seeing her, he could understand some of what Blaine had meant about the first time he saw her.

Sadness caused a pang in his chest at what had happened to her. He slipped into the opposite side of the booth.

“Thanks for coming,” he said.

A waitress came over. “What can I get you folks to drink?” she asked.

“Do you want to order some food?” Blair asked Georgiana.

“Just iced tea, thanks,” she said.

“Make that two, please,” Blair said, handing the menus back.

“I’m only here because you seemed so insistent,” Georgiana said. “What is it you wanted to show me?”

Blair slipped some pamphlets from the folder he brought in. “These are from an organization that works with pregnant, single women, urging them to keep their babies. Please read them. The only difference is that I’ll take care of all your expenses. You won’t have to worry about a thing financially.”

“Why are you doing this? It’s not going to help your brother; he’s already in prison.”

“I’m a Christian and pro life. I don’t want to see *any* baby aborted. Plus, this baby you’re carrying is from my brother, so it’s part of our family.”

“Part of...? What does *he* think about this?”

“He doesn’t care what you decide to do. He’s devastated enough over what happened and just wants you to get past this.”

“Well, I guarantee you that carrying this baby, a product of your brother’s rape, won’t help me there.”

“I’m sorry for that, but I don’t want to see an innocent suffer for its father’s sin. I don’t know what your feelings are in this, but I don’t think you want to be responsible for ending this new life in your womb.”

“Are you trying to send me on a guilt trip?”

Blair held Georgiana’s gaze with his. “No, I’m trying to keep you *from* one. Like so many women who’ve aborted their babies, I’m afraid you’ll regret it later on, perhaps years later. Will you at least *think* about having it?”

Georgina lowered her gaze to the tabletop, her expression sad. “What’s in this DVD case?”

“It’s a film of interviews with women who’ve aborted their babies, as well as rape victims who made the decision to bring their babies to term. The last part has a warning before it, because it shows what happens during abortions. You don’t have to watch that part if you don’t want to, but I’d like you to listen to the interviews.”

“All I wanted to do was go out on a nice date. I even considered sleeping with your brother if we hit it off, did you know that? Instead, he attacked me, forced himself on me and left me with this baby. I don’t think I deserved that, do you?”

“No, you didn’t and I can’t begin to express my sorrow over what has happened. For what it’s worth, I’ll do my utmost to be there for you in this. I won’t abandon you.”

Georgiana’s head came up and she met Blair’s gaze. “You’re so different from your brother. How did that happen?”

Blair’s expression grew sad. “Back when we were pre-teens, Blaine and I were confronted with the claims of Christ. I listened and he didn’t. It was a bone of contention between us.”

“Did you have any idea he would do what he did?”

“No. I knew he liked the ladies, but he never acted anything but the gentleman with his other girlfriends.”

“He seemed quiet at first, almost surly. He kept looking at me with this...this *longing*. After the meal, in the car, he relaxed more and we got to talking. He drove us to this scenic spot down by the water and...I should have known better than to start necking with him. At first, it was exciting; his hands on me felt good, but I felt it going too far and I wanted him to stop. Then he...then he...” She began crying and Blair put his hand on her shoulder. She flinched, but allowed it and relaxed.

“I’m so sorry for what happened. If I had any idea it would end like it did, I would never have suggested to Lucy that he date you.”

Georgiana looked up at Blair, her eyes red from crying. “What made him like that, do you think?”

“Well, lately he’s been working the oil platforms. It’s good money, but the tours can be long and pornographic magazines and videos are popular in the off hours among the men. Blaine has a history with porn and I’m afraid he got caught up in it.”

“Do you suppose I...was I somehow too permissive? Perhaps I dressed too provocatively.”

“No, no, don’t think that; it was his decision. Please don’t take this the wrong way, but you’re an extremely striking woman. I’m afraid, seeing you, he got all the wrong ideas.”

“I guess that would explain how he seemed early in the evening.”

“Yes, but you’re not responsible for Blaine’s actions.”

Blair waited, to give time for Georgiana to pull herself together. “I don’t want to seem pushy, but will you have the baby?”

She sighed. “I’ll think about it; I can’t make any more of a promise than that.”

4. The Choice

Georgiana:

Georgiana lay on the exam table, awaiting her “procedure.” After she had spoken with Blair, she had unadvisedly mentioned the meeting to Lucy and her friend had gone on the offensive, deriding Blair as “that do-gooder brother of a rapist” and urging her to have the abortion.

She read all the literature Blair had given her and watched the DVD. In a moment of curiosity, she even watched the procedure at the end and it shocked her. Nevertheless, Lucy’s strong arguments swayed her and she allowed her friend to drive her to the clinic.

When they got there, a dozen or so picketers lined the public sidewalk, carrying placards. Aside from a little chanting, they didn’t act aggressively and Georgiana could see some of their desultory expressions, as if what they did would stop no one. Someone handed her a brochure, but Lucy tore it out of her hand, ripped it up and threw it into the face of the protestor.

“Leave my friend alone!” she yelled.

The protestor looked sad and went on her way with her sign. Watching, Georgiana remembered the literature Blair had given her. They reached the front door and an employee from the clinic greeted them.

“Sorry about the protestors. They’re a nuisance.”

Georgiana thought about Blair’s plea. Obviously, these people sincerely believed as he did, their only motive to save the unborn. She felt sympathy for them, in spite of the fact a rape had necessitated her visit to the clinic. Nevertheless, she pushed all that down.

With Lucy’s firm hand clutching her arm, she decided to go through with the abortion.

The doctor entered the room and Georgiana’s heart fluttered within her chest.

“Hello, I’m Doctor Julius. How are you this morning?”

“I-I’m fine,” she barely managed.

“I realize you’re nervous, but this early in your pregnancy the procedure is routine. We’ll have you out of here in a jiffy. Please, put your feet in the stirrups, here.”

Georgiana did as instructed, and the doctor spread her labia with a retractor. The cold metal caused her to shiver and the invasion brought up memories of her rape. He rolled the suction machine over and readied the suction tip.

“Just relax; this won’t hurt a bit.”

Her heart beating like a trip hammer, Georgiana felt as if she would pass out. The scene of the procedure she had watched ran through her mind and she relived the suffering of the fetus, no larger than a lima bean, but still clearly human-looking. Blair’s kind face hovered over her, as she felt the tip of the suction line enter her vagina, making a horrible, sucking sound, and it galvanized her into action.

“STOP!” she yelled. “Don’t do it! I don’t want the abortion!” She felt the tip leave her.

“Are you sure, miss?” the doctor asked.

She took her feet from the stirrups and sat up. “Yes, I’m sure. Did you do any damage to it?”

“No, I had barely started, when you yelled for me to stop. Why did you change your mind? I hope I didn’t terrify you.”

“No, you were very kind. A man named Blair, whose face I saw in my mind’s eye, stopped me. I’m sorry I changed my mind.”

Doctor Julius smiled benignly. “Don’t apologize for deciding to keep the baby. I’ve done too many of these and I was just thinking about quitting the business; it’s getting so I find it hard to sleep. Thank *you* for helping me make up my mind.”

Hearing the doctor’s words made Georgiana more thankful than ever over her decision not to abort the baby. “You’re welcome, doctor. I’m happy I helped you make up your mind.”

“You mentioned a Blair. Your chart indicates the pregnancy was the result of a rape. If you don’t mind my asking, how is he involved?”

“He’s the brother of the man who raped me.”

“Oh, dear. And he wanted you not to abort?”

“Yes, he begged me not to. He’s a Christian and pro-life. He told me he’d pay all my expenses.”

“He sounds like a good man, despite what his brother did. Even though I wanted to leave off doing these procedures, I offered, since you were the victim of a rape. Anyway, I’m happy to hear you’re keeping the baby. I wish you all the best with it; may it bring you much joy.”

“Thank you, doctor, but I don’t know what to think at this point.”

“I understand.” He reached into his jacket pocket and brought out a business card. “Here’s my number and the address of my office. I’m going to be switching over to OB-GYN soon. Come see me if you wish. I’ll offer my services for free in your case.”

“Why would you do that?”

A sad look crossed over Doctor Julius’s face. “I’m Catholic and doing abortions has had me in the confessional far too often. A priest, who’s a friend of mine has been counseling with me. I think God sent you to me for this very reason.”

Blair:

“I can’t begin to thank you enough for keeping the baby,” Blair said. He and Georgiana sat in the same diner over coffee; decaf for her because of the baby. “If I may ask, what made you decide to keep it?”

“*You*, actually.”

“Me? How did I do that?”

“When I was lying on the table, about to have the procedure, I saw your face and I couldn’t go through with it.”

“Praise the Lord! I think that was God, urging you not to end the baby’s life.”

“It’s funny you should say that. The doctor, when I told him to stop, confessed that he wasn’t going to be doing any more abortions; he had been feeling more and more guilty about it. He said he was Catholic and that he’d been going to confession over it and now he’s going to be an OB-GYN doctor. He gave me his card and told me he would see me for free.”

Blair’s heart soared when he heard Georgiana’s words, confirmation in his mind that God had his hand in keeping her from aborting the baby. “That’s wonderful news! This all sounds like the hand of God at work. I’ve been a Christian for a lot of years, but...to see him at work...it still awes and humbles me.”

“I’m glad for you, but, now my friend, Lucy, is mad at me and won’t even answer my calls. I’m all alone in this.”

“What about your parents?”

“We’re estranged and they live in another state.”

At that moment, Blair knew what he had to do. “You’re not alone; I told you I wouldn’t desert you. I’ll help you, pay any expenses you face beyond the doctor, be your delivery coach; the works. Okay?”

“You’re serious, aren’t you?”

“Completely; that’s how much I want this baby to live.”

“Is it because it’s related to you, because of your brother’s causing it?”

“I suppose that’s part of it. I’ve done what I could in the past, made donations, picketed abortion clinics, but I had just been praying about doing something more; then this happened.”

“You know, try as I might not to see it,” Georgiana said, “I’m beginning to see a pattern here. First, you pray about doing something more about abortions, your brother rapes me, you offer to help me have the baby and the doctor decides to give up doing abortions and is going to provide free medical care.”

“You’re right; I can see the hand of God in this!”

Georgiana chuckled, but it held no mirth. “Yeah, some God. What kind of a loving God would allow me to be raped?”

“God doesn’t operate in our lives like we’re marionettes; we have our own free wills. Blaine did a very bad thing; God saw that. Now, he’s working to bring something good out of it.”

“Good, huh? Blaine’s in prison, I’m pregnant and you’re going to be faced with extra bills.”

“I don’t mind paying.”

“Why can’t there be some good for me in there?”

“Who says there won’t be? We have no way of knowing God’s entire plan in this.”

“A ‘for instance’ would be nice at this point.”

Blair thought for a moment. “Well, who’s to say that, when you stayed the doctor’s hand, it wasn’t the thing to make him stop doing abortions?”

“Wow, that’s a stretch.”

“Not when you have faith in God.”

Georgiana looked into Blair's eyes. They looked as blue as the Pacific on a sunny day. *Why couldn't I have gone out with him?* she thought and then she snapped back to reality.

Blair's brother Blaine had raped her.

Part Two: Pregnant Pause

1. Knowing Georgiana

Georgiana:

Georgiana leaned back against Blair, as she practiced her breathing. Now at seven months, she felt as big as a cow and the rearranging of her organs to accommodate the fetus in her uterus had made her partly incontinent, a fitful sleeper and always off-balance. She couldn't believe how big she looked, which made her feel about as sexy as a manatee.

For his part, Blair had been a rock. He picked up all the bills for her regarding the baby and often paid her grocery bill. He came over at a moment's notice and never missed an appointment at their birthing classes. In addition to that, he constantly told her how beautiful she looked.

In spite of the circumstances, she had come to regard the entire pregnancy as not such a bad thing after all. Even when she thought of how she got the baby, her time with Blair had made her see what a miracle nurturing a new human life within her body could be.

"You're doing great, Georgie," Blair encouraged. "You're a pro at this."

"I certainly hope that's the case when it comes to the main event," she replied, absently stroking her distended stomach.

"Okay, class," the Lamaze instructor said. "See you all next week. Keep practicing and you'll all do fine come D-day."

Before Georgiana and Blair left, the instructor, Bev Smith, caught up with them. "Mr. Downes, may I speak with you a moment?"

Blair stopped. "Sure. What did you want to speak with me about?"

"I just wanted to tell you how much I appreciate your attitude. You're not only great with the missus, but you're an example to all the other husbands."

"I'm not Georgie's husband; I'm just her birth coach."

"Oh, I'm sorry for the misunderstanding. You're just so good with her."

"Why, thank you," he replied, looking over at Georgiana. "She's a pleasure to work with."

"I hope I'm not prying, but how did you come to be her coach?"

"I'm pregnant by his brother," Georgiana said.

"I don't understand. Why isn't he here? I assume he's your husband, or boyfriend?"

"Not exactly. He raped me."

"Oh, I see," Bev said, embarrassed by her repeated faux pas. She smiled wanly. "Well, I'm happy you wanted to keep the baby."

"You know, Bev, I didn't think I would be, considering the circumstances and all, but I find I'm bonding with the little guy."

"You know it's a boy, then?"

"No, but I have a feeling it might be."

"I'm so sorry for my misunderstanding. I admire you for seeing this pregnancy through. God bless you and I hope you have a healthy, happy baby boy."

"Thanks, Bev and I apologize for dropping it on you like that. I don't know why I act that way sometimes." All at once, Georgiana's face crumpled and she began crying.

"What's wrong?" Blair said.

“Oh, don’t mind me,” she said through her tears. “My moods swing like a pendulum.”

“It’s often like that late in the third trimester,” Bev said and she looked at Blair. “You take her to the nearest sweet shop and let her have whatever she wants; that’s the best medicine I can think of for overactive emotions.”

“I’ll do that,” Blair said.

Blair:

“Would you like to come up?” Georgiana offered.

“Come up to your apartment? I’m not sure I understand why. You’ve never invited me up before.”

“I just thought we could talk a little. Bev’s right about the emotions. I could use a friendly ear and you’ve been an angel with me.”

“Okay, I’d be glad to.”

He parked the car and they went to Georgiana’s second floor apartment via the elevator.

“I hate to be so lazy, but, lately, it feels like I’m carrying a sack of cement when I walk up.”

“No problem. You don’t get points for suffering.”

The elevator door opened and, as Georgiana crossed the threshold, she stumbled and Blair caught her. This put their faces an inch apart. Blair turned his head and looked into her eyes. At that moment, he thought he had never seen someone so beautiful. He had no idea that he had become victim to biology, for a pregnant woman has what people refer to as that certain “glow” about her. A very real thing, it occurs in order to make her desirable to her mate, so he’ll want to stay with her. Georgiana, already a striking woman, benefitted from this and Blair fell victim to her pregnancy-enhanced lure.

He lowered his lips to hers and she softened against him. His arms went around her and he felt himself respond, as he got lost in the softness of that kiss. Georgiana even *smelled* good! He felt her arms go around him and pull him closer. His breathing accelerated and the kiss seemed to go on forever.

The elevator door bumping them broke the spell.

“I’m *so sorry*, Blair,” Georgiana said through her tears. “It just happened. You must think I’m a slut.”

Blair stared at the floor. “No! You’re not. I wanted it as much as you did, God help me.”

“I wouldn’t blame you if you decided to stop being my coach.”

His head snapped up. “No! I committed to it and I’ll see it through.”

“Oh, Blair! I think I’m in love with you!” she broke down crying.

Blair went over, kept a few inches between them on the sofa, and put his arm across her shoulders. “You’re just saying that because we’ve been seeing so much of each other.”

Georgiana looked up. “N-no, I’ve seen how kind you’ve been. You’ve been more attentive than most husbands. I feel I’m cheating you; I want to give you so much more. Since being pregnant, my libido’s been in overdrive and I’ve wanted to make love with you for the longest time. I’m even dreaming of it!”

His eyes widened. “I couldn’t possibly do that.”

She nodded. “Yeah, I know. You’re a Christian and I’m not.”

“It’s more complicated than that.”

“How?”

“You’re carrying my brother’s baby.”

“How can you even consider that? He’s a *rapist*! I hate him!”

“Don’t say that. He’s my little brother and I love him. Sure, he did a terrible thing, but he’s not some deviant; he succumbed to lust in a vulnerable moment. He willingly gave himself up and is looking at nine years in prison for what he did.”

“I don’t know if I *want* you to be my coach anymore.”

Blair gave her a sad look. “I’m sorry to hear you say that, but, if that’s your wish, I’ll honor it.”

Georgiana’s eyes got wide with fright. “No! Don’t do that! I’m sorry I suggested it.”

“Listen to me and listen carefully, Georgie,” Blair said. “I said I’d be there for you and I meant it; I’m there right to the birth and beyond. I’ll be this baby’s uncle and I’ll love it as much as if it came from your marriage to Blaine and not because of...of what happened. Over the past months, I’ve come to love you too; as a *sister*. I know you think your life is over because you’re pregnant and a single mom, but God hasn’t forgotten you. It says in the Bible that he’s father to the widow and the orphan. Well, I’m sure that applies to single women too, especially single *mothers*. Put your trust in him; he’ll never let you down.”

Georgiana lifted her hand and placed it on Blair’s cheek. “I fervently wish I had met you years ago and that I shared your faith. Any woman would be blessed to have you as a husband.”

“Thanks for saying that, but I’m not husband material.”

“How can you say that? You’re wonderful.”

“No, I’m not.”

“What happened to you Blair? Why are you so down on yourself? For that matter, why isn’t there a Mrs. Downes?”

“There was.”

“What happened? Did she die?”

“No, she divorced me.”

Part Three: Blaine’s Story

1. Doing Time

Blaine:

Blaine lay on his cell’s bunk with two black eyes, a split lip, loose teeth, sore ribs, one broken finger and lacerated knuckles. He felt as if a freight train had knocked him down and stopped to back over him. Four inmates, his cellmate among them, had waylaid him in the shower room; yes, prison proved much different from jail. Wrestling with them hadn’t been easy, but he put all four of them in the infirmary; his time on the rigs had hardened him and he put it to use in staying alive. He thanked God he had seen the shiv coming and knocked it away before putting his cellmate, the one who had tried to use it on him, down *hard*. The dustup had been the usual, stupid power plays common to a place where, in the name of rehabilitation, they warehoused men together and expected them to behave. The guards roughed him up some more on the way to the infirmary, probably because he had hurt some of their favorites, but, thankfully, the warden hadn’t taken further action against him and didn’t put him in solitary. Blaine wondered what would happen next.

At that moment, as if in answer to his question, a guard signaled for his cell door to open and a skinny, effeminate man, who couldn’t have been five-six, or weigh over one-thirty, entered his cell, carrying fresh bed linen and a pillow.

“What’s this?” Blaine asked the guard.

“Your new roomie,” he sneered. “I hope you and cupcake have a nice honeymoon.”

As the door clanged shut, Blaine looked at the man. Small and wiry, with a short-but-gelled pompadour, he looked like a classic stereotype of a gay man. He even had eyeliner on his dark eyes, making him look like an Egyptian pharaoh in a wall painting. He looked vaguely Latino.

“Hi, I’m Presley,” he lisped. “Don’t mind him, he doesn’t like me much, but I forgive him in my prayers every day.”

Blaine pondered the incongruity of that last statement. “I’m Blaine. How’d you end up my cellmate?”

“Well, when I heard you sent yours to the infirmary, I asked the warden if I could bunk with you.”

“And, just like that, he agreed. How do you know I won’t do the same to you?”

“Oh, Warden Collier and I are *tight*,” Presley said, crossing the fingers of one hand, “and he told me you behaved yourself and didn’t start the fight.”

“Why me?”

“Why not?”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

Presley went over to Blaine’s bottom bunk and surprised him by sitting on it and gently touching his face. In spite of the fact he winced, Presley’s touch felt as gentle as a bird’s wing.

“Oh, you poor thing,” he cooed. “They really worked you over. I’ll just have to see what I can do. It’ll have to wait until my stuff arrives though; this cell definitely needs the ‘Presley touch.’”

“Look, if you think I’m going to be your new boyfriend, I want you to know my gate doesn’t swing that way.”

“Don’t get your tidy-whities in a knot, I’m not into that anymore.”

“*Anymore?*”

“No, not since I’m Jesus’ man.”

Presley did, indeed, give their cell the “Presley Touch” and took care of Blaine like Florence Nightingale took care of the troops. He worked in the prison infirmary as a nurse, a job he held on the outside. He ended up in prison because he administered a morphine overdose to a gay friend dying from AIDS, to end his suffering. It didn’t matter that he requested it.

Once inside and terrified an inmate would abuse him, he begged the warden to give him a gay cellmate. Warden Collier, a compassionate and fair man, bunked him with one of the inmates who worked as one of the chaplain’s assistants, a young, black ex-gang-banger named Kelvin Axton. At first, Presley lived in fear, but he needn’t have worried. Kelvin didn’t try to hurt him; instead, he witnessed to him. For the first time in Presley’s life, he clearly heard the claims of Christ and, at the end of only one month, he asked Kelvin how he could become a Christian. Kelvin, never one to varnish the truth, told him in no uncertain terms that he had to repudiate his “fag-bag” ways and ask Christ to make him one of God’s children.

“How do I do that?” Presley asked.

“Do you believe Jesus is God’s son, all man and all God?”

“Yes, I think I do.”

“Ain’t no *think* about it, man; either you do, or you don’t.”

Presley pondered what Kelvin had told him about Jesus and nodded. “Okay, I do.”

“And that he come to save us from the sins we can’t overcome?”

“Yes.”

“Then you there, m’man.”

“I’m God’s child now?”

“Yup.”

“What about the fact I’m gay?”

“You know what I said about that, but hear this. Jesus took heat from the religious bigots of his day by taking bread with prostitutes, tax collectors and the lowest of society. It didn’t mention it specific-like, but I think there might have been a few queers in there. Now, go and sin no more.”

“That’s all there is to it?”

“What, you expecting he gonna make you fullback for the Rams?”

“No, I guess not, but it seems so simple.”

“Word on that, but it wasn’t for God. Like I say to you, Jesus, God’s son, had to come here and do the job for us. But, now you know the way, it gonna be a tough row to hoe, but you have Jesus on your side when the temptation get bad.”

Presley explained that, in spite of his still-effeminate ways, he’d been celibate for two years. “I’m not saying I don’t admire some of the hunkier inmates in here, but I don’t want to dishonor Jesus by acting on my gay urges.”

“Why aren’t you still bunking with Kelvin?”

“He got paroled. He writes from time to time to tell me about the ministry he has to the gangs. I’m so proud of him. He’s getting married in a month to a wonderful girl and I’d love to be there, but it isn’t God’s will for me.”

“If hunky guys in here are so tempting, how come you wanted to bunk with me?”

“Oh, *please*. I’m not saying you aren’t a hunk, but you’re too bulky for me, even back in the day; I liked my men more slender; you’re like a brick wall.”

Blaine thought back to the night with Georgiana that got him sent to prison. “Well, I’m glad for that, at least. Thanks for taking care of me, by the way.”

“A cup of cold water and all that, honey. You may not be my type, but you seem like a nice guy. Why are you here, anyway?”

“I raped a woman.”

“Oh, dear. How did it happen?”

“I don’t want to talk about it.”

“Look, I know it’s tough, but Chaplain always says we have to ‘fess up to our sins to get healing. Tell, old Presley about it and maybe it will help you get past it.”

“I don’t want to get past it.”

“Now, that’s just plain dumb. So, you did wrong, screwed up, but that doesn’t mean you have to stay there in Pity City. Think of your time here as your penance for your past sins and think about your relationship with Jesus too.”

“How do I just do that?”

“By giving that sin and guilt to him and believing that he can forgive them.”

He can forgive rape? I took her by force and now she has a baby.”

“Well, there you go. God already made something good happen out of it.”

“That’s *good*? I made her pregnant!”

“Did she abort the baby?”

“No, my brother, he’s a Christian like you, talked her into keeping it. It’s going to be born in another month.”

“Praise God! Don’t you see? She didn’t snuff out that innocent life and you’ll have a son.”

“Man, that sounds so screwed up.”

“And her aborting the baby and living with that guilt all the rest of her life would be the *right way* to go about it?”

“I’m not sure I have enough faith.”

“I thought the same thing, but every day that goes by and I stay celibate, helps mine grow. I haven’t been able to think beyond here and hope to meet Miss Right just yet, but I take it one day at a time for now. This guy in the Bible, when Jesus asked him if he believed, answered, ‘I believe, help me with my unbelief!’ and he became God’s child that day. Blaine, honey, I’m going to ask you a serious question. Do you believe that Jesus has the power to save you from your sin of rape and all the others too?”

“I’m not sure.”

“I’ll take that as ‘Help me with my unbelief.’ Do you want to pray with me about it?”

“Could you show me in the Bible what Jesus said about forgiving sin? I never read it much. My big brother’s the religious one of us.”

“Sure thing.”

Presley showed Blaine, right from the Bible, the claims of Christ and Blaine slipped to his knees with his cellmate to pray the sinner’s prayer.

“Jesus, I believe you are who you said you are and I’m asking that you’ll forgive me for getting all caught up in porn and raping Georgiana. I don’t expect to walk out of here or anything; I want to do my time and pay for what I did., but, if possible, I’d like to see my kid someday. Thanks for sending Presley to my cell to help me believe in you.”

Blaine looked over at Presley, who opened his eyes to look at him. “Did I say it right?”

“Honey, you did great, but don’t forget to put the period at the end of the prayer by saying, ‘amen.’”

Blaine bowed his head again. “Forgive me, Jesus, for forgetting the period. Amen.”

At that moment, Blaine, the former rapist, kneeling next to Presley, the former homosexual, had become a child of God.

2. Turning from the Past

Blair:

“*Divorced* you, but why?” Georgiana asked, genuinely puzzled.

“I was no prize, believe me.”

“Did you abuse her, or something?”

“Not physically, but I was unavailable.”

“How so?”

“I was there, but not there; *unavailable*. No woman wants to be treated like furniture. I had my interests, which didn’t include her, and looked her up when I wanted sex. Otherwise, I was, for all intents and purposes, a stranger.”

“Wow, you’re so different now.”

“Give Jesus the credit. When Suzanne hit me with the divorce papers, seeking divorce on the grounds of ‘mental cruelty’ and ‘alienation of affection’ it came as a wakeup call. I used to think those terms were just so much psychobabble. Oh, I thought it was her, being overly subjective, but I had painted myself into my own corner. The more she talked, the more I realized she perfectly described me. I ended up not fighting at all and gave her anything she wanted; the car, the house, everything. She’s happily married now and I’m glad for her.”

“What did you do then?”

“I licked my wounds, felt sorry for myself, and wallowed in misery. Blaine was a big help. Since I had no house anymore, he had me move in with him. He let me mope around for a while, then kicked me in the butt and made me get back into life. We partied together at first, but, having been married, I quickly soured on that scene. Blaine didn’t give up. He was always more sports-minded than I was, so he dragged me into one adventure after another, scuba-diving, sky-diving, rock climbing, long-distance cycling; the whole thing. The activity kept me busy and helped me forget about my shame and loneliness.”

“How did you get religion?”

Blair looked up at her. “It’s so much more than religion. I like to think of my faith as a relationship, a relationship with Jesus. Anyway, I first heard the claims of Christ on a climbing outing. I had just completed a difficult climb and, when I dragged myself over the top, there sat a beautiful blonde woman, the sun behind her, turning her hair into white flame. She reached out and helped me up and over. ‘Hi, I’m Cait,’ she said in a voice that sounded like honey and silk.

“I had never seen a woman so well built, so beautiful; she looked like a goddess. Of course, being a man, I was instantly interested. I sat next to her and we talked. By the end of our conversation, two things happened. She told me about Jesus and I fell head-over-heels in love.”

“Did you date?”

“No. She had taken a vow of celibacy.”

“But...*why*?”

“Believe it or not, Caitlin had been a star in the porn industry. A real beauty at a young age, she made one wrong turn after another and ended up in the porn business. She made good money at it too, but it came with a price.; she became HIV positive.”

“Oh, my God! How did she get to know Jesus, to put it in your terms?”

“As she put it, the HIV was a *good* thing, for it got her out of the porn scene. She was more concerned over how she had blasted her soul. When she got the news, she tried to commit suicide, but an EMT, an ex-lesbian, told her about Christ. As she put it, she latched onto Jesus like a drowning swimmer grabbing onto a life preserver. They became roommates and both lived celibate.”

“How did you come to faith?”

“Well, she made quite an impression on me. Every man’s fantasy, her face and body on hundreds of soul-destroying videos, she had come to the point her life was a heap of ashes. I wanted to know how she rose above that. We stayed in touch and, one night, at her and her friend, Janelle’s, apartment over coffee, I finally turned my life over to Jesus. After I prayed, I took a vow of celibacy too. They tried to talk me out of it, but I wanted it. My sex life had been a joke, both in my marriage and afterward. I’m not proud of the one-night stands. They held this ceremony and I haven’t been with a woman in three years.”

“Oh, I’m *so sorry* for making you break your vow.”

“I slipped a little, but, thankfully, we stopped.”

“Now I feel like a real slut. I’m as big as a house and I tried to seduce you.”

No! You didn’t. You succumbed.”

Georgiana looked sadly into Blair’s eyes. “Like Blaine succumbed that day?”

“No. He took something from you by *force*. If we *had* gone too far, you would have been as much at fault as me, but the choice would have been mine too.”

“I see what you mean; I would have used my wiles, such as they are at this point, to do the wrong thing.”

“Georgie, you’ve got to stop beating yourself up. You were the victim.”

“All of a sudden, I don’t feel like a victim.” She looked up into Blair’s blue eyes. “What happened to Caitlin? Is she still with Janelle?”

“No, she died of AIDS last year.”

Georgiana broke down and cried. “Oh, m-my G-God; it just g-gets worse and w-worse,” she sobbed.

“Don’t feel that way. I was there at her deathbed, along with Janelle, and she made it feel more like a home going. I’ll never forget her last words: ‘Hang in there with Jesus, Blair; he has plans for you,’ and then, she slipped away, with a smile on her beautiful face, to be with her Savior. I still keep in touch with Janelle.”

Forgetting herself, Georgiana fell against him and sobbed her heart out. Blair, his own tears starting from the memories, rubbed her back.

Blaine:

“Hello, brother; how are you today?” Blaine said, as he sat opposite his brother in the prison’s visiting lounge. Instead of the usual glass and phones, they could visit—under guard supervision, of course, and after a thorough strip-search of visitors—at tables.

“You look different somehow? Why so chipper?”

Blaine gave Blair a broad smile. “It’s because I *am* different.”

“Okay, now you’re beginning to worry me. Are you into some cult in here?”

“Look, I arranged with the warden to allow my cellmate to visit with us. When he gets here, he can explain it. He’s the one with the words.” Blaine looked to the left, at the entrance. “There he is.”

When Blair saw Presley, his jaw dropped. “*He’s* your cellmate?”

“Chill out, man. He’s a great guy.”

Blaine could see the thoughts march through Blair’s mind, as Presley swished over. He suspected his brother must suspect he had become a homosexual.

“So, this is the brother?” Presley asked.

“Yes, this is Blair.”

“Oh, my; he’s a pretty one.”

Blair looked at his brother. “What’s going on here, Blaine?”

“Do you want to tell him, or should I?” Presley asked.

“You tell him. You have the way with words.”

Presley looked over at Blair. “It’s too bad they don’t allow touching here, or I’d give you a big, holy hug.” Blair’s brows knit into a question mark. “Anywho, your brother here got into a fracas with some of our local thugs,” he pointed solicitously to the thin, red line on his upper lip, “and I asked Warden Collier to bunk me in with him....”

Blaine could see his brother wrestling with cognitive dissonance, but, being Blair, he held his peace. “Okay, Pres, I’ll take it from here. Long story short, this swish sitting before you led me to Jesus.”

“Okay, this must be some dream I’m having. Did you just say he led you to *Jesus*? You’re a born-again Christian now?”

“That’s right, bro; just like you.”

Blair looked at Presley and back at Blaine. “And Presley here, led you to the Lord?”

“That’s right.”

“Don’t look so puzzled, honey,” Presley added. “I’m still into men, but, because I’m with Jesus now, I don’t act on it anymore.”

“And you’re a born-again Christian?”

“Listen to yourself, Blair,” Blaine said. “If you’re going to get all high and mighty here, this visit is over.”

“Relax,” Presley said. “Big brother here is just getting his head wrapped around things; aren’t you, honey?”

“You’re not at all what I expected.”

“Tell me about it; I’m not at all what *anyone* expected, including my parents.”

Blair smiled at Presley’s self-deprecation. “I’m sorry if I offended you. I was saved because of the witness of a former porn star, who roomed with an ex-lesbian.”

“Sometime you’re going to have to tell me that story, but you’ll want to catch up with your brother. God bless you and have a great day.”

With that, Presley swished out of the visiting area.

“I don’t know what to say, Blaine, other than praise the Lord! I wish I could give you a hug here.”

Blaine smiled. “That’s okay; I know you’re hugging me on the inside. How’s Georgiana doing with the baby?” He saw a dark look pass over Blair’s face. “Uh-oh, I caught that; is something wrong?”

“No, no; not at all. Everything’s fine.”

“Bro, I know you; everything’s *not* fine. Is she going to lose the baby?”

“No, it’s not about the baby at all.”

Blair related the whole incident at Georgiana’s apartment. “She’s so down on herself and I’m afraid I just confused her more. She’s so close to a commitment to Jesus; I just hope I haven’t gotten in the way.”

“Cheer up, man. I screwed up royally and look what happened; Presley led me to Jesus. Can you think of anything more improbable than that?”

Blair gave him a wan smile. “Is he a good cellmate?”

“The best. Once you get past the limp-wristed affectations, he’s got a heart of gold.”

“I know we shouldn’t second-guess God, but he’s a real trip.”

“Yeah, I’ve been trying to teach him to be more masculine, but he loves his hair gel and eyeliner. One thing at a time, I guess. He reads scripture to me all the time and answers my questions. I’ve learned a lot from him.”

“How are the urges coming?”

“Porn has zero interest for me now. Oh, I feel the absence of women and sex a lot at times, but Presley taught me to pray though it. I pray with him too, about his gayness.”

“Do any of the other inmates give you grief about him?”

“Not to my face. Back awhile, as I wrote, I put four of them in the infirmary and, now, the other inmates keep their distance. I’m glad to be of help to Presley. He was having a hard time of it with his former cellmate. Everything had been going well, then he goes and rapes the poor guy.”

“Oh, wow; that must have been terrible for him.”

“Not the rape, as Presley described it. He had a lot of trouble afterward with the pull back to his old ways. He’s been persona-non-grata with many of the other gays in here since he gave his heart to Jesus. Anyway, I’ve been looking out for him. Who knew? I get sent here for rape and now I’m protecting someone from it.”

“That’s how God works, bro.”

“I need a favor, Blair.”

“Name it.”

“Please let Georgiana know I asked after her and that I now know the Lord.”

“Are you kidding? Of course I’ll do that.”

“There’s more. Would you ask her to write?”

“Okay, but that’s a tougher one and I can’t guarantee her reaction. I’ll ask her though.”

Blair stood up and Blaine followed. In another second, he hugged his little brother, who actually stood three inches taller, risking the ire of the guards.

“I’m so happy for you and I love you,” he said.

“I love you too, Bl...” Blaine couldn’t finish, because of the hitch in his voice.

Before the guard could come over to break them up, Blair headed for the door with his arms out at his sides. Even the strip search he had to endure again, to be sure he didn’t attempt to smuggle anything out, didn’t spoil his joyful mood.

Blaine had become his brother...in Christ!

Three days later, Blaine got an unexpected visit. Figuring it had something to do with Georgiana’s delivering the baby, he went to the visitor’s area and waited at his table. When he saw a very pregnant Georgiana step shyly through the door, with Blair waiting on the other side, he couldn’t believe his eyes.

Every prisoner’s eye in the room followed her as she waddled over to his table, walking with that off-balance gait of pregnant women. He got up and helped her sit, surprised she let him touch her. She looked nervously around the room, her eyes finally resting on Blaine.

“I’m terrified,” she confessed. “I’ve never been to a prison before.”

“Don’t be. None of these men, including me, can hurt you because of the guards. Besides, the warden doesn’t let any of the really hard cases come to this area. I’m delighted that you decided to come see me; I only wanted you to write.”

She stared at her hands on the tabletop. “Blair told me about your request and I figured I owed you at least one visit.”

“You don’t owe me a thing.”

“I’m carrying your baby.”

“Yes, you are. What are you going to do when it’s born? Put it up for adoption? Did Blair offer to take it off your hands?”

“I considered both those options, but I’ve decided to keep it.”

“Oh, my...*really*? Why?”

“It’s complicated. At first, I didn’t want to kill it, but I resented that it reminded me of...”

“My rape?”

She looked up at him. “Yes, but I’ve come to love this baby and I don’t even know what sex it is yet. To make matters even more confusing, I can’t explain why.”

Blaine had no answers to her puzzle, so he changed the subject. “When are you due?”

“Any day now.”

“Has everything gone well? Blair tells me you’ve been doing great in your birthing class.”

“Yes, thanks to him. He’s been wonderful.”

“I’m so glad to hear that.”

Silence sat between them, as they both contemplated the elephant in the room. Blaine spoke first.

“I suppose I ought to ask at this point why you decided to come see me.”

“Blair told me you now believe in Jesus,” she replied, raising her gaze to look into Blaine’s eyes. “Is that true?”

He smiled. “Yes, it is.”

“I can see it. You’re so different; more relaxed, less intense.”

“Praise the Lord! I’m glad you can see the change in my life.”

“But...*how*?”

“I’m not sure I know what you mean.”

“Well, you’re in here for raping me and you found faith. I, on the other hand, have been down on myself *since* the rape.”

“What on earth for?”

“I don’t feel worthy, somehow, to be carrying this new life inside me.”

“How are you not worthy? Believe me, I don’t feel worthy of anything, just grateful. Jesus did that for me.”

“C-could he do that for me, do you think?”

Blaine could see her struggling to control her emotions. Even at that, tears started to leak from her eyes.

“Hasn’t Blair explained it to you?”

“Yes, but I wanted to hear it from your lips.”

Blaine wanted so badly to reach out and take Georgiana’s hands in his, but he realized the rules stopping him were a good thing. “Let me tell you this. When I came here, all I wanted was to serve my time; I didn’t even want you to forgive me, but Jesus did, in spite of everything. If you come to him, lay all your guilt and self-loathing before him, he’ll not only forgive you, he’ll give you a reason to smile again. Blair can show you how.”

Georgiana looked up and locked her eyes to his. She looked so achingly beautiful, every inch of her bursting with life, Blaine’s heart ached at the sight. Because of his new relationship with the Lord, he felt deep gratitude that God had brought something worthy, something *holy* from out of his terrible deed. Georgiana’s voice snapped him out of his thoughts.

“Could *you* show me how?”

The question stunned him. He wanted to cry out, “But I *raped* you, how can you ask me, of all people, to do that?” but he remembered something Presley once said to him one morning after chapel, when he asked about how God worked in their lives in spite of their past. “Honey, God isn’t in the business of pigeon-holing us. Where we only see condemnation, he sees *potential*. Don’t you think I marvel at how he uses me? Yet, he’s let me have the privilege of leading so many inmates to Jesus, even some of the raunchiest gay ones. I used to fight it, but now I sit back and let him amaze me.”

Tears welled up in Blaine’s eyes, as he spoke. “You have no idea what it means to me to hear you say that. I don’t feel worthy *at all*, but a very wise man once told me I should sit back and let God amaze me. I’m really new at this, but here’s what I’ve had happen in my own life. Once I let go of the problem, gave it over to God, he did all the heavy lifting. I didn’t feel like it would work, but, in the last few weeks, I’ve seen changes in me I never thought possible. All it takes is for you to believe that Jesus is God’s son and he came to save us all from our sins. Do you believe that?”

She nodded. “But how did you deal with what you did?”

“The rape? I carry it with me every day. It used to be like a dead weight, dragging down my spirit, but now I keep it as a reminder of what I’m capable of...and of what God forgave me for.”

Georgiana's tears welled up and flowed down her cheeks. "Will you pray with me...now?"
"I'd be honored to do that," he replied, as his heart swelled with love and gratitude. "I wish Presley, or Blair was here, but I'll do the best I can. Let's bow our heads."

Georgiana did and Blaine followed. "Lord, Georgiana comes to you humbly and asks for your forgiveness. Like me, she's been beating herself up and, now, she wants it to end. Georgiana, please pray after me. 'Lord, I know that I'm a sinner and I'm not happy anymore. I believe in what your son, Jesus, did on the cross and I want to give all my sin, worry and grief to you to deal with, because I realize I can't. Take my life from this day forward and let me live it for you.' Georgiana repeated each phrase, as Blaine prayed it.

"Thank you Lord, for hearing our prayer," he said when she finished. "Help her delivery to go well. I'd like to personally thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for bringing blessing out of my sin. Say this next part with me, Georgiana. 'I thank you for this in Jesus' name, amen.'"

When Blaine looked up, everyone in the room within hearing distance looked their way, every face solemn.

"Is it done?" Georgiana asked, fishing in her pocket for a tissue to daub at her face. "Am I now a Christian?"

Blaine smiled. "Yes, you are." He saw the guard signal the end of the visit. "It looks like time's up. Praise the Lord, you're now his child. I know I have no right to ask this, but would you send me pictures of the baby?"

She smiled. "Of course. It's half yours, after all."

Blaine's heart lurched when he heard her words.

"Give Blair my love."

"I will," she said, levered herself to her feet with Blaine's help and left.

Blaine waved at his brother, who waited beyond the door.

Thank you, Lord, for bringing good from my sin, he prayed in his mind, his heart filled with joy.

Part Four: Toward the Future

1. Time Served

Blaine:

Blaine walked out of prison, having served just under two-and-a-half years of his nine-year sentence. He got out early, partly for good behavior, but mostly because of the efforts of Georgiana and Blair on his behalf. He blinked in the strong, April sunlight, his eyes still moist from his tearful goodbye with Presley, who had become his dearest friend and who he would miss a great deal. He promised to work on his behalf to see him get a parole, but Presley waved it off.

"Don't worry your head about it, honey; I've got work to do in here. There are always other cellmates to introduce to Jesus."

"I'll pray that Warden Collier sends you the good ones."

"No, I want the *bad* ones, the ones who need Jesus the most."

"Like me?"

"No, you were a pussycat, not that you didn't need him."

"I'll visit you often."

"You'd better."

“Hey you’re me brother and it’s what brothers do.”

Presley didn’t speak, but the look on his face spoke volumes.

He saw Blair, standing with Georgiana and fifteen-month-old Blake, a tow-headed, blue-eyed cutie who looked so much like his mother; it made his breath catch in his throat. Standing there in the sunlight, she looked stunning, but the effect she had on him felt right and clean now, not lustful, or uncontrollable. When they spotted him, they both waved and walked toward him. Blair reached him first and hugged him hard.

“It’s good to see you out, bro,” he said, his voice husky with emotion.

“I never thought I’d say it, but I have mixed feelings about it.”

When Blair broke off the hug, Georgiana handed the baby to Blair and hugged Blaine as well. “I’m so happy you’re out,” she said.

Blaine felt uncomfortable with Georgiana in his arms, her blonde head just below his chin. He could smell her perfume, mingled with the scent from her hair and felt himself respond. He broke off the hug and stepped back. Before anyone could notice his discomfiture, he turned to Blair, who held his son.

“Wow, Blake’s getting big!”

“Would you like to hold him?”

“Is he going to be okay with it?”

“There’s only one way to find out,” Blair said, handing him the boy. He looked nervous, but he didn’t cry.

“Hi, there, big fella! My goodness, you’re *so* handsome.” He looked over at Blair. “Does he know?”

“Oh, yes,” Georgiana said. “We’ve told him you’re his daddy from the time he could understand. We told him you were away, but would be back as soon as possible.”

“Does he know why I was away?”

“Oh, sure, we told him everything; all the details,” Blair said.

“You did?”

“Of course not, you lunk-head! Since he sees me all the time, I suspect he thinks I’m his father, in spite of what we say.”

Blaine felt a finger go to the fine, white scar on his lip, his souvenir from his fight. “Yeah, daddy got it from an accident,” he said, “but it’s all better now. Have you been a good boy for Mommy?”

The boy nodded. “You’re my daddy?”

Blaine’s eyes flew open wide. “Wow, he talks so well! Yes, son, I’m your daddy, and I’m sorry I haven’t been there for you, but I’m back now and we’ll have lots of fun together.”

“What do you say we go find a diner and get something to eat. Then we can drive home. Would you like to drive?”

“Sure thing! Man, it’s going to feel strange to be behind the wheel of a car again.”

Blaine drove to the diner and they set up in a booth. He went to sit with his brother, but Georgiana spoke up.

“Come, sit next to me,” she invited.

“Are you sure?”

She nodded. “Why wouldn’t I want to sit next to the man who led me to the Lord?”

Blaine slid in and bumped her hip. “Uh, sorry.”

“No problem.”

A waitress came over and they ordered their food and beverage. For a while, they ate in silence, smiling at one another when their eyes met. Finally, Blaine spoke.

“Wow, this is awkward. Here I am, sitting with my brother, my son and the woman...”

“Who gave birth to him,” Georgiana finished. “Look, I don’t want to get too specific for little ears here, but I’m over it, okay? Since I’ve come to Jesus, I see our little guy as the blessing he is and I’m thankful I didn’t... Please, Blaine, I don’t want you walking on eggshells around us, okay?”

Before Blaine could respond, Blake yelled “Eggies!” causing everyone to laugh.

2. Reassessment

Blaine:

After they ate, taking the opportunity to catch Blaine up on some things, Blair asked him to stop by his apartment. He got out, grabbed Blaine’s duffle, and went to the driver’s window.

“You’re bunking with me, of course, but I want you to take Georgiana home and spend some time with her. You two have a lot of catching up to do.”

“Do you think this is a good idea?” Blaine asked, and felt a hand on his shoulder.

“I *wanted* to do this,” Georgiana said softly.

“I don’t know about—”

“It’s okay, Blaine; I trust you.”

He drove to her apartment and, when she had put Blake down for a nap, she made coffee and sat on the sofa. Blaine sat in an armchair.

“Thanks for trusting me,” he said.

“And why shouldn’t I? You’re a new man now, since you came to Jesus, right?”

Blaine hung his head. “Yeah, but I feel so awkward near you after what—”

“Don’t say it. It’s history.”

Blaine looked up at her. “It may be history, but I *can’t* forget it. I didn’t just snatch your purse, I assaulted you! Even now, I can’t believe I did...what I did. It all seems so *unreal* to me.”

Blaine, you’re not that man anymore. I saw the change in you that first day I visited you. I see the change now. I *trust* you.”

“I don’t trust myself...with *this*.”

“Then, there’s only one way to put it to the test. Come, sit next to me.”

“No, I don’t want to.”

“Blaine, you’re the man who led me to Jesus and, in spite of how it happened, you gave me our beautiful Blake. I’m so glad now that Blair convinced me to keep him. *Please*, come sit next to me.”

Blaine obeyed, but he acted as if she had asked him to go sit in the electric chair. He sat down gingerly, as far away as he could get.

Georgiana reached out and took his hand. “Blaine, I want you to move next to me and put your arm across my shoulders.”

“I-I can’t. I could...”

“What; rape me again?” Blaine nodded. “I don’t think you will, but, if I’m wrong, I won’t fight you.”

“You’d let me...?”

“I’m not worried that you will,” she said, patting the cushion.

Blaine moved over and put his arm across her shoulders, maintaining an inch between them.

“There, isn’t that better?”

“No.”

“You may be feeling uncomfortable, but you’re not doing anything wrong. See?”

“Why are you pushing it like this? I would think you’d want to keep me at a distance.”

“I’ll be honest with you, Blaine. The night you raped me, I hated you with all every fiber of my being. When I found out I was pregnant, I wanted to get rid of the baby and rid myself of any memory of that night. When Blair called and begged me to keep the baby, it changed a lot of things in my life. Somewhere in the middle of my pregnancy, I began to love the baby with all my heart. After that, I began to look at *you* differently. I realized that you weren’t the monster I had imagined. Heck, if you had just a bit more patience, I would have invited you to my bed.”

“You would have?” Blaine asked, incredulous.

Georgiana nodded. “I thought you were a real hunk. I still do.”

Blaine shook his head in disbelief. “I had no idea.” He brought his hands to his face. “Oh, man, I was so stupid.”

“No, you were caught up in a horrible set of circumstances. I’m not saying what you did wasn’t wrong, it *was*, but I’ve forgiven you for it.”

“I...you...I don’t know what to say.”

“Say that you forgive yourself and want to give yourself a second chance.”

“A second chance at life?”

“That too, but I was referring to *us*.”

Blaine locked eyes with Georgian for the first time. “Are you saying what I *think* you’re saying?”

“I want us to have the first date we should have had; that is, if you’re still interested.”

“I...yes, I am interested, but...”

“But nothing. Blaine, Blake needs a father. He needs *you*.”

“Oh, Georgiana, you’ve made me so happy, I want to pinch myself to make sure it isn’t a dream, but I’m so unsure of myself.”

“It’s no dream. I’m not offering you heaven. I’m offering you a ton of responsibility, and an instant family.”

“A ton of responsibility and an instant family sounds pretty good right about now; it’s my idea of heaven.”

“Good. I’m glad to hear that.”

“So, where do we go from here?”

“How about supper at a good restaurant?”

“But...what about Blake?”

“Blair can babysit, or we could take him with us. He’s very well behaved in public.”

Blaine smiled. “We can take Blake; I would *really* like that!”

“Then start by kissing me.”

Blaine gave her a panicked look. “Are you sure you want to push it like this? I just got out of prison. I haven’t been near a woman in nearly three years.”

“As I said, I trust you.”

His heart thumping, he lowered his lips to hers and they merged into a kiss.

Oh, Lord, help me to do the right thing! he prayed.

Though he felt himself respond and his heart pounded, he felt in control and enjoyed Georgiana’s soft lips with none of the surge of lust it would have caused three years earlier. God

had burned it out of him and he could now enjoy the clean feeling of a relationship free from the taint of sin-fueled lust.

Thank you Lord, he added.

At the restaurant, Blaine basked in the warmth of having a family with him, however tentative at the moment. Blake proved to be the well-behaved sweetheart Georgiana had promised and more than one patron smiled their way. One middle-aged couple even stopped by their table.

“Your son is so cute,” the woman gushed.

“He reminds us of our grandson,” the man added.

“How old is he?” the woman asked.

“Fifteen months,” Georgiana replied.

“Oh, he’s so well-behaved!”

At that moment, Blake held up his fork with food on it, offering it to the woman. “Eat!” he said.

“Oh, isn’t that so adorable! No, honey, we already ate. You enjoy your meal.” She looked over at Blaine. “Is he your first?”

“Uh, yes ma’am, he is.”

She straightened. “You make such a lovely couple. How long are you married?”

“We, uh, I—” Blaine stammered.

“Almost three years,” Georgiana said, rescuing him.

“Well, you two have a happy life together. Carl and I have been together for forty-five years. I’m Emma, by the way.”

“I’m Georgiana and my husband’s name is Blaine. Our son, here, is Blake.”

“You’re such a lovely family. It’s such a pleasure to meet such a loving couple, who did it right.”

Blaine watched, with his mouth open in shock, as the couple left. He turned to Georgiana. “Why did you lie to them?”

“It was so much easier than the absolute truth.”

“Absolute truth? *None* of it was true.”

“Oh, is that so? Are we not a family?”

“I guess, but—”

“And are we not a couple?”

“Yes, but—”

“And have we known each other for nearly three years?”

“Yes, but—”

“Blaine, stop! You’re beginning to sound like a motorboat. Let me ask you a question. Are you enjoying all this?”

“Yes, I am; very much.”

“And can you see us as a couple?”

“On one hand, yes, but I never imagined it could be true.”

“Well, it *is* true. I’m here, with *you*, and our son is here. I love you, Blaine; and I’m not going anywhere.”

“You *love* me?” he asked, his eyes wide with surprise.

“Isn’t it obvious?”

Blaine shook his head. “But...*how*?”

“When you led me to Jesus that day, I went home and my memories all crashed in on me. I guess Jesus was trying to tell me something. As I cried, what happened that night played in my mind. Until it happened, I was enjoying the thrill of it. You had me half out of my clothes, and your hands on me had me revved up. It wasn’t until you had my shorts almost off that I realized I didn’t want to go that far on our first date. I panicked and yelled for you to stop. Yet, at that moment, I realized I would have welcomed your advances under different circumstances.”

“You almost make it sound like you’re as much to blame as I am.”

“In a way, I suppose I was. Since becoming a believer, I’ve seen how we, in our arrogance, think of sex as an appetite, like eating when we’re hungry.” She reached out and placed her hand on Blaine’s. “You have no idea of how many nights I wept, thinking of you in prison for something that was just a matter of my permission. Had I gone through with it, however bad I felt afterward might have made me regret it, but it wouldn’t have been rape.” She stopped and looked over at Blake, but the boy seemed intent on his meal. “Look, even before I knew Jesus, I wondered how much different it would have been if I didn’t tell you to stop.

“When I got pregnant, it made me reexamine my motives. Then, when Blake came along, all my questions went out the window with my doubts. He’s the best thing that ever happened to me and, I think, to *you*. Am I right?”

Blaine nodded, and he felt tears well up in his eyes. “As homey as this looks, Blake came from a terrible night when I...I won’t try to minimize that; it was my fault.”

“Do you have any affection toward me?”

“Are you kidding? I thought you were amazing from the moment I saw you. Yeah, it was more lust then, but seeing you with...with Bl...” Blaine had to stop, for his emotions had overcome him. He brought his hands to his face and began to cry softly.

“Is Daddy sad?” he heard Blake ask his mother and his heart broke. He cried harder.

Oh, Lord, I screwed things up so badly. I don’t deserve Georgiana’s love and I don’t deserve Blake. Why have you blessed me so? When he felt Georgiana’s arms go around him, he had his answer. When he had been at his lowest ebb, God sent a gay man to tell him of a love that could overcome gayness, sin and even rape. Without lifting his head, he spoke.

“I love you, Georgiana. God’s been so good to me after what I’ve done, I’d be a fool to make the second greatest mistake of my life and not want to have what you’re, what *he’s* offering.”

Georgiana hugged him harder as he wept, the tears coming as a cleansing from his past years of regret, repentance and sorrow.

“Is everything all right, ma’am?” he heard someone ask.

“Yes, everything is very much all right,” he heard Georgiana answer.

Epilog

1. New Relationships

Georgiana:

Blaine and Georgiana lay under the live oak, enjoying the shade, as Blake ran around like a wild Indian. Georgiana sat nursing their newborn daughter, Caitlin. They had named her after the lady who had led Blaine’s brother, Blair to Jesus.

“This is just perfect,” he said.

“Why do you say that?” she asked.

“Here I am, enjoying watching my son enjoy being a boy, with my gorgeous wife nursing our *daughter*; what’s not perfect about that?”

“You have a point. I especially like the gorgeous wife part, even though I think you’re an incorrigible flatterer.”

Blaine reached over and laid his hand on her cheek. “You are *so* beautiful; I truly don’t deserve to be sharing a bed with you.”

“Don’t you dare go there!”

“Yeah, I know, it’s in the past and we agreed not to bring it up, ever again, but I’ll never stop being grateful you’re in my life.”

“Don’t forget, you’re in mine too and I’m happier than I could ever have imagined. However badly it started, it led you to the Lord and I soon followed.”

“Blair’s always saying how God’s in the business of working things out. I’m reminded every time I visit Presley.”

“He’s right and now he knows for himself.”

“Yeah, I’m happy for him; he’s done so much for me, for *us*.”

“He certainly has.”

Georgiana looked down at the little girl in her arms, nursing contentedly. As she felt the strong pull of her sucking, causing her milk glands to tingle as they released their nourishing fluid, it amazed her how God had worked it all out. The intricate workings of the human body awed her and made her conscious of how none of it could have happened by accident.

By accident. Even her rape had been part of God’s plan, for from it had come a son, one of the joys of her heart, along with his sister and the man who made it happen. Sin had caught both of them up in its web and they treated the most intimate physical act between a man and a woman with far too little respect and awe, but God had worked it out.

Now, as Blaine’s wife, she gladly took him to her bed and into her body, safe in the knowledge that they shared a holy bond, the mystery of “one flesh,” ordained by God from the beginning of creation.

“I love you, Blaine,” she said.

“I love you too,” he replied. “Thanks.”

“For what?”

“For reminding me so much.”

“And I’ll *keep* reminding you.”

“Good; I’ll always be happy to tell you, as well.”

“Do you know what I’d like to do when we get home and put these two down for a nap?”

Blaine looked up into her eyes and saw a familiar gleam. “Well, ohhh-kay then; let me get this stuff into the car and—”

“Hold your horses, lover; I’m enjoying this lovely afternoon.”

“Sorry.”

“No, don’t be sorry. I don’t *ever* want you to be sorry for wanting to love me, *ever again*.”

Blaine lowered his head to kiss Georgiana. “You’re so beautiful. I truly don’t deserve you.”

“Nonsense, we deserve each other and, as long as we keep Jesus at the center of our lives, we’ll be happier than we can imagine.”

“Amen,” he replied and ended further discussion with a long, passionate kiss.

When Caitlin reached up with her tiny hand and touched his chin, Blaine’s heart swelled with gratitude and pure joy.

Blair:

“What would you like to do tonight?” Blair asked.

“Oh, I don’t know. Something romantic, maybe?”

“Any preferences?”

“Surprise me.”

“Your wish is my command, m’lady.” Blair closed the passenger door, went around and slid into the driver’s seat.

Lucy Candlis, Georgiana’s friend, sat in the passenger seat.

Lucy:

Georgiana’s decision to keep the baby confused and infuriated her. How could she wish to keep a baby that came from a rape? She resented the intrusion of Blair Downes, the rapist’s brother. How *dare* he interfere? She had no idea that he had contacted her friend, until she changed her mind on the very day of the procedure. They had argued heatedly, until Lucy felt guilty for causing her friend, who still had to deal with the fact of the rape, to break down and cry. She left and broke off communications, refusing to return Georgiana’s calls.

Because they lived in the same town, Lucy occasionally saw her one-time best friend going around, usually in the company of the do-gooder, Blair. What had happened to the fun-loving jock she knew from high school and had wanted to date? It seemed religion had turned him into a self-righteous, nosy, busybody.

Over the next months, it pained her to see her friend get bigger and bigger from a baby someone had implanted in her by force. She avoided contact as much as possible and went to great lengths to keep from meeting her, or Blair, on the street.

One fateful day, near the end of Georgiana’s pregnancy, her friend called her yet again. Her finger hovered over the “Reject Call” button, but, for some reason she couldn’t fathom, she pressed “Accept Call.”

“Hello? Lucy? Are you there? *Please*, talk to me.”

“What do we need to talk about?”

“I realize you’re mad at me, but can you come over, so we can talk?”

“What good can that do? You’ve decided to keep the baby and that’s that.”

“No it isn’t, Lucy! You’re my best friend and I hate it that we’re not talking.”

“I say again, what do we have to say to each other that hasn’t already been said?” She heard Georgiana start to cry.

“Please, Lucy; I feel so bad about the way we were when we last argued. Can’t you find it in your heart to continue to be my friend? Is my decision to keep the baby such a bad thing? I couldn’t bear to kill it because of how it got started. Can’t you see that?”

Her friend’s pleas finally melted the ice around Lucy’s heart somewhat and she felt guilty over her hard-hearted stubbornness. “Okay, I’ll come over and we can talk, but I’m not promising anything.”

“Oh, thank you, Lucy! Can you come over tonight?”

“Yeah, okay; see you in half-an-hour.”

Lucy stood before Georgiana’s door, an outfit for a newborn and some other necessities in a small bag in her hand. Firming up her resolve, she pressed the doorbell button. When the door opened, there stood Georgiana, looking huge in her last couple of weeks, yet, she had that certain “glow” common to all pregnant women.

“Thanks for coming!” Georgiana gushed. “*Please*, come in.”

Seeing Georgiana standing before her broke down any further resistance and she stepped forward to hug her best friend. “Oh, Georgie! I’m so sorry for deserting you!” she cried. “I’ve been such a...such a *witch* about this.”

“It’s okay now; you’re back. Come in and have a seat. Can I get you anything?”

“No, I’m fine. Here, I got you something for the baby.”

“Thank you! I really appreciate it.”

When Lucy entered the living room, she saw Blair sitting on one end of the sofa. Her expression hardened and she turned to her friend. “What’s *he* doing here? I thought you wanted to talk.”

“Please don’t be mad. Yes, I want to talk, but Blair has been there for me throughout this pregnancy and I wanted the three of us to talk.”

“Lucy, I know you probably think of me as the enemy at this point,” Blair said, “but I want you to know I’m not here to argue with you. I just wanted to let you know how I figured into this. Can we at least have a conversation?”

“I’m not happy that Georgie sprang this on me, but, yes, I’ll listen. I just want you to know that you and I are on two different pages about this. You’ve changed a lot since I knew you in high school.”

“Fair enough and yes, I have changed a lot. May I ask just what it is that you and I are on two different pages about?”

“How about the fact you talked my best friend into carrying this...this *travesty*; the product of a rape!”

“I understand how you must feel, but let me ask you something. How is this innocent baby a travesty?”

“Have you been listening to anything I just said? Georgiana was *raped!*”

“I understand the rape part, which I agree was terrible, but I ask again; how is this baby to blame? Did it ask to be conceived, just so it could make your friend feel bad?”

“Don’t try to trick me with slick questions.”

“Look, I asked Georgiana not to abort the baby because I firmly believe we should never abort babies; it’s part of my deeply held faith in God. A baby is a gift and we do wrong to kill it.”

“Yeah, I’m aware of your religious beliefs, but the trouble is, your brother put that baby in her and there’s no getting around that.”

“It may surprise you, but I agree with you completely there.”

“Oh, *do* you?”

“Yes, I do. My brother’s paying for what he did in prison, but this baby is another thing altogether. Yes, it came from a rape, but it has the right any baby has to be born and live out its life on this earth. Who are we to terminate it?”

“Luce,” Georgiana cut in, “no one’s forcing me to have this baby; I wanted to keep it and do you know what? I love this little guy inside me. I never thought I would, but it’s true. Why should it die?”

“Now you sound like *him*.”

“Do I? Well, I don’t share his religion, but I agree with him about the baby. Now, I’m glad I listened. If I had killed it, I would have been miserable.”

“You don’t look so happy.” Lucy regretted the words as soon as she spoke them.

Georgiana gave her a sad look. “You’re right; I’m not happy.”

“I’m sorry, Georgie; that was a cheap shot.”

“But it was accurate. You know how it was with me; one disastrous relationship after another. Some of our friends were so envious of my so-called beauty, but it hasn’t done me so much good. Men seem to flock to me, but the wrong kind of men. Perhaps the beauty I have is the problem; it attracts men, but for the wrong reasons. I know it sounds crazy, but I feel that, having this baby, I’m finally doing something right, something *pure*. All I ask is that you support me in this with your friendship.”

“Oh, Georgie!” Lucy said and got up to sit next to her long-time friend. She took her hand in her own. “I’m sorry I abandoned you. This was your decision to make and I should have been there for you.” She gathered Georgiana up into a hug.

Blair:

As he watched the two women hug, renewing their bond, Blair felt glad inside. Yet, he felt sad as well when he considered their need of a savior, of Jesus.

“Lucy, I know you don’t think very much of me, but I’m going to continue as Georgiana’s birth coach, since I’ve done so from the beginning of her pregnancy. Even so, I want you to get as involved as you feel comfortable with. Does that seem reasonable?”

Lucy turned to him and gave him a surprisingly gentle look. “I guess I haven’t been fair to you. You’ve been there for my friend when I was being stupid and abandoning her when she didn’t do what I thought she should. Though I don’t agree with you, you only acted out of your personal beliefs. I’m sorry for the way I acted and I hope we can be friends.”

“Yes, of course, and I’m glad to see you two reconciled. I’ll go home now and let you two catch up.”

“No, don’t go, Blair,” Georgiana said. “I’d like you to stay.” She turned to look at Lucy. “That is, unless it’s a problem with you.”

“No, I feel like *I’m* the one who’s intruding here; I don’t mind at all.”

“This is just a suggestion, but I’m sure everyone’s hungry. Would it be okay if we ordered take out and ate here?” Blair suggested.

“That sounds like a great idea,” Georgiana agreed. “I feel so huge, going out would be such a chore. I’d prefer to just flop around here and be more comfortable.”

“That’s fine with me,” Lucy replied.

“Okay, we could order Chinese, Italian, or there’s a diner around the corner we can get take out from. You two can visit while I go for the food.”

They ordered from the diner and Blair went to get it.

Lucy:

“Have you two started a relationship?” Lucy asked Georgiana.

“I know it must look like it, but no, he claims he’s not cut out for a meaningful relationship. Besides, he says we don’t share the same faith.”

“What a self-righteous creep. Maybe I did have the right idea about him.”

“No, no; please don’t think that. You have to know him better to understand how deep his faith is. It’s why he came to me in the first place; life is very precious to him because of his faith in God.”

“He sounds like a bit of a prig.”

“No, he’s not like that at all. He’s taking care of all my expenses and has been at my beck and call since the beginning. He’s kind and gentle and a great listener.”

“You sound like you’re in love with him.”

“I suppose I am a little, but, when he told me his story, I see that there’s a lot of sadness there keeping him from a relationship.”

“What happened?”

“I don’t feel right telling on him, since he related it in confidence, but he’s had a rough time of it.”

“Well, I’m glad he’s been so good with you, especially since....”

“Don’t beat yourself up. God worked it all out.”

“Now you *really* sound like him.”

When Blair got back with the food, they sat around the dining room table. After an initial silence, they began to chat amiably, as Georgiana and Blair caught Lucy up on how the pregnancy had been progressing. Lucy began to relax and found she enjoyed the light banter, even with Blair, who turned out to be everything Georgiana said and not a religious prig at all. She had to admit to his good looks; looks refined over the years since school. Tall, but not bulky, with a slim build, that trademark, unruly shock of sandy hair and those gorgeous, blue eyes, he laughed easily and listened well. She remembered the crush she had on him in high school, but his girlfriends always seemed to get in the way. She wondered why the guy didn’t have someone and remembered the fact he always seemed unconcerned about his girlfriends, as if he viewed them as a distraction. Perhaps circumstances had spared her a lot of heartache.

Finally, it came time for her to leave. “Thanks for the meal, Georgiana. I enjoyed my visit and I’m happy we patched things up.”

The two women hugged.

“Thanks Blair; he bought the food. As I said, he’s picked up all my expenses, including a lot of the groceries. With what I’ve been putting away, that’s no small deal.”

Lucy turned to Blair. “I guess I owe you an apology for being so antagonistic with you.” She stuck out her hand.

Blair shook it. “It’s not a problem. I understand your being upset. After all, I came between you and your best friend and you did what you thought was right for her.”

“Hmmm, I didn’t expect that answer. I seriously misjudged you.”

“Thank you; I appreciate that. Could I ask you a favor?”

“What?”

“My car’s in the shop and I took a cab over. Would you mind dropping me off? I don’t live far from here.”

“Sure.”

In the car, Lucy didn’t know what to say, so she remained silent. Blair finally broke the silence.

“I hope you’re not so quiet because you’re still mad at me.”

“No, it’s not that at all. I find I don’t know *what* to say to you. We seem to live in two different worlds.”

“On the contrary, I think, once you know me better, you won’t find me so alien.”

“You know, I’ve wondered how you managed to get Georgie to keep the baby.”

“I simply made a case for its life. Even thought it was a tiny bunch of cells at the time, it was a human being and didn’t deserve to be killed.”

“You make it sound so horrible.”

“It *is* horrible.”

“But your brother raped Georgie. Why should she have to keep the baby, a constant reminder of her rape?”

“Well, you heard her today. She’s come to love the baby and she hasn’t even seen it yet.

“You seem so sure of yourself.”

“About this, yes. Of all the things I’ve read about abortion, there is a high incidence of regret and guilt among the women who’ve had them. Besides, Georgie’s baby is a relative of mine, my nephew or niece.”

Lucy looked at Blair with wide eyes. “Now, *there’s* something I never considered.”

“Look, I’m not taking the rape lightly, but, for what it’s worth, Blaine is devastated over it and is looking at his sentence as penance. I know you probably think differently, but he’s not some hard-drinking, woman-hating thug. He got in over his head with porn and, I’m afraid Georgiana became a victim. Believe me, I would never have suggested he date her if I knew how bad it was with him.”

Lucy uttered a mirthless chuckle. “Ironically, we discussed the possibility of her sleeping with him and Georgie even packed some condoms in her purse.”

Blair looked thoughtful. “I didn’t know that.”

“I remember Blaine from the grade below us. He was a typical jock, letterman, babe magnet...kind of like you. What the heck happened to him?”

“He got into all the wrong things, like me.”

“Like you? You’re this religious guy.”

“I’m not religious; I just know the Lord as Savior. I wasn’t always like this. I wrecked a marriage through neglect and my life went all to pieces. It took Jesus to sort it all out. Back then, Blaine tried to help me through it, so I guess I’m doing what I can for him. Forgive me for asking, but do you have anyone?”

“A boyfriend? No, not at the moment. I’m taking a break after several failed relationships.”

“I don’t want to push, but would you like to have dinner sometime? We could catch up a bit. It’s been a lot of years since high school.”

“You’re serious, aren’t you?”

“Of course, or I wouldn’t have asked.”

“Aren’t girls like me off the menu?”

“What do you mean, ‘girls like you?’”

“Well, I’ve slept with my share of men; I’d think you’d want your dates to be more virginal.”

Blair chuckled. “That’s not one of my qualifications for dating.”

“But, why me?”

“Why not? Call it my way to mend fences. Besides, I happen to think you’re very attractive, in the truest sense of that word.”

“Are you trying to pull my leg?”

“No, I’m not. I was aware of your crush on me in high school. I would have dated you, but my head was swelled from too many girlfriends and being too into myself.”

“Now I’m really interested. You’re on for a dinner date, but only if you tell me a little more about your past life.”

“It’s a deal, but I’ll require something too.”

“What’s that?”

“You have to let me tell you how I came to Jesus, okay?”

“I could possibly regret it, but you’re on.”

2. Lucy Renewed

Lucy:

As it turned out, that first date led to more and Lucy did indeed listen to what Blair had to say about Jesus. Even after Georgiana gave birth, something she enjoyed more than she'd admit, they continued to see one another. Try as she might to resist, his charming manner and easy way about him won her over. It all came to a head one night after a ball game and they sat in Blair's car outside her apartment.

"It's too bad we're not on the same age with Jesus, because I'd love it if you'd kiss me right now. Those baby blues of yours are mesmerizing."

"I'm sorry, but I couldn't."

"Blair, we've been seeing each other for a while. It's the Jesus thing, right?"

"Not entirely. As I told you, when Cait led me to the Lord, I took a vow of celibacy. I did it because I'm not relationship material. My failed marriage proves it."

"Wow, you need to do some serious reevaluation."

"What do you mean?"

"You're so *very much* relationship material. You've been an angel with Georgie, she's in love with you, you know, and you've been the perfect gentleman on our dates. The only thing missing is the sex."

Blair gave Lucy a penetrating, serious look for so long, she thought she had made him angry. "I had no idea you thought that about me."

"Man, celibacy must have affected your sense of self worth," she said, turning to face him. "Would it be too much to ask for a test kiss?"

Blair smiled. "Sure. Would on the cheek be okay?"

"Very funny."

"I'll be honest with you, Lucy. I like you a great deal and I've been wondering how it might have been had we dated in high school, but I can't possibly get serious with someone who doesn't believe as I do. I'm not blaming you, but, sooner or later, it's going to be a bone of contention between us."

Lucy sighed. "Okay, make your pitch."

"Excuse me?"

"Don't you have an argument, or something, for what you believe?"

"Of course."

"Well then, Billy Graham, start preaching."

Blair:

Lucy didn't make a commitment that evening, but she listened intently, said goodnight and went up to her apartment, along with his New Testament and a promise to read the gospel of John, if nothing else. Blair didn't hear from her for a few days and decided to call her, when she beat him to the punch.

"Blair? Do you think you could come over to my apartment?" she asked, when he answered.

"You sound upset. Is everything okay?"

"Not really. I need to talk with you."

"Okay, I'll be right over."

When he arrived, a red-eyed Lucy opened the door. What's wrong, Luce? Why have you been crying?"

Lucy indicated a seat on the sofa. Two glasses of red wine sat on the coffee table. They sat and she took a sip of hers. Blair followed suit, keeping silent. Finally, she looked up at him.

"I'm sure you know what happened when Georgie visited the prison two days ago," she began and Blair nodded, taking another small sip of his wine. Lucy reached out and took his New Testament off the coffee table. "I started reading at the Gospel of John and, when I finished, I kept going; from Matthew through Revelation. Georgie called me the next day, all excited and happy over what happened with Blaine. I went to see her and she chattered on for an hour. I felt glad for her, but it troubled me a lot. Here she was, relating how her rapist led her to Jesus, as she put it. I can't tell you how confused I am at this moment."

Blair took her hand in his, noting how small and frail it seemed. "Your confusion comes from the fact you're fighting Jesus. Give up; let him in and you'll begin to see what Georgie's trying to tell you."

"Is this how it was with you?"

"In a way. As you know, it was Cait, infected with HIV from her years in the porn industry. She confronted me with the claims of Christ and her faith and calm acceptance in the face of her certain mortality showed me I had no excuses."

"Is it really that simple?"

"It might seem that way to you, but Jesus moved the universe to conquer sin and he did it for us. Stop fighting him and let him save you."

"But I..."

"It's not in your hands; it's in God's. New life starts when you, in faith, come to the foot of the cross and meet him there. Look, let's pray together and I'll lead you through it. Okay?"

Lucy bowed with Blair and, holding onto his hand as if to a life preserver, prayed the sinner's prayer and became a new creation in Christ.

Her new life had begun.

Lucy:

"Let's drive down to the water and walk along the pier, holding hands. That would be romantic."

Blair looked up. "We're blessed tonight; the moon's nearly full. What say we get some seafood, *then* walk on the pier?"

"Romantic and practical, I like that."

They had a fine supper and took that walk, walking along without talking, enjoying the easy, relaxed atmosphere between them. Blair stopped and turned to face Lucy. Her long, dark hair shone in the strong moonlight, and he could see it's reflection in her dark irises. He bent to kiss her and she melted into it; the second kiss they had shared. When they broke it off, Lucy breathed rapidly, her heart fluttering.

"Now, *that's* romantic. I began to think you' *never* kiss me again after that first time."

"Thank you for being so patient with me."

"You're worth the wait."

"Am I?"

"You don't realize that, after all this time?"

"I once believed I wasn't made for a long-term relationship, but, getting to know you better, has proved to me that I may be long-term material after all."

“Hallelujah! God has truly answered my prayers!” Lucy went up on tiptoe, pulled Blair’s head down and kissed him again, long and passionately. She felt his strong arms go around her and she embraced him. To her, it seemed to last an hour. When they broke it off, she sighed with contentment.

“Dear, sweet Lord, that was amazing; *you’re* amazing!” she gushed.

“That’s the first time anyone’s called me amazing,” Blair said, smiling down at her.

“Blair, I...oh, I’ll just come out and say it. I’m hopelessly in love with you. I feel like, if you decide to leave, I’ll just die.”

“You don’t need to worry on that score. I’m not going to leave you.”

“Dare I hope to think you could come to love me too?”

“I already do.”

“Really?”

“Yes, really.”

“Then we have a chance at something...?”

“Something long-term? Yes, we do. How’s this? Lucy Candlis, will you do me the honor of becoming my wife?” Blair reached into his pocket and brought out a small, square box.

“Oh, my God! Is that what I *think* it is?”

He opened the box and showed her. “May I take it out and put it on your finger?”

“Oh, yes, *yes!*”

“Lucy, you’ve made me the happiest I’ve ever been in my life. I look forward to ending my vow of celibacy...on our wedding night.”

Lucy felt her head swim. Her heart hammered in her chest, as Blair slipped the ring on her finger. Sudden tears erupted, as the import of what just happened sunk in.

Blair understood and, in that precognitive way of his, took her into his arms and let her cry out her joy.