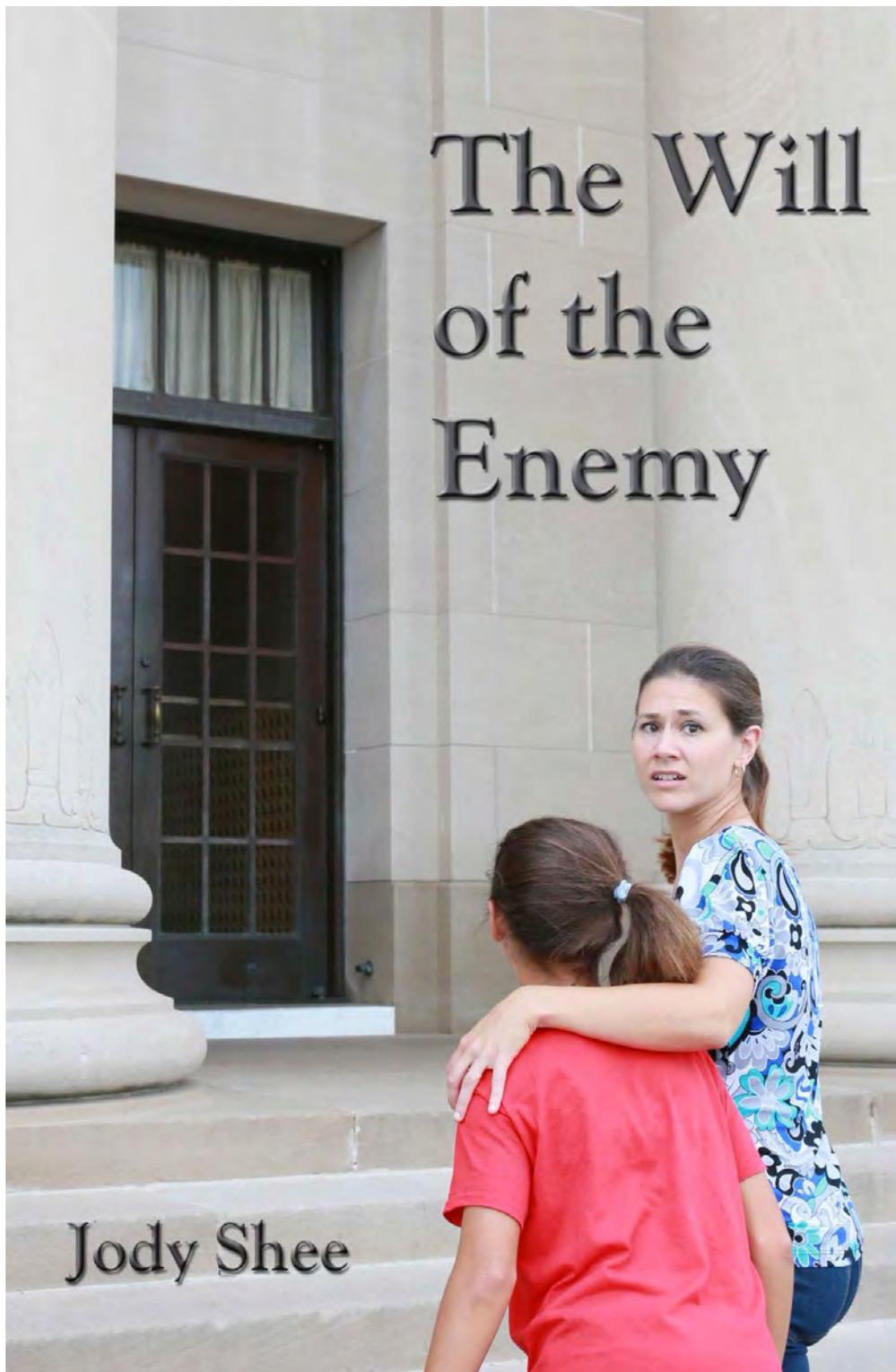


The Will of the Enemy

Jody Shee



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Prologue—November 1989

Julie's stomach rumbled loudly. She knew Angie was famished too, as she watched the poor thing hold her stomach now and then while playing Candy Land with her new friend Brenda.

It was almost 1:15. To speed things along, Julie positioned herself in Hazel's kitchen next to anything that needed to be done. She removed the rolls from the oven into three baskets, dropped ice into the water glasses, and stirred the gravy. For her daughter's sake, she announced that everything looked done, hoping Hazel would agree and finally call everyone to the Thanksgiving table.

By 1:30 all 15 of them were gathered around either the dining room table or one of two card tables set up in the nice lady's small living room.

"Before we eat, let's all go around and say what we're thankful for," Hazel announced triumphantly.

Julie wilted, but quickly smiled and straightened her shoulders. *I was so wrong to not feed Angie this morning. I should have realized it would take this long to get such a big meal on the table. I could kick myself. We're not that low on Special K and milk.*

She didn't hear what the first three diners were thankful for as she pondered what she herself could safely say in this mixed group of casual church acquaintances who also had nowhere else to spend the holiday.

No one here really knows me. They would never believe me if I told them what I'm really thankful for.

Suddenly there was a loud knock at the front door. Hazel rose. "Who could that be? I'm not expecting anyone else."

She looked out the window and announced that a police car was sitting out front. "I wonder what this is all about," she said as she removed her apron before opening the door.

While everyone started talking, Julie instinctively jumped up and motioned for Angie to do likewise. "Please excuse us for a minute," she said quietly and ushered Angie into the bathroom with her, closed the door, and put her ear to the door.

"Hello. Sorry to interrupt your Thanksgiving dinner. I'm Officer Hellerman. I'm wondering if Julie and Angie Bradley are here."

Julie tried to catch her breath. She squeezed Angie's shoulder tightly. Right now she was thankful she had grabbed her purse and taken it into the bathroom with her. She surveyed the window.

"No, you have the wrong house. There's no one here by those names," Hazel said innocently.

Julie was also thankful that everyone in this Florida community knew them as Linda and Gabrielle.

"Well, I really don't mean to pester you, but actually, the mother and daughter I'm looking for may not go by the names Julie and Angie," the policeman said.

Julie gasped for air and examined the window. *It might be big enough.*

"The woman is 32 years old, and her daughter is eight. Are you sure there's no one here like that?"

“I don’t know what makes you think the mother and daughter you are looking for are here. I know all my guests, and I can tell you for certain that your criminals aren’t here,” Hazel said with certain irritation and finality.

“Hey, where did Linda and Gabrielle go?” one of the guests piped up.

“They’re in the bathroom,” Brenda said.

Julie raised the bathroom window, yanked out the screen, and ordered Angie up on the toilet and out the window. Fortunately the air conditioner unit sat beneath the window.

Julie squeezed her petite frame out the tight window at the same time she heard a rap on the bathroom door.

She rushed Angie across three backyards and peered around the third house. Her car was parked in front of it. The police car was still at Hazel’s house with no policeman in sight.

“Run to the car!” she yelled to Angie.

They both slammed their doors as Julie started the engine and threw the Chevy into gear. She looked through the rearview mirror as she laid rubber and noticed the policeman jump into his car.

“Hang on, Pookie. Stay calm!”

She tore down the street and around the corner. She knew there was an ally next to her favorite bakery. *Maybe I can lose him if I do all side streets.* She turned left at her first opportunity, then left again, then right.

She couldn’t see the police car anymore. She kept speeding.

“Oh Sweetie. That was so close!”

“I’m hungry,” Angie whined.

“I know you are. I am so sorry.”

Wow, that was close. Thank you God, once again.

Chapter 1—October 1979

The billowy white clouds and crisp October air prevailed over Mission, Kansas. Julie and Terry’s wedding day couldn’t have been more perfect—less than a month before her 22nd birthday and exactly a year after their first date at Denny’s.

The only thing that wasn’t picture-perfect about Julie’s most memorable day was that her father wasn’t there to give her away—something that always darkened her wedding fantasies.

She would never forget the day she was told that he died of a heart attack. She was at recess playing dolls with her friends in the third grade when her teacher interrupted and took her to the principal’s office. “I have something very difficult to tell you, Dear. Your father became very sick suddenly and he quit breathing. The doctors couldn’t help him. I’m afraid we won’t see him again here on earth. He has gone ahead of us to heaven.”

If only he could have met this unpretentious man who shared her dreams of building a wonderful family that would travel down life’s path with laughter, fun, and probably a few trials to keep them grounded. She and Terry pictured nightly walks through the neighborhood behind a baby stroller—an after-dinner ritual they promised each other they would not let go of.

She knew this would have been one of her father’s proudest moments. But Julie determined the night before at the rehearsal that she wouldn’t let that thought crowd out the joyous celebration of their love and pledge to one another.

Now she shifted from one foot to the other in her uncomfortable white satin pumps in the back courtyard of Maple Grove Community Church, waiting for the crowd to approach the receiving line. She clung to Terry's left arm, with her mother, Rita, and sister, Melanie, to her left. The birch trees had released most of their yellow leaves, but the maple trees were flaming red and orange. Julie wanted to just soak in the day and write every detail in her diary—down to the cracks in the tiles beneath her feet.

“Here, Gretta, trade places with me,” Terry's dad, Bob, told Terry's mother. “I want to stand next to Terry and introduce Julie to our family friends. I can't trust Terry to remember all their names.”

Terry rolled his eyes. “Hopefully this won't last too long,” he whispered. But Julie smiled. She was excited for the party of friends and family about to parade by with hugs and congratulations.

Before long, Julie's cheeks hurt from smiling so much as envious friends hugged her and told her how beautiful she looked. She was the first of her close friends to get married.

“Hey Terry, look there. See that man with the grey hair about five people away,” Terry's dad said as he poked him. “That's Judge William McGraw. Be sure to say something intelligent and try to impress him. Maybe he can pull some strings to get you into the police academy.”

Julie knew this was a sore subject between the men. Terry was still a security guard at the mall where they met. He couldn't decide what he should do with his life. His dad so badly wanted Terry to follow in his footsteps and become a policeman. He gave his dad a half smile rather than succumb to the loud refusal Julie imagined he felt inside.

“Hey there, William,” Bob shouted as Judge McGraw approached Julie. “Meet my new daughter-in-law! They plan to live on 49th Street. Terry will be close to the police academy. We have to get him in there, you know?”

Julie felt the awkwardness of the moment. She and Terry had shared many conversations about his future and if he should just tell his dad he couldn't bear the thought of being a policeman.

“Well hello there. Congratulations young man. I haven't seen you since you were in junior high,” the judge told Terry. “I'm sure someday you'll be a great policeman like your dad. I'll have to see what I can do to help.”

A squalling baby suddenly drew everyone's attention. Julie looked at Melanie, who wore the beautiful, pink satin matron-of-honor dress. Someone had just handed Melanie April, her six-month-old daughter. Two-year-old Lexie now clung to Melanie's leg too.

“Sorry about that,” Melanie grimaced, realizing they were now the center of attention.

“I think her diapers are in the corner of our dressing room,” Julie said, guessing at the reason behind April's distress.

Melanie excused herself from the receiving line. “You want one of these?” she asked Julie, extending April in their direction.

“We want four of those,” Terry said proudly. The women standing around the newlyweds murmured a collective “awww” as they saw the loving heart he had for children.

Chapter 2—December 1980

“Oh, did you just get here?” Rita asked when she turned around from putting the green bean casserole in the oven and saw her daughter. “Let’s see, why don’t you put that here on the table. By the way, what is it?”

Julie explained her cranberry experiment. She knew she liked pecans and celery in a Christmas cranberry salad, and had speculated that it would be great if cream cheese and orange gelatin were also mixed in. She remembered seeing such a recipe in either *Better Homes and Gardens* or *Ladies Home Journal* the year before, but hadn’t saved the recipe, so she ad-libbed.

“If everyone likes it, the recipe will go in my notebook,” she said. “Of course if no one likes it, I don’t know what we’ll do tomorrow because I’m supposed to take this dish to Terry’s parents for our Christmas together.”

Terry made himself comfortable in front of the television in the basement with Melanie’s husband, Steve, and the two kids. Lexie had made it safely through her terrible twos—but barely. And just over a year since Julie’s wedding, April, named after the month when she was born, was climbing all over her dad and the furniture.

Melanie came up behind Julie in the kitchen and poked her. “Hi there!”

Julie jumped.

“When did you guys get here and how long are you staying?” Julie asked.

She didn’t get to see her sister nearly as often as she’d like since they lived in Nebraska.

“Oh, by the way, did you girls bring your empty toilet paper rolls and paper towel rolls?” Rita asked.

“Darn! I forgot,” Melanie said, winking at Julie. Their mother’s face fell.

“Of course I remembered. When have I ever showed up without toilet paper rolls?”

Their mom often needed the empty cardboard tubes for her craft consignment shop. Angels, scarecrows, and princess dogs were waiting to be made from the rollers. The paper towel rollers made especially cute dachshunds with frilly collars.

“We have to head back home late tomorrow morning so we can be at Steve’s parents’ house by 2,” Melanie said. Then she turned to Julie. “By the way, how do you get along with your in-laws?”

“We do okay,” Julie said. “Do you have a Sprite, Mom? I’m really thirsty.”

She continued, “Terry’s relationship with his parents is a little strained. I guess I can see why. His dad is certainly king of the house. He keeps pushing Terry to make something of himself. What I find aggravating is that he’s always telling stories of guys he arrests and how he outsmarts his partner. He really should be more sensitive. He’s been through two partners since we’ve been married,” Julie said. “He also doesn’t treat Terry’s mom very respectfully.”

As her mother handed her a glass of Sprite on ice, she said, “What’s the deal? You’ve never liked Sprite before.”

Julie shrugged and chugged.

“Well, should we open our presents now, or wait until after dinner?” Rita asked.

“Oh, let’s do it now,” Melanie suggested. “Then the girls’ gifts will keep them busy the rest of the time.”

They called the troupe from downstairs, and soon wrapping paper, boxes, and squeals filled the room. “Save the ribbons,” Rita called over the chaos.

Rita opened a box with a pink and purple sweatshirt in it. “World’s Greatest Grandmother,” she read on the front of it. “Which of the kids is this from?” she asked Melanie, who was preoccupied with a new stuffed animal for April.

Melanie looked up. “That’s not from us.”

Rita frowned with confusion and then looked at Julie.

Julie stood, walked to Rita, and hugged her. “It’s from us!”

Melanie and Rita screamed, while Julie announced, “We’re going to have a baby!”

They made Julie recount every detail from the time she had found out two months earlier: the baby was due on the Fourth of July, Julie had morning sickness almost all the time, and the last thing that sounded appetizing was a wad of turkey on her plate. Mashed potatoes and green bean casserole, maybe. But that was about it.

“She hasn’t craved pickles yet,” Terry announced. “But I’ve had to go out at night and buy potato straws. I didn’t even know companies still make them.”

During dinner they discussed Julie’s job at the mall and how long she would stay there or what she would do next. She had thought of going to college to get a journalism degree, or maybe a teaching degree. Maybe teaching junior high English would be fun, she explained. But now with the baby coming, she wasn’t sure. Terry’s job didn’t pay enough for her to stay home.

“Why don’t I watch the baby at the consignment shop for you while you work—at least until it starts walking,” Rita volunteered.

“Well, I don’t know . . .” Julie started to say.

“Excuse me!” Terry jumped up from the table and abruptly left the room. He returned with a freshly full plate of food, but Julie noticed he hardly said another word.

After dinner, Melanie led Julie into their old bedroom.

“So, how is Terry doing with all this?” she asked. “I’m sure he’s excited, but I know it’s hard on a guy if he feels he can’t fully support his family.”

Julie sighed. She felt uncomfortable trying to find a way to paint a rosy picture. But the truth was, Terry was struggling.

“At first he was ecstatic about moving away from home after we got married. He loved being free from his parents, particularly his dad. But the free feeling didn’t last long. He gets grumpy whenever I talk about things I’d like to have for our baby. He knows we can’t afford anything. The only thing he knows he likes to do for sure is give kids swimming lessons at Fantastic Fitness Gym.”

“That’s admirable,” Melanie offered. “How did he ever get interested in that?”

“When he was a kid, his dad forced him to take swimming lessons, and he hated it from the first day, because all he could do was the dog paddle, and other kids laughed at him. Then a teenager jumped in and showed him how to swim and coaxed him on, until he finally learned. That teenager made such a good impression, Terry later found it in his heart to do the same thing for other kids. I think it makes him feel like a man. So he’s helped out at the gym for several years now. In fact, sometimes he spends more time there than at home with me.”

“And what about his goal to become a policeman?” Melanie probed.

“That was really his dad’s dream for him, not his,” Julie explained. “He doesn’t want to be like his father in any way.”

“But we’re really excited about the baby,” Julie added. “Maybe that will make us closer. I think if we’re both working on the same goal, he’ll pull through this. I just think that marriage has been a harder adjustment for him than it’s been for me.”

Terry suddenly appeared in the doorway. He glared at Julie and told her he needed to talk to her.

Melanie jumped up from the edge of the bed. “I need to go check on the girls,” she murmured as she brushed past Terry.

“What do you mean telling your sister we have a lousy marriage?” Terry demanded after closing the bedroom door.

Julie felt the bottom drop out of her stomach. “I didn’t say that. I just said I was having an easier time than you are—considering your unhappiness with your job situation.”

“Well, I don’t want you running to your family and telling them what an awful person you think I am. I’m doing the best I can and we’ll make it. I also don’t want your mother taking care of our baby. I’ll take on a second job if I need to so you can stay home and take care of it.”

Julie hated the idea of him working two jobs. She would never see him. After he left the room, she wondered if their evenings of strolling the baby after dinner could ever possibly happen if he was never there. Tears slid down her face.

###

Julie and her good friend from work, Rachel, sat on the couch eating iced angel sugar cookies as Julie explained how the baby announcement went over with both sets of parents. She had long ago told Rachel she was pregnant. It was hard to hide the fact at work when she kept going to the bathroom to throw up.

“After Terry’s family came down from the euphoria of becoming grandparents, his dad took him aside and had a talk about going to the police academy. Terry appears to have suddenly warmed up to the idea and quit bucking the idea of becoming a policeman. I’m not sure why, but that’s a pressure off me.

“I might need you to spend the night and keep me company after the baby is born and he’s at work all odd hours of the night,” Julie said with sad reservation. “But at least he’s thinking of the family, and that’s good. I may be able to quit my job after all. He doesn’t want my mom watching the baby for us.”

They talked about Terry’s friends Don and Greg, who used to work at the mall too.

“I don’t know that it’s a great idea for Terry to hang out with them, though,” Rachel confessed. “You know Greg is an alcoholic, don’t you?”

Julie frowned. “No. How do you know that?”

“Terry told me.”

“Well, why didn’t he tell me that?” Julie shrieked. “And he’s out with him tonight, and they are going to a bar!”

Julie sighed and stared across the room. The whole conversation brought a few sore subjects to the top of her mind. She was a Christian—didn’t drink and never had—and Terry hadn’t been raised going to church. But he had admired her faith. He’d assured her that he realized how important it was and that he planned to develop that area of his life.

“When we were dating, I told him that what bothers me most about some drinkers is that alcohol, no matter what form, seems to consume their minds and conversations. I remember like it was yesterday. He nodded and said drinking wasn’t that important to him.” She continued randomly speaking her thoughts out loud. “He has a beer now and then, but he doesn’t feel he has to drink to have fun.”

Julie veered from the topic of alcohol to church. In their year of marriage, Terry had only gone to church with her three or four times—mainly when she made a big deal about it. She had told her boss that she didn't want to work on Sundays because she went to church. Terry, on the other hand, often worked on Sundays and explained that it was important to him to take as many hours as possible so they could save up for a down payment on a house.

"I guess I should be grateful that he is so concerned about the future of our family. That's why I haven't pushed him any more on the topic of church," Julie finished. She got up to make some popcorn.

"Let's watch 'It's a Wonderful Life.' I have the video," Julie said.

After the movie was finished and they had sufficiently snacked their way to near sickness, Rachel decided to go home.

"Thanks for inviting me over," she said as she put her coat and boots on. Julie opened the door to the blustery breeze.

"Thanks for listening to me tonight. Sorry I was so down. Drive carefully," she called after Rachel and shut the door.

Julie picked up the plates, bowls, and cups, keeping her eye on the clock. She thought she remembered Terry telling her not to wait up for him. At the time, it was just a sentence. Now she was worried. It was 8:30 and what if he didn't come home for hours? What was he planning to do all night? What if Greg got him into trouble? Maybe Terry would keep Greg *out* of trouble.

She put on some Christmas music and started to mop the kitchen floor. But she had eaten too much junk and felt a little nauseated. She sat on the couch again with a hot cup of chamomile tea and wished she had a cat to keep her company.

At 9:30 she decided to put on her flannel nightgown and get into bed with a book. Surely Terry would be home soon.

He wasn't. She turned out the light thinking about her conversation with Rachel. Soon she was sleeping, but woke up every hour to look at the glowing clock.

She startled awake when she heard a thud, like the front door closing. Julie sat straight up in bed. It was 4:10. "Terry, is that you?"

"Yeah, go back to sleep," he yelled. "I'll sleep out here so I don't keep you awake."

Too late. She was wide awake. She went into the living room. He was already on the couch with his shoes and coat still on.

"Where have you been? I've been worried sick!" she demanded. "You could have called!"

He sat up. "I'm so sorry." He hung his head. "I had an accident. Don had to drive me home."

He told her that the roads had turned to ice, and he had run the car off the road into a ditch. He had to walk to a gas station and call Don.

Julie didn't know if she should be mad or glad that he at least was safe at home now. But then she thought she smelled alcohol on him. She could feel her blood pressure rising.

"Were you drinking?" she asked.

"Yes, but I only had a few beers," he slurred. He fell back on the couch.

Julie's stomach was upset. She suddenly felt clammy, and she knew what that meant. She rushed to the bathroom where she puked and cried at the same time. "Oh Lord, please help me deal with this," she whispered.

Chapter 3—June 1981

From the passenger seat, Julie sipped her soothing, hot tea. She felt a little crampy and somewhat deflated—more than usual these days. She stared out the window, not really caring that they were passing her favorite daisy-filled median.

Your flowers are still going strong,” Terry offered cheerfully.

Silence.

He glanced around and saw a man jogging with his black lab panting alongside him.

“Maybe we should get a dog,” he said.

Julie closed her eyes and leaned her head back.

“Why haven’t I ever heard of your Aunt Rosalind and Uncle Robert?” she finally said.

“I don’t know. I guess I didn’t realize I never told you about them. I can’t remember what I’ve told you and what I haven’t. Is that a crime?” he asked.

Julie felt her blood rush to her head. “If they are so important to you, and you are spending so much of your time with them, then why didn’t you invite them to our wedding?” She glared at him.

“My Uncle Robert and Dad don’t get along. It would have been very uncomfortable for everyone if my aunt and uncle had been at the wedding.

“Same thing with this baby shower. As long as my dad is there, it’s not a good idea for Uncle Robert and Aunt Rosalind to be there too.” He screeched to a stop at the light. Julie’s tea sloshed onto her huge belly. She quickly opened the glove compartment for one of the napkins she kept there.

“Well, what is so special about them that you can’t manage to make it home before midnight?” Lately he had been coming home late several nights a week, claiming to be at their house.

Terry’s pause was too long. “Uncle Robert and I play chess, and you know how long that can take. Time just slips away,” he finally offered.

He had never told her about his love of chess, either. *This smells so fishy. Could he be making all this up, and he’s really spending all his time somewhere else and hiding it from me?*

She decided she just needed to calm down before they got to the gym where Terry had helped rent a room for their big family and friends’ shower.

“There’s the happy couple,” Gretta beamed as they came in the door. Yellow and purple crepe paper hung perfectly spaced in all directions from the center of the ceiling, where a beautiful angel mobile hung. Two guest-of-honor chairs waited beneath the angel.

Hmm. That mobile would be perfect for the baby’s room. I’ll bet Mom is responsible for that decoration, Julie thought.

She was soon enmeshed in the attention of her parents, sister, nieces, friends, and even Terry’s family. She decided it had been a great idea to have both mothers in charge of refreshments and decorations. That gave them an opportunity to get to know each other better. After all, they would both lay claim to this grandbaby that was due in three weeks. It would be Gretta’s first grandchild, and she was obviously looking forward to it.

Julie noticed that a long table on one side of the room was filled with presents. Two huge sheet cakes, a bowl of punch, and several dishes with nuts adorned the long table along the opposite wall.

“I hope that cake has buttercream frosting,” she told Rachel, who was standing next to her, admiring the whole baby shower scene.

“I could test it for you,” Rachel offered.

“That’s okay. It looks store bought. They never use buttercream.” Julie admired the colorful layout and hoped no one would mind if she just sat down.

“Time to play games!” Melanie announced. Groans rose from the deeper voices in the room, but the chairs were quickly arranged into two groups. The women eagerly participated while the guys hung out on the other side of the room.

The group spent 45 minutes on baby name scrambles, guessing what baby foods were in various containers, and predicting the final date, hour, and birth weight of the baby. Then it was time to cut the marble cake while Julie and Terry sat in the center chairs, and opened gifts.

Since Julie and Terry didn’t know if the baby was a boy or girl, they received plenty of red and yellow outfits. One of Julie’s favorite gifts was a baby bouncer to hang from the door frame, courtesy of Melanie. “That will be a life saver,” Melanie piped up. “Any time you want to talk on the phone or take a shower, just put the baby in that.”

“She’s almost put me in ours a few times,” Steve chimed in. Everyone laughed.

Julie ripped into a soft package and unfolded a beautifully hand-crocheted, pastel rainbow-colored blanket with soft scalloped edges.

“Awww,” everyone murmured. Julie looked through the wrapping paper shreds to see who it was from. She found a small tag that simply said “To Baby Bradley, from Aunt Rosalind and Uncle Robert.”

Wow, they really do exist. What kind people, she thought. She looked at Terry.

He shrugged and smiled. “She gave it to me last week. I hid it in my locker,” he said.

“It’s so beautiful!” Julie exclaimed, rubbing it against her face. Her heart lifted as the cloud that had hung over her dissipated. *Why do I always doubt Terry? I need to meet and thank Aunt Rosalind personally for this gift.*

Gretta wheeled the next gift over to them. It was the baby stroller Julie had seen a few months earlier at their house, but now it was filled with little packages.

“This is just the beginning,” she whispered into Julie’s ear. “I’ve been shopping, and Bob would probably think it’s all too much. So what I have still at home we’ll keep a little secret.”

Julie knew all about the secret stash she had been collecting for months and wondered how much bigger it had become since she had last been over there. She started opening the little packages that were mostly clothes of all sizes. And bravely, some were pink and frilly while others were blue and boyish in all sizes up to age one.

“Gretta, I don’t even have that many clothes. What is wrong with you?” Bob snapped. Everyone else may have thought the same thing, but probably not with the same degree of vehemence.

“It’s their first baby. I couldn’t help it,” she responded.

“This is absurd! You must have spent hundreds of dollars on this,” he continued. Julie secretly guessed that it was more like *thousands*. “You need to control your shopping obsession.”

Julie and Terry looked down. Everyone else in the room stopped talking.

“Don’t worry, Dear. I got much of it from garage sales over the past year.” Gretta spoke quietly as she turned red.

“I’m going to have to put you on a budget, I can see . . .”

“Dad!” Terry shouted, “Lay off of her. She’s just happy for us. Give her a break!”

Julie put her hand on Terry’s back.

“You see what I mean?” Terry said to her, but not caring who overheard. “I don’t know how she stands him. He’s always so hard on all of us. He’s just obnoxious!”

“Wait a minute there,” Bob said, standing up. Terry jumped up and ran out of the room. In moments Julie heard squealing tires.

Her stomach sank. In fact, she felt a sharp pain.

“What’s wrong, Dear,” her mother asked.

“I think I just need to rest,” Julie said, trying to catch her breath.

“You *are* resting,” her sister said. “Just breathe deeply.”

“Actually, I need to use the bathroom,” Julie said. On her way there, she felt another sharp pain and had to sit down.

“Let’s get her to the hospital,” Rita said as she rushed to Julie’s side, with Melanie and Steve close behind her.

“We’ll take her,” Steve offered, as more people poured into the hall.

“Julie, who is your doctor? We need to call him,” someone said.

“I need Terry,” Julie cried.

But no one knew where he was; let alone how to reach him.

###

Julie endured a rough night. In no time, her contractions were deep, painful, and nearly overwhelming. Her mother was by her side stroking her forehead. “You’re doing fine, Dear. This will all be over soon. I am so proud of you.”

The two nurses were alternately concerned that her doctor might not get there in time. “Certainly someone can deliver this baby, can’t they?” Julie winced. But soon, Dr. Cannon showed up in blue scrubs, apologizing for his tardiness.

“I was in the middle of the Bee Gees’ concert, and I had to arrange for my wife to get home,” he said.

“Oh, the Bee Gees. I forgot they were here. I’m so sorry,” Julie said sincerely; then she grabbed her mom’s arm and yowled. After she recovered, she asked if Dr. Cannon had seen her husband in the waiting room when he came in.

“No, I didn’t see him.”

“I can’t have this baby until he comes!” Julie insisted.

“Well,” Dr. Cannon said as he examined her. “It looks like this baby is coming, whether you agree or not. It’ll just be a little bit now.”

Her mom tried to keep the conversation light between Julie’s bursts of pain, yells, and rhythmic breathing.

“I remember giving you your first bath in a popcorn bowl a few days after we came home from the hospital,” Rita said. “You didn’t seem to mind at all.”

“I know. You told me that a long time ago. I won’t have to do that to my baby. Terry’s mom thought of *everything*. We have a little plastic bathtub.” They both looked at each other and smiled before another contraction struck.

“Okay, Julie. It looks like you’re ready. The baby is just about here. When the time comes, give one big push,” Dr. Cannon said.

Her mom grabbed her hand. “Squeeze as hard as you need to.”

Julie pushed her head back, roared from deep within, and pushed with all her strength. The baby was soon in the doctor’s hands, and then passed to the nurse. A small cry soon followed. Julie half cried and half laughed.

“You have a beautiful baby girl,” Dr. Cannon announced.

They were all crying—Julie, her mom, the nurse, the doctor. Julie was soon holding her daughter wrapped tightly in a small blanket.

“Oh, look at her,” Julie said, unable to take her eyes off of the baby. But she was soon crying again, only differently this time.

“What’s wrong, Honey?” her mom asked.

“Where is Terry? He has to see her.”

“I’ll go out in the waiting room and see if anyone has heard from him,” Rita said firmly.

In a moment the door opened from behind and Julie asked, “Did you find him?”

“It’s me, baby,” said Terry.

Once again tears poured. The doctor and nurse left the room as Julie held the baby for Terry to see.

“Oh my. Look at all her dark hair!” Terry said. The baby yawned with her eyes closed.

“Hi there little one,” Terry said softly, rubbing her little head gently with his index finger.

“We’ve been waiting for you.”

“Isn’t she the most beautiful baby?” Julie said smiling.

“Yes, she certainly is.” Terry kissed Julie on the forehead. “I love you very much. Both of you.”

Julie had never seen such love in his eyes. She was full of love, hope, and contentment.

“I wish I could climb in bed with you,” he said. “I’m so sorry about what happened at the shower. I had no idea you were so close to having the baby. I shouldn’t have run off like that. I just lost myself. I am just stupid. I didn’t want to miss this for anything.”

“I know your dad gets to you. Let’s just put that behind us. You’re here right now, and you didn’t really miss anything. I couldn’t have handled you passing out on the floor while I went through that,” she said to comfort him.

“Thank you. You are always so understanding.” Terry sighed. “Here, let me hold her.”

Julie handed the baby over and Terry spoke sweet nothings to his new daughter. Julie saw a tender father and somehow knew he would be loving, devoted, and protective, just like she always dreamed. She experienced all the feelings she’d felt on their first date.

“She’s our little angel,” Julie said. “Shall we introduce Angela Claire to everyone else?”

A nurse came back in the room. “You have quite an entourage out in the waiting room. I’m going to take this little one to the nursery and let everyone see her through the window. We want to keep her away from germs. And we’ll also get you cleaned up and into a room.”

Terry was anxious to go to the waiting room and celebrate with everyone.

The room was filled with his mom and dad, little sister, Julie’s parents, sister and brother-in-law and her nieces, as well as Rachel.

April looked at Terry. “Where’s the dolly?”

He squatted to get on eye level with her. “You mean baby Angela Claire? The nurse is taking her to the baby room. Pretty soon we can go out there and see her through the glass.”

Then he thought a second. “You know, she’s your new cousin.”

All hostility between Terry and Bob was forgotten as everyone shared in the miracle of a new baby.

Nothing was ever the same again after June 15, 1981.

Chapter 4—July 1983

Tomato-watermelon sorbet. What a concept! Julie was flat on her back on the living room couch in their “new” fixer-upper house. She was catching up on one of her unread issues of *Bon Appétit* magazine while Angie napped. She kept the door to her room open with the fan blowing for a little white noise.

Since Angie was two years old now, they decided to get her a twin bed, a project Terry’s mother naturally took on. Her insistence turned out to be helpful since Julie wasn’t working anymore. Terry was still a security guard and was taking evening college classes to qualify for the police academy.

This sorbet would make a wonderful treat for Angie and would be a perfect way for Julie to use her abundance of garden tomatoes. As she read through the ingredients, she didn’t hear footsteps. When she finally lowered the magazine, she was eyeball to eyeball with her innocent little girl, who was shirtless, holding her stuffed rabbit, and sucking her thumb.

“Well hello there my little Pookie! Have you finished your nap?” Julie scooped up Angie and blew into her belly button. Angie giggled and thrashed. “How is my precious angel?”

Terry came in from the kitchen, also without a shirt—though much dirtier than Angie. He had been working on his motorcycle in the garage. How Julie hated that dangerous thing.

“It is so hot out there, I can hardly stand it. I have an idea. After supper, why don’t we go to The Purple Cow and get some ice cream?” he said.

“Wow! Ice cream! What do you think of that, Pookie?”

“Yay, ice qweem!”

The family date would be a double treat. They didn’t see much of Terry these days since he was taking classes, teaching swimming lessons at the gym on Saturday mornings, and still going to his aunt and uncle’s house at least one night a week to play chess until all hours of the night. Julie truly didn’t know how he did it.

She also didn’t know *why* he did it when he had such a precious daughter who adored him. *Daddy* was her first word, and she followed him around everywhere. Only Terry could get her to eat broccoli—by pretending it was green rabbit tails. Macaroni and cheese was both of their favorites, and they raced each other to finish it.

But supper this night wasn’t so much fun. Julie planned on cheeseburgers with cheddar cheese on Angie’s burger, and blue cheese with sautéed mushrooms on theirs. But Rita called while the burgers were on their indoor grill, and Julie forgot about them until they were charred. She didn’t have any hamburger left to start all over again, so she tried to peel off the black crust—unsuccessfully.

Terry silently got up from the table, dumped his burger into the trash, and made a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. “I don’t know how you expect *her* to eat that,” he said.

“Well, why don’t you make her a sandwich too, then,” Julie said. So he did.

Before Julie could finish cleaning up, Terry announced it was time to go.

Julie hated to fail at anything, and she equally hated to leave the dishes undone. What might have been a welcome exit from the kitchen for anyone else wasn’t good for her right then.

She strapped Angie into the backseat of the purple Mustang and plopped into the passenger seat while Terry revved the engine. Julie rolled her eyes. “Do all of our neighbors need to know we are leaving now?”

“Yes, they do. You always tell me we don’t spend enough time together as a family. I want them to know we are spending time together as a family.” Then he floored it into the street.

“You didn’t even look both ways!” Julie yelled.

Angie started crying.

“What’s wrong?” Julie turned around and asked.

“Where’s Bunny?”

“Oh, Honey. He’s inside. Let’s let him rest while we go eat ice cream.” She hoped that would work. How could she have forgotten Bunny?

Halfway to Purple Cow, Terry told Julie, “I’m going to Uncle Robert’s house while you’re at church tomorrow.”

“Why do you have to do that?” she demanded. “You need to go to church with us!”

“I’ll tell you why. I need some space. That’s why.”

“Space from what?” Julie was incredulous. “You’re never home as it is.”

He accelerated to 65 mph.

“Slow down! The speed limit is only 35. You’re going to kill us!” Julie shouted.

He drove faster, while Julie gasped. Then he slammed on the brakes. Julie instinctively put her hand in the back to make sure Angie wasn’t tossed around.

They heard a siren and both looked in the rearview mirror. It was for them. Terry pulled into a nearby parking lot.

The policeman came to Terry’s window and asked to see his driver’s license. Then he took it back to his car.

Terry and Julie sat silently. Angie tried to look out the window. “Ice Qweem?” she asked.

“Not yet,” Julie stated.

The policeman returned with Terry’s license. “Are you Bob Bradley’s son?”

“Yes, he’s my dad. I’m sorry officer. I was just checking my brakes. I had to speed up first to test them.”

“Well, I’ll let you off with a warning. But that was pretty dangerous. Don’t try that again.”

“Please, don’t tell my dad,” Terry said.

The officer winked. “I won’t tell him. You just be careful.”

Julie glared at Terry.

“You lied to him.”

Terry drove off.

“Stop the car please,” Julie said.

He did. She opened the wide door, pulled her seat up, and unbuckled Angie. “Let’s go for a walk, Sweetie,” she said. “Go get your Purple Cow,” she told Terry as she slammed the door.

He drove away.

Julie carried Angie to a gas station and called Rachel on the pay phone, praying that she was home.

Before long they were sitting in Rachel’s car at an A&W, ordering ice cream from the driver’s window. Julie sat in the back seat to keep Angie’s mess to a minimum as she fulfilled the promise of ice cream.

Julie put on a happy face and spoke with a cheerful lilt to protect her daughter from any further effects of the fight. But the air was frosty. The ice cream didn’t taste very good to either Julie or Rachel.

“Anything I should know?” Rachel finally ventured.

“Oh, it’s just more of the same,” Julie said, trying to sound matter-of-fact. “You can go ahead and take us home. I’m pretty sure he won’t be there.”

Chapter 5—December 1984

Julie opened the front door to let her mother in. Rita was carrying a big box, which was open at the top with tinsel hanging over the edge.

Decorating the Christmas tree was one of Rita’s favorite holiday traditions—a trait Julie wished she had inherited. The next best thing was having her mother’s help. Her mom had even started a tradition of making one special decoration each year for Julie and her family to help build a collection of family Christmas memories.

“If you have the time, I thought we could string popcorn. Then I have some special paint we can spray to make it all different colors,” her mom said. “Where’s Angie... and Terry?”

“Terry is at the gym, training kids. Angie begged to go with him. They have childcare, so I thought it would be okay if she went along. I thought this would be good bonding time for them,” Julie said.

She had made hot, spiced cider and poured some for her mother. “Let me see if I can find my Christmas tapes,” Julie said. “While I’m looking, we have some Christmas photo proofs over there on the table. See which one you like best.”

Julie put on the Andy Williams Christmas tape, knowing how much her mother loved the singer, and returned to find Rita looking thoughtfully at the photos.

“What do you think?” Julie asked.

Her mom looked up. “I think you look very sad in every one of these pictures.”

Julie felt surprised—not that she looked sad, but that it was so obvious. “I guess I was just having a bad day,” she said.

“Honey, I don’t want to intrude, but is there anything you’d like to talk about?”

“I’ve just been a bit tired lately—and no, I’m not pregnant.”

“Well, that’s understandable, chasing after a three-and-a-half year old. But this doesn’t look like tired. It looks more like depressed,” Rita said.

Julie slumped down onto the couch. “Oh, I don’t know. It seems Terry and I argue so much lately. He’s gone so much of the time—between work, classes, the gym, and going to his uncle’s. I just can’t accept it. It’s not right. So I’m always on him about it, and I’m sure it’s driving him away from me.”

“So what has changed? He’s kept that schedule for a couple years. Has he been physically abusive to you?”

“Why do you ask that?”

“Honey, you can tell me anything. You know that.”

“Well, our arguments are getting worse, and he has pushed me a few times. He may have even slapped me a time or two.”

“How do you respond when he does that?” Rita asked.

“I certainly tell him he better stop and that he can’t treat me that way. It’s so disrespectful. And I don’t want him treating me like his dad treats his mother.”

“Hmm. Does that help?”

“Actually, it does. He doesn’t want to be anything like his father.”

“Please be sure to call me when things get out of hand, would you promise me?” Rita implored. “And what about some counseling? Would you be open to that? I know someone who would be very good for the two of you.”

“No, no. I can’t. I know things will get better. In fact, it feels wonderful to finally tell someone. Just please pray for us.”

“I will do that. But let me also give you a piece of advice. You might not want to hear this, but I’ve watched how you respond to him sometimes, and it’s like you’re not on the same team. This is not tug of war. You’re parents now, so you need to be united. Try to support and encourage him any way you can.”

“I will. I think I needed to hear that,” Julie said. Then she paused. “But there’s one thing that keeps eating at me. He spends so much time at his aunt and uncle’s house. It just doesn’t make sense to me. It’s like a part of his life I know nothing about. I didn’t even know about them until more than a year after we were married.

“I met them once. Terry took me over there after Angie was born so I could thank them in person for the beautiful blanket they gave us for the shower. They were nice enough. Kind of shy, actually. But there was nothing dynamic about their relationship with Terry. I just don’t get it,” Julie concluded.

“Where do they live?” Rita asked. When Julie told her, Rita said, “Oh, I know exactly where that is. I get my hair done close to there.”

After they’d strung some popcorn, they heard the Mustang pull into the driveway. Terry opened the door and in ran Angie, straight into her grandma’s arms.

“My there, little girl. You smell like... grease.”

“What happened to her?” Julie asked. “She is filthy.”

“We went into a dark room,” Angie said. “There was a puppy.”

Terry interrupted. “We stopped off at a friend’s garage to look at a car he’s working on.”

“I saw bright lights. I wish we had a puppy,” Angie said.

“Well, I guess I’d better go to the library and study for the test I have this week,” Terry said.

Remembering the need to be a team player, Julie excused Terry and turned to Angie. “Did you have a good time with Daddy?” She took a deep whiff. “I think we need to clean you up.”

“I’ll give her a bath,” Rita volunteered.

“That would be great. I’ll make us all a snack, other than popcorn.”

While Julie was out in the kitchen mixing some mayonnaise, cheese, and herbs for one of her favorite cracker spreads, her mom called her into the bathroom.

In a cheerful tone, but looking deeply into Julie’s eyes, Rita showed Julie some bruises high on Angie’s inner thighs. “Honey, do you know how she got these?” she asked Julie. “And look at her underwear.”

Julie saw blood and other fluids on her underwear and started to panic. *What is this? Oh my, what has happened to her? Where has she been? Who did this? This could never happen to my little girl.*

“Uh, I don’t know, Mom. I really don’t,” she said.

Doing the only thing she could imagine at the moment, Julie pressed on the bruised area. “Does that hurt, Sweetie?”

“No. Not now,” she answered.

“Did someone hurt you there?” Julie’s mom tried.

“No. I played in the dark room. The puppy was soft.”

Julie felt a combination of nauseated and furious. *What has happened to my little girl? What did Terry do to her? No, he wouldn't hurt his own daughter. Does he know about this? What kind of friends does he have?*

She ran out of the room to explode away from Angie. She went into the living room and put a pillow over her mouth and screamed. She nearly hyperventilated.

She stood there and tried to collect herself so she could go back into the bathroom. "Mom, what should we do?" she asked quietly with a shaky voice.

Very calmly, while she dried Angie off, Rita suggested that they take a little drive in her car and go visit the hospital.

"Why don't we go to the library so I can ask Terry about it?"

"Yes, we need to do that. But we certainly need to have her seen and get a report. This is a serious thing," Rita said.

###

It only took 10 minutes to reach the library. Rita drove around the parking lot as they looked for the Mustang. After three circles around the building, it was apparent Terry wasn't there.

"He has to be in there. Let me out. I'm going in to find him," Julie said.

What if I can't find him? Then what? He has to be in here, she thought as she raced through the library, looking around every corner and at every table. Where could he possibly be?

"Let's not worry about that right now," Rita said, taking control of the situation after Julie returned to the car frantic. "Let's just go ahead to the hospital."

"I forgot to bring her stained undies!" Julie exclaimed.

"Don't worry. I put them in a plastic bag. They're in my purse," Rita consoled.

"Um, I'm here to talk to someone about my daughter," she whispered to the hospital receptionist, not wanting Angie to overhear, though Rita was doing a good job of keeping her distracted. "I'm pretty sure she's been molested, and I need to have her checked out."

"Please have a seat," the receptionist said. "We'll get her in as soon as possible."

Julie explained to Angie that they were going to visit a nice doctor who would give her a checkup since she hadn't had one recently.

"Will he poke me?" Angie asked with fear in her eyes.

"No, Honey. They won't give you any shots today. They'll just look you over."

Finally Julie was called to follow a nurse. Her heart was pounding. *Oh Lord, I hope I'm just over-reacting. Let this turn out to be nothing,* she breathed as she, Angie, and her mom paraded down the hallway into the exam room.

Julie stood while her mom sat in a chair and Angie was seated up on the exam table.

Before the nurse left the room, she advised Julie to undress Angie.

"This is so the doctor can check and make sure you are in perfect shape," she told Angie.

Soon an older, silver-haired doctor with reading glasses in a white coat knocked on the door and entered with a clipboard. "Um hmm," he said as he read the reason for the visit. "We're going to check you out, and if you're really good, I'll give you a sucker before you leave."

Angie recoiled and started crying, not wanting the doctor to touch her.

"I'm sorry doctor; she's not usually like this," Julie said patting her daughter. "Angie it will be okay," she told the cowering girl.

"Why don't I have Dr. Melissa Taylor come in and take a look."

Julie was apologetic, but relieved. "Thank you."

Dr. Taylor came in cheerfully and without a doctor's jacket over her dress.

"How are you Angie?" she asked. "I have a little girl about your age. Do you like puppies?"

"Yeah!" Angie exclaimed.

"So does my little girl. When you leave, I have something special to give you."

"A puppy?"

"It might be. You'll have to wait and see."

The doctor did preliminary checking—checking Angie's ears and her heart with the stethoscope—which Julie guessed was to get Angie used to the doctor touching her.

Dr. Taylor looked at Angie's bruises on the insides of her upper thighs and gently did some tests with wooden sticks and cotton swabs a little higher up.

Angie pointed to her belly button. "Mommy and Daddy blow on me here!" she said.

"Does it tickle when they do that?" Dr. Taylor asked with a smile.

"Yes. And a big man too," Angie said.

Without missing a beat the doctor asked, "What big man is that?"

"I don't know."

Julie gasped. "When did that happen?" she demanded, startling Angie.

"I don't know," Angie whispered.

"You can put your clothes back on now, Angie." The doctor said. "You look very healthy, Angie."

"Mom, let me have the plastic bag," Julie said to Rita.

"This goes along with the exam. She came home today with this soiled underwear. Can you test it?"

"Yes, I was going to ask you if you had anything like this," Dr. Taylor said as she accepted the bag with its contents. "We will have results in a few days and we'll give you a call." She lowered her voice as she added, "I think you're probably right about what you suspect."

Julie's heart thumped in her chest. *Where could Terry possibly be? He surely has the answers to all of this.*

As promised, Dr. Taylor had a surprise—a small puppy finger puppet.

Angie jumped up and down. "Look Mommy!" she exclaimed. "Look! Look!"

"Yes, Sweetie. Now don't forget to say 'thank you.'"

Julie couldn't hide her emotions, as tears streamed down her face.

"You crying?" Angie asked sweetly. "You want my puppy?"

###

Julie was glad she didn't have to drive. She slumped in the front passenger seat reeling with chaotic thoughts while Angie sat in the back seat playing with her new toy and singing her ABCs. *Who molested my baby? It happened today when she was with Terry. Maybe we're all wrong and she just played in something. Oh, who am I kidding? I've just got to talk to Terry. Has this happened before and I'm just noticing it? Now, where all did he take her today? He mentioned a friend's garage. Is he the big man Angie was talking about? She was in daycare at the gym. But there's something about a dark room. It must be the guy's garage.*

They were almost home. Julie looked over at her mom, who appeared lost in her own thoughts.

"Pookie, when we get home, would you like to go make a tent in your room and have a tea party with your dolls?" Julie asked.

“Yea! Let’s have a tea party!”

She knew that would occupy Angie. A tea party was a very special occasion. It meant that she could have little cups of lemonade, or apple cider in this case, and Cheerios in her room, something that would normally have been forbidden.

After Angie was set up with her tea party, Julie and her mom went to the kitchen to pool their thoughts.

“Okay, let’s try to figure out Angie’s schedule today,” Rita started.

“No, let’s try to figure out where Terry is. I’m tempted to go to the library again.”

“Wait a minute,” Rita said. “Before we do that, you need to level with me. Is there any chance that Terry could have done this to her?”

Julie sighed. “I don’t know. But I think I should tell you what I know has been going on. Terry has pushed me a few times, and he definitely has slapped me. I didn’t tell you that one time he threatened to shoot me if I didn’t shut up. So, I’ve become afraid of him. But I don’t think he would molest his own daughter. He doesn’t get mad at her as much as me.”

“I wish I knew more about what makes a man molest children,” Rita said. “Does Terry have any habits that might lead him to do this? Does he drink or use drugs or anything?”

“He does drink, I’m afraid. I’ve never told you, because I knew you wouldn’t approve. But he’s not an alcoholic. I just can’t believe Terry has anything to do with this,” Julie said defensively.

“You mentioned he threatened to shoot you,” Rita continued. “He has a gun?”

“Well, naturally. He’s a security guard. He has two of them. In fact, one of our fights was about guns. After he threatened me, I hid the guns. When he couldn’t find them, he confronted me. I told him the place I hid them was much safer than where he kept them. He got so mad, he pushed me down.” Julie hung her head, then quietly continued. “Then he kicked me and told me to never do that again.”

Julie wanted to change the subject. Fortunately, so did her mother.

“We have to find Terry and see what he knows,” Rita said.

Before Julie could respond, she heard little footsteps. Angie’s tiny tea-party pitcher of apple cider was empty.

“Here, my little Pookie, let’s get you some more. And more Cheerios?” Julie asked. Angie didn’t want any more of the cereal. Come to think of it, Julie had mindlessly given her a whole bowl full of them to start with.

“I think what I really need to do is clear my mind here and prepare myself for when Terry does eventually come home. My head is spinning, and I need to unwind and sort out my thoughts. Would you mind if I just handle this from here... at least for today?” Julie pleaded.

“Yes, of course. I’ll try to calm down too. My mother instincts are as strong as yours. How about if I call you tomorrow?”

After her mom left, Julie felt guilty about how little playtime she spent with Angie. She sat down in her room with her and made up stories about the dolls.

It was 5:30 p.m. and mostly dark by the time Terry got home. Julie had been so lost in her mental stew that she forgot to plan dinner.

She refrained from bombarding him with angry questions and startling information. She had to be sensitive to Angie. “I’m sorry, I don’t have dinner ready,” she said. “Can we just order pizza?”

“Pizza!” Angie shouted, jumping around the room.

Terry agreed.

I better handle this right or it could get ugly around here, Julie thought.

“Sweetie, while we wait for our pizza to be delivered, wouldn’t you like to play in your room?” Julie asked Angie.

Fortunately, she agreed.

“After you left for the library, we took a little trip to the hospital,” Julie said, trying not to inject the hysteria that was just under the surface.

“Why? What happened?” he asked with seeming genuine surprise.

“Oh, but first, were you at the library?”

“Yes, of course, but why did you go to the hospital?”

She explained about the bath, suspicious bruises, soiled underwear, and emergency room visit.

“The test results will be back in a few days,” she said, now folding her arms across her chest and raising an eyebrow. “So, where all did you take her today? And I don’t want vague answers.”

Terry just looked bewildered with his jaw dropped and a far-away look in his eyes, as if he was thinking.

“Okay, let me get this started,” Julie said. “Did you take her to the gym with you this morning?”

“Yes, and I left her in the little green room with a few kids who were younger and two babysitters, probably in their 20s. They were girls.”

“How long was she in there, and were there any guys in there?”

“It was probably an hour and a half. I didn’t see any guys go in there, but I wasn’t watching.”

“How was she acting when you picked her up?”

“Perfectly normal. She was happy.”

Julie paused before her next question. *I just know this is going to lead nowhere. He could be lying, and I wouldn’t know. He lied about being at the library, he’ll probably lie about where else they went.*

“Where did you go after that?” she asked.

“My friend Brett’s house. He’s working on a ‘61 Corvair in his garage. So we stopped and sat around for a few minutes.”

“I don’t think I know anyone named Brett. What does he look like?” Julie remembered that Angie had said the man in the garage who blew on her belly button was a big man.

“He’s just an average looking guy. About my size.”

“So, he’s about five feet ten and skinny?”

“Yeah, something like that.”

Just like I thought. We’re getting nowhere.

“What else can you tell me, Terry? We’re missing something. Did you ever let her out of your sight when you were at Brett’s?”

“No, honest, I didn’t. We didn’t stay long because Angie was starting to get into things.”

“Did Brett happen to blow into Angie’s belly button?”

“No, of course not! And I’m just as puzzled by this as you are.”

The doorbell rang. It was the pizza delivery guy.

As all three of them ate their hamburger and cheese pizza at the kitchen table, Julie asked him if he went straight to the library after he dropped Angie off at home.

“Yes, and I was there all afternoon.”

“We saw the libwawy,” Angie spoke up.

Terry raised his eyebrows.

“Yes, we went looking for you, and you were not there,” Julie said, with anger rising in her voice. *That jerk wasn't there.*

“Well, you didn't look hard enough, because I was there.”

“Why wasn't your car there?” Julie asked.

“It was there, on the west side of the building.”

I give up, Julie thought. *He is such a liar. How come I never saw this side of him before we were married?*

Terry simply was not helpful and didn't appear to be nearly as concerned as she was. *I'm not going to get much sleep tonight*, she thought.

The next morning at church, Rita greeted Julie at the front door.

“What did you find out?” she asked Julie after they dropped Angie off at Sunday school and went straight to the restroom.

“I got nothing out of him,” Julie spouted. “I am so mad. He also said he was at the library yesterday. We know *that's* not true!”

“Well, I really prayed about this last night,” Rita said. “I think we need to get some other answers too. When does he usually go to his uncle's house?”

“Right about now. And on Wednesday nights.”

“Well, you said that's the most puzzling thing about him. How about after he leaves home Wednesday night to go visit them, you call me, and I'll go over there and see if he actually makes it there?” Rita suggested.

“You can't do that. He'll see you!”

“No, I'll make sure he doesn't see me. I'll park somewhere else and walk down the street. Please. I can do this and not raise any suspicions.”

“I don't know,” Julie said. “What if someone recognizes you?”

“I'll wear an old coat and a scarf over my head. Now I've thought this through.”

“Why don't I do it instead?” Julie asked.

“No, you stay home with Angie. I know where the house is. It's by my hairdresser. I can even picture where I'll hide my car.”

“Oh, okay. It would be good to know if he really does go over there,” Julie conceded.

###

Julie decided it was time to catch up with her former work pal Rachel and called her to have lunch on Monday.

Over chicken salad sandwiches made crunchy with celery and roasted pecans, Julie caught up on former co-worker gossip.

“So, how are you and Terry doing,” Rachel asked.

What should I tell her? Oh, she already knows we're struggling since the day we went for ice cream.

“All I have to say is, just be thankful you're single. And if you ever tell me you're interested in someone, let me check him out first.”

“You will be the first to know if anyone ever looks at me twice,” Rachel promised. “So, what's going on?”

Julie poured out her heart, first about Angie and the trip to the emergency room. “I’m supposed to get the results back from the hospital tomorrow or Wednesday. My stomach is in knots waiting.” She noticed the startled look on Rachel’s face.

After pondering who could have abused Angie, they started talking about Terry’s denial or indifference to the situation.

Rachel sat back in her chair, looked at nothing in particular and said, “Very interesting,” several times.

Julie told Rachel about their fights, giving details she hadn’t even told her mom—like the time Terry missed the trashcan when he was throwing a chicken bone into it. He angrily picked up the trashcan and threw it, hitting her.

“I was so love-struck when we got married, I never saw these things coming,” Julie said. “Do you see anything unexpected in Terry’s life at work?”

“Well, I don’t see him a lot at work since he covers such a large area,” Rachel began carefully.

Julie noticed her hesitation. “Don’t hide anything from me.”

“Okay,” Rachel ventured. “Remember the conversation we had about Terry’s buddies who drink? I’m not sure if you know, but he actually drinks a lot himself, and more than beer. In fact, I think he has a drinking problem.”

“What in the world makes you think that!” Julie demanded, a bit defensively.

“I’ve seen inside his locker at work. He has vodka. It’s pretty well known that he drinks.”

Julie’s jaw dropped. “Why didn’t I know that? And why didn’t you say something before?”

“I wasn’t sure if I should. At first I thought you already knew, but when I realized you didn’t, I couldn’t decide if it was my place to tell you. Now I know I should have told you.”

“Yes, you should have told me. I’m so mad. Not at you, but that I didn’t figure it out. I want to believe the best about him, and I guess I just can’t anymore.”

“There’s something else I should tell you,” Rachel said. “This week one of the guys told me he saw some terrible pictures drop out of Terry’s locker. They were of men touching small children without any clothes on. I didn’t want to hear the whole description. But the guy who told me said Terry picked up the pictures quickly and slammed them in his locker.”

“You’re kidding!” Julie screamed. She jumped up and started pacing around the kitchen, her mind in turmoil. *Why would he look at pictures like that? And now his own daughter has been molested. What is this guy capable of? But he wouldn’t do it to his own daughter, surely. He loves her. What kind of a freak looks at pictures like that?*

She sat back down. “You don’t suppose he’s the one who molested Angie, do you?” Julie pleaded with Rachel. “Someone who looks at pictures like that is sick. Is it an addiction like alcohol that when you look at dirty pictures you feel compelled to act it out yourself?”

“Oh, what am I going to do?” she continued, now with her head buried in her hands.

Rachel put her hand gently on Julie’s shoulder.

“I know it’s horrible, but the bad pictures don’t mean Terry abused Angie,” Rachel said.

She paused while Julie calmed down a bit before she spoke again.

“Look, my Aunt Elizabeth works as a counselor at a women’s shelter. I think you should go see her,” Rachel said.

“I’m not going to a women’s shelter.” Julie stated.

“No, what I’m saying is my aunt has talked to hundreds of women in all kinds of situations, and she’s helped many of them figure out what to do next. She has heard everything. And I mean

everything. I think she is fascinating, and she's told me that she specializes in abused women. I can give you her phone number."

Julie tried to insist that she didn't need that kind of help, but as the idea sunk in, she felt a little less resistant.

Rachel wrote down the name of the shelter and her aunt's name and phone number.

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Julie blew her nose and picked up the phone to call her mom. "The hospital just called with the results of the tests they did on Angie and on her underwear. The lady told me she was likely molested."

"Likely molested? Don't they know for sure?"

"That's what I asked. The woman told me Angie probably was molested, but they just don't like to state it in absolute terms in their written reports in order to avoid lawsuits."

"Oh, that is so awful."

"She said *likely molested* is good enough and should indicate to anyone that it really did happen."

"But they won't officially confirm it," Rita stated with disgust.

"No. But they aren't denying it, either. I asked them to mail me a copy of the report. Anyway, I have something else to tell you. I had lunch with Rachel. Remember, she works with Terry? She told me he keeps vodka in his locker at work. Everyone knows he has a drinking problem. And, get this, he keeps child pornography in his locker too!"

Julie could hear her mother let out a gasp. "I don't even know what to say. But I'll tell you what. I'm going to find some answers tonight. Isn't this when he goes to his uncle's house to play chess?" Rita asked. She explained her plan to Julie once again. This time, Julie was all for it.

"Please call me as soon as you get home, will you?" Julie asked.

The second stunning phone call of the day came about 7:45.

"Are you sitting down?" Rita asked. She explained how she put on her wool scarf and her brown winter coat that she hardly ever wears, so no one could recognize it. She left home at 6:40 to drive to the uncle's neighborhood. "I really prayed that this trip would provide some answers or insight into what's going on. God certainly answered my prayer."

"So what happened already?" Julie urged her. She sat on the edge of the couch.

"Well, there weren't any cars in the driveway. I figured his uncle keeps his car in the garage. At about 7:20, I decided to park on the next street. I found a spot where I could see his uncle's driveway from between two houses. At 7:25, I saw some car lights on his street, and I saw what could have been a purple Mustang pass the driveway. I figured maybe he was going to turn around and park on the street in front of the house. But I waited and didn't see the lights anymore.

"So, I got out of the car and walked to the street, and I saw the Mustang in his uncle's neighbor's driveway. I wondered if I wrote the wrong address down. Why would Terry park in the neighbor's driveway?"

"I didn't know what to think, so I started walking back to my car to figure it out. Then I heard a front door close. I turned and saw Terry and a girl with long, dark permed hair, blue jeans, a leather jacket, and high heels walk down the driveway and get into his Mustang with him."

“You are kidding!” Julie shouted.

“No, I’m not kidding. I turned so he wouldn’t see my face. I pulled my scarf over my head. He revved his engine and took off quickly. He zoomed past me, stopped at the stop sign and turned left. And he was gone, just like that.”

Oh no. Who is this guy and what is going on? This is not the person I married. How could he do these things? He’s a complete stranger.

“Mom, are you sure it was him? How could he do something like that?”

“It was him. I know this is awful. But be thankful that pieces of the truth are finally coming out so you can have a complete picture of who he really is,” Rita said with unusual strength in her voice.

“Mom, I can’t stay with him. You know what this means don’t you?”

“Yes, Honey. I know. I don’t ever condone divorce, but with everything that’s happened, I’ve come to grips with it, and I don’t expect you to stay with him.”

That’s a relief, Julie thought. But I can’t leave him just yet. I need some answers.

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Find out the chilling yet inspiring way the story unfolds and concludes by purchasing a copy of the full book from Amazon. It’s available in paperback as well as in a less-expensive Kindle version. (www.amazon.com/The-Will-Enemy-Jody-Shee/dp/0615874991)