

# FIRST BAPTIST



## EPISODE 1:

She rolled her eyes as she sat motionless in her car and watched as officer Spade slowly walked toward her humble old school VW Jetta. This traffic stop was a major inconvenience and surely would cause her to be late for choir rehearsal. She knew she was only going 45 mph, as anything over that her car shook and pulled slightly to the left.

Though she claimed not to be “about that life” anymore, she noticed how well his uniform fit. Regardless, she was thinking, “I am about get his badge number and write some letters. I am getting pulled over because of an obvious trumped up and bogus charge; this is freaking ridiculous.”

He tapped on her window and gestured for her to roll it down. She complied and he asked if she knew why he pulled her over. She said, “I do not,” and before she could say,

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The night progressed; the two talked, laughed, stared intently in each other’s eyes...

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Shay opened the envelope and read the first few paragraphs... Her eyes bucked, she smiled widely, but then began to weep uncontrollably...

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The odors expelling from the home were a combination of mothballs, vanilla, sewage, and generations of poor decisions and countless broken promises.

### EP 5: PAGE 15

“I barely exist when we are apart... Shay, will you...”

“I was only doing 45 in a 50,” he answered her with, “I had to.”

Officer Spade went on to say, “I have been watching you drive your Jetta past here for 8 months every Wednesday around this time. I was talking to my Pastor about you, and he said God told him that I needed to stop you.”

Shay thought to herself, “I know 5.0 didn’t stop me and make me late for rehearsal to spit game.” She angrily pulled out her phone to record the interaction and Spade grabbed the cellphone, removed his police helmet, and looked directly into the camera to say, “it is true, I used my police motorcycle, siren, and uniform to pull this woman over.” He then proceeded to give the date, time, and location where the very event occurred. He handed the telephone back to her and said, “I ask for your mercy, in your hand you hold my career... you hold my life. My actions were that of a soul who was desperate because woman I was desperate to meet you. If I fail to respect you, cheat on you, or make you cry other than with tears of joy, that video will prove that I broke all police policies and protocols in pursuit of my future wife.”

He gave her his police business card that offered all of Officer Calvin Spade’s credentials and those of his supervisor, Captain McDuffy. Then he walked away.

Her heart was beating fast, her palms were sweating, and she felt electricity all about her. Her mind and her body were reacting in manners that they had not in many years. “Help me, Jesus,” she moaned as her shaking hands attempted to engage the ignition, enroute to First Baptist. She took a deep breath to collect herself but dropped the business card. It flipped over and rested near the gas pedal.

As she reached for it, there in red sharpie was written, “Cliffhanger Restaurant, 4/17 @

6:00pm.” She hurriedly deposited the card in her purse and cranked her unreliable Volkswagen. She began to think about what just happened and could not recall anything but officer Spade’s voice, his firm navy-blue uniform, and his cologne on her 22-minute commute to 1217 Burnt Hickory Trace.

As she walked toward the sanctuary, she could hear the choir practicing, “He’s an on-time God.” She could hear that song but see Spade’s face and smell his cologne. She knew that cologne, it was “Azzaro Wanted;” it was her absolute favorite and her ex-boyfriend’s weapon of choice.

Shay was downright confused as she thought that Deacon Trevor Bloath’s son, Myron, was the one who God handpicked for her. He was an accountant, owned a poodle named “Bee-Berry” who wore a bright red vest, lived on a cul-de-sac in the suburbs, had never been married, had no kids, and drove a Chevrolet Volt.

He had a 401K.

He was safe. Plus, she had gotten an unsolicited prophetic word from Mother Simms, the resident Prophetess, about their pending union.

She took a quick look at the Deacon’s son. However, she thought about Officer Spade and that he more than likely drove a muscle car, lived in midtown, had a pit bull or Rottweiler, many scars from his past life, and a few fierce tattoos. She believed him to be a “bad boy.”

In her days before Jesus, “bad boys” were her kryptonite. But God... she proceeded to move that guy’s card to the zip up pocket in the inner depths of her Dooney & Bourke and tried to focus on the tenors, sopranos,

altos, and baritones sitting before her.

She made it home and as she tried to read her bible, she entertained thoughts of Calvin Spade... yes, "those" types of thoughts. She caught herself and started saying, "I rebuke you, Satan." She felt some relief as she remembered she was scheduled for a luncheon with Myron the following day. She collected herself, put her earbuds in, listened to the Psalms in the audio bible app, and finally dozed off.

Around about 3:30 am, Shay woke up to thoughts of Myron sitting in his customary booth, the one closest to the restrooms at Applebee's. Their luncheon was scheduled for 11:30 am, but she was positive that he would arrive at 11:00 because, "you never know about this traffic; it's tricky." He will order a beverage that consists of 2/3rd unsweetened tea, 1/3rd water, and two packets of Equal. Then, he will say, "get whatever you want off the \$10 menu, I'm paying." He will then order a grilled cheese.

Shay arrived at 11:33 am, but Myron was already there in the booth closest to the restrooms. The same old booth. As he greeted her with his expected peck on the right cheek, she heard a whisper that, "Spade pulls hair." She refused to acknowledge the thought and listened while Myron explained that he had been there since 11:00 because, "you never know about this traffic; it's tricky." He ordered a beverage that consisted of 2/3rd unsweetened tea, 1/3rd water, and two packets of Equal. Then, like clockwork, he uttered, "get whatever you want off the \$10 menu, I'm paying."

At some point, she began to stare aimlessly into the center of his grilled cheese sandwich and decided that it represented her and her uneventful life: safe, humdrum, and cheap. The grilled cheese just sat there on that big old plate, all alone.

She listened unfocusedly to Myron's hypothesis on why we rarely see bees or butterflies anymore and how Dick Chaney pulled all of George Bush's strings. Her faced screamed, "Dude, it's 2022, just please stop!"

After their date, like the other 36 times, they both walked to their individual cars. This time, Myron parked on the side of her Jetta, so she had to walk past his Chevy Volt and read his dumb bumper stickers, yet again, which say, "Accountants Like To Get Fiscal," and, "Don't Hate, Depreciate," ugggh!

She finished out her workday at Broad Ripple High School and noticed that there existed three students and teachers around her named "Calvin." She never really noticed that before, but she did today. And, out of all days, the students were studying the 30th president, Mr. Calvin Coolidge. Her heart, or perhaps that voice, was telling her that these cannot be mere coincidences and that maybe God was trying to tell her something.

That night, she blocked her telephone number and contacted Captain McDuffy's office at the telephone number Spade provided. But on each of the eight occasions, the telephone rang busy. An inner voice told her that his department is, "super hectic fighting crime and saving lives." Her pursuit went no farther.

Though she tried to move past her encounter with Officer Spade, his face was plastered over her inner eyelids as she tried to dose off. She took a 30-minute shower but continued to smell his cologne. She whiffed her Miss Dior Eau de Parfum, Courtesy of Dior, but still smelled Mr. Calvin's Wanted. About 3:00 am, after succumbing to the battlefield of her mind and tossing and turning, she Googled the

Cliffhanger Restaurant and was excited to review this photo:



She perused the menu and noticed that the hors d'oeuvres cost around \$120. For a half of a second, she asked how someone could afford this place on a policeman's salary. With the other half of the second, she tried to dismiss all thoughts pertaining to this man.

The only person that Shay talked about the encounter with Calvin Spade with was her half-sister, Janis. They were "Ghetto Twins." Janis was excited because she never thought Myron was even a slightly adequate match for Shay.

Janis told Shay that she would go to the mall with her and prepare her for her big dinner date. Shay, however, indicated that she never said that she would go. Janis then asked, "are you a she-punk?" This was a term the duo used to challenge each other as teenagers, before they went their separate ways for a while. "Why wouldn't you at least see where this could go?" Janis asked. "The cop guy risked his entire career just to meet you. That's amazing. You told me that he is 6-foot plus, and 225lbs of pure chocolate muscle," her sister said.

Janis closed with, "girl, what is wrong with

you?" Janis then left.

The next day, Shay called Janis and the two ventured to the mall. Shay reminded herself that she is a "good church girl." She purchased an outfit that was conservative, less revealing, and not at all form-fitting. Janis shaking her head said, "your blouse does not accent your shape and is kind of Granny Mae-ish (Granny Mae was Shay's grandma, but not Janis' as they had different Mommas)." Regardless of Janis' commentary, Shay decided to maintain a level of conservativeness. She said, "I must represent First Baptist in everything I do."

At this point, she had not heard from her mystery man, but she felt like he knew that they would, in fact, meet at the world famous, and most exclusive, Cliffhanger Restaurant.

## EPISODE 2:

Shay asked Janis if she could use her new Tesla. She was rather ashamed of her old-school VW and did not want the valets, in fact anyone, to see her step out of it. She drove the Tesla carefully but was nervous all the way up the mountain to the fabulous Cliffhanger restaurant.

At approximately 6:50 pm, a super long, stretch Hummer limousine arrived at the carpark. With anticipation, she could see Calvin exiting the limousine's rear panel, lowering one leg at a time. The buckles on his shoes caught the moonlight and temporarily blinded her. Again, her heart began to beat quickly, and her palms begin to sweat. There he was, the man who had infiltrated her thoughts, her mind, and her imaginations over the course of the last

week and a half. Mentally, he visited places within her that she reckoned had been welded shut by past hurts.

Shay called her sister and they decided that she should be “fashionably late.” They decided that the appropriate arrival time should be 7:05 pm. At exactly 7:05 pm, she braved the red carpet to the lobby of the Cliffhanger restaurant.

She was welcomed by the maître d’ who said, “good afternoon, Miss Meriwether.” She never questioned how he knew her name, but proceeded to smile from ear-to-ear. The maître d’ carefully escorted her to the second floor to a private dining suite.

Prior to entering the Traicion Suite, she appreciated reading the colorful welcome sign that featured her complete government name, “Shaylynn Denise Meriwether.” There was a man and a woman there to serve both she and Calvin. There was soft music playing by Wayman Tisdale, and the room was covered by about 50 scented candles. The melodious aromas were that of a marriage of temperate scents of lilac and violet, her most favorite combination. Rose petals offered a passageway down the small flight of steps leading to the heart of the room. Without anyone seeing, Shay suddenly closed then opened her eyes to see if she was dreaming, but she wasn’t. Her heart was beating on “Hammer Time.”

In the middle of the circular dining room sat one long table and Calvin, dressed in all black with a purple bowtie and matching cummerbund. His shoes were so shiny, and his socks looked as if they were handmade. The copper’s socks looked like they were 1000 thread count, or something.

The waiter gently took Shay by the hand and guided her toward the middle of the room. As she got within 3 feet of Mr. Spade, she



began to absorb his cologne. Socially distancing was the farthest thing from her mind, and the thoughts racing to her mind were... well, you know.

Next, Spade took Shay by the hand and as he gently caressed it, he walked her to the table and pulled out her seat. He then turned to the people sent to serve them and said, “please take the rest the night off.” The female server looked perplexed, and before she could say anything about feeding her babies, Spade pronounced, “I’m covering your entire shift, and adding a 30% tip on the meal.” After the two left, Calvin then donned an apron and proceeded to travel back-and-forth to the kitchen to personally serve Shay.

Without asking, he seemed to know that her favorite food was scallops. The shellfish was presented masterfully and was placed methodically over a bed of rice pilaf. To the right, there were grilled asparagus stalks, pan-seared broccoli, and fresh apricots. She never asked how he knew that this was her favorite meal, even down to the apricots, but “that voice” assured her that this man was a “Godsend.”

The night progressed; the two talked, laughed, stared intently in each other’s eyes, and drank wine. Shay was “acting

like a big girl," the most she had ever ingested up until this point was 2-and-a-half peach wine coolers in the 11th grade at Beckie Gwell's sleepover; but today, she had a Rosé made from the muscadine fruit. It was powerful.

Time flew by; three hours had passed, and Shay found that she was no longer safely grounded within her faculties. By the end of the night, Calvin opted to transport Janis' car to her home via a professional car relocation service. There was a note taped to the steering wheel which read, "Janis, thank you for allowing Shay to use your car. I am making sure that she gets home safe, signed your future bro-in-law, C.S."

Though Shay had never drank wine, she did not believe that only three glasses of red wine would have such an impact on her.

Before she knew it, she totally passed out.

Calvin physically carried her to the limousine that had been parked outside awaiting his departure from Cliffhanger. The trio traveled to Shay's humble apartment on the Lower East Side, and in a lasting act of chivalry, the officer carried the disabled woman into her residence.

In the morning, she woke up fully clothed, embarrassed, and ashamed. Prior to saying

her morning prayer, and while in the process of checking herself, she began to hear bacon popping and smell the hypnotizing aroma of freshly made flapjacks stirring about the house.

Shay grabbed her shoes as she hustled to her small kitchen. There she saw Calvin finishing the bacon, toast, and flapjacks. The eggs, scrambled hard with sharp cheddar cheese mixed-in, like she always liked them, were already steaming on the table. There were flowers, so many flowers, a newspaper, and a cup of Java with two creams and one old school sugar cube like she use to share with her Granny Mae before God called the old women home. Shay was Granny Mae's favorite granddaughter.

The silence was thick, and no one said a word. She looked at him, he looked at her, they looked at each other. After several more seconds of deafening silence, Calvin said, "thank you for a memorable evening."

She did not say anything, and before Shay sat down, Spade grabbed her chin, lifted it northward and their eyes met. Calvin quietly uttered, "there's nothing to be ashamed of, we had an enjoyable time, we both drank too much, and absolutely nothing happened." She put her head back down, as it was difficult to gaze upon him, or to be in such close proximity of him or that most spellbinding cologne.

Calvin walked to the couch, grabbed his shoes, folded the soft crocheted blanket, handed Shay the pillow, and then left. Shay then armed the alarm system and sat in front of her breakfast attempting to understand what just happened.



# EPISODE 3:

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03

Three days had passed without one single word from Calvin. Then, suddenly, at 4:00 pm, Shay's cellphone vibrated and her caller ID read "private." Instinctively, Shay answered with "hey," in one of those grown woman-type voices and her sooter said, "I love that all red outfit on you." She looked down to remind herself that she was sporting red jeans, a red "Blessed" T-shirt, a red First Baptist baseball cap, a red Fendi belt, red plastic hoops, red bangles, and red, low-top K-Swisses.

She asked the lawman how he knew what she had on. He quickly replied, "look out of the window." She looked out the window and there he stood, leaning against an old-school, candied-apple red, Chevy Camaro. The voice said, "you knew he drove a muscle car." Calvin wore all red too. Who even knew that a red-faced Cellini Rolex even existed?

Shay said, "you know I don't get off until 5 o'clock." He responded, "I do, that's why I got here early so I can watch you work for a while." She said, "you know that's kind of weird." He answered, "what's weird is living life without you. I feel incomplete. I feel like a nomad, with no place to go. I have just roamed and roamed. Woman, I shall never be at home, I cannot find rest until you say 'I do' to me."

She closed her phone and tried to concentrate on the 10th graders there for Social Studies tutoring for the next 58 minutes, but it was just so hard. One of the school children, Tracy, asked, "who is that Ms. M?" Shay responded, "that, Tee, is either a blessing or a curse." No additional questions were asked, or comments made.

At exactly 5 o'clock, Shay went outside where Calvin remained unmoved. The sun



was out, so were his "guns." His arms looked like two bronze-colored lamb shanks. On his right shoulder was a long scar, like something she imagined every pirate might have. His large arm portrayed the following tat; She pondered if perhaps it was carved or burned into his broad left extremity:

## NOWWIV

Calvin greeted Shay with a most passionate kiss. It was unlike Myron's safe, grilled-cheese-eating, dog-vest-having, benignly unimposing cheek-peck, but with a kiss that made the acrylic on her pinky toes rattle. This was a kiss that made her reevaluate her WHOLE life. You know, the type of kiss that will have a lady feeding a man seedless grapes one at a time while dinner is cooking, the dishwasher, washer and dryer are humming simultaneously, and as his feet are resting on the ottoman while he's relaxing, watching Monday Night Football. This was the type of kiss that Granny Mae warned her about. Yes, ladies, it was one of those "uh-oh" or "what have I done?" kisses.

Though it was Wednesday, Shay felt like

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she could not pass on the opportunity to spend more time with this man. She called the Assistant Choir Director, Lee, and asked him to manage things this evening as “something came up.”

As expected, Spade opened the young woman’s car door and when he put the key in the ignition, Tupac could be heard screaming, “I ain’t a killer but don’t push me (volume 10).” Calvin hit a few buttons and MercyMe was then heard singing, “I can only imagine (volume 3).”

Shay and Spade ventured toward the little Italian restaurant off Third, on the corner of Valentine Rd., near Costco. The constable appeared to pay little attention to the posted speed limits on the drive over. When they walked in, Salvatore, the restaurateur, asked Calvin if he would like his normal booth. Calvin nodded to affirm, and the trio continued on.

They sat in the booth, but by this time Shay’s curiosity had willed its way to the front of the impromptu date. Shay asked Calvin what happened to his arm and he replied, “when I was younger, I cut my arm on a razor wire escaping from a boy’s home.” He offered no more, nor did she ask. The voice whispered to her heart, “poor guy.”

“What does your tattoo mean?,” the choir director inquired. The cop said, “I was branded then I had it overlain with ink; it means that there will be no World War 4.” Shay gulped and said, “that’s really heavy.”

There existed a sense of unrest, possibly due to the nature of their not so casual banter. Then, to change the atmosphere, Shay’s favorite pizza, on cue, happened to make its way out. T’was a personal pan pizza with anchovies on one side, pepperoni on the other, and mushrooms down the middle; it was delivered to her piping hot. A cup of

Loganberry was chilled and brought to her in a thermal cup. She took a quick look at the menu and saw that Loganberry, her preferred drink of choice, was nowhere to be found. Calvin said, “I took care of that for you baby. I will always take care of you.”

The melody, “All My Life,” by K-Ci & JoJo, could be heard bellowing throughout the Italian Bistro. The voice suggested that there was no coincidence that this song is playing.

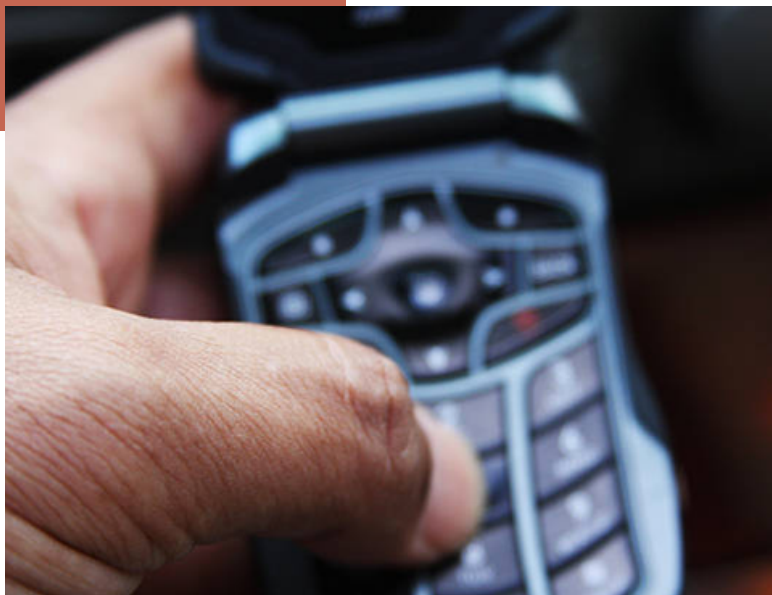
The couple talked and laughed, but this time Shay lay well within her faculties and thus asked the brawny man for his telephone number. His response was, “I will do you one better.” He then rendered a carefully wrapped gift box; the wrapping paper was hot pink, her favorite color, of course. The voice said, “he misses no details.”

The beautifully decorated box stowed an iPhone 14. She, being an Android user, never understood that the iPhone 14 had not been released to the public yet. She took the ivory-colored phone, due to be released sometime in September, and he said, “try it out, press number one.” As instructed, she pressed number one and it immediately rang to his phone. The caller ID read: “Mi Amor.”

Spade then said, “text me baby-girl.” Therefore, she sent him an emoji of a heart and he showed it to her on his phone and then sent her a text of two hearts with the inscription, “I am no longer a lonely heart.”

After exiting the eatery, Calvin taxied Shay back to her car that sat unmoved at the high school and prepared to depart the school grounds. She longed for what may be regarded as a slightly naughty goodbye kiss, but after opening her car door and helping her in, he simply stroked her left





hand and took his leave.

Shay could barely wait to get home to call Janis, and the sisters began to ask where this man has been all Shay's life. Janis asked Shay, "have you heard from Myron?" At which time Shay responded, "who?" and they both chuckled.

Unexpectedly, Shay received a call from Mother Simms of First Baptist, however, she allowed the call to roll to voicemail. She later checked the voicemail and Mother Simms simply said, "Matthew 7:15." Shay thought that the old woman must have called the wrong church member because she did not request any scriptures of Mother Simms.

Spade was advancing all over Shay's mind and it was proving to be a fruitless battle to capture her thoughts. In an effort to alter her focus, she looked through her emails and saw something from Myron titled: "I Am an Accountant, What's Your Superpower?" The email included two coupons for UniverSoul Circus tickets. Shay offered absolutely no response and tried to divert her concentration to a recording of Bishop Jinx's most recent sermon.

Bishop Jinx is like the 5th generation leader of First Baptist. His suits used to fit two sizes

ago and he still wears a process. His four front teeth are all gold, and he often smells like Brut by Faberge', Old Spice, or lime peels. This guy consistently confuses meanings and tenses of words. Like more than one man is 'mens,' and more than one woman is 'womens.' If someone is not at home, he will ask, "what time do you respect him?" Shrimp are 'scrimps,' and streets are 'screets...' I am not even going to attempt to tackle how he pronounces 'orange.' You get the picture.

Bishop, Theodore Dexter Jinx, III, possesses a plaid Member's Only jacket, a black leather fanny-pack, and drives a 2004 Cadillac Seville. He is known to workout Thursdays between 2:20 and 2:35 PM at the Planet Fitness on Liberman Dr. in Colquitt Township. While there, he usually sits on the exercise bike and uses his flip phone. Though there's a few small rhinestones on the base of the phone case, you dare not tell this man that he is not the epitome of masculinity.

Jinx is unapologetic and known for kind of saying whatever comes up. The sermon Shay accessed was titled: "If His Name is Pootin, Just What Do Ya'll Think He's Made Of?" Last month, for the usher board anniversary, he preached a sermon about the Gadarene demoniac which he entitled: "A Nude Dude in a Rude Mood." When he tendered the title, you could tell that he felt good about himself, somewhat accomplished, but those in attendance kind of sat there like deer in headlights. But that's our beloved Bishop Jinx.

Before she could be thoroughly entertained, or repulsed, by the bishop and evidence his most recent linguistic masterpiece, the doorbell rang. Her doorbell-cam showed a silhouette of a delivery person from A-1 Courier, LLC. Shay signed for a 5 oz. parcel and discovered

that it was a letter from an attorney's office demanding her presence on the following Tuesday at 9:15 am sharp.

She contacted the office; they confirmed her appointment but were unable, or unwilling, to release any additional information over the telephone. The Administrative Assistant, Meagan, warned that Shay is to only speak with the specific Attorney listed in the notice about the matter.

Shay conducted internet research to determine that this particular firm was known to specialize in child custody matters, wills, and inheritances. The Attorney with whom she was scheduled was Alton Betancourt, the firm's main partner.

Shay asked that a substitute teacher cover for her on Tuesday and made her way to the offices of Betancourt, Klaven & Schmidt. She reluctantly parked her VDubb next to the Rolls, Bentleys, and Bugattis sited about the large lot whose signs advertised \$35 an hour parking rates. She was sure to take her ticket to be validated upstairs.

Betancourt, Klaven & Schmidt's office was located on the penthouse level (125th Floor) of the Fleshinger Building, far above Channel 24's corporate headquarters, and in the same building where Governor Lungren has his luxurious apartment. Shay was extremely impressed with all of it.

At exactly 9:15 am, Betancourt, Klaven & Schmidt's Administrative Assistant, Meagan, who favored a young Little Kim before all "the work," said, "Attorney Betancourt will see you now." His was a large corner office that offered her a complete view of all the Tri-city area. The office smelled of lavender and money. After she melted into his grand, plush office chairs, Betancourt handed her a large manilla envelope. Shay opened the

envelope and read the first few paragraphs of the communique. Her eyes bucked, she smiled widely, but then began to weep uncontrollably.

## EPISODE 4:



In summary, the envelope proved that Granny Mae had invested wisely into the following stocks:

- Monster who created a trend for caffeinated beverages.
- Tractor Supply Co. supplied the growing number of hobby farmers.
- Old Dominion increased its efficiency.
- HollyFrontier rode the shale oil boom.
- Altria prepared for a decline in cigarette sale.

Shay was advised that she was the sole beneficiary of an inheritance of 3.75 million dollars. There was a letter from Granny Mae which explained that the money had been put in a trust account until Shay turned 25-years-old, which was less than a month away. Granny Mae directed Shay to

trust the Lord and to understand the meaning of this quote, “Et tu brute.” The cryptic letter closed with the following communication:

“Jesus is the only Answer. No one else is. Shay, remember everything I taught you. No One but God is your source. Only Our God can define you. The Devil is a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”

Shay noticed that the return address on the letter was from Satartia, MS. The address was: Rt 1 Box 12, Bloath Bypass, Satartia, MS 39162.

An internet search revealed all she needed to know about “Et tu brute.” The language was Latin and was from a Shakespearean story of treachery. The address in Mississippi, however, puzzled the choir director as she always thought Mae was from the Tri-city area, and specifically, the Willington Projects.

Shay scheduled a vacation for the following week. She and Janis had planned to take a quick trip to NYC for shopping and to sight-see, but because of the recent developments, Shay took the liberty of cancelling the trip with Janis and instead suggested that Janis take her daughter, Miley. Shay made an excuse that the school “messed up” her vacation days.

As her paycheck had not hit her account yet, she used her brand-new Capital One Venture card to rent a vehicle and was well on her way to Satartia, MS. As soon as she left the county, Spade called to ask, “Baby girl, where are you going?” She replied, “a lot has happened and I must leave town for a few days, but I will call you just as soon as I get back... wait, how did you know that I left?” He stated that there was a safety feature on her telephone that allowed him to be able to always find and protect her. There was a weird pause and some silence that ended when the copper said, “be careful on the road and call me if you need anything.”

Shay thought that her ride would give her a chance to listen to Bishop Jinx’s sermon titled: “Hashtag, If and Then (he actually wrote ‘hashtag’ in the church’s program).” She missed this particular sermon because of Miley’s piano recital a few weeks ago, but heard that the portly preacher “brought it” that Sunday. He always begins with a prayer. Let me recap the prayer he said on that Sunday:

“I pray for all of the womens in the audience. Lawd, encourage these womens to be who you done made them to be. Some of these womens got so much fake stuff on (someone in the audience could be heard saying “watch it preacher”), from they hair, eyelashes, eyebrows, color contacts, so much make-up on that they had to reply it with a paint sprayer, they puff they lips up so big like that they done kissed a hot clothes iron, they cut they noses smaller, some got silicone tops and I heard now bottoms too. They use lasers to zap off they chin hairs. They get they fat sucked out of they stomachs with some sort of medical vacuum cleaner. Sidebar, I know all you sangle womens been wondering, I like a woman whit some meat on they bones; Now, most of you ladies



gone be upset, but my wife gonna be healthy enough where she's warm in the winter and shade for me in the summer, Amen!

Lawd, I would ask that before you deny any of these womens with all this here fake stuff entry into heaven, that you run they fingerprints to see exactly who they be."

Shay shook her head in disbelief, but pressed on to the sermon. After he prayed, the rather stout reverend proceeded with: "there are times in scripture where God is expecting a full and complete transaction with his peoples. See, if Brother Ben told me, 'If you take me to Big Mabel's Rib and Fish House and I get the brisket, I will give you \$20,' should I expect the \$20 if I don't take him? No! Should I expect the \$20 if I take him and Big Mabel is sold out of the brisket and he has to get a whiting sandwich instead? No! I should not.

Watch this:

'He will draw nigh unto us 'if' we draw nigh unto Him, James 4:8.' Look here, what is the ultimatum (he meant alternative)? If we don't draw to him, should we expect him to draw to us? No!

'Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.' If you don't continue in his word, should you expect to be his disciple? No!

'Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.' If you don't do whatsoever, he commands of you, should you expect to be considered a friend? No! You ain't a friend and lemme ask what's the opposite of friend, Saints?

'If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give wear to his

commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee.' If you don't hearken to the voice of the LORD, should you expect diseases, yeah you should,

Exodus 19:5: 'Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine.' Ya'll know what I am saying!

2 Chronicles 7:14, 19: 'If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. But if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them.' Wat if you don't humble yourself and pray, turn from your wicked ways, and what if you turn from him and forsake his statues and go and and serve and worship other Gods?

After listening to the bishop and embarking on a most exhausting drive, the GPS led Shay right to Rt 1 Box 12, Bloath Bypass, Satartia, MS 39162. Due to the 911 mapping system, the address is also known as 43 Shepherds Moose Lane. The rural property was unkempt; chickens and goats walked about freely and there was a poor-looking older dog under the porch. He looked like the only thing holding him together were his many legion of fleas. Shay swore that the old sooner had a smoker's emphysema-type cough.

An elderly woman answered the door; her face was weathered, she had a bold patch of white hair in the center of her head, and it appeared that she was blind in one eye.



The back portion of her hair was covered by a bandana that had obviously been used during 10-or-so previous painting excursions. She had a shark's tooth necklace on and mixed-match Betty-Boop earrings. She wore yellow spandex pants and an X-Men t-shirt that had half of the wrinkles the old woman had. Sadly, the elderly woman had mistakenly put her brassiere on the outside of her shirt. She was barefoot and her feet were black as coal. The odors expelling from the home were a combination of mothballs, vanilla, sewage, and generations of poor decisions and countless broken promises.

Prior to Shay introducing herself, while chomping vigorously on the end of a corn cob pipe, the elder said, "Child, I know who you are, you are Mae's grandbaby, Shay-Shay." Shay remembered that as a little one, many family members would call her that, but she had not heard it in over two decades.

When Shay walked in the double-wide, what she thought was shag carpeting wrapped around her feet and abbreviated every step. However, a closer look revealed that animal hair is what had stymied her every movement. Kendrick Lamar's song, "Element," was heard coming out of a back

room. There was plastic covering what appeared to be lawn furniture in the living room. The black and white television was in a console and there was a record player attached to it. There were Richard Simmons and Jane Fonda VHS tapes strewn about. The old lady had a light-green rotary telephone and several pictures of Motown Artists covering her walls. There was a mirrored ceiling above the lawn furniture and 2 bean bag chairs placed near the imitation fireplace. The floaty stuff in the lava lamps was broken into various pieces, and the generations of roach families, who themselves appeared to turn on the light, didn't scurry, but rather stared Shay down.

On the coffee table sat several Jet magazines and a slew of collection letters from Blockbuster video. There were bumper stickers on the fridge. One read: "Rebbie, the Only True Jackson." Another, read: "Pass the Ganja to the Left-Hand Side." The last bumper sticker said: "Just Don't Drive a Cougar, be a Cougar." From the back of the trailer, an older man could be heard spitting flawless bars from J. Cole's, "Pride is the Devil."

Unfortunately, Shay discovered, as the two conversed, that this woman was able to endure severe bouts of narcolepsy and terrible gas, simultaneously. A normally 20-minute conversation took about 90 very loud, and uncomfortable, minutes, but through it all, Shay was able to discern that her host was Granny Mae's mother's oldest sister, Beatrice "Bea" Bloath.

Though auntie appeared to be eccentric in dress and mannerisms, she was quite astute and portrayed a woman of mental fortitude in speech. She was well-spoken and articulately shared with Shay stories of she and Mae's momma's upbringing. She shared some peaks and valleys and

disclosed more about Granny Mae than Shay ever knew. Granny Mae served as one of the first African American women to work as a NASA scientist. Bea gave a small chest to Shay that held academic award after award achieved by her Granny Mae over the years.

Shay was hesitant to ask, but she wondered what happened. She wanted to understand how Granny Mae ended up in the projects after achieving so much intellectual success in her time.

Beatrice “Bea” Bloath, who had not mastered the art of diplomacy or of sugar coating anything, answered simply, “It was a man.” A voice of an elderly man could be heard yelling, “Bea, do not mention Bobby and Whitney again.” Ignoring such unsolicited commentary, Bea went on to say, “Baby, listen, men are good to look at and sometime to keep us company, but all of them are not Godly. Men have started every single war, and even in the bible when these preachers suggest that women are men’s weaknesses, nope!” Shay listened intently as the mature women spoke because the round bishop never, ever, said anything like this.

The archaic lady went on to say, “They want to blame Eve, but Adam was supposed to be leader. They want to blame Sarah, but Abraham was supposed to be leader. Then, when those elders brought the woman to Jesus, they had the nerve to say, ‘we caught this woman in the very act of adultery.’ Where was the man?”

Ms. Bloath continued by saying, “Your Granny was a straight-A student and brilliant scientist, but she met the wrong man. Glenn, your no-account grandfather, took all he could from Mae: money, emotion, and time. He just depleted her life and robbed her of common sense. He tore her way from the church and from God. He was a leech. He became her focus and she stopped paying



any mind to God’s word. We kept trying to tell her what we saw, but the Devil got her! She felt like she kept hearing a voice confirming that ‘he is the one.’ She heard a voice all right, but it wasn’t from my sweet Jesus.”

The night progressed, and before Shay left, she asked the older women if she knew Trevor or Myron Bloath. “Know them?” she snickered as she walked to an antique curio, and pulled out an old, tattered scrapbook. The book of memorabilia was covered in dust and featured black and white photos of JFK, MLK and the like. There were photos of Bea and Deacon Trevor’s father, LC Bloath. Bea said, “yes, I know them, Trevor was my stepson, and I raised him like my very own. Well, your Granny helped me raise that other boy.”

Bea said, “Shay-Shay, before I forget, your Granny told me to tell you when I saw you for you to play your favorite game with her.” Without acknowledging her great-aunt’s last statement, Shay asked if the elder actually knew Trevor’s son, Myron.

Bea angrily replied, “that little Hellraising-so-and-so and his Jezebelish girlfriend were here last year and stole some of my checks and credit cards,” responded Bea.

Shay said, “I am sorry you must be mistaken; Myron is no Hellraiser, in fact, he is as boring as day-old, bread. Myron once told me that he doesn’t wear flip-flops because in Australia they’re referred to as thongs and that the space between your toes is private and considered sacred in most 3rd-world countries,” as she rolled her eyes.

“If you say so, but when folks get arrested around here, it's big news,” said the old woman. Bea went to grab a copy of the Satartia Scoop, the local newspaper. The Satartia Scoop newspaper consisted of about 12-15 pages and advertised the weekly swap meets, graduations, birthdays, and DUIs and other arrests, and is sponsored by Poke-Chops, a café on Highway 18, where their slogan is: “We Fry Everything, Even Our Menus!”

With her sight failing, the old woman asked her visitor to read the paper out loud. Shay opened the edition in question and read a few of the articles about the hog-calling championship and all about the invitations to LaShelle’ Wright’s baby gender reveal party that was held at the VFW Post 678 on Deer Pass Road. The old guy in the backroom yelled, “it should have been the daddy reveal party!” Regardless, Shay continued to read.

Shay read about Bobbi Rae and Caleb Moffett’s grand wedding reception at Waffle House and saw that a \$25 reward was offered for the return of Edgar Souder’s mule, Jenny. The add stated that, “there would be no questions asked.” Shay giggled but kept on browsing the local tabloid.

After reading an advertisement for Phil Upton’s “Fill-up” package store, with the “county’s only drive-thru liquor window,” Shay finally reached the section she so

desperately desired. When Shay perused the many arrests, ranging from hunting on animal reserves, TOCs (Theft of Chickens), DUIs, and unpaid child support warrants, she fervently focused on something that demanded all her attention.

## EPISODE 5:



After closely scrutinizing the documents, Shay was quite shocked to see a booking photo of Myron. Myron was apparently known by several aliases:

- Myron Bloath
- Miron Bloath
- Meyeron Bloath
- M. S. Bloath
- Miron Blaothe
- My-Ron Bloat
- “Stitch”

The eccentric old woman shared that Myron “Stich” Bloath had criminal records in CA, WA, TX, KS, MS, and Puerto Rico. Shay was lost for words and searched for info about his female accomplice; however, there was no picture or relative

information for his accomplice because the back pages of the newspaper were absent. Shay attempted to access Wi-Fi to determine more, but Bea's place was too remote. She decided to leave, and though not absolutely certain, thinks that the roaches actually moved her purse closer to the door and even pulled her keys out of it.

Regardless, Shay immediately made her way to town to garner some firsthand info, but the Satartia Scoop offices were closed. The Satartia Scoop offices sat catty-corner to Smithfield's Feed Store and Nail Place on Thompkins Pike near Hurt Creek.

At Smithfield's, a man can buy feed for his hogs from Mr. Kim, while Ms. Kim gives his wife a mani/pedi. This month, their special is that should you buy the Feed-Nails-Nails \$69.95 Family Pack, you will get 20lbs of sow meal, a mani/pedi, and receive a coupon for a dozen hot-dipped galvanized or stainless-steel nails for the price of aluminum ones!

Additional inquiries about the close-knit neighborhood resulted in Shay learning that the company's owner/editor/publisher, Bubba McFarland, was away on a fishing and hunting expedition and not expected back until late Monday morning.

It was Friday, and there was just no way the weary choir director was going to miss the opportunity to discover all the pieces to this rather convoluted puzzle. She contacted the rental company and school to extend her stay in Yazoo County, MS.

Shay then traveled to the closest place of lodging, Miller's Motel and Diner, on route 66, next to Barney's Biscuits, Bolts, and Bubbles. Barney's serves you breakfast while you get your tractor washed or repaired.

Shay used the motel's website to determine that the Satartia Scoop possessed absolutely

no online presence. After offering her identification, and prior to tendering payment, the innkeeper told Shay her room was already paid for. "Your room, 112, is the nicest one we have; it even has a window. In there, we always use 2-ply!"

Mr. Patel added, "Your room is located next to Mr. Spade's room, 114." Shay's eyes opened widely, and before she could say anything, the motel's proprietor stated, "Mr. Spade insisted that there should be no connecting door."

Maybe Shay should have been upset about the obvious intrusion, but she appeared most excited about having someone familiar to talk to that she could trust. She hurried to his room, but saw a sticky note on the door which read, "Back soon my love."

She opened the door to room 112, but could barely maneuver around because of all the roses. She saw her bedspread, sheets, and "My Pillow" from home and several boxes of new outfits, jewelry, and French perfumes. Her sooter had drawn a smiley face on another sticky note sprayed with his cologne and attached it to a box of Gobstoppers, her favorite childhood candy.

Officer Spade returned armed with a personal pan pizza with anchovies on one side, pepperoni on the other, and mushrooms down the middle and a chilled glass of Loganberry. In the motel's mini-fridge, Shay found scallops over a bed of rice pilaf, grilled asparagus stalks, pan-seared broccoli, and fresh apricots. She felt so fortunate to have a man who cared for her so deeply and covered every single detail. The voice said, "total package." He kissed her, and without emitting a single word, let it be known that he had been aching for her.



He sat her on the bed, lowered himself to one knee, and presented these words to her:

“I am without if I am without you.  
I die every time you depart from me.  
I am reborn when you are near.  
Though I fear no man,  
I fear breathing when I cannot see you.  
I barely exist when we are apart,  
and I endure when we are together.  
Shay, will you...”

Shay, not allowing the Romantic to continue, interrupted him to share the story of this tangled web of confusion; she omitted any info about the millions and millions of inheritances, but mainly focused on the mystery surrounding Myron. Spade expressed some degree of interest, but instantaneously received a text. After digesting the texted message, his countenance was altered and without much notice, the man abruptly retired to his room for the night.

On Saturday and Sunday, the couple spent all their time together. They patronized three casinos in Biloxi, where Spade spent money like it was water, drove the Natchez Trace, ate steak and lobster, drank, laughed, and sight-saw. In case you are wondering, each night saw each person in their own separate beds.

Monday’s visit to the Satartia Scoop’s humble offices proved devastating. The building had been burned to the ground and Mr. McFarland had not returned from his rural outing. The local sheriff, his 3 sons, and half the town had been out looking for him.

Dejected, the two ventured back toward the Tri-city area without knowing who the unidentified chick was that accompanied Bloath on his local crime spree.

Spade drove the entire way while Shay reclined. Some kind of way, 5.0. was capable

of driving all the way home while massaging the First Baptist’s chorus leader’s feet with scented, warming oil.

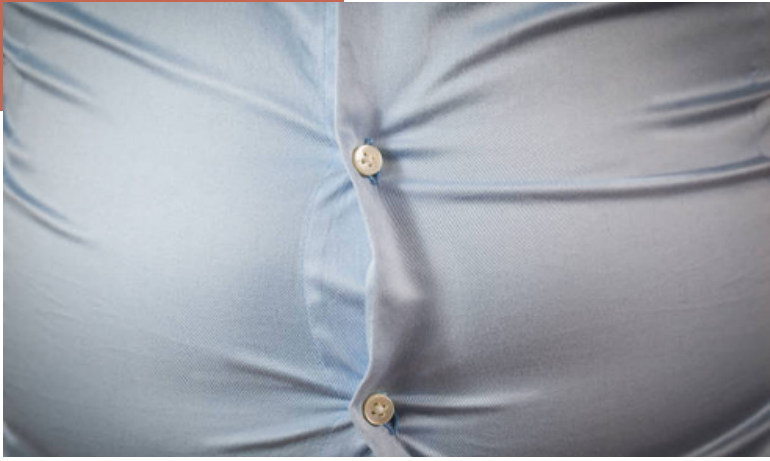
On interstate 55, the two listened to an online version of Bishop Jinx’s most recent sermon entitled: “You Can’t be Fixed Unless You Been Broken.”

An excerpt of the sermon suggested: “many of you’s peoples are in a pit. Ya’ll worrying bout the sides of the pit, when you need to be axing why you there. Joseph’s brothers throwed him in the pit and he sat there until they got another idea. What I am saying? That ya’ll may need to be in a place where you just thank, not move all about, but just thank! Then, without you moving about and involving yoself in God bid-ness, it give him a chance to develop yo next step without yo help.

See, once Jo-Jo came up out of that pit, he got sold and ended up in Egypt. Ya’ll know the story, Pothead’s (Deacon Lester could be heard saying, “Potiphar, sir.”) wife tried to bump bellies, but look here, while singing he “saw something wrong with a little bump...” (Mother Sherell could be heard saying, “alright Pastor.”) Look here, he did right and still ended up in jail. Ya’ll gonna do right and still be caught up in some stuff.”

Bishop could then be heard yelling “Read!” Mother Sherell could be heard saying, “This is from the NIV: John 16:33 ‘I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.’” Bishop went on to say, “Thanks Mother, I like the New Inspirational Version (no one said a word).”

Ya’ll getting stuck in yall’s pits and yall’s cells, yall making yall’s pits and cells yall’s home, when as chill’n of God, you should



know that ain't yo place, or who you is... God must be letting you, 'chill-lax...' young folks I got that from Charlamange and ne'm. He letting you chill-lax, and rather than fretting, pray to find out why you is where you is and then start praising him for what he gone do next! If you trust him, then trust him, always and forever. I feel a heatwave in here!... Ask Jonah, the Lawd will let you sit in some nasty places, fish guts and all, to teach you something. Amen?"

Next on the recording, Tiny, one of the Slattery twins, can be heard yelling, "Ouch!" Shay was told that one of the buttons from the Bishop's vest popped off and caught the young women above her right eye. Rumor is that it left a scar.

By the end of the sermon, Shay and her sort-of-beau made it safely to their city. While at home, Shay sat on everything that she knew and tried to develop a plan of action to find out what she didn't. She temporarily stopped going to First Baptist, as she did not want to see the Deacon or his son until she understood all of the inner-workings of this profound mystery.

Before she knew it, she started repeating, "Holy Spirit activate, activate, activate!" Shay sat and pondered everything that occurred and thought that perhaps she may have recalled a vital clue and piece of the puzzle. She recounted hearing Bea say, "Your Granny told me to tell you to play your

favorite game with her." They actually had two favorite games: Parcheesi and Message Decoder.

Next, Shay tried to call Bea to get conformation that she heard and understood her correctly, but there was no answer. She called, then called, and called again, but simply to no avail. She pondered that, of course, there would be no way to play either game by herself. Parcheesi cannot be effectively played solo, and as far as Message Decoder, Mae would have had to give her a note. The deal was that encoded in each note was a private message. They would only capitalize the letters of the words needed to relay a secret message.

Wait! It then dawned on Shay that Granny Mae left her that cryptic letter the day she was made aware of her inheritance. Before she could go to her filing cabinet to retrieve the correspondence from the lawyers, the Satartia, MS police called after seeing Shay's telephone number on Bea's caller I.D. multiple times. The policemen explained the old woman expired in her sleep the previous night. Almost immediately after, Spade texted Shay and said, "I am coming right over, I have something for you; I am right around the corner."

When he arrived, the Fuzz was wearing a tight muscle shirt and smelled of Shay's favorite scent. The voice said something inappropriate and added, "just do it and you can always repent later." Next, the beefy patrolman handed Shay the missing pages to the Satartia Scoop newspaper and a thick Manilla envelope.

Wait to see what happens on the next edition of First Baptist.