



### **How it begins ... Episode One**

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of July several years ago, two adorable girls make their not too subtle entrance into the family of Cedric and Rachel Parker. One is named Katherine but is called Katie while the other is labeled Karen. The twins are both beautiful and bewitchingly fair haired darlings.

However after a period of time, small differences become obvious. Clearly by the ages of five years, the girls' begin to display completely distinctive physical characteristics. While Karen's hair remains straight and silky, Katie's hair becomes luxurious with volumes of waves like her mother. Still the girls play well together and love each other dearly.

During the approach of adolescence, Aunt Claire insists that both Katie and Karen spend their summers with her learning how to be posed and sophisticated. Karen takes to the training like a "duck takes to water" while Katie hates her summer outings.

“Dad, must I spend another summer with Aunt Claire?” Karen whines.

“I think it’s a lot of fun learning the art of elegance.” Katie interjects.

“I don’t.” Karen counters. “Sports suit me better.”

Consequently, Katie begins to fall into a deep depression whenever time draws near for her to accompany her sister Karen to Aunt Claire’s home. Cedric becomes hostile toward Claire and emphasizes his right to intercede in his daughter’s development.

“Katie will not be accompanying Karen to your home this summer.” Cedric asserts.

“And, I would like to know why not? That child has the grace of a bull elephant. Her training needs to be accelerated!” Claire insists.

“I believe I know what’s best for my own daughter!” Cedric firmly stands his ground, fighting long and hard until he finally convinces Claire that it will be in Katie’s best interest if she remains with them during summer break. However, their daughter Karen has willingly become Claire’s protégé.

It is no secret that Claire despises her younger sister Rachel. Cedric has always been her desire for a mate, but his admiration is firmly bestowed on Rachel. Therefore, when Claire first notices that Wyatt is observing Katie; Claire puts it into the heart of Karen to lure Wyatt away from her sister anyway that she can.

Claire buys Karen exceptionally beautiful clothes. She also makes sure that her Personal Assistant Amanda takes the girl to the finest salons where she is groomed and coiffured. Karen’s stunning honey blonde hair is given magnificent platinum highlights similar to her own. Claire also generously bestows money on Karen for whatever she thinks will help capture Wyatt. Katie is not neglected by her parents. Cedric’s wealth not only matches Claire’s but overshadows it. Regardless, it is Katie’s personality that captures Wyatt’s heart, not her financial resources.

Even knowing that, Karen grows weary of the pursuit. However, Claire never gives up the notion that it will be possible for Karen to win Wyatt

away from Katie. As a final gesture, Claire tries to dissuade Karen from having anything to do with Jonathan but to no avail.

“Jonathan is the balm I need to soothe the constant rejections I’ve face with Wyatt.” Karen insists. “Besides, I am thrilled with the attention I receive from him.” So Karen continues to pursue both men.

Jonathan is totally captivated by Karen and her glorious head of hair. Jonathan delights in watching it gleam in the evening sun and sometimes imagine running his hands through it. Had Claire not been so blinded by jealousy; she would realize just what a kind and loving husband Jonathan will make Karen.

Jonathan also knows of Claire’s dislike for him and does everything he can to sway her toward him. After his final conversation with her, he understands that it is a hopeless endeavor. Claire refuses to acknowledge the many good qualities of Jonathan and takes her resentment of him to the grave.

In the course of time, whether consciously or not, Karen eventually allows her aunt’s evil influence to put her into competition with her twin. Claire’s icy and manipulative fingers reach from beyond the grave to orchestrate dissention between the two sisters. Whenever Wyatt buys something wonderful for Katie; Karen insists that Jonathan find something even grander.

Beautiful foreign cars are definitely Wyatt’s passion and not Jonathan’s. Wyatt has no qualms regarding the purchase of such expensive vehicles to add to his collection. So when Wyatt purchases for Katie a breathtaking white Lamborghini –Karen coaxes Jonathan into buying her an Gold-colored Alfa Romeo Giulia. Jonathan has to manipulate the bulk of his assets to do this.

In Karen’s mind she could imagine Claire becoming furious if she had not coerced Jonathan into buying that car. However, the purchase puts Jonathan well over his spending budget and is almost his ruin. Both Karen and Jonathan reluctantly go to Wyatt for assistance. Wyatt, through his personal contacts, is able to sell the Alfa Romeo Giulia at a profit and recovered Jonathan’s assets.

Karen's father Cedric is furious and demands to know what could have possessed her into doing such a fool-hardy thing. When she tells him that her Aunt Claire had pushed her into doing it; Cedric begins to question his daughter's sanity.

"What are you talking about Karen? You know that Claire is dead." Cedric's face changes from one of anger to one of concern.

"I know father—nevertheless, that's who told me to do this."

Cedric decides to have a secret discussion with his son-in-law Jonathan suggesting that perhaps having children would help.

Karen has two miscarriages and the third attempt at pregnancy proves life threatening. After much deliberation with Jonathan, Karen succumbs to the surgeon's knife and all future hopes of having children are forever sequestered. Karen tells her father that Aunt Claire feels this is all for the good. She doesn't think Karen needs children anyway. Cedric shakes his head in dismay and leaves his daughter alone.

Although Karen still maintains a somewhat subdued version of her self-serving attitude, it is only tempered by the fact that Katie is always by her side throughout all the unhappy turns of life. At her father's insistence, Katie attempts to pacify her sister's strange behavior and at times is somewhat successful.

Even when the spirit of Aunt Claire is blatantly stirred up in Karen to the point of being obnoxious—Katie realizes that the beloved Karen of her youth is still lurking somewhere in the background.



### **The Lovely Madelyn ... Episode Two**

It is now the present and for the past sixteen years—“The lovely Madelyn ...” is uttered by someone at least once every day. Not that her younger sister Jasmine isn’t a beauty with her flawless complexion, but Madelyn’s mannerisms always fascinates and attracts admiration. Jasmine, being the youngest of three siblings, finds it a constant battle to be accepted for who she is.

Madelyn’s older brother Wyatt Jr. graduates with honors from Sanford University. He has returned to Maple Grove to pursue a great job as an architect in his father and uncle’s firm.

Madelyn has easily slipped into big brother’s shoes. She excels in everything she attempts to do. She is Senior Class President, Valedictorian and President of the local National Honor Society. Madelyn also possesses luxurious, long blonde hair like her mother. While little sister Jasmine’s blonde hair is medium-length, with natural sparkle like her father.

“Jassy, don’t worry if your hair is not like Madelyn’s.” Mrs. Katie Parker Anderson, their mother always says. “You are so very beautiful. Your hair is

reminiscent of a summer's day: bouncy and teeming with life. You don't have to walk in your sister's shadow. You are both stunning young ladies!" Jasmine smiles happily because she is learning to be content with her luscious locks.

Wyatt Jr. is also another defender of little sister Jasmine. He has always been the very first to come to her rescue when teachers and thoughtless friends make comparisons of Madelyn and Jasmine. The worst offender is Karen Parker Anderson.

"Why can't you be more like Madelyn?" Mrs. Anderson, Maple Grove Preparatory School volunteer coordinator, whines one day while visiting her sister. Karen Anderson is Jasmine's aunt. Karen is also married to Jonathan Andrew, Wyatt's brother and twin sister to Katherine (Katie) Anderson.

"Madelyn is going very far in life. She has the beauty, poise and personality of a debutante!" Karen throws in her sister Katie's face. "It's easy to see she inherited **my** social skills!"

"Jasmine will go very far as well **dear sister**. She has understated classic good looks and a *fabulous figure!*" Katie retorts in anger. "I am proud of her athletic abilities. I am extremely proud of **both my daughters!**"

"You were never the socialite, **were you dear Kate.**" Karen flings at her sister with vehemence.

"Maybe not **dear Karen** but **I married Wyatt**, didn't I?" Katie hurls back in defense watching her twin sister flinch.

"Uh ... well, I guess I'd better be going." Karen says picking up her belongings and feeling very foolish and small. She gives her sister a spontaneous hug in apology.

"Yes ... I guess ... and do come again." Katie replies returning her sister's hug and also feeling childish as she walks Karen to the door. Kate knows that her sister really loves her; she just has a problem getting past her own self-worth due to an interfering and dominating aunt.

After witnessing the hilarious episode with her Aunt Karen and her mother, Jasmine finds herself quietly sitting on the glider swing that graces her parents' courtyard.

"I wonder how mom put up with Great Aunt Claire and Aunt Karen for all those years. There definitely has to be a lot of love!" Jasmine thinks to herself.

"What are you doing out here, squirt?" Wyatt Jr. questions.

"Oh, I am trying to stay out of Madelyn's shadow. Aunt Karen seems to think the sun rises and sets on her." Jasmine complains while fiddling with the rubber band that secures her ponytail.

"Oh—I guess you've witnessed yet another "attack of the dragon lady," eh?" Wyatt Jr queries laughingly.

"Yep, and as usual she tries to leave a few burn marks on mom." Jasmine says, also giggling.

"That woman is definitely cruising for a bruising. Aunt Karen can sometimes possess the sting of a scorpion." Wyatt Jr. interjects. He is affectionately called Ocean by Jasmine and Madelyn because his thick hair sometime seems to glimmer in the sunlight.

"I know and a scorpion's sting can kill!" Jasmine reminds her older brother.

"You don't think that Aunt Karen would—" Ocean's voice trails off.

"I don't really know; I'm just saying that sometimes her words can bite like an adder to use another cliché." Jasmine reveals.

"Now that you've mention it; there are times when Aunt Karen really isn't herself. Then there are times—what did mom have to say?" Ocean asks.

"Ocean, you know how our mother is. I thought I was about to witness the extermination of that scorpion! Aunt Karen displayed the common sense to back off; wiping the egg off her face!" Jasmine laughs.

“That’s our mom. Aunt Karen has the knack of rubbing her the wrong way. It’s hard to believe that mom has endured Aunt Karen’s acid tongue for all these years. I think it’s beginning to wear on her nerves. Anything Aunt Karen has to say that remotely resembles comparing you to Madelyn puts her into combat mode!” Ocean smiles thinking about how feisty his five foot two inch mother can be.

“From what I’ve heard others say, Aunt Karen is becoming more like Great Aunt Claire every day!” Jasmine exclaims.

“Now that’s one for Grimm’s Fairytales. I heard there was quite a competition between Great Aunt Claire and Grammy over Grandpa Cedric.” Ocean comments.

“Yes, and after the twins were born the wedge became even deeper. Great Aunt Claire started to favor Aunt Karen. She would invite her over for the summer. Take her on outings. Mom said she never wanted to go because she felt something not quite right with Great Aunt Claire!

“Some people said that Great Aunt Claire had a familiar spirit?” Ocean remembers. “She did seem to have quite a hold on Aunt Karen, still does.”

“Do you think that Aunt Karen possesses that spirit?” Jasmine asks him.

“Yes, if Great Aunt Claire had it; you can rest assured that Aunt Karen has it. Just as Great Aunt Claire and Grammy were rivals for the heart of Grandpa Cedric. Aunt Karen and mom were rivals after dad. Mom however won him over without a skirmish.” Ocean responds.

“Yes and isn’t it’s so strange that mom is so much like Grammy and Aunt Karen is so much like Great Aunt Claire. Mom is so beautiful and Aunt Karen has that **HAIR**.” Jasmine says.

“I heard that Aunt Karen’s hair came out of a bottle or a series of bottles.” Ocean begins his story.

“Wow, you’re kidding!” Jasmine exclaims.

“No, that’s the local gossip! Great Aunt Claire’s hair was so straight and silky because it came straight out of a bottle. She wanted Aunt Karen to be

so much like her that she had her personal aide take her to the best salons to perform all kinds of incantations.” Ocean adds.

“Now I know you’re making this up.” Jasmine chuckles.

“Honest! The chemists also used a variety of straightening products to train Aunt Karen’s hair to be more like Great Aunt Claire. I’m told that in time Aunt Karen achieved the desired look.” Ocean continues his story.

“Hmm—” Jasmine is still not convinced that the fabrication is true.

“While Madelyn’s hair, on the other hand, is naturally silky and straight. Madelyn does possess the same gorgeous head of hair with streaks of dark gold that could intoxicate any man. While Great Aunt Claire had the platinum trademark.” Ocean concludes. “That’s the same look that Aunt Karen uses to hypnotize Uncle Jonathan!”

“Quite a story!” Jasmine admits, “Aunt Karen and mom share the same similar looks but mom has personality and a marvelous figure!” Jasmine defends smiling.

“You most definitely can’t deny that, little sister!” They both laugh hardily.

As things seem to settle, Madelyn appears to join them outside. Jasmine looks up from the glider swing and smiles at her sister.

“And what are you two laughing about?” Madelyn questions her siblings.

“Oh, we were discussing the pros and cons of our mother and aunt.” Ocean informs Madelyn as she slides into the swing next to Jasmine.



### **Showing Who is in Charge ... Episode Three**

Madelyn's elegant demeanor captures their attention. Her movements are as deliberate as a model's. Madelyn is so shockingly like her Aunt Karen that many people think she is Karen's daughter much to Karen's delight.

Karen pays full tuition for Madelyn to go to *Maude Fabersham's Ultimate Allure*, the same finishing school that Great Aunt Claire patronized. Since Madelyn really wants to go and Jasmine shows no interest, Katie concedes to her daughter's and sister's wishes. Jasmine being more like her mother and Grammy is allowed to participate in girl scouting, hiking, and boating.

"Jassy, I'm really sorry what happened a moment ago. Sometimes I don't understand Aunt Karen at all. Let's talk about it."

Then Madelyn turns to Ocean.

"Ocean will you leave us alone for a while; I want to talk to Jassy alone." Madelyn says ushering her older brother toward the house.

“Sure thing; just let me know if either of you need anything. Actually, I do need to be getting back to my apartment. Getting that architect job straight out of college has really worn me out.” Ocean says.

“Not to mention those nights out with the boys you have been in a habit of taking. I don’t know what you see in that Crawfordville horde. They have the collective mentality of a Walrus!” Madelyn shakes her silky hair laughing.

“Let me enlighten you, *Miss Ivy League*. Joe, Melvin, Cleo and Dennis are a great bunch of guys. I admit they are a little rough around the edges, but you couldn’t ask for better mates.” Ocean mimics an Australian accent.

“They really are nice guys, Maddie.” Jasmine reiterates.

“Ocean Anderson, have you been exposing Jassy to those boys?” Katie has just been standing in the doorway and hears part of the conversation. “I don’t mind so much you hanging around that rowdy lot but to expose Jass—”

“Mom, just hold on for a minute! You’re beginning to sound *Miss Ivy League* yourself. That must be something they teach at Maude Fabersham’s. I don’t think there’s anything wrong with Jass joining us guys sometimes. You know how great she is at basketball. **You** were All State Champion back in your day and dad says you could whip any fella with your hands tied behind you. Dad says you were always hanging around—” Ocean admonishes as his mother interrupts.

“Ocean, didn’t you say that you had something to do back at your apartment?” Katie reminds her son. “Besides, things were a lot different in “my day.”

“Okay, okay I know when I’m not wanted.” Ocean replies mimicking hurt feelings but giving way to laughter as he gives his petite mother a bear hug.

“Maddie, there’s a phone call for you. It’s your Aunt Karen. No doubt she has additional information about the preparations for Maple Grove Senior Prom and Maple Grove High Commencement Ceremony.” Katie directs her remarks to Madelyn. “I know Karen is a super pain in the derrière but she means well. Please put up with her demands a few more days.”

“Mom your sister is a snob and you of all people know it. The way she treats you and Jasmine makes me want to barf. I only put up with it because of my love for you and respect for my elders. You went to *Maude Fabersham’s Ultimate Allure* but it didn’t turn you into a vamp.” Madelyn complains slowly rising from the swing.

“Aunt Claire couldn’t manipulate me like she could Karen and my mom. I think mom was a little intimidated by her but dad held his ground. Karen absorbed every bit of who-do Aunt Claire offered. What happened today was just one of many scrimmages I’ve waged with your Aunt. My mother is a sweet and caring soul while Aunt Claire was dominating heifer!”

“You really think Great Aunt Claire was into enchantment?” Madelyn asks.

“I can’t prove it. Only Great Aunt Claire and Karen know for sure. One can’t tell and the other won’t. All I know is that she gives me a very uncomfortable feeling whenever I am in her presence. Whenever I look at her, it’s like seeing a stranger.” Katie reminisces.

“Well ... I don’t want to end up like her.” Madelyn flatly states.

“You possess Grandpa Cedric’s stubborn spirit as I do. You have nothing to fear from Karen or Great Aunt Claire. Now, go talk to your aunt and do use some of that charm she so graciously paid for. You can talk to your little sister later.” Katie coaxes, herding Madelyn in the direction of the phone and giving Jasmine a wink.

Madelyn chuckles hardily and tries to compose herself as she follows her mother into the house.

“So much for heart-to-heart talks with big sister, eh Jassy?” Ocean says walking toward his car with Jasmine following close behind. He couldn’t help noticing the mischievous look in Jasmine’s eyes.

“Aunt Karen is probably going to give Maddie additional tips on how to be perfect.” Jasmine says trying very hard not to laugh as she conjures up images of her sister making faces at the phone.

“Maddie is a lot like mom. She can politely listen to what you have to say and then turn up the fire and burn you to a crisp!” Ocean smiles.

“Yep ... I am like Grammy. We just take and take. I guess I’d just rather stay out of a person’s way than face a confrontation.” Jasmine says pensively.

“Well, don’t worry about it little sister— ... your teen years are promising to be very interesting. I can see our little caterpillar emerging into one hellava butterfly.” Ocean predicts laughingly.

Jasmine knows that it is very rare that Madelyn has the time to talk to her. It seems that Madelyn’s calendar is always filled with something planned. She finds herself hoping that now that Madelyn is graduating—everything will calm down and she can enjoy a normal life.

Meanwhile, Madelyn is on the phone with her Aunt Karen.

“Madelyn, my lovely child, I have finished the final preparation for the prom tomorrow night! I took the liberty of ordering you an exquisite Paris gown. You will definitely be the Belle of the Ball.” Aunt Karen purrs feeling very proud.

“Mom and I are going to the Shops of Maple Grove to find my gown. I’ve spied one in the window at Topaz Ltd. that I like very much.” Madelyn counters.

“Oh please ... we both know that your mother doesn’t possess the finesse to choose a pair of stiletto heels!” Aunt Karen is beginning to lose some of her graces.

“She’s **my** mother, I’d like to remind you, Aunt Karen!” Madelyn is also on the verge of showing her claws.

“Such undeserved loyalty, my lovely Madelyn –you would best use your gratitude on me. Where would you be without my constant assistance, my influence, and my connections?” Aunt Karen slyly reminds Madelyn.

“My father has as many if not more connections, Auntie.” Madelyn responds, on knowing how much her aunt despises being referred to in that manner.

“Oh, I see. Now that you are on the verge of graduating you feel that you know longer need me. Beware, my young protégé!” Aunt Karen threatens.

“My dear Aunt Karen, I am well aware of your many contributions and I am grateful for your assistance—” Madelyn begins

“That’s much more like it dear Madelyn—” Aunt Karen interrupts.

“But, if you ever attempt to demean my mom to me, I will personally make you regret the day you were born.” Madelyn responds with so much venom that it makes Aunt Karen wince with fear. “I believe this conversation is over.” Madelyn presses her finger on the button, ending the call.



### **A Father's Counsel ... Episode Four**

Jasmine loves playing rough and tumble much to the annoyance of Karen Anderson and the delight of Katie Anderson. Like Katie, Jasmine is on the girl's track team and has gotten several trophies in middle school for her basketball skills. Also to her Aunt Karen's disappointment Jasmine's father is very proud of his athletic daughter. Karen Parker Anderson still carries a secret torch for the handsome Wyatt Anderson but it is Katie Parker Anderson who won and retains his heart.

A kiss on the forehead brings Jasmine back to the present.

"I've really got to go, squirt, but I'll call you tomorrow." Ocean says.

"Ok, Ocean." Jasmine replies.

Jasmine gives her brother a generous hug and returns to the swing. There she plops back down and begins to swing in earnest. Just then her sister reappears.

“Jassy, I’m sorry I had to leave you to talk to Aunt Karen. I’m trying very hard to be amiable to her but it has not been easy. She constantly tries to fill my head with garbage about mom. I’m sorry I ever got involved with her.” Madelyn states pensively.

“I’ve never heard you speak this way, Maddie!” Jasmine responds in complete surprise.

“I never wanted mommy to know. As a kid, I was always fascinated by all the glitter Aunt Karen possessed. And, when I was offered the opportunity to attend *Maude Fabersham’s Ultimate Allure* I was beside myself with joy!” Madelyn continues fingering her silky mass of hair.

“Yes, I remember.” Jasmine smiles back at her sister. “I just never cared for all that ruffles-n-lace nonsense?”

“I know.” Madelyn shares a laugh with Jasmine as they both swing away.

Now Katie is an attractive middle-aged woman who although prefers jeans and sweats has an insatiable passion for furs. This is not to say however that Katie can’t be cajoled into an occasional evening gown when attending one of her husband’s important gala events!

Although she and Karen are twins they are dissimilar in many, many ways. While Karen is fair skinned with streaks of platinum interwoven into her blonde hair, Katie is of a healthy bronze complexion with thick rich brilliant-blonde hair. Karen is tall and stately while Katie is a pixie delight. Karen attempts to intoxicate Wyatt with her feminine charms and stylish dresses, Katie bowls him over without even trying by being herself.

Katie is completely satisfied with the life she shares with Wyatt. Karen is in constant competition, struggling to best her twin with the size of houses, cars, and other material possessions. Jonathan has to finally put his proverbial foot down when Karen’s desires near put them on the brink of bankruptcy. If not for the shrewd business savvy of his younger brother

Wyatt, Jonathan would have lost everything. Instead, Jonathan shares a growing empire with Wyatt Sr.

Being aware of this fact, Katie tries to keep Madelyn from being negatively influenced by the spiteful and sometimes vindictive Karen. Madelyn's desire to be sophisticated without the cynical aspects is applauded by both Katie and Wyatt Sr.

Later that afternoon Katie has a conversation with Jasmine.

“How about the two of us going shopping on Saturday. Karen wants to introduce Maddie to some out-of-state friends of your Uncle Jonathan and Wyatt who will be very beneficial to your sister's endeavors. Wyatt is going with Maddie since Jonathan has to meet business clients. Both Wyatt and Uncle Jonathan think this will be the best. Your Uncle Jonathan's eyes have been opened to a lot of things since that little mishap a few years ago. By the way, the Millstones and Bentleys are very influential without the natural aversion that comes with wealth. After our shopping spree we can have a late lunch!” Katie replies studying her beautiful daughter. Katie marvels that she has been blessed with two strikingly beautiful girls and one handsome son.

“Mom that would be swell!” Jasmine says smiling. “I look forward to it!”

“I want to try out a new look on you. If you like it, we'll call it a permanent makeover, otherwise it's business-as-usual!” Katie laughs.

“Do you really think it's time for a new look, mom?” Jasmine inquires.

“Why not ... you're 15 going on 16? I was introduced to a new look at that age. However, I am giving you the choice of whether you want to settle down with that look or not. My Aunt Claire bullied my mother into trying to make me a “carbon copy” of Karen. She told my mother that it was about time I started acting like a lady and not just another jock. I really enjoyed the look, but the fact that Aunt Claire wanted to thrust it upon me made me rebel. It was my father who intervened.”

“Grandpa Cedric is a very special man in your life isn't he, mother?” Jasmine asks.

“Yes he is and I hope he will be around for a very long time. So, what are your plans for this afternoon? I need to go with your sister and Karen to supervise the fitting of her prom dress.” Karen explains.

“Mom, can I ride my bike over to Aunt Meg’s house” Jasmine asks. “I have a taste for her cookies!”

“Why don’t you let your father take you, sweetheart? Then get your Aunt Meg to bring you back. That way you won’t have to ride your bicycle in the dark.” Katie suggests.

“That’s a great idea mom, thanks!” Jasmine says. Katie hugs Jasmine and goes into the house in search of her husband.

Jasmine waits for her father to come outside. They get into his company truck and head in the direction of her Aunt Meg’s house across town. Jasmine gives her father a hug and prepares to hop out of the truck. Her father speaks to her.

“Jasmine, my darling your mother and I only want what’s best for you, you believe that?” Her father asks gathering Jasmine in his arms and giving her a fatherly hug.

“You and mom are terrific. Aunt Karen thinks I should stop playing sports and settle down to a more demure lifestyle.” Jasmine says almost laughing.

“Well Jasmine fortunate for you Karen is not your mother. I will not allow her to dictate to you the way she tries to do to your mother Katie. I think she never got over the fact that I chose Katie.” Her dad replies gleefully.

“Why did you choose mom, dad?” Jasmine asks curiously.

“I chose Katie, Jassy because she was the most fascinating woman I’d ever met. She could play basketball with the best of them and then look good without smelling like a floral arrangement. Your Aunt Karen ... you know.” Wyatt laughs.

“Yes dad I know. Do you think that Aunt Karen resents mom?” Jasmine quizzes.

“I think it’s a mixed relationship. She loves your mother, but she is also jealous of what she possesses. This is why she clings so hard to Madelyn and tries to create friction between the two of you. But we are NOT having it!” Wyatt retorts forcefully and then laughs.

“Oh dad ... I know what you mean ... thanks!” Jasmine giggles back.

“I want to buy your mother that new full-length fox-fur I saw in the display window. I know she doesn’t really crave furs but she looks fantastic when I’m able to seduce her into wearing one!” Wyatt laughs.

“Dad ... you love mom very much don’t you?” Jasmine asks already knowing the answer.

“Yes, sweetheart I love your mother very much.” Wyatt replies on a sober note.



## **Like Looking in the Mirror ... Episode Five**

Just as Meg goes to the window, she sees her brother and her niece getting out of his Blue Maserati-Ghibli. She bolts out of the front door all smiles. Meg, short for Megan, is youngest in a family of two boys and one girl. Wyatt is three years older than Megan and three years younger than his brother Jonathan. When Karen couldn't capture Wyatt, she allowed herself to be seduced by his older brother Jonathan. Jonathan's knack for making money as the senior partner in the Andrew firm is as legendary as his good looks and charm. There is no shortage of sex appeal in the Andrew family.

Meg operates as a freelance interior designer visiting the homes of both distinguish local and state-wide legislators. She has plenty of clients and occasionally visits the capital. Sometimes she recruits the assistance of Jasmine who shows great promise with her artistic style. Although Jasmine has a great love for the outdoors, she is beginning to blossom in her teen

years. She is truly starting to take greater interest in designing, much to the delight of both her mother Katie and her Aunt Meg.

Meg's husband is Walter Summerfield. Walter is a retired Air Force colonel who now enjoys tinkering with electronics—computers mainly. Walter works in communications so he is still into making big money. Walter contracts his services to major companies who face disruptions in their communication devices. Between the two of them Meg's and Walter's incomes afford them a very lucrative existence. In fact on several occasions Wyatt Sr. incorporates Walter's services on different projects that require his unique expertise. Both Walter and Meg are very fond of her sister-in-law Katie. However, their relationship with Karen has much to be desired.

Walter and Meg have one son, Walter Edward named for his father and grandfather. Since Edward went abroad to study; Walter and Meg are happy to spend time with Madelyn, Jasmine or Ocean whenever the opportunity presents itself.

“There is my Jasmine! I am glad to see you two. Why didn't Katie come? I know that Maddie must be getting ready for her commencement exercises. Oh by the way, Walter is in the back Wyatt why don't you holler?” Meg says packing a big smile on her face. Wyatt makes his way to the back of the spacious lawn while Meg gives Jasmine her full attention.

Walter is in the back working in the shop he has created from the detached garage. When he sees Wyatt he drops what he's doing to meet him half-way.

“Wyatt, it's good to see you. Did you drop Jassy and Maddie off? How is Katie?” Walter quizzes.

“I'm bringing Jassy this time Walt. Maddie is being prepped by “that woman” and Katie is acting as referee.” Wyatt laughs.

“Well, Katie is more than up to the challenge. Your brother really has his hands full with that woman, doesn't he?” Walter chuckles, “She is as different from Katie as night is from day.”

“Yes, I know. Jonathan loves her! That man would give her the moon if she asked for it. I'm getting Katie that fur coat I saw in Frederick's display window.” Wyatt adds.

“Do you mean that fabulous full-length fox-fur coat?” Walter quizzes.

“That’s the one, buddy.” Wyatt replies.

“Wow, you’re getting Katie another fur coat ... hey Meg will want another one, too. Watch it buddy!” Walter admonishes in mock disapproval.

“To tell you the true, when Jassy discovers how great she’ll look in finery and fur I may be in for trouble. We’ve never had any trouble with boys. Maddie has been so busy with school activities that she rarely has time. And Jassy, well the guys look at her as an equal. When she starts wearing makeup and dresses ...” Wyatt allows his voice to trail off.

“I think you are going to have to get ready for the change. I know it’s not going to be easy but Jassy is a beautiful girl. You take her to church on Sundays; don’t guys look at her then?” Walter asks.

“Jassy usually wears a plain pantsuit with no makeup. Her hair is piled on top. The young men are too busy drooling over Madelyn and frankly Walter, I am too busy fending off the little hormone-carriers to notice whose looking at Jass!” Wyatt admits.

“After Katie finishes with her they will definitely be-scoping our Miss Jassy!” Walter teases.

“And just what are you two talking about?” Meg says smiling with Jasmine following close behind.

“Oh nothing just men talk.” Walter says giving his wife a hug.

“I think my father is contemplating the discovery of his daughter.” Jasmine guesses.

“You are becoming as perceptive as your mother!” Wyatt states in surprise.

“Yes father” Jasmine laughs “I’m beginning to notice things about you.”

“Just tell Katie to call me when she is ready for that shopping holiday. I’d like to tag along and offer some suggestions.” Meg volunteers.

“I never realized just how pretty you are, Jasmine.” Wyatt says as if he is seeing his daughter for the very first time. Jasmine and Meg stand side-by-side and Walter is shocked at how much Jasmine resembles his sister. Walter stands back and looks at his wife and niece. He shakes his head also.

“Will you look at that? Jassy is almost the spitting image of you, honey!” Walter says looking from his wife to his niece.

“Jass, you are as much Megan as you are me!” Wyatt exclaims in approval.

“Okay, enough already ... Jassy come with me into the kitchen. I have a plate of homemade Molasses Cookies just waiting for someone like us.” Meg said heading back into the house with Jasmine as well as the men in hot pursuit. Nobody makes Molasses Cookies like Megan Andrew Summerfield!



### **Turning Point ... Episode Six**

It is later that night when Aunt Meg finally returns Jasmine to her home. Jasmine's mother is still up and welcomes her daughter with a big kiss.

"So, did you enjoy your visit with your Aunt Megan?" Katie quizzes.

"Mom, I really had a good time." Jasmine replies. "We had a wonderful talk and like you she thinks that I need to get with the program, too. Hey where's my sister?"

"Maddie's asleep. She's going to have a big day tomorrow with both the commencement and the prom tomorrow night." Katie says.

"Mom, I'm so going to miss Maddie. I know we didn't get to spend a lot of time together; it was still wonderful having her around." Jasmine acknowledges as her mother gets her brush and begins to brush her hair.

“I know you will. But just think. You will be involved in all types of activities. Not only sports but other things as well. Anyway, you’ll be seeing your sister when she comes home on holidays.” Katie reminds her as she puts Jasmine’s hair into one lovely braid.

“It still won’t be the same. What do you think Aunt Karen will do?” Jasmine questions.

“I don’t really know. She has invested so much of herself into Maddie that I suppose she’ll need to adjust herself as well. Anyway, let’s not worry about that tonight. Now if you want to go to your sister’s commencement exercises tomorrow, you’d better get some rest too.” Karen says laughing.

“Ok, I will—good night, mom.” Jasmine gives her mother a hug.

“Good night Jasmine; I’ll talk to you in the morning.” Katie returns her daughter’s hug and goes into the master bedroom where Wyatt waits.

“I was wondering when you were coming to be? Maybe I need to go off on a trip and—” Before Wyatt can complete his sentence, Katie plants a kiss firmly on her husband’s lips.

“Now that’s more like it—what were the two of you discussing anyway, as if I didn’t know?” Wyatt inquires.

“Maddie and Karen ... who else?” Katie retorts.

“I wonder how she is handling the fact that our Madelyn will soon be off to college—away from her unwanted influence.” Wyatt queries smugly.

“Karen bares watching. I have been observing strange behavior in her lately.” Katie reveals to her husband.

“Jonathan has been telling me that sometimes it’s as if she’s a totally different person.”

“Well darling, like I told our youngest daughter, tomorrow is a busy day for Madelyn. We need to get some sleep so that we will be up to the challenges of the day.” Katie smiles as the two of them prepare for a good night’s sleep.

## **Meanwhile at Morningstar Manor—Karen’s and Jonathan’s Home**

“Darling, please come to bed—you don’t at all look well.” A concerned Jonathan replies.

“I can’t sleep. Graduation is tomorrow and soon Madelyn will be going out of town. Whatever will I do?” Karen laments.

“Karen, Madelyn belongs to Katie and Wyatt. She was never yours to begin with.” Jonathan looks at Karen in surprise.

“She should have been mine! Katie never knew what a jewel she had in that girl and now she is gone!” Karen begins to weep bitterly. Jonathan rises from bed and goes over to her in an attempt to console her, but she abruptly pushes him away.

“Why are you acting this way?” Jonathan questions. “You are not yourself. Please, come to bed.”

“No!” Karen explodes, grabs her dressing gown and rushes to the terrace. Jonathan is tempted to follow her and demand obedience but because of an important meeting in the morning opts to return to bed, leaving Karen completely alone.

Karen sits on beautifully carved bench in the garden. She is beside herself with sadness then she hears a familiar voice.

“Karen, Karen.” The voice is hardly audible.

“Who’s there?” Frighten, Karen looks around. At first she sees nothing. Then, there is a chilling breeze followed by a hazy apparition. Karen is too petrified to move. Then form speaks to her.

“Don’t be afraid Karen. I can’t hurt you. However, like you I had a protégée who sadly disappointed me.”

“Aunt Claire? Is that you?” Now Karen is terrified.

“Only the Essence of Me—an essence keep alive by you, Karen. There were times when your behavior was—questionable?” The voice stirs moments of recollection in Karen’s mind.

“Yes, but I don’t understand.” Karen asserts, willing herself to turn away from the unholy sight but is unable to.

“That is because I was just testing you, my dear. I was testing your loyalty, your usefulness. You see, there is some unfinished business that needs attending.” The voice states chillingly.

“Unfinished business?” Karen repeats.

“Yes, your Uncle Patrick, my fiancée Paul Cunningham, and those wicked people George and Cindy Beasley, who ended my existence.” The phantom comes even closer. The face is indeed that of her dearly departed aunt but it is cruel, twisted into something frightfully evil. Karen attempts to flee but is unable to.

“You cannot resist me, my pet. You never could. And through you I will get the revenge I so richly deserve.” Claire acknowledges and all Karen can do is nod in agreement.

“Now return to your husband and your bed. Yes, return to Jonathan Anderson. You married him against my wishes however it is obvious that he loves you very much. For that reason alone he will be spared. But your mother—” However, Karen springs to life as if waking from a coma.

“Leave both my mother and sister out of this. They have suffered enough!” The determination in Karen’s voice even set Claire abate.

“You still have that spark in you—fantastic. Very well, Rachel and Katie will not be included along with Jonathan. However, Wyatt—” And again Karen gives her that menacing look.

“Do not push me Karen.” Claire retorts, moving even closer. “My powers do not allow me to hurt you—but I am not without resources.” Claire threatens smiling.

“If you want my help in your evil schemes, dear Aunt Claire, it would do you well to remember who it was that taught me all that I know. This is why you need me.” Karen becomes bold in the knowledge that she is able to stand up to the fury of her departed Aunt Claire.

For the second time, the horrid face becomes placid.

“Then we have a deal. You will be an avenue for me to deliver my final crushing blows to all those who thought that death could silence Claire Monique Westbrook from achieving the last laugh.” And with a gust of extremely cold breeze she is gone.

Smiling and secure in her newfound confidence, Karen returns to her bedroom. She removes both her slippers and robe. Sliding under the satin sheets with Jonathan, she snuggles next to him. Jonathan is pleasantly surprised by this change in Karen and begins to gently caress her before they both surrender to a wonderful early morning slumber.



### **Run Silent—Run Very Deep ... Episode Seven**

The next morning finds Karen in an unusually good mood. Jonathan catches the aroma of bacon and sausages while coming out of the shower and smiles broadly.

“Wow, you are definitely in a good mood. A totally different person from last night.” Jonathan retorts while giving his wife a generous kiss.

“When you have everything in perspective, it just makes a difference.” Karen replies returning his smile.

“So, what do you have planned for today?” Jonathan quizzes while scanning his morning paper.

“Oh, I thought I would pay the Right Reverend Patrick Marcus Westbrook III a visit.” Karen responds.

“Really? Uncle Patrick—what type of business do you have with him?” Jonathan flips several papers of the financial section before coming to something of interest.

“Oh, just some loose ends that need to be tied. Not to worry, darling.” Karen dodges as she completes cooking breakfast.

Jonathan notices that all through the meal Karen has a rather strange look on her face. When she catches him eyeing her, she returns to a pleasant smile. Jonathan shrugs it off and continues eating. When he finishes, he greets their housekeeper Agnes and after waving good-bye to Karen, he leaves for the office. Karen turns to Agnes.

“Please clean up this kitchen, Agnes and don’t doddle around.” Karen snaps.

“Yes Mistress!” Agnes replies startled. Karen notices immediately and corrects herself.

“I’m so sorry Agnes—I don’t know what came over me.” Karen gives her housekeep an affectionate pat on the back.

“No problem, Mistress!” Agnes retorts still completely baffled.

“I will be gone most of the day, Agnes.” Karen rejoinders while reaching for her very stylist purse on the counter. “If Jonathan calls tell him I will meet him later for dinner. In fact, you can leave about 3:30 pm today.”

This puts a huge smile on Agnes’ face.

“Thank you, Mrs. Anderson. I really appreciate that.” Agnes beams.

“You deserve it. Bye for now!” Karen says as she walks out of the back door. Agnes watches her as she walks over to the trash bin and puts something into it. Or is she taking something out of it—Agnes really can’t tell.

Then Karen enters the garage through a small door. Moments later, the familiar purr of the Pink Porsche and the Mistress of the House is gone.

“Hmm, very strange.” Agnes asserts then she returns to her chores. The telephone rings and she answers.

“Agnes, I’d like to speak to Karen a minute.” Jonathan cheerfully explains.

“Sorry, she’s not here sir. Said she will get in touch with you later.”

“Really? Okay, thanks Agnes. Oh, did you notice anything different regarding Mrs. Anderson?” Jonathan decides to inquire.

“Now that you mentioned it sir, yes.” Agnes decides to inform him. “At first, she was rather cross with me for no apparent reason. Then she changed and told me that I could leave at 3:30 pm. I do hope that is alright with you, sir?”

“Of course. Now this is strictly between the two of us. I want you to inform me of any changes you notice in my wife. I can’t put my finger on it but something is just not right.” Jonathan requests.

“Will do, Mr. Anderson. You can count on me.” Agnes responds looking forward to doing a wee bit of detective work.

“Thank you Agnes, and enjoy your day.” Jonathan returns. “I know I can depend on you. Good-bye.” But before he can release the call, Agnes thinks of something else.

“Oh by the way, your wife took the Pink Porsche!” Agnes informs Jonathan.

“The PINK PORSCHE!” Jonathan yells in complete shock.

### **On a Destructive Path ...**

It doesn’t take Karen long to reach the Vicarage. Patrick is outside tending to a small garden when he notices the car approaching. After overcoming a brief moment of DeJa’Vu, he goes over to greet his niece.

“Hello, Karen! To what do I owe—” Before Patrick can finish his sentence, Karen is hurrying up the walkway.

“Never mind Patrick, I need to talk to you on an urgent matter.” Karen brushes pass him, heading for the front door. This catches Patrick completely by surprise.

“Karen, this is not at all like you!” Patrick comments in utter surprise.

“Never mind, Patrick.” Karen repeats in a voice that sounds very little like her and more like her aunt. “This is in regards to an unpaid debt.”

“An unpaid debt?” Patrick begins to watch his niece uneasily. “Have a seat, Karen.”

“Yes, the \$8,000 that you owed Aunt Claire.” Karen erupts, then starts on him. “You have had enough time to come up with the funds.”

“Karen, how on earth do you know about that money. Besides, Claire is dead. What do you want me to do, stuff it in her crypt.” Patrick laughs nervously.

“It would be a shame if the congregation knew about your gambling, wouldn’t it Patrick?” Karen replies and Patrick’s handsome features turn sour. He walks over to Karen and looks directly into her eyes. He knows exactly what is going on.

“You’re possessed!” Patrick proclaims incredulous. “Somehow, Claire has manage to return and she’s taken control of you. Oh my poor Karen!”

Before Karen can retaliate, there is a knock on the Vicarage door. It is Judd Warner.

“This is not over!” Karen shouts as she rushes to the front door. Almost knocking Judd down, runs to her car and careens down the lane.

“What was that about?” Judd takes off his hat as he watches Karen drive recklessly toward town, barely missing another car.

“Did you tell Karen about my gambling and the \$8,000 that I owed Claire?” Patrick frantically questions Judd.

“Of course not. That is a long, closed matter.” Judd reiterates taking out his pipe and placing it in his mouth.

“Not according to Karen. She came here demanding the money.” Patrick is turning a very unflattering shade of grey.

“What? That’s impossible. How could that be?” Judd drops his pipe, looks at Patrick and then stares at the place where the Pink Porsche once reside. That car was the favorite mode of transportation of the late Claire Monique Westbrook!

“It’s not impossible if Claire Westbrook has returned.” Both men look at each other in horror!

“Claire alive!”



### **Paying Respects to an Old Nemesis ... Episode Eight**

Karen makes her way to Jefferson Federal Prison where both George and Cindy Beasley are housed. Cindy is located in the Women's Ward. Because of Karen's influential family, she is able to see Cindy.

"To what do I owe this visit, Mrs. Anderson?" Cindy retorts looking disdainfully at Karen.

"Because of you, my life was cut short." The voice that comes from Karen is not her own. Cindy looks at her in sheer panic.

"You—who are you? What are you playing at." Cindy is in total fear.

"You recognize my voice, don't you. This is the last you will hear from me and see this world." Karen replies as the temperature drops suddenly as a thick, gray mist begins to fill the room. It is so thick that one prison guard, Bert Miller, sounds the alarm and the room goes under complete lockdown. When the mist finally dissipates, Karen is gone and Cindy is slumped over in her chair. Another guard, William Thomas comes to assist but it is too late—Cindy Beasley is dead!

“What happened here?” Calls out Bert as he tries to ascertain what just happened.

“I don’t know but Ms. Beasley is dead. Is anyone else hurt?” William queries as he looks around the small room.

“No, everyone else seems to be fine. Hey, what happened to Mrs. Anderson?” Bert inquires as he notices that Karen is no longer seated across from Cindy.

“That’s funny—I never saw her go pass me. Did anyone see Mrs. Anderson leave?” William asks.

“Nope.” Someone replies.

“Nor I.” Another responds.

“She just couldn’t have vanished into thin air. Somebody had to have let her out which is in complete violation of the lockdown protocol.” Bert insists.

Cindy’s lifeless body is removed from the Visitor’s Area and Warden McAllen is promptly informed.

“I want an immediate autopsy performed. You say there was an intense fog and then when it lifted she was dead?” Warden McAllen finds this incredible.

“Yes sir, this is exactly what happened. Mrs. Anderson came to pay her a visit and—” Bert is interrupted by the Warden.

“You say that Mrs. Anderson was here? Which one?”

“The pretty Mrs. Anderson, sir.” Bert responds.

“They are both very attractive—again, which one?” The Warden repeats his question.

“Karen Anderson. You know, she is the niece of the late Claire Westbrook. Remember that murder incident that happened a few years ago.” William tries to refresh the mind of the Warden.

“Oh yes, I remember. At first they thought it was natural causes but it turned out to be murder. What on earth would Karen Anderson want to talk to Cindy Beasley about?” The Warden strokes his neatly cut beard.

“I don’t know, sir.” Bert answers.

“Where is she now?” The Warden wants to know.

“I don’t know, sir.” Again Bert answers.

“What do you mean you don’t know? You just let her leave?” The Warden looks at the two men in utter shock.

“No, she kind of disappeared.” Bert replies sheepishly.

“Disappeared?” The Warden thunders. “People don’t just disappear. Someone had to have let her out. Now who did it?”

“Sir, one minute Mrs. Anderson was talking to that Beasley woman and the next minute there was this fog. When the fog cleared, Mrs. Anderson was gone and Cindy Beasley was dead. That’s all we know.” A rather weary William confesses.

“She may have escaped the room but she may be still at the facility. Let everyone know that I want to see her NOW!” A very disconcerted warden says.

It’s about twenty minutes later when another guard brings Karen into the Warden’s office.

“Is there anything wrong, Warden McAllen?” Karen asks innocently.

“Yes there is—Cindy Beasley is dead and you were the last person with her.” The Warden is never one to mince words. Karen stares into his eyes giving the warden a look that makes him wince.

“Are you insinuating that I had something to do with that?” Karen maintains a calm voice but her eyes are piercing. The warden immediately backs down.

“No, no indeed Mrs. Anderson.” The warden babbles. “I was just wondering if you noticed anything prior to the, the fog.”

Both William and Bert look at each other in surprise. They have never seen Warden Justin McAllen cower down to anyone—less known a woman.

“I didn’t notice a thing. I just came to see the person who thought my Aunt Claire’s life was of little consequence to this world, that’s all Warden. If she’s dead, then that is of little concern to me. Now, if you will excuse me, I need to be getting home. I have a dinner appointment with my husband.” Karen rises and the Warden meekly nods his head. After the door is closed behind Karen, Bert walks over to the warden.

“Sir, are you alright?” He asks.

“What? Oh, I’m fine Bert. Let me know the outcome of the report on Cindy Beasley. Now, if you’ll forgive me—I have work to do, and so do you.” Warden McAllen rejoinders in a dismissing attitude, returning to his former self.

As the two men excuse themselves and leave the room, Bert looks at William.

“I’ve never seen him react that way, have you?”

“No. It’s as if he was terrified of the woman. The only other time I’ve seen him act that way is when Claire Westbrook reprimanded him during one of the Board of Trustees’ meeting. I happen to be there picking up some records.” William remembers.

“He almost acted like he’d seen a ghost or something.” Bert retorts, then they both think about the thick fog that engulfed the room.

“Do you believe in people having familiar spirits, Bert?” William asks.

“Up until now—no.” Bert says, “But after what we’ve just experienced and the way the Warden reacted to Karen Anderson, who knows? I heard that she was very close to the Westbrook woman before she was killed.”

“So did I. And so people thought it was down right unnatural the hold she had on some people—like she had something on them.” William adds.

“Yeah, well here comes Dr. Dawson with the preliminary on Cindy Beasley. What’s the verdict, Doc?” Bert inquires.

“Looks like her heart just stopped beating. Like something scared her so badly that she died. Did you notice the look on her face?” Dr. Dawson tells the two men.

“Something scared her to death?” Bert responds.

“Yep. But like I said, it’s just a preliminary report. I’m going to give that information to Warden McAllen myself. Then, I’m going to do a more thorough examination. But I seriously doubt if I find anything else. There is not one mark on her body. Nothing out of place. Just a look of horror and that’s it. Well, see you boys later.” Dr. Dawson nods as he goes to give the warden the news.

“What do you make of that, William?” Bert queries.

“Glad I never did anything to upset Claire Westbrook. C’mon, let’s finish our shift so that we can get the Hell out of here.” William answers and the two men adjourn, going their separate ways.



### **A Small Glimmer of Hope ...**

Earlier that morning, Karen has gotten the news that there has been a small fire in the storage closet of the Maple Grove Auditorium. It has caused little damage to the actual amphitheater, but as is customary, there will be a delay in previously planned events.

“That delay works favorably for me.” The voice in Karen’s head asserts. “Gave me the time I needed to pay Cindy Beasley a little visit as well as Patrick. Now—” Karen shakes her head, again gaining control.

“I have to meet Jonathan for dinner. I have my own life.” Karen reprimands.

Karen grimaces as the voice is silent and she instantly is feeling herself again. This time it is Karen who speaks.

“Thank the heavens she is gone! This is getting to be much more than I bargained for. I dare not tell Jonathan about it, though. He will definitely think I am mad.” Karen thinks aloud.

As Karen heads toward their favorite bistro, she notices her uncle leaving the law offices of Judd Warner. When he sees her, he flags her down. Karen slows down while Patrick approaches the car. First, he looks her in the eyes to determine if it is safe to talk to her—it is.

“Karen, are you alright?” Patrick begins.

“Then you know, don’t you?” Karen stares at him, then looks down.

“I know that one of my favorite nieces doesn’t normally barge into the Vicarage demanding money, if that’s what you mean.” Patrick hedges the subject, fearful that it may trigger an episode.

“Don’t worry, she’s gone. And, I am sorry about what happened earlier. I never knew you had a problem like that.” Karen replies in sympathy.

“It’s okay on both counts. I’ve discussed the matter with Judd Warner. Followed him back to his offices and he went over the Will with me. I don’t owe Claire anything.” Patrick pronounces and is immediately hushed by Karen.

“Don’t mention her name, that could—” However, before Karen can complete her sentence, the wicked woman is back.

“Had a talk with Judd did you?” Karen retorts and her face becomes a twisted contortion due to the possession.

“Leave that innocent, sweet woman out of this, Claire. She is just a victim—a pawn in your evil, distorted plan for revenge. I will cast you out.” Patrick threatens feebly.

“You? You couldn’t stop an ant from finding its way home. Go back to the Vicarage and play rector. You are not fooling anyone but yourself.” With a horrid, frightening laugh Karen is zooming down the road toward Paul Cunningham’s house.

Patrick rushes into Judd’s office without even knocking.

“Oh, I’m sorry, I—” Judd observes Patrick’s tousled demeanor and immediately realizes that something is amiss.

“Never mind, Pat. Audrey, please bring the Vicar a very strong cup of coffee.” As Audrey leaves the room, Judd helps Patrick over to a comfortable chair. He doesn’t speak because he fears for Patrick’s sanity. However, after the entire cup of the strong substance is consumed, it is Patrick who utters a word first.

“My poor Karen. She is in a fight for her very soul.” Patrick laments. “Oh, pardon my manners. Thank you so much for the coffee, Ms. Stewart.”

Audrey nods and Judd motions her to get a pen and paper as is his custom when he believes he is about to hear something vital.

“Karen is trying to fight her but she is not strong enough.” Patrick continues his lamentations.

“What on earth is he talking about?” Audrey whispers and Judd shakes his head, just as confused.

“Don’t you understand? Claire is trying to take over Karen and the woman is fighting it. That deranged sister of mine has returned. She’s back!” Patrick screams and suddenly passes out.

### **Meanwhile ...**

Karen is having a bit of a struggle herself as she is determined to keep her dinner engagement with Jonathan but Claire is now having none of it.

“I’m tired of your interference in my life—I want to have dinner with my husband!” Karen shrieks in anguish.

“Little fool!” The voice spits in disagreement. “That spineless Jonathan can wait. I need to pay dear Paul Cunningham a visit. How dare he go on with his life as if there was never anything between the two of us. Even if I did tell him we were finished!”

“You broke up with Paul? After he’d been so supportive of you.” Karen is frantically fighting for control of the car.

“Supportive of me? He was just another handsome and spineless jellyfish—just like your Uncle Patrick.” Claire’s presence saturates the vehicle like a gray mist.

“I can’t see. You are obstructing my view. I can’t see—” Then there is a loud crash and everything is silent.

Two hours later finds Jonathan, Katherine, Wyatt and their two other children at the Maple Grove Presbyterian Hospital. Kate is sick with worry regarding her twin while Jonathan paces the floor angrily.

“She just couldn’t leave Karen alone. I thought we were rid of her when she died. I thought that was an end to her meddling. Oh Karen, my darling Karen.” Jonathan burst out into uncontrollable sobs.

“I should have said something sooner.” A disheveled Patrick retorts as he enters the waiting room. His neatly pressed suit is crumpled and his demeanor is liken to someone whose fallen into a container of rubbish.

“Uncle Patrick!” Katherine cries as she rushes over to be with him. Judd Warner is accompanying him. “I’m so glad to see you. What are you talking about? Why do you look like—” Judd interrupts.

“It’s a long story. I suggest we all sit down and I will assist to sort this entire mess out, that is with the help of Patrick. Care to go first?” Judd gives Patrick a crooked smile and an arm of support.

“Ok ... here is the entire bloody mess. We should have had this conversation a long time ago. But I thought the circumstances ended when Claire died.” Patrick commences as he unfolds everything, from his former gambling addiction to his confrontation with Karen/Claire. Everyone is speechless, including Wyatt until finally Jasmine breaks the silence.

“That explains a lot of things. Slowly and systematically Great Aunt Claire has been poisoning the mind of Aunt Karen. And now she lays in a coma—a victim of an evil woman’s folly.” No sooner does the words escape Jasmine’s mouth until the room becomes strangely silent. A thick, gray mist overtakes the area and the specter of Claire stands in front of Jasmine.

Unafraid, Jasmine stares her down. Even when the apparition shows her the most hideous face—Jasmine is unmoved. There is a loud screech, the room clears and the temperature is normal again. Patrick speaks smiling.

“The force is strong in this one.” Patrick acknowledges and Katherine hurries over to her daughter to embrace her caringly.

“The most horrid thing I’d ever scene but I wasn’t afraid.” Jasmine explains. “All those long hours of strenuous exercising really toughens a girl up.”

“Good for you that it does. I had a talk with Warden McAllen. It seems that Cindy Beasley is dead.” Wyatt begins to expound to his family. “Cindy was literally scared to death. It would seem that Claire had the same fate for you—but she didn’t realize that she was up against a rock and rocks don’t frighten.”

Everyone laughs and it is Patrick who returns sobriety into the conversation.

“I think we can use this to our advantage. When Karen finally awakens, Jasmine and I will be in the room with her. We need to find out how Claire returned. This will finally give us an indication as to how to send her back.” Patrick insists.

“I will be there also. My will is as strong as my daughter’s. It will be you who will be in danger, Pat. However, as a man of Faith—it will be a test as to what its limits are in you.” Katherine decides and Patrick agrees.

“Well, I think the rest of us need to go home. We don’t want to be a new vehicle for Claire. With Karen unconscious, she is confined to this hospital. Shore up your Faith—you’re going to need it.” Judd replies as reluctantly Patrick, Katherine and Jasmine are left alone in the hospital.



### **Talking With Regards to a Legend ...**

The ride from the hospital is a quiet one. Each individual is cocooned within his own thoughts. Shortly, they arrive at the Vicarage. Kate speaks first.

“You really think Jas will be alright alone with Karen?”

“I’d put money on it.” Patrick replies, then noting the frown on his sister’s face quickly drops his head in shame.

“Yeah, Uncle Patrick. That was indeed a poor choice of words. I do get your point, though. Now just who did you have in mind to get information regarding this legendary person?” Kate queries.

“Josh Freeman.” Patrick replies as he exits his car and goes over to the other side to assist his niece.

“Josh Freeman! Good choice. If anyone knows the truth regarding this mysterious individual—trusty Josh is the man.” Kate smiles.

“Right! Let’s go.” Patrick hurries up the walkway and inserts the key. Motioning to Kate, they both head toward his private study. Not the one where he entertains members of the congregation—a completely separate room.

Kate finds herself a seat in the beautifully furnished room near the desk and Patrick situates himself on the other side. Rummaging through a drawer he’s just unlocked, he captures a black cellular phone. With determination, he dials the numbers. A man answers.

“Is that you, Patrick?” a strong, muscular voice inquires.

“Yes it’s me, Josh. Are you free to talk?” Patrick asks.

“Not if you’re calling me on that phone. Why don’t I come over to the Vicarage. Marjorie has her bridge club members over—that could mean that one of them might meander near my man-cave to see what I’m up to.” Josh chuckles.

“Okay Josh, we’ll see you soon.” Patrick informs him.

“We, Patrick?” Josh is interested.

“Yeah, my niece Katherine is with me. I guess you’ve heard about Karen, huh?” Patrick responds.

“Shucks, it’s all over the Maple Grove community! What got into that girl to make her drive so recklessly?” Josh wonders.

“Claire Westbrook.” Patrick asserts and the man at the other end is silent.

“I’m on my way.” Josh hangs up at his end and rushes to tell his wife that he’ll be away for a while.

“What’s wrong with Reverend Westbrook. Do I need to come with you? Has Karen taken a turn for the worse?” Everyone at the bridge table is focused on Josh.

“No, but I’m needed just the same. Please, continue your game, Marjorie. If you’re wanted—” His wife interrupts.

“I’ll come a running.” Marjorie smiles and the ladies return to their game.

Giving his wife a brief kiss on the cheek, Josh leaves the house, hops into his late model Ford F-150 and points it in the direction of his long-time friend—Patrick Westbrook.

Molly Johnson, Patrick’s housekeep has been informed of the expected arrival of Josh Freeman. Ever since Patrick has been assigned to this parish, Molly Johnson and Josh Freeman have been staples in his life. Neither ever cared very much for Claire but knew how to keep things amiable.

It isn’t long before there is a gentle knock on the door to the study.

“Yes, Molly?” Patrick calls from the other side.

“Josh is here.” Is Molly’s response.

“Send him in and thanks Molly. You know what to do.” Patrick smiles as he stands to welcome his comrade.

“Tell me everything.” Josh starts whiling shaking the hand of his friend generously. “Oh, and howdy Kate.”

“Hello Mr. Freeman.” Kate smiles.

“Enough with that mister business. We’re behind closed, secured doors. Josh is good enough. You know, I’m not too much older than Patrick here, although he likes to pretend he’s still a lad.” All three have a good laugh over that comment, then Josh becomes sober again. “Well, Patrick?”

“Okay, I’ll tell you what I know.” Patrick replies and gives Josh as much details as he knows. Even about how Karen insisted that he pay back the loan.

“Tarnation! Now Karen wouldn’t know anything about that. There are just a few of us who do and we don’t talk.” An excited Josh says.

“Exactly!” Patrick explodes.

“My Jasmine has had a run-in with the witch as well.” Kate includes. Then she gives Josh her information. Josh sits very quiet for a moment.

“Well?” Queries Patrick.

“Well?” Katherine echoes.

“We need reinforcements of the highest magnitude. This definitely calls for Madame Amara!” Josh decides.

“Will you be able to contact this person?” Kate and Patrick ask in unison and Josh almost laughs.

“No, not directly but I know her brother Jabari. Vodou is definitely nothing to take lightly and Madame Amara only works with people that she knows or who are familiar with the family. Strangers have caused a lot of bloodshed.” Josh cautions.

“Will you be able to contact this Jabari, then?” Patrick is becoming anxious. “Karen is unconscious now but whenever she awakens—” Patrick doesn’t have to finish his statement, Josh gets the idea.

“Don’t worry. I will do whatever it takes. Just keep an eye on that girl and don’t let her leave the hospital. That vengeful witch has already taken one life.” Josh balls his fists in anger.

“You know about Cindy Beasley? But of course you do.” Patrick corrects himself.

“Who else would have a motive and means of eliminating her from the equation by making it look like a mere heart malfunction? That’s Vodou, I tell you!” Josh exclaims. Then rising from his seat he heads toward the door.

“Make sure Karen stays sedated. The hospital staff will never believe your story, even though you are a man of the cloth. My Marjorie makes a very strong sleeping tea. I’ll explain to her the circumstances and you can have it on hand—just in case.” Josh explains.

“I don’t think she wants to wake up just yet. She somehow seems to know that she is safe as long as she stays asleep.” Kate interjects.

“That’s good. Then the tea will be just a welcomed standby. I need to get home now. Marjorie is going to be worried sick with curiosity as to what is going on. Might as well add her to the tribe.” Josh tips his hat and is heading toward the front door.

“So now we wait.” Kate replies solemnly.

“Yes, we wait.” Patrick affirms. “Molly, get in here. You might as well know what’s going on.”

With a wide grin, Molly enters the room. She knows that Patrick is aware of her interest in this situation as well.



### **Making the Right Connections ...**

Josh arrives home just in time to see the ladies exiting the door, heading for their various cars. An anxious Marjorie stands just outside.

“Well, is it as bad as I imagined?” She asks.

“Slightly worse.” Josh responds as his wife follows him inside. Then he begins to explain everything that he knows regarding Karen and her most unusual situation.

“I’m get the fixings for the tea.” Marjorie asserts as she goes into the kitchen. Josh pulls out his cellular phone and begin to dial numbers he hasn’t had to dial in a long while.

“Asubuhi njema!” A familiar voice replies.

“Asubuhi njema, and how are you?” Josh queries.

“Is that you Josh, my old friend?” Jabari counters.

“Yes, it is I. How are you?”

“I am well, Josh.” Jabari answers. “How is Marjorie?”

“She is doing great, as usual. This is not a social call, Jabari.” Josh begins.

“I did not think that it was.” Jabari asserts in his heavy Haitian accent. “There is trouble of a supernatural manner?”

“I am afraid so, Rafiki yangu. Do you remember Claire Westbrook?” Josh asks.

“The woman is, was world renown. Are you telling me that she has returned.” Jabari sits upright in his recliner.

“That is exactly what I am telling you. She is trying to do her worst by influencing Karen Anderson. Fortunately, she has resisted but not before the death of Cindy Beasley.” Josh informs him.

“Ah yes, Cindy Beasley. I remember hearing about her. There was an inquest and then a discovery of the true assailant. Now you say that this person is dead?” Jabari picks up his tea to sip but quickly puts it down as it has become quite cool.

“I am. Karen is in a coma. I asked Marjorie to prepare a special blend incense she awakens but I think the woman understands what is at stake.” Josh retorts.

“And from what I have observed in the past, she has a great ally in her twin. What is her name?” Jabari is scratching his head.

“Kate—Katherine Anderson. She’s a feisty one alright.” Josh replies. “I didn’t know you’d met.”

“My father was one of the few invited to the moratorium for Madame Westbrook. I accompanied him. I observed briefly how the two interacted and knew right away that Kate was the stronger one.” Jabari proclaims proudly.

“You have always been a good judge of character, Rafiki yangu! We will need the help of Madame Amara.” Josh concludes.

“Indeed you will. I will consult with my sister and get back to you. In the meantime, limit the number of people who are allowed to visit Karen.” Jabari cautions.

“I believe that Reverend Westbrook has that pretty much under control. He understands the severity of the situation. That’s why I am discussing it with you right now. But what about the staff?” Josh quizzes.

“If he is as vigilant as I think he is, I am sure he has contacted the people who hold authority at the hospital.” Jabari offers.

“Won’t they think he’s exaggerating the matter?” Josh interjects.

“Maybe at first. However, Reverend Westbrook has a way of getting his message across to his followers. I have heard more than one of his broadcasts and they have been very enlightening. Even to me!” Josh recognizes the admiration in his friend’s voice.

“So what do you suggest we do in the meantime?” Josh questions.

“Just what you are doing. I will be in touch.” Jabari asserts.

“Nzuri-bye rafiki yangu!” Josh replies, signaling the end of the conversation.

“Nzuri-bye, Joshua. You are my good friend as well.” Both men release the call. Josh moves into the kitchen where Marjorie is emptying the tea into a medium-sized container.

“Well, the tea is prepared. What do we do now?” Marjorie looks at her husband.

“I will inform Patrick. He will collect it on his way to the hospital.” Josh tells his wife as he sits at the kitchen table dialing yet another number.

“Yes Josh, what is the news?” Patrick asks.

“I have contacted Jabari. I explained to him everything that is happening. He is confident that you will be able to handle things until he gives us further instructions. He said that his father was at Claire’s services.” Josh asserts.

“Oh, I didn’t realize that Zane Oladoyinbo is the father of your Jabari?” Patrick exclaims in surprise. “He has been a great contributor to us, especially since Claire—”

“You don’t have to go any further.” Josh interrupts. “Small world and all. Well, at any rate what we need to do now is just wait.”

“This is a very taxing waiting game.” Patrick adds. “Oh yes. I talked to the CEO of the hospital. Very obliging fellow and he is more than willing to help. Who would have thought that he would be familiar with Haitian Voduo?”

“Really? Okay, so we don’t have to worry about the staff doing anything stupid. That’s a relief.” Josh sighs heavily.

“No. Walt will filter down the information to those that need to know and Karen is in a restricted room. You have that tea?” Patrick inquires.

“You can pick it up on the way to the hospital. It’s incredible the influence that woman had—er, has on this town. I thought that when she died things would be different. Not that I wanted—” Now Patrick is the one interrupting.

“We all have mixed feelings on that matter. At any rate, I will be on my way to retrieve the tea and then off to the hospital. There is no telling what mischief that wayward spirit is causing.” Patrick almost laughs.

“Very soon we will all be able to laugh but for now, we need to keep our wits about us. Do remember that, Pat.” Josh chastises.

“Of course, Josh. I’ll see you soon.” Patrick asserts then returning the phone to its cradle, he stares at a beautiful picture of a pastoral scene in his private study. Smiling, he returns to the papers scattered in front of him.