## Unauthorized Confessions of a Micholive

HOLY BIBLE

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## Chapter 1

I could feel God's precious spirit slowly moving throughout the small overflow room. I could see people worshiping God around me, but it was like I was wrapped in a cocoon of warmth and happiness. My body was tingling from head to toe as an overwhelming presence of joy and peace flooded my senses. That's the way God's spirit made me feel. It felt like I was waking up on the first day of spring and in love. There was an uncontrollable feeling of elation that had my stomach doing back flips. I tried to remain still and enjoy the moment, but my body simply would not stay still. I swayed from side to side and praised the power of God silently. My feelings of pure ecstasy were suddenly interrupted by Craig as he approached me from behind. He placed his hands on my hips and slowly pulled my body towards his. His hard penis pressed against me and I felt God was trying to send up smoke signals and warn me about something. I quickly spun around and glared at him with disgust. This was not the time or place to be playing these types of games, and he knew this. I could not understand why Craig felt it was necessary to keep trying to seduce me this way. When I gave my life to Christ, I promised him that I would only serve him, and I meant every world of it. No matter how many obstacles Satan had thrown in my direction, I had always remained steadfast in my faith. It was just like Craig's ass to pull a stunt like this in church.

Craig tugged at my elbow and whispered in my ear, "Come with me! I have to tell you something."

I glanced around the overflow room embarrassed, hoping no one had seen us. Arriving late at a revival service was always so embarrassing because you were stuffed in the back where it was standing room only. This was one time that I was happy I was late, because no one noticed us leaving.

I held up one finger and followed Craig through the crowed room until I opened the door. The sounds of crickets and dense darkness filled my senses as the door slammed shut behind me. The muffled sounds of people still praising God could be heard as I quickly approached Craig. I wanted to let him know what type of scum he really was. It took a sick individual to interrupt God's spirit just to get his rocks off.

I placed my hands on my hips and prepared to tell him about how thoughtless he was, when he quickly moved closer to me and gently placed his hand on my stomach. "Now hold on Angela, I know that was stupid."

I hated when he flashed me that million dollar smile.

He placed his arms around my hips and pulled me closer and whispered, "I'm sorry, baby." He kissed my cheek gently and whispered, "Come on, you know I was just playing. Don't be like this." *Every fiber in my body screamed for me to push him away. Seconds passed as I stood there and pretended to be angry. He continued to hold me and caress my body with his hands.* 

Craig continued to sooth me with his words. "Come on, Angie, stop acting like this. You know I was just joking with you. I was just trying to get a couple of laughs. I never meant to disrespect your faith, I was just having fun. If you think it's best to wait until we are married, then that's fine. If I've never told you, I think you're a strong woman for putting God first in your life. I apologize for doing and/or saying anything disrespectful about you or your faith. Now, I understand how much you are willing to sacrifice for God, and I will never act that way again. I want to love you unconditionally, without any strings attached."

Now I was confused! This was not the Craig I knew. The Craig I knew was the "give it to me baby" Craig. Now he was saying all the things I had always wanted to hear from him. It was like I was in a theater watching a movie scene. I wanted to tell him I didn't care and I hate him, but my mouth would not open.

Craig's warm embrace had my body pulsating with excitement as he continued to whisper to me. "Angela, you are the most important person in my life. I think about us getting married, having a family, and growing old together. I know you may not believe me, but I love you. I have always loved you and I will never hurt you again. Please give me a chance to prove it."

Now I knew I was in the middle of a dream! The words coming out of Craig's mouth were just too weird! I had known Craig since he was in the ninth grade, and the words love, marriage and family had never been part of his vocabulary. That was the reason why we had broken up because his cheating ass couldn't understand the meanings of those words. I wanted to punch him for lying, but I couldn't. I just stood there glued to his every word like some lovesick, school girl in a fantasy.

Craig leaned forward and tried to kiss me, but I shook my head no.

I quickly glanced back toward the church and spoke frantically, "Are you crazy? Anybody could have seen us."

Craig smiled at me and led me toward the church garden behind the building.

The smell of sweet honeysuckles and jasmine crashed against my senses. Craig turned me around and continued to talk. "Is this far enough for you, or do we need to go further? I don't want anyone to hear you scream."

I playfully slapped his arm and pulled away from his embrace. I remembered how the hurt of losing Craig had made me withdraw from my friends and family and how easy Craig seemed to move on without even an afterthought. A part of me wanted him to say something terrible to wake me up from this lucid dream, but it never happened.

Craig held out his hand and slowly guided my lips toward his. I made one last attempt to pull away, but it was too late. Our lips touched and it was like every hurtful deed Craig had committed slowly dissolved. His tongue gently pulled at mine, causing my body to shiver with excitement. Craig slowly pulled away and stared deep into my eyes, causing me to blush and turn away quickly. Craig pulled me closer and began to gently sway my body from side to side as if we were dancing to an imaginary song. Everything I was doing right now was wrong. There were certain rules that you followed in a Pentecostal church to avoid backsliding, and I had violated almost all of them. I was alone with a man and I had allowed him to isolate me from God's spirit. I felt silly for giving in after scolding him, but this time it felt different. For the first time, it didn't feel creepy. In fact, it felt really good, and I wanted more. Everything I had learned in Bible study about the Holy Spirit's protection disappeared. I slowly unbuttoned his shirt and he allowed me to touch his chiseled chest. I felt a sudden surge of energy rush through my body as he softly caressed me. The more Craig hugged and squeezed my body, the more excited I got. How did I get myself in this predicament?

I closed my eyes and quietly prayed to God. "Please Lord, hear my prayer and take this temptation away from me now in the name of Jesus."

I opened my eyes just as Craig tugged at the belt wrapped around my skirt. I felt helpless as my dress fell to the ground. I could hear muffled voices of praise coming from the church, but my mind was in full lust mode. Craig slowly guided my hand down his tight abdomen and rested it on his pants zipper. Craig leaned his head sideways and stared at me as if to say "Your move!"

In any other situation, I probably would have never thought about backsliding. But again, I had already dishonored every church rule to keep me from getting in this position. There was a small voice encouraging me to fight, but still, I unbuckled his pants and gave his zipper a quick yank. Craig slowly pulled down his pants and underwear, revealing his erect penis.

I began to pray again for God to give me strength. "Anything but this, Lord. You said that if I asked in your name, it would be done. I need you to rescue me from this temptation. I can't hold on any longer."

Craig pulled me closer to his body and pulled my panties down. Everything felt so right, from his rippling muscles to his hard dick slowly sliding between my thighs but not yet inside. I grabbed Craig's arms tightly and closed my eyes as he pressed his body closer to mine. I shook my head no, but my body was swaying back and forth against him. With each thrust, my breath quickened as Craig studied my facial expressions and smiled.

The sound of the pastor's voice reverberated in the darkness, "Is there one who is willing to come and give their life to Christ?"

I could hear church members respond in concert, "Amen, Amen."

But Craig already had my body aching and begging to have more of him.

I continued to swivel my body on his erect penis until I whispered, "I want you inside me."

A devilish grin crept across Craig's face because he knew he was getting what he wanted. My faith in Christ had always given me the power to fight against any temptation, but tonight was different. All those times he had pressured me for sex, I had always resisted. Why, God, was I giving in tonight?

Embarrassed at what I had just said, I avoided eye contact with Craig by looking at the ground. Craig lifted me up into his arms and we both fell to the ground with our bodies entwined together. Craig quickly pulled his shirt off and unbuttoned my blouse. He nudged me backwards

and my legs slowly parted as he positioned himself to enter me. Chills swept across my body as his mouth teased my nipples and he slowly pushed himself inside me.

I began to beg God for forgiveness and barter with God. "Please, God. I need your help. I will do anything if you take me out of this situation."

Begging to God only aroused Craig even more. It was like he was getting joy out of stealing me away from Christ. He repositioned my legs around his shoulders and methodically pressed deeper inside me. I clinched my arms around his neck and buried my contorted face in his chest. My body convulsed with every movement and I whimpered for mercy. My body had never experienced such intense pleasure. My muscles tightened as Craig glided swiftly in and out of me. My ears began to ring and my body stiffened just as I began to...

"Excuse me, Miss, are you okay?"

The bright morning sun made it hard for me to see. I slowly focused on the voice of the stewardess tapping my shoulder. Awkwardly, I pulled my seat up out of recline mode and put on my glasses. There were two teenage girls sitting adjacent to me, staring at me and giggling.

Again, the stewardess asked, "Miss! Are you okay?"

I replied with my face flushed with embarrassment, "I'm fine, thank you."

The only thing on my mind was getting to the airplane's restroom before dying from humiliation.

Here I was again having devilish dreams instead of keeping my mind on God. But then again, that's how I had gotten into this situation in the first place. I quickly hurried to the tiny restroom and freshened up. I returned to my seat just as the pilot announced that we were on final approach.

I glanced over at Sha'qounda, who was sleeping peacefully, and I wondered how my life had become so complicated in such a short time. I had gone from innocent church girl to conspiring to bring down one of Atlanta's most famous churches. The funny thing about the whole situation is that I never really wanted to hurt anyone. All I had ever wanted from Bishop Tyler, Calvin, and Prophetess Stanford were love and respect. The only things that I received was tears and regret. They pushed me into a corner and I had no other recourse but to fight.

I glanced out the small window as the plane touched down at Savannah/Hilton Head Airport. It was hard to believe, but this small area of Georgia had laid the foundation for who I had become. Baxley, Georgia was where my love of Christ first clashed with my curious thirst for all things worldly, especially bad boys. The irony of it all! Craig was the first stone that led me away from Christ, but here I was dreaming about him.

The first time I saw big-headed Craig, I thought he was so arrogant. He strolled into my tenth grade class and the girls started giggling like the latest teen idol had just walked in. He was tall with caramel skin and deep dimples that exploded off his cheeks. Craig wore the latest fashions, and when he walked past, I just wanted to brush against him. He was confident in himself, and it showed when he sat beside me and started up a conversation. I had to admit that he was the cutest boy I had ever seen, but I refused to acknowledge it. Craig asked if the seat

next to me was taken. I wrinkled my face up and replied "yes" in a nasty tone. I wanted him to know for certain that I wanted no part of him.

I tried to ignore him as he walked to another seat, but he noticed me glancing and smiled at me. I frowned back at him as if I were disgusted by him looking at me. Craig turned away unfazed by my reaction and started talking to another girl who was mesmerized by his smile.

The rest of the morning was filled with glances from Craig and me trying my best to ignore him. It was almost as if he knew me, but was hesitate to approach. No matter how hard I tried to ignore Craig, I always found myself gazing at him. I wondered if he would ever approach me again, and that question was quickly answered. I was standing in line waiting for lunch when I saw Craig waving at me. He was walking in my direction and I nervously turned away. I tried to engage in small talk with my friends, but it was too late.

"Hi Angela! My name is Craig."

My friends looked at Craig and me in an awkward way and started giggling. My friends walked away making kissing noises, trying their best to embarrass me, and it was working.

Craig, unfazed by my friends' reaction, smiled at me, held out his hand, and introduced himself again, "My name is Craig."

Surprised that Craig knew my name, I nervously replied, "How do you know my name?" Craig replied, "Carson Harden."

I remember Carson was best friends with my brother Steven during his freshman year at Clark Atlanta.

I responded by laughing and said, "Carson had a little snotty-nosed cousin who always cried when he didn't get his way. You wouldn't happen to be him, would you?"

Embarrassed by my question, Craig shook his head yes. We both laughed and I was able to relax a little because we had something in common.

I asked Craig, "How did you remember me from back then? We had to be in the third or fourth grade."

Craig's eyes brightened as he responded, "I never could forget you because you had those wired eyes like a cat."

I blushed at his comment and quickly glanced in the opposite direction. Family members had always made remarks about my eyes since I was a baby. My eyes were hazel brown, but sometimes they changed to a bright amber and gold when I was in the sun. As a child living in a small town, I just wanted normal eyes like everyone else. I hated trying to explain why my eyes were so different from everyone else's. As I got older, I learned to appreciate them because they complemented my looks. Craig told me that he had just moved from Atlanta with his mother. Atlanta gave Craig and me something else to talk about. I had always enjoyed going to Atlanta. Craig and I quizzed each other about Atlanta for what seemed like forever.

Craig would challenge me, "I bet you never rode Goliath at Six Flags."

I would respond, "Boy, please, I ride that old thing all the time. I bet you never rode the Batman."

He would respond with excitement in his eyes. "Batman! I've ridden Batman at least a hundred times."

Our conversation switched from Six Flags, to Stone Mountain, to all things fun in Atlanta. We never had an awkward break in our conversation. His cute looks and bright, intriguing smile had my stomach turning flips. Craig would lean in towards me when he laughed and I would nervously blush when he brushed against me.

Craig and I had a lot of fun together during that school year, but I guess he didn't see me as girlfriend material. I never pushed the issue, and during that summer, we just became good friends.

Craig's world was restricted like mine. Most of our friends took advantage of their summer vacation by spending endless hours at the outdoor pool at the recreation center. Our recreation center time was limited because most of the week was dedicated to vacation Bible school.

New Heaven Church of God became Craig's and my little discovery zone. Church became the link that would bond us together. New Heaven Church of God was a typical small-town church with about one hundred twenty members. My parents made sure I was at church for Sunday morning service. I had choir practice on Saturdays, and sometimes I would attend Friday night. Overall, I considered church fun. Craig, on the other hand was forced to endure the equivalent of church prison. His mother made him attend church Tuesday night, Wednesday night, Friday Night, and all day Sunday. Not only did I feel sorry for him, but even some grownups felt sorry for him. Craig's mother was an ordained evangelist and she was making sure that Craig was following in her footsteps.

At New Heaven, we were accustomed to the strict belief system. People in Baxley considered our small church to be harsh and overly rigorous. But that was nothing in comparison with Craig and his mother. The Hardens' literal interpretation of the Bible was alarming. His mother always wore a long white dress with a head veil, and Craig was not allowed to watch television or attend movie outings with other kids in the church. It was not unusual to see people at New Heaven shouting, praising God, and speaking in tongues. But you rarely saw a fifteen-year-old kid doing it.

We were used to hearing kids in the church testify about being saved and sanctified, but none of us ever spoke about speaking in tongues. That type of behavior was for older people in the church. Not only was he already speaking in other tongues, but he was also preaching. No one in the church actually believed Craig could really preach until we saw his first sermon.

Imagine sitting in church and all of a sudden a fifteen-year-old kid gets up and starts preaching like a grown man. When Craig spoke, it felt like God himself was speaking through him. He understood the word of God and he conveyed that message clearly to us.

Many people in church believed that God had a calling on Craig's life. Craig started out preaching once a month at our church, and those services attracted more members than any other service. Sometimes when he felt the spirit of God, he would fling his jacket off to the delight of the crowd. The church members and visitors would laugh and scream for more. At the end of the summer, I saw Craig preach at a revival service. At least one hundred sinners fell to their

knees begging God for salvation because of the power of his sermon. That summer, Craig became a little superstar in Baxley. I was just happy to be his friend at the time. Little did I know that our destinies would lead us in separate directions, and that school year would be the catalyst.

I walked into eleventh grade homeroom and I could hear the adoring whispers from the boys. "Damn! Who is that? Ah man, that's Angela. Angela? You mean skinny Angela from last year? Yep? Damn she fine! I bet I get her phone number this year."

Craig's eyes bounced happily up and down my body and I blushed from the attention. The summer between tenth and eleventh grade had been extremely good to my self-esteem. My lanky, bean-pole body had finally developed.

The hot Georgia summer had turned my normally light skin into an exotic copper shade. And my long, dark, wavy hair only added to my beauty. Over the summer, my father had also noticed the new crowd of boys hanging around vacation Bible school. The funny thing about fate is that it happens while you're busy making other plans. While my father was concentrating on keeping the boys away from me, he was pushing me closer to Craig.

Craig had always been a safe boy in my father's eyes. He was very respectful and almost spiritual to a fault. My father actually encouraged Craig and I to hang around each other. Everyone at New Heaven thought that it was so cute because we were connected spiritually. I was in the choir and he was the dynamic sixteen-year-old preacher. Our friendship was considered perfect in the church world. But with any situation, there is always the possibility of change, and by the fall of my eleventh-grade year, change had come.

I found myself more anxious and excited to be around Craig. Craig would pull people out of the audience to help prove a point during his sermon, and I would make every effort to volunteer. I just wanted to brush up against him. The Bible says, "If I could just touch the hem of his garment." Well, at the time, all I wanted to do was just be near Craig.

It was difficult being raised as a young Christian in a holiness church. We were taught to put Christ first and flee from the temptations of Satan. The problem was you never knew where the temptations would come from. The expectations of a saved, sanctified teenager were almost overwhelming. Everyone treated you like you had all the answers when you really didn't know anything. People just assumed you would make the right choice. Our parents built a bubble of faith around us and took for granted that nothing could tempt us. They believed that both of us being saved was enough to keep us focused, but it wasn't.

Our parents allowed us to go to the park after morning service, just to give us a break. If my parents had only known what was going on during those breaks. Both Craig and I were becoming more curious about our feelings. The problem is that we had no idea of what to do. Our kisses were awkward because we were trying to imitate what we had seen other people doing. Even though we didn't know what we were doing, it felt really good.

Most of the church members would be at the Music Pavilion listening to live jazz bands. The Music Pavilion was a covered stage and amphitheater located in a grassy bowl inside the park. It was a popular spot for concerts and events. Church members would bring blankets and picnic baskets and relax until the late service started. Craig and I would sneak off to our own secret spot. I loved being in that secret spot with him. The spot was a huge reservoir wall that overlooked the amphitheater. Most people hated the overlook because it was such long hike back to church. This was the place that Craig and I forgot about the church and explored each other. Craig and I would kiss and rub on each other until it was time for the long hike back to church.

I enjoyed those innocent moments with Craig. He would hold me tightly from behind and rub and softly squeeze my breast. I enjoyed letting him press against me until his penis was hard. I got into a habit of taking my pantyhose off before leaving for our rendezvous. The feeling of grinding against Crag was magical. Craig would nibble on my neck and message my body, causing me to shake with anticipation. Deep down in my heart, I knew what we were doing was wrong because of our Pentecostal upbringing. But I swear, those tender moments alone with Craig never felt like sin. We had convinced ourselves that as long as we never had sex, we were okay. All of that would change on Thanksgiving Day.

There was nothing like Thanksgiving Day in the small town of Baxley, Georgia. Pining your own Christmas tree from a nearby farm, greeting friends on Main Street as you dashed in and out of small shops looking for that rare gift, and watching the town Christmas tree light up for the first time were just some of the magical events that occurred in Baxley. On this day, my faith would be tested beyond anything that I had encountered in my short life.

To us, there was nothing odd about attending church on Thanksgiving Day. In fact, it was required. While our parents cooked and served meals to the homeless, I helped Craig conduct the young adult service. Young adult service encouraged us to worship Christ in a way that would attract younger people to the church. Craig's ability to galvanize young people was incredible. His knowledge of the Bible along with his ability to connect with the younger generation made him an ideal candidate for that year's event. Craig convinced local gospel hip hop artists to perform in the park. He gave an emotional message about being thankful and the crowd responded with a rousing applause. If you hadn't known any better, you would have thought that Craig was the headliner.

Craig introduced the master of ceremony for the musical event and exited the stage. He walked toward me and smiled as he approached. I was so proud of just being associated with Craig. People in the audience rushed in his direction, shaking his hand and patting him on his back. Craig just took it all in stride like it was nothing new to him.

When he finally reached me, he hugged me tightly and whispered, "Let's go for a walk."

Cheerfully, I agreed and he held my hand tightly as he escorted me through the crowd. I felt like the wife of a pop star. Eventually, Craig and I emerged from the crowd and their attention turned to the act on the stage. We soon found ourselves walking on the long path towards our secret spot. We exchanged glances back and forth and giggled because we knew what we were going to do.

When we arrived at the reservoir wall, we nervously looked around. Unlike on other days, the park was crawling with people that day, and anyone could walk up on us. I could still hear the music echoing in the background as Craig pinned me against the wall. I giggled as he tickled my neck with his soft kisses and his hands gently squeezed my butt. I could feel his hands slowly

lifting my skirt and my breathing began to intensify. I was used to Craig feeling on me, but he had never tried to feel under my skirt. I quickly grabbed his wrist to stop him. Craig pulled me closer and continued to squeeze and massage my butt.

He whispered in my ear, "I just want to touch you in your panties."

I smiled at him and shyly shook my head no. He responded by gently peeling my fingers off his wrist and placing my hands around his neck. Craig than unbuckled his pants and pulled out his penis.

I pretended to be shocked and appalled by saying, "You are so nasty."

Craig, embarrassed, quickly placed it back in his underwear and smiled. I playfully punched Craig in the shoulder and he pulled my body closer until I could feel his erect penis nestled tightly against my vulva. Craig stepped back and I tried to pull him back toward me. He looked into my eyes and slowly unbuckled his pants while pulling out his penis. I pretended to be shocked and weakly fought against him, but in reality, I was curious too. Scared from all the tall tales that my parents had told me, I shyly peeked at my first dick.

Craig asked if I wanted to touch it and I timidly agreed. Craig slowly guided my hand down and placed it around his penis. He trembled with excitement and I flinched when it started to expand in my hand. I gently touched Craig's penis with my fingers, unsure if I was hurting him. I noticed that every time I touched the tip of his penis, he would wince and draw back. I also noticed that the more I played with it, the harder it got. Craig asked if he could rub it against me and I froze.

I was afraid to answer because of my faith and parents. I could hear my parents telling me that this was wrong, but Craig was already pulling me closer. His penis grazed my vulva as he positioned himself between my thighs.

The sexual energy rushed through my body as his dick rubbed against my panties. I could feel my legs trembling with anticipation of what was coming next.

I was confused and afraid and I felt guilty. I wished that I had never allowed him to touch me like this. It was my fault that Craig was out of control, and it was my fault that we were backsliding. Every thrust from Craig made me feel like a sinner. I could feel my panties moisten and my inner thighs tighten around his penis. The moisture from my panties made the thrust from Craig easier. Craig's eyes were closed tight and the frown on his face was intense. The more he pushed, the more I wanted to have sex with him.

After about three or four minutes of intense rubbing back and forth, I was on the brink of pulling my panties down when something strange happened. I felt the muscles in Craig's neck stiffing to a tight coil and his firm grip around my waist begin to tighten. His normal, deep, baritone voice gave way to soft moans. Craig's thrust intensified as he lost control of his body. He grunted one last time and released a steady stream of warm fluid between my legs. The extra dampness felt nasty between my thighs, but it turned me on. Craig's breathing became more erratic, and he staggered sideways as if losing his balance. I extended my arms to catch him and he awkwardly fell forward with his head coming to a rest on my shoulder. We held each other in an awkward silence. I wanted to ask Craig if we just had sex, but I was afraid. We quietly

straightened our clothes up as best we could and started the long walk back to the church. We held hands as we walked back to church, but it felt forced. Normally we felt comfortable with talking about anything, but that day was different. We walked in silence trying to make sense of what had just happened. I stopped at a nearby restaurant and washed the smell of sex off as best I could. I threw my panties in the garbage and we proceeded to church.

By the time we arrived at evening service, it had already started. My father glared at us as we entered the church. I sat in the rear of the church and Craig slowly walked to the pulpit. I was so embarrassed that I was in church without panties on. I barely lifted my head to speak to anyone. I was always taught that a Christian should seek forgiveness, but I felt like there was no coming back from this transgression. I looked at Craig and his bright, normal smile had been replaced with a guilty gaze of regret.

My father asked Craig if he had a sermon for God's people, and for the first time ever, Craig said no. The guilty expression on Craig's face told all that he had backslid. My father looked at me, and it was like his eyes were burning a hole in my forehead. I think he knew Craig and I had done something wrong, but to what extent, he just did not know. During alter call, the entire church gathered around Craig while he prayed for forgiveness. I sat nervously in my seat wishing that Craig and I had never stumbled down that road. Later that night, my father asked me if I wanted to talk, and I shook my head no. There was no way I could let my father know that I had sinned.

The thing about being a teenage Christian is that you are taught to always look to Jesus or the Bible for answers. I searched for any scripture in the Bible that talked about the feelings I was having, but I couldn't find it anywhere. Craig and I saw each other the next Sunday and it felt awkward. The fun of seeing each other had turned into a daze of guilt. Craig and I finally had a conversation about what had happened. We both agreed that we could still go to the park, but nothing else.

That following Sunday, we both prayed for strength before going to the park, but still we ended up in the same predicament, I pinned against the wall while he soiled my panties with his sperm. Again and again, we asked God to forgive us of our sins, and we always ended up in our secret spot.

After a while, it got easy. I could praise God in church with a brown bag containing my wet panties and not hurt with guilt.

Craig became an even better con artist. One Sunday morning, my father asked Craig to preach in his spot during his absence. Craig preached one of the most passionate sermons about backsliding that I had ever heard. When we got to our secret spot, he came so hard between my legs that I thought he had a super soaker water gun for a penis. For a long time, I thought that it was something that I had done to make him cum so hard. I would later find out the truth.

At first it was just simple curiosity, and then overnight, Craig's attitude seemed to turn into the need to prove something. He started to pressure me more and more about having sex, and the things that he was asking of me were way passed our meager knowledge. One Sunday while pinned against the wall, I felt him pulling my panties down. At first it was playful, but then he became aggressive to the point of ripping my panties.

I was surprised because he never had been so demanding and aggressive. He wrestled me to the ground as if he were trying to force himself inside me. Craig only stopped after I screamed at him and slapped him in the face.

Craig laughed as he helped me off the ground and said, "I was just playing with you."

I laughed along with him, but in the back of my mind, I felt like things would never be the same.

I could tell something was bothering him, but he rarely talked about it. Then, Elder Early Madison began showing a lot of interest in Craig's mother. I wondered if that had anything to do with the change in his behavior. Elder Madison and my father were both ordained at the same time. In fact, sometimes it seemed as if my father and him were competing against each other.

My father would come home after church and complain about Elder Madison getting more shine than him. Sometimes my father would stay home almost as way of protesting. The Bishop would ask us about my father, and my mother would tell some lie to keep us in good standing with the church. I never really understood why my mother went out of her way to look good in front of a bunch of gossip hounds. It was almost like we had to be perfect because she didn't want our name in mud.

I always hated saying "yes ma'am" and "no ma'am" to a bunch of cackling hens who thought they knew better. The same cackling hens were always trying to help Elder Madison find a good wife in the church. Elder Madison was young, attractive, and wealthy. Every single woman in the church wanted him. That's why everyone found it odd when he hooked up with Craig's mother. Not to say that she was ugly, but most people thought he could have done a lot better.

Craig's mother only dated Elder Madison for a short time, but I could tell that the relationship bothered Craig. He was especially bothered by the way his mother would force him to go with Elder Madison on trips. Elder Madison was more than generous with his money, especially to the young boys in the church. The girls in the church would get jealous about the gifts, but they were only offered to members of the youth ministers club. The youth ministers club consisted of boys ranging in age from six to twelve who were being raised in single-parent homes. Craig was older than most of the members in the young ministers club, but he was invited to chaperone because of Elder Madison's relationship with his mother.

Elder Madison would take the boys to Atlanta to see basketball games, take them on camping trips, and the most prized trip of all, Disney World. Craig was so excited to help chaperone during the first couple of trips. Then it was like he was uninterested in helping Elder Madison. In fact, he was so against going with Elder Madison that he would often be overheard cursing at his mother when she tried to force him to go. Craig eventually stopped preaching and sometimes would just skip Sunday service and meet me afterwards.

Then the rumors about Elder Madison began, but none of them were ever confirmed. Rumors or not, my father made it perfectly clear that my brother was to stay as far from him as possible.

My father would say, "Steven, don't ever get in that man's car. Something just isn't right about him."

I think everybody except my father was shocked when Elder Madison was arrested. My father just kept screaming, "I told you so," as Elder Madison's face flashed across the TV. The reporter said a nine-year-old boy had been molested by Elder Madison for years. I often wondered if Elder Madison had a part in Craig's sudden change of just being curious about sex to wanting to prove his manhood.

During the summer after my sophomore year at Appling County High School, my brother found me a summer job working as an intern at ESPN in Atlanta. The job was fast-paced and I met a lot of new people. Craig and I communicated over the phone and I felt like nothing had changed. He would tell me that he loved me and that one day he was going to buy me the biggest house in Baxley. During my first few weeks in Atlanta, unbeknownst to my father, I dreamed of having that same big house with Craig in Baxley. As the summer came to an end, I knew I could never spend the rest of my life in Baxley, Georgia. The bright lights and urban city feel of Atlanta had grown on me. I met different people with bigger dreams than just staying in a small town.

My junior year of high school came and went, and then Craig started making comments about us going to Georgia Southern University together. The university was only fifty miles from Baxley, and I wanted to go further away. I visited Georgia Southern with Craig to appease him, but I knew it was not for me. Then Craig found out that his careless attitude towards his grades was coming back to haunt him. His mother invested more in his athletics than in his education. I had to admit that Craig was a very good basketball player. Most people in Baxley thought that he would be a huge basketball prospect. The reality was that he was a great basketball player in Baxley, but just average anywhere else.

On the other hand, my plans for college had already been in full swing since I was a sophomore. By the start of my senior year at Appling County, I had already received letters of acceptance from Virginia Tech, University of Tennessee, Baylor, and University of Cincinnati. The only reason that I was considering Cincinnati is that I had traveled there with my ninth grade debate team. I remember having such joy when I traveled to other places far from Baxley, Georgia. My dream was to attend Spelman College, and I would stop at nothing to achieve that dream.

Craig's dream of playing college basketball was dying quickly by the hour. His average basketball skills combined with his low grades equated to no scholarship offers. While my mother and father bragged at church about my college acceptance letters, Craig's mother seethed with jealousy. Whenever I went over to Craig's house, his mother would make sly comments about me not being better than anyone else in Baxley.

Ms. Harden's favorite line was, "Y'all can have a couple of babies, get jobs at the plant, and buy a nice used mobile home. Life don't get no better than that." At first, Crag would stay out of the conversation, but then he started sounding like his mother. "Baby, we've been together for a long time. What's wrong with having kids now? I love you and plan on marrying you, so why wait?"

I was stunned because he sounded just like his mother. I continued to express my desire to leave Baxley. Eventually, Craig and I stopped going to movies between church services and he started talking to other girls at school. People in the church could see that Craig and I were having problems. What irked me the most was the way his mother would blame me. She would grab my hand and escort me to the altar as if I was doing something wrong.

As time went on, we began to argue more. I still remained true to Craig because I loved him. The straw that broke the camel's back occurred on prom night. For years, I had been so sure that when I lost my virginity it would be to Craig. We talked about having sex, but we had never gone all the way. At least one of us hadn't.

The protective father and preacher always made sure he talked to us about sex. My father would always stress to us that sex was a special commitment that should only be between married people.

But his street mentality usually made the conversation sound like, "If you touch my daughter, I'll kill you."

It began to seem like every sermon my father preached was directed at me. "Young people, I know prom is coming up. But always remember to put Jesus first."

And the church would respond with choruses of "Amen."

By the time prom night arrived, my mind was twisted in several directions. I wanted to respect my Christian upbringing, but I also wanted to make Craig happy. After days of going back and forth, I decided that I wanted Craig to be my first. I called him and told him that I had a special surprise for him after prom. That was the first time in a long time that I had heard excitement in Craig's voice.

Over the past couple of months, I had been the one initiating all the contact by phone. Most of the time he didn't answer or he would cut the conversation short. Those few months were very frustrating for a young girl in love. The sound of happiness in Craig's voice made me sure that this was the right thing to do.

Craig arrived at my house early and he appeared to be very excited.

Just as we were walking out the door, my mother spoke. "Craig, can you please wait in the car? I need to speak with Angela."

Craig walked out the door and my mother put her arm around me. I thought we were about to have one of those mushy moments when your mother tells you how much she loves you.

Instead, my mother smiled at me and then whispered, "Those new underwear are really cute, but still respect yourself."

I was so embarrassed! I had bought those sexy panties just for Craig. I thought I had hidden them pretty well. I should I have known I couldn't get anything past my mother.

My mother called my father and he started walking toward us. I was mortified. Would my father kill me and Craig? Or would he just call off the whole night? I looked at my mother with

panic in my eyes as my father arrived. Instead of telling him about my sexy panties, we joined hands and prayed.

After prayer, I walked out the house feeling free. I approached the car and smiled at Craig. I could feel his eyes on my body, so I poked my little butt out just a little further. I don't know if my mother told my father about my new panties, but I do remember my father bursting through the front door. He leaped off the porch just as Craig and I were pulling off. My father pounding on the truck, startling us, and Craig slammed on the brake.

I was so embarrassed when I heard my father yell. "My man, if my daughter's not home by 12:00, I'm coming to find you."

Craig's lips cracked into an awkward smile, but my father's expression was deadly serious.

Prom night started out uneventful, but that would not last. I was dancing and mingling with friends when I was approached by Stormy Underwood. Stormy and I were not friends; in fact, she ran in an entirely different circle. Her circle of friends were considered low grade. She lived in an area of Baxley known as "Black Town." It was your typical low-income part of any small country town. The four block area of town was packed with generations of low-income people who never made it out of Baxley. Steven and I were forbidden to go in that area. My father believed that side of town was like a black hole. Once you went in, you never came out. It was filled with crime and baby mammas. Stormy reminded me of a young Whoopi Goldberg with an attitude. She was a third-generation resident of Black Town with no plans to go anywhere. She hated me because she knew I was going places.

I was standing near the door with my friends when she came up to me. Stormy, accompanied by her group of Black Town inhabitants, looked at me with a smirk on her face. I turned away from them, but they continued to stare at me as if she knew something. The more I tried to ignore her, the more she whispered to her friends

After a few minutes, I finally asked sarcastically, "Do I have something in my nose or something?"

Stormy glared back at me with a smirk on her face and replied, "Naw, you okay, but I guess you haven't heard."

I turned toward Stormy and responded, "What are you talking about?"

Stormy glanced at me one last time with glee and walked away. I looked at my friends and just shook my head. As the night went on, I began to get more funny looks from other people in the crowd.

Concerned, I asked Craig, "Why are all these people looking at me all crazy?"

Craig responded by brushing it off and saying, "I don't know. I didn't see anybody looking at you."

My question seemed to make Craig nervous, because all of sudden he was ready to leave. Craig kissed me and whispered in my ear, "I love you. Come on, let's get out of here so I can get my surprise."

Craig's cute dimples looked like golf balls as he smiled at me and made his eyebrows dance up and down. I playfully punched his arm and blushed as I thought about giving away my precious virginity. I felt the bright light of the spotlight aimed at us as we continued to dance. Craig panicked and pulled my arm.

He was rushing me out the gym, but not before I heard cat calls of, "Da...ddy, Da...ddy."

I was so confused. I pulled away from Craig and stood in the middle of the crowd. Still dumfounded, I felt my best friend, Kennedy Jones, pulling me in her direction. She grabbed me so fast that I nearly tripped over Craig's patent-leather-clad foot.

Kennedy rushed me out the gym door and pulled me close as she spoke. "Angela! I need to tell you something, and it's really going to hurt you."

Terrified, I responded, "What, Kennedy? What's going on?"

Kennedy took a deep breath and responded. "People are saying that Craig and Christy Mitchell slept together, and that she might be three months pregnant."

I can honestly say that hurt was one of the worse feelings I have ever experienced. It felt like somebody dropped a block of cement on my chest. I glanced back in the gym and saw Craig looking guilty as fuck. I loved Kennedy, but I had to hear it from Craig. Hurt and humiliated, I took the long walk back to Craig.

It felt like every eye in the building focused on me as I spoke. "So is it true? Did you get Christy pregnant?"

Craig looked at me as if he smelled rotten cheese and responded, "What are you talking about? You need to stop listening to rumors."

Not satisfied with his answer, I replied, "So did you fuck her?"

There was a long pause. The silence told it all.

Craig let out a long sigh and mumbled as he stared at the ground. "You got your life, and I got mine."

I wanted to slap the shit out of him. I assumed he was alluding to the fact that I was choosing to go away to college. Craig and his mother had made it perfectly clear that he would be laying his roots down in Baxley. Although they had made it clear, I was sure that I could convince him to leave. And even if he had decided to stay, I was willing to have a long-distance relationship.

Craig looked around the gym as if I didn't exist. I wanted him to say something, but I could tell he had moved on. I remember feeling so hurt and betrayed. It was like all my dreams were going down the drain and there was nothing I could do.

I felt my hand race forward and crash into his face as I spoke. "I hate you, motherfucker. You ain't shit."

I stormed out of my senior prom hoping I would never have to see my classmates again. If I could have left Baxley that night, I would have. Kennedy drove me home and offered to stay, but I declined. I was so hurt and humiliated that all wanted to do was hide.

I headed toward my door and my father greeted me. "What's wrong? What happened?"

I responded by shaking my head and saying, "Nothing, I'm just tired."

My father replied angrily, "Naw. Where that little motherfucker at? He did something, and I'm going to find out."

He opened the door and ran toward Kennedy's car. I was hoping he wouldn't snatch her out of the car thinking it was Craig. But at that point, I really wasn't thinking about that. I slowly climbed the stairs to my room and was met by my mother.

She approached me with concern and asked, "What's wrong baby?"

By that time, my eyes were filled with tears. I looked at her and then turned away, shaking my head. I was too upset to even talk. My mother started to follow me, but heard my father's voice getting louder outside. She ran down stairs and the door slammed shut.

I could hear Kennedy now explaining to my parents how that no-good Craig had broken their daughter's heart. I could hear them still mumbling as I dozed off to sleep. I was awakened from my sleep by my father's voice calling my name.

My mother interrupted him by saying, "Would you please leave that girl alone and get out of her room? We can talk about it tomorrow."

I could tell my father still wanted answers that night, but he reluctantly left the room. I pulled my covers over my head and tried to go back to sleep. The only thing on my mind was what Craig saw in Christy Bryant.