

Elsewhere
A Novel by Frank Danger
Volume 1
Sample Chapters 1 Through 10
(19,384 Words)

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Chapter 1

It was a beautiful day in Effitsville, Pennsylvania. It was a Friday. It was the third week of April.

Joseph Klinger and Catherine Klinger had been happily married for sixteen years. They had two children. Eric and Peggy were fraternal twins. They were both twelve years old.

Catherine Klinger was a psychotherapist at the Effitsville Behavioral Health Center. Joseph Klinger was an office manager for the headquarters of a Consolidated Retail Incorporated. They both had been in their jobs for over ten years.

There kids were attending the George Washington Grammar School. They were doing a good job as students. However, Joseph was upset that his kids were not learning about Christianity in the school. Catherine would take the kids to a Bible Study group in St. Mary's Parish to compensate for this problem. Their kids were doing so well that Catherine did not want to transfer them out of the school.

The kids were going to have to go to school today. Joe and Catherine woke up two hours early for some unknown reason. They had an early breakfast and then started to talk about their lives as students in grammar school.

“I think that my school was a little bit awkward,” Joe said. “You could not believe some of the things that I had to deal with in St. Cleo’s Grammar School. It was a school that was supposed to be a dating service for young adults. Part of the tuition that parents would pay would support the capacity of the school to be a dating service for its students.”

“Why would the principal and the teachers want young adult kids in grammar school to date each other?” Catherine asked.

“There was a lot of peer pressure to date and to become sexually active among the students,” Joseph said. “Many of the girls were looking for fiancés and to get engaged so that they would have a husband after graduation from high school.”

“What was going on with the boys?” Catherine asked.

“The boys were trying to rape and to sexually exploit the young adult girls,” Joe replied. “It seemed to me that the principal and the teachers did not care about the boys’ efforts to violate the young female minors in the school.”

“Did you try to have sexual relations with any young girl?” Catherine asked.

“They would put me down for not really pursuing a girlfriend while I was in grammar school,” Joe replied. “What scared me was the possibility that I might get a girl pregnant. I was scared that I might be arrested and charged with statutory rape. It is just rape when a boy tries to seduce and to have sexual relations with an underaged minor that is under the age of eighteen years old. I do not think that the teachers and principal understood this.”

“Did the kids taunt you?” Catherine asked.

“They drove me so crazy that they convinced me to try to commit suicide,” Jose said. “They came to my house at the end of the fourth-grade school year to attack me. Then I went into the house to take an overdose of vitamins. Those kids enjoyed the idea of hurting me.”

“Why would the kids want to hurt you?” Catherine asked.

“Something was wrong with the school,” Joe replied. “It was not my fault. The authorities discovered that St. Cleo’s Grammar School had serious problems after I tried to hurt myself.”

“So, you decided to abstain from dating because you were afraid that you might make a girl pregnant?” Catherine asked.

“My therapist, Ellen Hayes, and my psychiatrist, Dr. Marcus Adams, felt that dating and sexual activity could destroy my life at that age when I was still in grammar school. My best friend, Clarence Fulbright, also struggled with the humiliation of not being able to date girls in an environment where everyone was dating.”

“Did anything really bad happen when the kids were dating?” Catherine asked.

“There were at least three underaged teenage pregnancies that I detected when I was a student at St. Cleo’s Grammar School,” Joe replied. “Beth Lynch was the tragedy of the school. She thought that she had found the man of her dreams in Cedric Chapman. They were only dating for a few weeks. They decided to become sexually active. Their birth control failed. She got pregnant and then had a miscarriage while she was attending classes. Griffin Odell, the principal, felt that a miscarriage was the best thing that could happen for her.”

“What else went wrong?” Catherine asked.

“We had the most successful drug dealer in Pennsylvania in our community here in Effitsville. His name was Lionel Merlin,” Joe replied. “He was the kind of drug dealer that thought that he could get

away with murder. He could get his clients any illegal drugs and/or any illegal painkillers in the world. I was so insulted because of the way that local and federal law enforcement agencies either could not detect his operations or just did not want to do anything about him.”

“Did you ever use drugs from him?” Catherine asked.

“No,” Joe replied. “I believe in my relationship with God. I always felt that God would never want me to ever use painkillers, illegal drugs, tobacco, alcohol, and/or weapons. I have that agreement with God. God knows the way that I feel about these destructive substances and devices. It is part of my relationship with God to stay away from illegal drugs and painkillers.”

“Did the teachers and the principal detect that some of the students might be involved in taking illegal drugs?” Catherine asked.

“They either did not know that the problems existed or did not want to do anything about the problem if it did exist,” Joe replied. “This was a principal and a faculty that did not care about saving their students from the demons of substance abuse.”

“What other disasters did you witness in St. Cleo’ Grammar School?” Catherine asked.

“All of our students had to answer to the Gang of Terror,” Joe said. “They were ruthless. They would deal drugs. They would work in off-the-books businesses. They would work for the mafia and organized crime in Effitsville County. They were violent. They wanted to court young girls in St. Cleo’s Grammar School for dating and marriage.”

“I heard rumors that they had two girlfriends in St. Cleo’s Grammar School before they were arrested during an armed robbery,” Catherine said. “Were they engaged?”

“Yes,” Joe replied. “Chrissie Hilbert was my love interest. She was someone that supposed to be the girl of my dreams. She knew that I wanted to have a long-term relationship with her. I still do

not know why she rejected me for gang members. I do not understand what I did wrong with her. It is very painful when I look back at her engagement and the subsequent bank robberies. There were rumors that she and her best friend, Johanna Clarke, were both pregnant. Those relationships were tragedies. I feel bad because I would never have done anything that would have been so cruel and so destructive to Chrissie if she had been my girlfriend."

"Do you think that she would have been better for you than I am for you now?" Catherine asked.

"You are the most wonderful wife that any man could ever hope to have," Joe replied. "I know that the betrayals that I suffered in that school could not possibly happen between us. I have faith in our relationship. I feel the strength of God's love for us in our relationship. I am thankful to God that our love for us is working out for us."

"I feel a little bit jealous when you express your depression that it did not work out with Chrissie and other girls," Catherine said. "What makes me different than them?"

"You love me," Joe said. "Those other girls never loved me. I never loved them. That is why I am so grateful that you are part of my life. I am one of the luckiest men in the world."

"I appreciate the complement," Catherine said. "What was the most outrageous event that you ever saw in St. Cleo's Grammar School?"

"A gang of student tried to break into the school," Joe replied while they were laughing. "I think that six or seven of us wanted to occupy the school after school hours. I found out that they had found a way to break into the school. I thought that it was funny that they thought that they could get away with it. I decided to go along with it with no regard of the consequences of what would happen to us if we should get caught."

“Did the school have an alarm system?” Catherine asked.

“The principal and the pastor were psychologically disturbed,” Joe replied. “They had never thought that the school would ever need an alarm system. We took advantage of that show to be successful in the way that we would break into the school.”

“Did you get away with it?” Catherine asked.

“All the kids were arrested,” Joe replied. “I was transported to the Effitsville Hospital and Medical Center for a psychiatric evaluation before my parents took me home.”

“Why did they want to do something that was so crazy?” Catherine asked.

“Our students wanted to confront evil spirits in the school,” Joe replied. “That was our goal.”

“Did you experience these evil spirits while you were in the school?” Catherine asked.

“I believe that we did deal with evil spirits that wanted to hurt us,” Joe said. “They did a good job of getting our students into trouble. They had nerve to try to break into their own grammar school.”

“Why did you have such a hard time in socializing with your peers in St. Cleo’s Grammar School,” Catherine asked.

“It was very difficult for someone like me to join anyone of the school’s malicious peer groups,” Joe replied. “Some of these peer groups encouraged their members to drink alcohol. Others would promote smoking. The bad peer groups would encourage students to use illegal drugs. I could not betray my relationship with God by engaging in destructive behaviors and self-destructive behaviors.”

“How did your relationship with God develop while you were a child and a young adult?” Catherine asked.

“My parents told me that I had to pray,” Joe replied. “They transferred me to parochial grammar schools. That encouraged me to communicate with God through prayer. I decided to try to find the God that exists in my life from the time that I started studying about God in the second grade. Now I feel that I can communicate with God and that I can talk to God. That is why I need psychiatric treatment. It seems that my relationship with God can cause me to hurt others. My relationship with God can cause God to hurt others. I can hurt myself because of my depression. There are many reasons why I am a voluntary patient that will take these types these types of medications. The medications help me to balance my life as a human being and as a child of God. We hope that we will not hurt anyone in the process of engaging in our relationship. I always try to do what God wants me to do. I just take offense to it when God asks me to engage in actions that hurt others.”

“How do you feel to being married to a psychotherapist like me, Joe?” Catherine asked.

“A relationship with you is good therapy no matter what it is that we do together,” Joe replied. “You help me to have a different perspective on life. You help me to understand my conflicts. You help me to respond to my psychiatric medications. You help me to enjoy the love of a beloved wife and kids in a loving family. I am very grateful that God has given me that kind of happiness in my life.”

“How many kids were doing drugs in your school?” Catherine asked.

“I do not know,” Joe replied. “I do know that they were going to exclusive parties that had a reputation for distributing all kinds of drugs to the party’s participants. I have reasons to believe that some of our students were hooked on drugs. I never had any evidence to support the idea that kids in my school were doing drugs.”

“How would your peers and your teachers treat you in St. Cleo’s Grammar School?” Catherine asked.

“They hurt me a lot,” Joe replied. “They would humiliate me for not having a girlfriend. They would put me down for getting grades on the American Standardized Exams. They would taunt me because I did not want to smoke, to drink, and/or to use illegal drugs. It hurt me to see students that were not doing well on the standardized exams. Maybe they were taking out that problem on me. Maybe the school was not educating students properly. Maybe they just wanted to punish me for that.”

“Did you have a good therapist and a good psychiatrist?” Catherine asked.

“Ellen Hayes was an excellent therapist,” Joe replied. “She would always make you feel better when the situation in that school would make me feel depressed. I think that Dr. Marcus Adams was the best psychiatrist that I could possibly have in that situation. They really wanted to help me. They wanted me to succeed in my schoolwork and in my personal life. I think that they did a wonderful job with my medical treatment.”

“Could they have done a better job in helping you to go to school without facing all of the conflict that you confronted?” Catherine asked.

“I do not know,” Joe replied. “I do not believe that the conflict was coming from me. The conflict was coming from elsewhere. The conflict was illegal for any grammar school to tolerate. Every school should be a peaceful learning environment. It should be a pressure cooker of hatred, harassment, and conflict. I do not know if psychiatrists have the training to deal with this kind of catastrophe. This kind of training is not available to psychiatrists and psychotherapists in their residencies. These kinds of violent conflicts do not exist in normal schools. It is just impossible to believe that this kind of conflict can exist in this type of parochial grammar school.”

“You deserve congratulations for surviving this St. Cleo’s Grammar School situation,” Catherine said. “We are so happy that you still function as part of God’s Human Race. Anyone that sees what you

have accomplished would express admiration and praise for the way that you handled yourself in that crisis as a child and as a young adult. I really admire that in you, Joseph.”

“Does that mean that you will continue to exist in my life as my wife?” Joe asked. “It is hard for a patient who takes psychiatric medications to impress a psychotherapist. I am so thankful that you have expressed a vote of confidence for our relationship. That is why I love you so much.”

“The feeling is mutual,” Catherine said. “I would not trade you for any other man in the world. I have to get the kids ready for school.”

They had been talking for more than an hour. Catherine went upstairs to wake up the kids and to prepare them for going to school.

Joe was contemplating taking the day off to visit the site of his old parochial grammar school, St. Cleo’s Grammar School. Joe felt a spiritual calling to go back to view the building of The St. Cleo’s Grammar School. Joe was considering calling out sick today. He felt that God wanted Him to go to the site of his old school to investigate what was happening there. Joe felt that God had given him that mandate. He spent five minutes in trying to decide to call his job to either take a personal day or to call out sick. Nevertheless, Catherine was going to voice her objections to what Joe wanted to do today.

Peggy and Eric came downstairs to greet Joe. They all hugged and kissed each other. Joe told them about how important it is for them to pray to God. Joe told them to talk to God if something goes wrong. He also told them to use their cellphones to contact either him or Catherine so that their parents can resolve the problems.

Ethel Felda worked for the Effitsville Children and Young Adult Transportation Company. She arrived at the Klinger residence to transport both Peggy and Eric to their grammar school. The kids

hugged and kissed their parents and then left the house with Ethel. Ethel then transported the kids to school.

Catherine had thirty minutes left before she had to drive to work. Joe made up his mind. He called his supervisor at work. His name was Ryan Thane. They had a conversation before Ryan excused Joe from work.

“Hello, Ryan,” Joe said. “I would appreciate if you could grant me a favor. Could you possibly give me a personal day today? I need to deal with a family emergency. Is there any way that you could help me out with this problem?”

“I would be more than happy to help you out with this problem, Joe,” Ryan Thane replied. “You can take the day off. I wish good luck and good fortunes in dealing with your emergency. We hope to see you back in work on Monday. Thank you for working for us, Joe. Again, we hope that we can help you resolve your family emergency.”

“I am very grateful for your consideration and kindness, Ryan,” Joe said. “I look forward to seeing you at work on Monday. Thank you. I hope that you will have a wonderful weekend. Goodbye.”

“Goodbye, Joe,” Ryan said.

Their conversation then ended.

Catherine then asked Joe what was happening to him. She wanted to know why Joe was going to take a personal day from work.

“Why are you taking a personal day from work, Joe,” Catherine asked.

“Catherine,” Joe replied. “I have a spiritual calling to visit the site of the building of my old school, St. Cleo’s Grammar School. I just want to investigate what happened to the building. It is not a big deal. It should be back home in about one to two hours.”

“Why do you want to open up a can of worms that has been closed for decades?” Catherine asked.

“Why should it be such a problem for you, Catherine?” Joe asked.

“I am worried about the state of your mental health,” Catherine replied. “You want to do something that is completely and totally irrational. There is no reason why you should be doing this now. You have to understand that.”

“You should get ready to go to work, Catherine,” Joe said. “This is a problem between me and God. This is a problem within my relationship with God. You do not have to get involved with this problem. It is not like I am going to rob a bank or that I am going to try to hurt myself. This is just a fact-finding mission. That is all that this is. You have to understand this.”

“I have to go to work,” Catherine said. “Good luck on your fact-finding mission.”

“Thank you for your vote of confidence,” Joe said. “I am leaving now. Have a good day at work. Goodbye.”

“Goodbye, Joe,” Catherine said.

Joe then left the house. He then got into his car and proceeded to travel to the site of the building which was St. Cleo’s Grammar School.

Catherine called Joseph's current psychiatrist. The doctor's name was Dr. Dennis Coulson. He was coworker with her at the Effitsville Behavioral Health Center. They had a short conversation before she left for work.

"I am so worried about what Joe is about to discover at the site where St. Cleo's Grammar School used to exist" Catherine said. "Joe was never supposed to know whatever happened to that school. I do not know why Joe has been having these ideas about visiting a school that tried to destroy his life."

"I will tell you the truth," Dr. Coulson said. "He will discover that St. Cleo's Grammar School no longer exists. He might feel upset about it. He might feel sad about it. He might feel that the school's fate was justified. You must continue to love Joe as your husband despite what might happen to his psychiatric condition. Just relax and pray to God that he will not emerge as a person that is a threat to himself or that is a threat to others. Do you understand me, Catherine?"

"He was never supposed to understand anything about that tragedy," Catherine replied. "I feel very bad that Joe is so happy and that he is doing so well and that he has to confront this tragedy now in his life."

"I do not think that he will suffer any life-threatening complications from this problem," Dr. Coulson said. "I think that Joe deserves to know the truth about where he came from and what really happened to him in that school. We have no right to keep that knowledge away from him. Maybe you should call his best friend, Clarence Fulbright, to with him soon so that they can compare notes on what went wrong and all of the good things that came out of the St. Cleo's Grammar School tragedy."

"I hope that you are right, Dennis," Catherine said. "We always hope for the best and we have to prepare for the worst. I will be at work in about fifteen minutes. Thank you for your sympathy and counseling. It really helps me to make sense out of all of this."

“It is always an honor and a privilege to help a fellow coworker with his or her issues,” Dr. Coulson said. “We are in the Effitsville Behavioral Health Center to help each other and to help others. We have fulfilled both missions at the same time. That is why we appreciate the privilege of employing a talented and caring psychotherapist like you. We look forward to seeing you at work soon.”

“I will be at work soon,” Catherine said. “Bye. Thank you.”

The conversation then ended.

Joseph wanted to see Chrissie Hilbert’s house first before he would proceed to site of St. Cleo’s Grammar School. Her house had a modest structure. It had white walls. He noticed that there was evidence that the Hilbert Family did not live there anymore. However, Joe was hurting that he could never make it work with her while he was with her in school.

Joe drove away from the house of Chrissie Hilbert’s Family with a very sad state of mind. Joe would try to understand why Chrissie thought that he would not be right for her.

He arrived at the site of St. Cleo’s Grammar School about ten minutes later.

He saw a sign that said: “Covell Construction Company. This is a Construction Site. Trespassing on This Property Is a Felony. Authorized Personnel Only.”

Joe saw that they were demolishing the building that used to be St. Cleo’s Grammar School. He was afraid to ask an employee of the Covell Construction Company to explain why they were demolishing the building that used to belong to his old St. Cleo’s Grammar School. Joe finally generated the energy to ask a supervisor to explain this to him. Joe walked up to the construction supervisor and started to talk about the demolition of the building.

“Hello, sir,” Joe said. “I used to be a student at St. Cleo’s Grammar School. I believe that this was the building that housed that school. Can you please explain why you are demolishing it to me? I would greatly appreciate if you could do that for me.”

“St. Cleo’s Grammar School was closed about twenty years ago,” the supervisor replied. “The students did disgraceful things in the end. It stopped being a school. It started being a madhouse. The federal government closed the school. It then merged with St. Barney’s Grammar School and became Alexander Hamilton Middle School. The news organizations were not allowed to make a big deal about it. It was a very quiet transformation. I am so sorry if I have hurt your feelings. Do you have any other questions about this situation?”

“Is Alexander Hamilton Middle School a good school?” Joe asked.

“It is a prestigious middle school,” the supervisor replied. “Our kids love that school. We feel so bad for the kids that did not make it in St. Cleo’s Grammar School. This community still has not recovered from that failure. It just hurts the community all of the time.”

“What are you going to construct here? Joe asked.

“We are going to build a huge assisted living facility for senior citizens and for others that cannot take care of themselves without help from caregivers that we will employ at this facility. The community wants to help our disabled seniors. We want to help others that have Alzheimer’s Disease and other psychiatric disorders. We hope that this project will work. Is there anything else that you would like to ask me before we go back to work?”

“Where is Alexander Hamilton Middle School?” Joe asked.

“It is three miles away from here,” the supervisor said. “I will give you directions. They are holding a carnival for four days starting today. You might want to take your kids to carnival to check out

the school for the future of your kids' education. Good luck. I hope that everything works out for you and your family."

"Thank you so much," Joe said. "We hope that God will bless you and that He will bless your company. Good bye."

"Good bye," The supervisor said.

Joe then walked away from the supervisor and got into his car. He then proceeded to drive home. He knew that he would be confronting Catherine about this situation later. He really did not know why no one had told him that St. Cleo's Grammar School had ceased to exist. He was looking forward to his confrontation with Catherine later in the afternoon.

Joe went to the mall to do some shopping before he went home to prepare to talk about all of this with Catherine.

Chapter 2

Joseph Klinger was a handsome boy. He was the first-born child of Perry and Melanie Klinger. His younger brother, Cody, was an adorable toddler. Joe was entering the first grade in Andrew Jackson School. Cody was in his last year in preschool before entering in Kindergarten.

The family did not have any young girls yet. Perry and Melanie were thinking about their options before they would try to have another child. Melanie did sincerely want to have a daughter. It was a source of conflict within her marriage. She decided to let it slide for the time being.

It was seven o'clock in the morning. It was time for Joe and Cody to wake up. Melanie went into Joe's room and nudged him to wake up. Joe was in a lot of pain.

"Mom," he said. "Why is it that our summer vacations end so quickly? It is not fair that kids like me do not get enough vacation time."

"We don't want to catch you being a lazy student," she said. "You have to be smart. Going to school is much better than sitting at home and wasting your time. You are becoming a big boy now. You have to want to learn so that you can become a responsible adult."

“You are just saying that because you want me to feel better than I already feel,” Joe said. “I am going to get ready for school even though what you are saying makes no sense.”

Joe then went to the bathroom. Cody also emerged from his bed and went into the bathroom. Melanie then dressed the two brothers and took them to eat breakfast with their father, Perry Klinger.

“Dad,” Joe said. “What is the difference between Kindergarten and the first grade?”

“Well,” Perry replied. “You have to learn how to read once you memorize you alphabets. You must learn arithmetic once you learn how to count from one to a hundred. You must respect our nation by knowing how to say the Pledge of Allegiance. You learn many good things in the first grade. You are going to enjoy knowing how to read,”

“When is Joe going to teach me my alphabets?” Cody asked. “I want to know my alphabets before I go to Kindergarten. Is it ok if you learn your alphabets before you start grammar school?”

“Joe will help you to learn your alphabets on the weekends,” Melanie said. “Joe is always there to tutor you. He is always there to help you. We are all a family. We must help each other. We have to finish eating because we have to go to work and school.”

They then prepared to leave the house.

Perry was a supervisor in the Effitsville Nation Parcel Shipping Company Melanie worked for the Alliance Uniform and Wardrobe Manufacturing Company. She was one of the supervisors of the fashion design team. They made a decent living. They were both satisfied with their jobs.

Hannah Brier was the daycare worker that would pick up Cody to bring to preschool every morning. She appeared at the entrance of the house about ten minutes before they had to leave.

“It is so wonderful to see you, Hannah,” Melanie said. “We are hoping that Cody will do very well in preschool this year. How have you been doing?”

“I have been fine,” Hannah said. “We have just finished remodeling the preschool. We also have computer games and other types of learning games for our preschoolers. We want our preschoolers to learn powerful social skills. Cody is very welcome in our facility.”

“That flatters us,” Melanie said. “Are you ready to go, Cody?”

“Hannah,” Cody said. “I want to learn my alphabet. Can you teach me how to know my alphabets this year?”

“Of course, Cody,” Hannah said. “We will work with you today.”

Hanna then took Cody with her to the Effitsville County Preschool. Melanie then took Joe to Andrew Jackson School to meet his new first grade teacher.

Joe and Melanie arrived a few minutes early. Joe noticed a curious kid at the entrance of the school. Joe asked him his identity.

“I am Clarence Fulbright,” he said. “I am looking for my best friend. I want to have a best friend that can ride my bike with me.”

“I need a best friend too,” Joe replied. “That good. We are now best friends. Now I have a friend that will help me to play games. That’s fun.”

Melanie became very worried as she kissed Joe and then said goodbye. She walked away in a hurry.

Hilda Manson then appeared to the first-grade students. They lined up at the schoolyard entrance. The kids followed Ms. Manson into the classroom. They said their Pledge of Allegiance and sang God Bless America before sitting down. She then distributed books to all the students.

She then broke up the kids to take turns in reading exercises. Joe, surprisingly, knew how to read Basic English. He was surprised. He did not know who had taught him how to read.

“Where did you learn how to read, Joe?” Hilda asked.

“It has something to do with my alphabets,” Joe replied. “People that know their alphabets can read better.”

“That is a good answer, Joe,” she said. “We all need to get ready for lunch soon. Let us go now.”

They all went to eat lunch. Joe and Clarence were then going to be able to confront some of their classmates.

Joe and Clarence talk with Kelvin Rogers in the schoolyard. They tell Kelvin that they have decided to be best friends. Kelvin asked them if they like girls yet.

“It is OK to like girls at any age,” Kelvin said. “It is part of being a boy. Do you like any of the girls here?”

“This is the first day of school,” Joe said. “Do we have to like a girl in school?”

“Boys and girls go out together in school all of the time,” Kelvin said. “Some boys are late bloomers. Some boys are like me. They start being friends with girls at a young age. What is normal for me is not normal for other kids.”

“Which girl do you like in class?” Clarence asked Kelvin.

“I am going to take my time,” Kelvin said. “These are cute girls. There are nice girls to from which to choose. I want you to know that you cannot choose what choose. My girl is not your business.”

“We will see who will get a girl first,” Joe said. “Will it be you or will it be Clarence or me? You think that you are special. You cannot win a girl of me.”

Kelvin started laughing. The girls also started laughing. The boys had no idea what exactly was happening. The lunch period then ended. The kids returned to class.

Hilda challenged the students to complete homework assignments that had to do with reading and vocabulary. She said that it was OK if they would have difficulty with the problems. She said that she would go over the problems with them on the next day of class.

“You are all wonderful students,” she said. “We are here to learn. You must learn from the time that you are young. You should think about your future. We want you to try hard to be the best first-graders in the world. I believe in you. We believe in you. All of you are going to do very well this year.”

“Are we going to learn about numbers in class?” Joe asked. “Do you teach arithmetic in the first grade?”

“Yes,” Ms. Manson said. “We will do everything that we can to teach all of you about counting and arithmetic. We want our students to be math wizards.”

“Thank you, Ms. Manson,” Clarence said.

“All of you are welcome,” Ms. Manson said. “Let us go with a final phonics review before we will go home.”

They then began a phonics lesson. Joe was completely fascinated by the material that he was using to learn how to read and to expand his vocabulary. He felt like learning more than the teachers expected him to learn. The faculty did not know that.

The day then ended. Joe and Clarence agreed to go bike riding together soon. Kelvin was searching for his first girlfriend.

Cody was trying to achieve skills that were more than teachers would require for a toddler of his age group. He was just a toddler that wanted to try hard to learn. Joe agreed to tutor Cody.

Hannah Brier picked up Joe at the end of the day. She brought him to the day care center. He then started working on his homework assignments there. He then went home with Cody to have dinner with his parents.

Perry and Melanie were concerned about Joe's new best friend. They were concerned about Kelvin Rogers. They were concerned about Joe's rapid start to learning how to read. They gave their kids a lot of support with fear in the background that the kids would not see right away.

The kids went to sleep peacefully a few hours later. Perry and Melanie were concerned about Joe. They did not know the nature of this crisis. They hoped for the best as they retired to go to sleep.

Chapter 3

It was a Monday on the second week of September

Dr. Marcus Adams had just finished a residency program in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the Effitsville State University Behavioral Health Outreach Center.

He was married to his wife, Josephine, for two years. They had one child together, a boy, Terrence. Dr. Adams loved his family life. He loved his wife and son. He wanted to have more children as his career would progress.

Josephine was a clinical social worker. She worked for an agency that would help disabled adults to find medical treatment, medical benefits and jobs. She felt that it was fulfilling to be able to help those in need of help.

Today, Dr. Adams had an important job interview at the Effitsville Behavioral Health Center. He had applied for a vacant position as a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist on their medical staff. He did need a job as his residency in psychiatry had ended.

He sat with his wife and son at breakfast to talk before leaving for his interview. They were hopeful that things would go well.

“I want to wish you the best of luck, Marcus,” she said. “I know that you are a wonderful psychiatrist. We need more psychiatrists like you in this county and in this state. I am very proud of you. I know that you will do fine.”

“Dad will do fine,” Terence said.

He struggled with words because he was two years old. Yet, Terence was very advanced for his age. He tried hard to communicate with everyone. He tried hard to be independent. He also had rejected the stroller. He felt the need to walk everywhere that he would go.

“I am happy to hear that from you Terence,” Dr. Adams said. “I am so blessed to have such a wonderful wife and son. Both of you are the greatest gifts that God can give to me. Thank you for being part of my life.”

“It is time for me to take Terence to daycare,” Josephine said. “We have to get ready. I know that you must go for your interview, Marcus. You are going to do a wonderful job. Come here and give me a kiss.”

They kissed each other. They also hugged Terence before they hurried to get their things together. They then left the apartment. Josephine was going to take Terence to the Effitsville Daycare Center. Dr. Adams went to the Effitsville Behavioral Healthcare Center.

Dr. George Akers was an out-of-state psychiatrist. He would train, supervise and certify psychiatrists. He was the director of the Effitsville Behavioral Health Center. His training included in child, adolescent, and adult psychiatry. The clinic also certified him to practice substance abuse addiction medicine.

Dr. Felicia Chetwin was the Director of Psychotherapy and Social Work. She would supervise the way that the therapists would help the patients with their medical treatment behavioral disorders and for substance abuse problems. She finished her Ph.D. in Psychotherapy at the Effitsville School of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences. She had been with the clinic for four years.

Ellen Hayes had been with the clinic for two years. She also was a Ph.D. in Behavioral Sciences. She was in her early thirties and was hoping for her first child in the future. She was the clinic's child therapist. She enjoyed working with children of all ages. It was her goal to help disabled kids to obtain a higher level of functioning. Helping kids was her passion.

Dr. Akers noticed that he was going to be interviewing Dr. Marcus Adams today at ten-thirty in the morning. He gathered Dr. Adams' references and transcripts while he was waiting for Dr. Adams' arrival.

Dr. Adams arrived ten minutes early. He greeted the receptionist warmly. It was evident that he had a good attitude. It was also evident that he was pleasant and likeable to the other employees of the clinic.

"Hello," Dr. Adams said. "I am here for an interview today with Dr. Akers. Could you please let him know that I am here? My name is Dr. Marcus Adams"

"Yes, of course," she said. "Please have a seat. He will be with you shortly. Thank you so much for coming here. We really appreciate you interest in working with us."

"Thank you so much," Dr. Adams said as he sat down in the waiting room.

Dr. Akers, Dr. Chetwin, and Dr. Ellen Hayes then invited Dr. Adams into the conference room. They all exchanged warm greetings before sitting down at the table. Dr. Akers was the first person to begin the interview.

“We want to let you know that we think that your credentials are incredible,” Dr. Akers said.

“We want a child psychiatrist that really cares about kids. We want a doctor that can help us to rebuild a kid that is hurt by a behavioral disorder. How should we go about fixing a broken child?”

“We must try to imitate the healing powers of Jesus Christ,” Dr. Adams said. “We must look to our relationship with God for guidance. God will help us to understand what therapies we can use to help our kids. We never want to say that our kids are beyond repair. God’s kids are above behavioral disorders. Our kids can beat behavioral disorders.”

“That is a very impressive attitude to have,” Dr. Felicia Chetwin said. “We are very impressed with your attitude about looking to a higher power to aid in the healing process that our kids have to deal with. What else can we do here that can bring our kids back to a normal life?”

“We have to find the right mixture of medication treatment, vocational training, and psychotherapy,” Dr. Adams said. “We have to help them to learn. We must give them the right medications for their conditions. Our therapists should see a crisis that is on the horizon. Therapists must stop the crisis from destroying our child in a way that is constructive. We must utilize several resources to save our kids from pain and suffering.”

“Why do you think that kids are attracted to illegal drugs?” Dr. Ellen Hayes asked.

“They are trying to treat a feeling of illness with an illegal medication that makes them feel well,” Dr. Adams said. “They think that a street drug can treat their disorders better than legitimate medications from a legitimate pharmacy. It is unfortunate that they do not know that.”

“They would also like to use cash because they want to disappear from the economy,” Dr. Adams said. “Cash is the root of all evil with kids that deal drugs. No one know how many billions of

dollars are missing. The cash is what they gain by doing drugs. That is until law enforcement agencies arrest them. We have to develop intervention programs to try to stop that from continuing to happen.”

“We need good doctors here,” Dr. Akers said. “We are now working with local schools to develop substance abuse early intervention programs. We are having a tough time. We need all of the help that we can get.”

“Our main goal is to find kids that are at high-risk for developing substance abuse problems and to treat them effectively before their lives are destroyed,” Dr. Ellen Hayes said.

“We have to experiment with different types of treatments to help our kids to off drugs out of prison,” Dr. Felicia Chetwin said. “We are very impressed with your attitudes, Dr. Adams.”

“We have been looking at your transcripts from the Effitsville State University Medical School,” Dr. Akers said. “Your performance in your classes was very impressive. Your evaluations from your residency while you were in the Effitsville State University Behavioral Health Outreach Center were outstanding. You have earned impressive praise for your attitude and for your ability to understand how to treat behavioral disorders in children.”

“Thank you for the complement,” Dr. Adams said. “I really appreciate your vote of confidence. It was always my dream to be someone who would make a difference for sick and disabled kids.”

“How does your relationship with God help you to treat sick children and adolescents?” Dr. Ellen Hays asked.

“We all answer to a higher power,” Dr. Adams said. “We are all part of God. He depends on all of us to develop human life. He depends on doctors to fix human life when the development of human life either is threatened or no longer is possible. We have feel sorry for God when his dream for the

eternal development of human life disintegrates and/or collapses. God has much to gain by helping doctors to help others that are in need.”

“We are very impressed with your advanced ideas,” Dr. Chetwin said.

“I think that we can hire you right away, Dr. Adams,” Dr. Akers said.

“You are the best candidate for the type of position that we have available,” Dr. Ellen Hayes said.

“I would be more than happy to join your team if you would be pleased to have me,” Dr. Adams said.

“You are hired!” Dr. George Akers said. “You can start to work next Monday. We are thrilled to welcome you to work as part of our team. Thank you so much for the way that you have flattered us.”

“It was my pleasure entirely,” Dr. Adams said. “It was a pleasure to meet all of you. I look forward to reporting to work next week. I wish all of you to have a pleasant week. I think that I should leave since this meeting has accomplished its goal.”

“Have a good trip home,” Dr. Hayes said. “We cannot wait to see you on Monday.”

“Take care of yourself, Dr. Adams,” Felicia said.

They all exchanged handshakes and hugs as Dr. Marcus Adams quietly left the clinic. He called his wife on her cellphone to tell her the good news. She was thrilled. The whole family was going to celebrate by going out to dinner.

Dr. Adams said a prayer to thank God for helping him to join a profession where he would be helping children and young adults. He asked God for wisdom, guidance and the healing powers of Jesus Christ as he drove home.

Chapter 4

It was the first week of October. It was a Friday.

Joe and Cody had been making a lot of progress in school. Joe had been trying to understand his advanced reading assignments. Joe was also tutoring Cody even though Cody was still in preschool.

Joe was sad of late. His grandmother, Kiana Klinger, had been spending long periods as an inpatient in the local hospital. Joe could not understand the nature of her illness. Perry and Melanie would not tell him what was wrong with her. Perry and Melanie would repeatedly tell Joe not to worry about Kiana's condition.

Today, Perry and Melanie had to take time off from work to take Kiana to the Dr. Milford Drake, Kiana's Oncologist. He had diagnosed her with cancer about nine months before. Perry took it very hard. Melanie was devastated.

Joe was very close to Kiana ever since he was a toddler. She would always babysit him. She would always help him to play with his toys. She would also help him to learn how to talk.

What hurt Perry and Melanie more than anything else was the trauma that would hit Joe if Kiana would die? Perry and Melanie did not know if Joe could maintain his level of functioning in school if Kiana were to die.

Cody was younger. Cody did not connect to Kiana as Joe did. He did not understand what was happening because of his age.

Perry and Melanie decided not to tell Joe and Cody that they were going to take Kiana to the oncologist. They had breakfast together before Melanie took them to school.

“Mom,” Joe said. “I think that Cody is doing better with the alphabets.”

“We appreciate the way that you are helping your younger brother,” Melanie said. “Both of you will become honor students someday. We are very proud of both of you.”

“The alphabets are hard,” Cody said. “I get lost when I try to go from A to Z. I think that I have to practice more with Joe.”

“You will have plenty of time,” Perry said. “No one is rushing you at all, Cody.”

“I like my reading assignments,” Joe said. “Some of them are kind of hard. I have to try harder to be able to get them done.”

“We know that you can do a good job,” Melanie said.

“You have to try hard to succeed,” Perry said.

“I will see what I can do,” Joe replied.

They all then finished breakfast. Hannah Brier then came to take Cody to daycare. Perry and Melanie took Joe to school. They then went to pick up Kiana Klinger, Perry’s mother, to take her to her appointment with her oncologist, the cancer doctor.

Perry and Melanie felt sad when they greeted Kiana at the doorstep of her apartment. She was living there alone for now. She looked weak and pale.

“Hi, mom,” Perry said. “We are here to take you to the doctor.”

“You always want to take me to the doctor,” Kiana said. “I am good for other purposes, you know. I am not just good for going to a doctor’s office.”

“We know that, Kiana,” Melanie said. “Please let us take you now. It is something that we have to do.”

Kiana then got her keys and purse. She locked the door to her apartment. They then exited the apartment building. They drove to the Physicians’ Building of the Effitsville Memorial Hospital and Medical Center. Perry parked his SUV in the parking lot. They then proceeded to keep their appointment with Dr. Drake. Dr. Drake’s receptionist greeted them warmly as Perry checked Kiana in.

“The doctor would like to talk with you and your wife first,” she said. “Would that be alright?”

“That would be fine,” Perry said. “Why would he want to see us first?” Perry asked.

“You really have to talk to him,” she said. “I am sorry.”

“That is fine,” Perry said.

He knew that something bad had happened. He felt like holding back his tears. He did not know how to prepare for what was about to hit him.

“Mister and Mrs. Klinger, and Kiana,” the nurse said, “Please come inside.”

“Thank you,” Perry said. “I appreciate your kindness.”

“We need Kiana to go to the examination room,” she said. “The Dr. Drake wants to see you in his office right over there.”

Perry and Melanie then went into his office and sat down. They felt depressed because it sounded like something horrible was going to happen. The doctor walked into the office at that point.

“Hello, Mr. and Mrs. Klinger,” Dr. Drake said. “How are both of you?”

“We are fine,” Perry said. “Are we going to hear bad news?”

Dr. Drake then sat down behind his desk.

“We have been looking at the latest CAT Scans and blood work on Kiana,” Dr. Drake said.

“Unfortunately, she has taken a turn for the worse. We have to recommend that she should be admitted into a hospice at this point.”

“How bad is her cancer?” Melanie asked.

“It has spread to a point where it has become untreatable,” Dr. Drake said. “She is failing rapidly. She does not have much time left until she will die. We think that it is better for patients like her to spend her final days in our hospice rather than at home with kids. It reduces the suffering that the family had to endure.”

“I am very sad,” Perry said. “I wish that I could do more for her.”

“I am so sorry also,” Dr. Drake said. “We are all sorry about cancer. It is a bad disease. We are making progress against it. It is a shame that our progress against cancer is so slow. We are so sorry for your grief now. Our prayers go out to all the members of your family. We have paperwork that you need to sign so that we can admit Kiana into the hospice.”

They then went in to talk to Kiana in the examination room. She knew that the news was not good. She knew that there was not much more that they could do to save her life.

“Kiana,” Perry said. “We have to admit you to a hospital now. You are too sick to go home. Do you understand?”

“Can Joe and Cody visit me while I am in the hospital?” Kiana asked.

“Of course, they can,” Melanie said. “We have to bring them to visit you. They love you very much.”

“I am sad because I am so sick,” Kiana said. “I just want to get better so that I can help both of you raise Joe and Cody.”

“We know that, Kiana,” Melanie said.

“You have to wait because an ambulance is going to come and to take you to the hospital,” the nurse said.

“Thank you, nurse,” Kiana said.

They then transported her to the Effitsville Hospice Center a few moments later.

Perry and Melanie then went to Andrew Jackson School to talk to the Social Worker about Joe’s situation. The counselor’s name was Amanda Benita.

Principal Percival Dodd greeted them warmly. He then escorted them to the social workers office. They then met with Amanda Benita.

“It is a pleasure to meet both of you,” Amanda Benita said. “We need to talk about one or two issues about your son, Joseph.”

“That is fine,” Melanie said.

“He seems to have low energy,” Amanda said. “He seems to be having trouble concentrating. He says that he is sad because his grandmother is sick. How is Joe at home?”

“He is fine,” Perry said. “We do not have problems with him.”

“We know that his grandmother is going to die soon,” Melanie said. “We do not know whether that will cause him to crash.”

“We can refer Joe to the Effitsville Behavioral Health Center to be evaluated by a child psychiatrist and a child psychotherapist. They can decide if Joe either needs medical treatment and counseling services. We know that Joe is a good child. We want to help him the best way that we can. We recommend medical treatment for kids like him when there is a good chance that his condition is treatable. We are not trying to put him down. We just do not like kids to come to school with an illness that is not being treated.”

“We understand that, Amanda,” Perry said. “What do you think that the diagnosis will be in the end?”

“It looks like Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Acute Depression,” Amanda said. “He really needs to be evaluated by medical professionals. We are very certain that his condition is treatable. This is not a life-threatening situation for any of us. We are all in this to help our kids to achieve the highest level of functioning that is humanly possible. That is because we all love our kids. We want to do everything that we can to help them when they get sick. That is part of the love that we give to them.”

“Thank you so much, Amanda,” Melanie said. “We really appreciate your kindness.”

“You are welcome,” Amanda said. “Here is the business card for the Effitsville Behavioral Health Center. You can call them to schedule an intake evaluation for Joe. Is there anything else that you would want to ask me?”

“We are fine,” Perry said. “Thank you for your kindness. We appreciate the way that you care about our kids. We are going to send a commendation for you to the Board of Education. You are doing a wonderful job.”

“I am flattered by how I feel when I know how much this school cares about kids,” Melanie said. We should go now. We hope that you will have a wonderful school year.”

“The same feelings go out to you and your family also,” Amanda said.

Perry and Melanie then left the school building. They made an appointment for Joe to go for an intake evaluation at the Effitsville Behavioral Health Center for the third week of October.

Hannah Brier got Joe after he finished school and brought him to daycare before bringing him home.

Chapter 5

It was a Friday on the third week of October.

Perry and Melanie had made an appointment for an initial psychological and psychiatric evaluation for Joe at the Effitsville Behavioral Health Center.

Joe was going to go to school in the morning. Perry and Melanie were going to pick him up after school and would drive him to the clinic.

They tried to explain what was going to happen to Joe at their morning breakfast.

“Joe,” Melanie said. “We have to take you to see special doctors later. They are going to see if they can help you to feel better. You seem to be a little sick.”

“I want my grandmother to come home,” Joe said. “That would be the best way to get me to feel better. Tell me why the doctors cannot fix what is wrong with her. I am very sad.”

“We know Joe,” Perry said. “We understand that you miss her. The doctors are doing everything that they can to help her. That does not mean that you should feel sad.”

“I miss my grandmother too,” Cody said. “I wish that she could babysit me. I like it when she reads me a story. It is fun. When are the doctors going to fix what is wrong with her?”

“They are doing their best,” Melanie said. “You just have to have faith in God that everything will work out for the better. We should get ready to go. Let us finish up breakfast.”

Melanie was going to take Cody to daycare today. She also was going to drive Joe to school.

Joe met up with Clarence Fulbright in the schoolyard before the start of classes. They started talking about Kelvin’s interest in Camila Mainer. He announced that she was his love interest.

Joe was insulted. He could not believe that Kelvin could try to get a girlfriend before anyone else. Joe felt inferior. He felt jealous. He felt sick. He did not know what to think about Kelvin.

“He is a nut case,” Clarence said. “I cannot believe that Kelvin is trying to get a girl at his age. He is crazy.”

“I want to have a girlfriend too,” Joe said. “He is not better than me. I will beat him out for a girlfriend eventually. You just wait and see.”

Ms. Hilda Manson then appeared at the school entrance and led the first-grade students into the school building. She was going to concentrate on helping them with phonics and arithmetic today.

Joe was having problems concentrating. He was very sad because his grandmother was sick. He was struggling to finish his assignments. The Ms. Manson noticed that Joe was very sad. She called him into the hall to talk with him.

“Joe,” Ms. Manson said. “Are you feeling alright?”

“My grandmother is very sick,” Joe said. “I have to go to see a special doctor today. I do not know what that doctor is going to do to me.”

“I am sorry to hear that you are so sad,” Ms. Manson said. “We just want you to try as hard as you can to finish your assignments in class. We want you to finish your homework assignments also. We know that you are having a hard time. Please do your best. Do you understand me?”

“Yes Ms. Manson,” Joe replied. “I will try harder. Thank you for talking to me.”

“You are welcome, Joe,” she said. “Please return to class now.”

“Ok,” Joe said.

He then returned to class. He tried to finish an arithmetic assignment before lunchtime.

The principal excused Joe from afternoon classes because he had a doctor’s appointment in the afternoon.

Perry and Melanie arrived at Andrew Jackson School at about twelve-thirty in the afternoon. They came to sign Joe out of school. They had to take him for his appointment at the Effitsville Behavioral Health Center.

Perry and Melanie greeted Percival Dodd, the principal, warmly as they signed Joe out for the day.

“Thank you so much for helping us with Joe’s appointment,” Melanie said. “We appreciate everything that you are doing to help us with Joe.”

“It is my pleasure, Mrs. Klinger,” Mr. Dodd said. “I am always here to help my students. That is everything about my job. We hope that Joe will be feeling better soon.”

“Thank you so much, Mr. Dodd,” Perry said.

Joe then appeared in the office with social worker Amanda Benita. Joe hugged Melanie and Perry before they left to keep their doctor's appointment. They gave everybody handshakes and thanks before leaving.

They arrived about twenty minutes early for their appointment because they had to fill out paperwork. Dr. Felicia Chetwin and Dr. Ellen Hayes called Perry and Melanie in to the office to talk about their issues.

"Thank you very much for trying to help us," Melanie said. "We are very concerned about Joe right now."

"What seems to be the main problem with him?" Ellen Hayes asked.

"He has problems with concentration," Perry said. "He has problems finishing tasks and school assignments. Sometimes he loses interest in what people are telling him when they are talking to him. He gets bored with an assignment and uses that as an excuse to walk away from it without finishing it."

"He is also very depressed because his grandmother is very sick," Melanie said. "We are afraid about how he will take it when she will pass away. She had terminal cancer. We just admitted her into a hospice unit. We are so scared that he will crash on us."

"This sounds like a crisis with Joe," Ellen Hayes said. "We think that his condition is treatable. He seems to be very high functioning. He seems to be a good kid. We think that he will eventually completely respond to discipline. We have to talk to Dr. Adams about what medication would be appropriate for Joe now."

"The FDA has reservations about treating children for depression," Felicia Chetwin said. "They have evidence that antidepressants can cause suicidal behaviors in kids. We only treat severe depression in kids as a last resort. "We are hoping that Joe will recover from his grandmother's death

quickly. We hope that his depression will be a short-term problem that will not require any long-term treatment. We also need to see him once a month for psychotherapy.”

“That is fine with us,” Perry said. “How long does it take for the medications to work?”

“It varies from child to child,” Ellen Hayes said. “Your son is high functioning. We are hopeful that he will respond to the medications much sooner than other kids.”

“Stressors in the environment sometimes cause these types of symptoms,” Felicia Chetwin said. “That is why we need to see Joe in psychotherapy. We want to make sure that his external stressors will not aggravate his condition.”

“He also has a best friend,” Melanie said. “I just have a bad feeling about the situation with Clarence. Is Joe too young too young to be socializing with kids?”

“It is a good sign when there is evidence of social functioning,” Ellen Hayes said. “That helps us out very much. It makes it easier for us to help him. Socializing is a good thing for a child at any age. You must wait and see whether Clarence will corrupt Joe to do bad things. You should just tolerate this situation right now.”

“Are there any other questions before we see the psychiatrist, Dr. Adams?” Felicia asked.

“I think that we have covered all of the bases,” Perry replied. “Thank you so much for your assistance.”

“We are ready to confront the psychiatrist,” Ellen said.

They then proceeded into Dr. Marcus Adams’ office. Joe, Perry, Melanie, Ellen and Felicia were in the office.

“It is a pleasure to meet all of you,” Dr. Adams said. “How are we doing today?”

"We are doing well, thank you," Melanie replied. "Our boy, Joe, is a little sick.

"I can see that," Dr. Adams said. "How do you feel Joe?"

"I feel sad because my grandmother is sick and they will not let me see her," Joe replied.

"How are you doing in school?" Dr. Adams asked.

"Sometimes it gets boring and I do not want to deal with it because I am so sad that my grandmother is sick."

"Are you distracted when you try to work on your class assignments and homework assignments?"

"Sometimes I just want to cry," Joe said. "I understand reading and arithmetic. However, I get sad and I do not know how to work on everything. I can do well on tests. It is just bad because my grandmother cannot come home right now."

"Mr. and Mrs. Klinger," Dr. Adams said. "This sounds like Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. We can treat this with a stimulant. He will take one pill in the morning. It will give him more energy to function in school. His depression is leaving him without any energy. We will leave his depression alone. There is evidence that treatments for depression can cause suicidal behaviors in children. We want to try to give him the stimulant first and then take it from there. Here is a prescription for the medication. Please schedule appointments for Joe to see me and Ellen Hayes in one month."

"Thank you so much, doctor," Melanie said. "We appreciate your kindness and integrity. We hope the best for you in your new career here."

“I love to help kids,” Dr. Adams said. “It is nothing but a pleasure to make a difference in a kid’s life.”

“Your attitude flatters us,” Perry said. “We hope that you will have a pleasant month. Take care.”

“Call our crisis line if you have any problems,” Dr. Adams said. “Joe will get better. I really believe that. God is on our side.”

“Goodbye, Doctor,” Perry said.

“Goodbye, Doctor,” Joe said.

“Goodbye,” Doctor Adams said.

They then left the office after making their follow-up appointments. They went to the pharmacy to fill the prescription. They then went home and encouraged Joe to finish his homework assignments. Cody came home a little while later.

Joe was going to start taking the medication with breakfast on the next day.

The day ended peacefully with the hope that Joe would be feeling and behaving better throughout the next few weeks.

Chapter 6

It was a Monday on the second week of November.

Joe had been taking his psychiatric medication for about a month. Perry and Melanie did see signs of improvement in his condition. They were praying that he would become healthier. They were encouraging him to try hard to concentrate and to finish his assigned tasks.

Joe still felt depressed about his grandmother's illness. Still, Joe was determined to try hard to make his parents proud of him. Joe did not want his parents to suffer.

The family talked over breakfast before continuing for the day.

"You know that you have an appointment to see Ellen Hayes today, Joe," Melanie said. "Hannah Brier is going to pick you up after school and is going to take you to the clinic. Ellen wants to help you very much."

"She seems like a nice lady," Joe said. "I think that they really care about people in that place. I hope that they can get me to be better. I do not want to stay sick."

"You are fine, Joe," Perry said. "You are doing much better. We are very proud of you. You are not sick at all. We just have to keep you on your medicine."

“I think that Joe is doing better,” Cody said. “He is a cool brother. I like the way that he tutors me. I almost know all of my alphabets.”

“We are so proud of you, Cody,” Melanie said.

“I like it when my brother does better with his skills because I love him,” Joe said.

“That is a very beautiful thing to say about him, Joe,” Perry said.

The conversation ended and they proceeded to leave the house. Hannah came to get Cody. Melanie proceeded to take Joe to school.

Joe arrived in the schoolyard about ten minutes early. He saw that there was a gang of girls at the far corner of the playground. They were talking to Camila Mainer. They were all laughing.

Clarence Fulbright walked up to Joe to talk to him about what happened in the schoolyard.

“Kelvin is a bad kid,” Clarence said. “He asked Camila to be his playmate at lunchtime. He is a bad kid. He should be punished for doing that.”

“What did Camila say?” Joe asked.

“She said that she would talk it over with the other girls for a couple of weeks,” Clarence said.

“She said that she could not be sure about how she feels for Kelvin.”

“I am really angry,” Joe said. “I want Camila to be my friend here. What does Kelvin have that I do not have? I am sick of Kelvin. They need to punish him.”

The boys that were listening to Joe and Clarence were laughing. Kelvin was also laughing at Joe and Clarence.

“The problem with you, Joe, is that you are not as attractive as me,” Kelvin Rogers said. “I know what a girl wants in a boy. You have to grow up before you can be attractive to girls like me.”

“I am attractive to girls,” Joe said. “You are a bad boy. You cannot tell me that I am not attractive to girls. You are sick.”

Ms. Manson then appeared at the entrance of the school. The kids then entered the school and went into their classes.

They did not notice that two school monitors were watching all of this. They were going to report this to the principal and to the teachers.

The teachers wanted to see how far this show would go before they would consider disciplinary action against the kids. Percival Dodd, the principal, found the situation to be funny. He was laughing as the schoolyard monitors talked to him about what was happening with the kids in the schoolyard.

“You mean to tell me that a first-grade boy actually has the intent to try to form a friendship with a first-grade girl?” Percival Dodd asked.

“Kelvin is not exactly normal when he thinks that he can disrupt the school with this idea,” the monitor said.

“I want these kids to think that I and the faculty will tolerate this craziness,” Percival Dodd said. “We normally do not tolerate under aged dating in this school. This first-grade craziness is funny. We are all laughing at these students. We want to laugh at these students because they are funny. Now, please leave me alone while I take a sedative to try to stop my need to hurt people.”

“That is ok, Percival,” the monitor said. He then left the office.

Ms. Manson talked to Joe later before the lunch period.

“I am impressed because you are doing much better in school, Joe,” Ms. Manson said. “I really appreciate your effort. You are really a wonderful student.”

“Thank you, Ms. Manson,” Joe said. “I am just going to keep trying hard. It is tough to think for a long time on the same task. I am learning how to do it. Thanks for helping me.”

“It is my pleasure,” Ms. Manson said.

The kids then prepared for the lunch recess. They all had to finish an arithmetic assignment by noontime.

Ms. Manson was disappointed over the way that the kids were slow to grasp the math skills that she was trying to teach them. She did not know what her options were to help the kids to have a better handle on math skills. She was going to discuss this with other teachers.

The lunch bell rang. The kids then went to the cafeteria to have lunch.

Kelvin stayed away from Camila in the cafeteria. He was talking to the other kids instead. Joe and Clarence were talking about the math problems.

“I think that the math homework is tough,” Clarence said. “Maybe I am a slow learner.”

“You will understand it someday,” Joe replied.

“What is your secret for knowing how to use numbers?” Clarence asked.

“I just try hard,” Joe said. “I do not have any secrets. I am sorry that I cannot be any more help to you.”

“That is ok, Joe,” Clarence said.

The lunch period then ended. The kids returned to class. Ms. Manson then focused on reading assignments in the afternoon.

Hannah Brier was waiting for Joe at the end of the school day to take him to his appointments with Dr. Adams and Psychotherapist Dr. Ellen Hayes. Joe and Hannah greeted each other in the principal's office before heading to the clinic.

Joe arrived for his appointments a few minutes early. Hannah was going to wait for him in the parking lot.

Ellen Hayes then appeared out of her office a few moments later. She gave Joe a warm greeting.

"How are you, Joe?" Ellen asked.

"I think that I am doing better," Joe replied.

They then went into her office. They sat down and started talking.

"So, what is going on in school?" she asked.

"I am doing better," Joe said. "I am trying hard to finish my assignments. I do not want to fall asleep before I finish my homework. I do not want to walk away from people when they have not finished talking with me. It is really hard."

"I am so glad that you are making a lot of progress," she said. "We are very proud of you. Are there any problems in school?"

"Kelvin Rogers is trying to date a girl in my class," Joe said. "He thinks that he is better than everyone else. He tells me that I am not attractive to girls. He says that girls are not interested in me. He says that girls are interested in him. I am very mad. I want the teachers to punish him."

"I am sorry to hear that," Ellen said. She was trying to hold back her laughter. "Who is his girlfriend?"

“Camila Mainer,” Joe replied. “She is very pretty. All the boys like her. Kelvin said that he wants Camila to be his playmate during the lunch period. I think that they should punish him.”

“Do you like Camila?” Ellen asked.

“I think that she should like me better than Kelvin,” Joe said. “She will be with me in the end. She will not be with Kelvin. They are going to punish him.”

“What are you going to do?” Ellen asked.

“I am going to win her over him,” Joe said. “Kelvin does not deserve someone like her. He has hurt me.”

“Be sure to tell us what you are going to do about this after you do it,” Ellen said while smiling. “Are there any other issues that you are facing?”

“I feel bad for Clarence because he is having trouble with math skills,” Joe said. I want to help him but I am having problems with math too. I think that math should be for older kids.”

“You have to do your best,” Ellen said. “You have to worry less about other students and more about yourself. Clarence is your friend. However, you should not feel guilty because he might be having difficulty in school. You should look out for yourself first. I think that you should see Dr. Adams now before you go home.”

“Thanks, Ellen,” Joe said.

Joe then went in to talk with Dr. Marcus Adams.

“I have been talking with your parents,” Dr. Adams said. “I am impressed with you progress. I think that we are going to keep giving you the same medication. We will call the prescription into the pharmacy. Thank you so much for trying so hard for us, Joe. We really appreciate your effort.”

“Thank you, Dr. Adams,” Joe said.

“You can go home now,” Dr. Adams said. “Please make your appointment for your therapy for next month before you leave. Remember to call us if you feel bad. Bye Joe.”

“Bye, Dr. Adams,” Joe replied.

The receptionist then gave Joe his appointment card. Hannah then went to the daycare center to get Cody. Hannah then brought Joe and Cody home. Melanie had already arrived home by the time that Joe and Cody had arrived.

Joe told her about his visit with Ellen and Dr. Adams. She was thrilled. She was thankful that Joe was making progress. Joe got ready for dinner. He also had homework assignments to finish. He went to sleep after finishing his homework in the evening.

Chapter 7

It was a Monday on the 1st Week of December.

Dr. George Akers had called a staff meeting in the Effitsville Behavioral Health Center to discuss the status and progress of various patient. The meeting was for ten o'clock in the morning. Felicia Chetwin, Ellen Hayes and Marcus Adams were to attend the meeting.

They were especially interested in Joe's situation. They were trying to develop experimental outreach early intervention programs for young kids. Dr. Akers believed that criminalization of a human being begins with a lack of psychiatric medical treatment in childhood. Joe seemed like a kid that would not fall into that kind of disaster.

Their goal was to save children and young adults from becoming criminals and substance abusers. The problem for them was to find a plan that would work. They would then present it to the Pennsylvania State Government. Their clinic would have to find funding for it. It sounded like an unrealistic goal that behavioral health practitioners could save even half the kids that get lost with drugs, alcohol, smoking, and criminal behaviors.

They wondered what might become of Joe with his disorders. He was a fascinating case for the clinic. He seemed like a good kid with a good heart. The question was very simple. Could peer pressure and other stressor that he would encounter in his childhood and young adulthood lead him down the path of self-destruction?

The George Akers began the staff meeting right on time in the conference room. Everyone attended. He began by giving them a warm greeting.

“Thank you all for coming here to share your expertise with us,” Dr. Akers said. “We have problems that we need to discuss. First, we should develop treatment procedures for grief-stricken kids. We have to help the parents of grieving kids to help the kids to overcome the loss of a loved one, whoever that may be.”

“We have that problem with Joseph Klinger,” Ellen Hayes said. “He is very attached to his grandmother. She will be dying soon. What toll will his grief have on his level of functioning?”

“Ellen brings up a good point,” Dr. Marcus Adams said. “This situation challenges us to treat Joe with the intent and goal of preserving his level of functioning. We must reduce his suffering and grief as much as possible. The problem is that we are really not allowed to use treatments for depression in children.”

“What Dr. Adams is saying is that our hands are tied behind our backs when it comes to treating kids that are suffering from depression,” Felicia Chetwin said. “Can we walk around the rules in this particular situation with this particular child?”

“There is a lot of evidence that some people that take treatments and medications for depression try or want to try to hurt themselves,” Dr. Akers said. “Nobody has been able to prove that

antidepressant medications actually cause young adults to think about self-injury. If we need to treat Joe for depression then that is what we will have to do. Who can argue a case against us?"

"Can we convince his insurance company to pay for it?" Ellen Hayes asked.

"We can try when the situation calls for the treatment of Joe's grief," Dr. Akers said. "I will not sit back and do nothing about this child's grief and suffering over the death of his grandmother. He deserves the help that he will get."

"We need to talk about other kids," Dr. Adams said. "How do we approach kids that feel peer pressure to take illegal drugs to treat their depression and other symptoms?"

"The peer pressure that young adults face to mix drugs and alcohol together is very tough," Ellen Hayes said. "They feel that they need to abuse alcohol and drugs to be accepted into a social circle or a social group. The fact of the matter is that kids will take drugs to feel better when they feel sick. They use illegal drugs because they make kids feel better. That goes for young adults and adults also. Our goal should be to identify what a substance abuser child's symptom are. We then must try to treat those symptoms with legal medications. We have to develop intervention programs to get kids off illegal drugs right from the first grade."

"That is a very interesting point," Dr. Akers said. "Thinking that substance abusers feel sick and that they try to take illegal medications to feel better is something that most people do not understand. Substance abusers are human beings. They are very sick. We must understand that no one has the right to self-medication. Drug dealers cannot prescribe medications for anyone. That is what we need to teach our kids. We should do it when they are young. It will come back to haunt us if we wait too long. We are going to be in contact with the authorities on finding the funding to launch early intervention programs for our high-risk kids in our public and private schools."

“What should we do for Joseph in the meantime?” Ellen asked.

“We have to be prepared to be able to offer him medication for his depression,” Dr. Adams said. “It would be a temporary problem that would last until he recovers from the death of his grandmother. We must treat his condition when it happens. We just have no choice.”

“I agree with you entirely, Marcus,” Dr. Akers said. “We are going to practice intervention strategies with Joseph Klinger first. That means that we will seek the authorization to seek therapies for him that are not available for kids. We will work closely with his parents’ insurance company to negotiate patience with our efforts to help Joe.”

“Do you think that some kids are born with special powers, George?” Ellen asked.

“We think that there are some children that do strange things that are unusual,” Dr. Akers said. “We do not know who taught him how to read at such an advanced level. He is also very mature in the way that he talks to us. We will not know what will become of his abilities until later. The government wants to put all kids that show evidence of special powers under psychiatric care for their entire lifetime. We should understand that a kid with special powers can disrupt the entire planet. We have to continue to investigate this situation over the next few months and years.”

“Well,” Dr. Akers said. “We have had a productive staff meeting. Let us keep up the good work. We have the best behavioral disorders treatment team in Effitsville County. Let us start seeing patients. This meeting is over.”

They then went to their offices to begin seeing patients.

It was the lunch break at Andrew Jackson School. Joe and Clarence were talking at a far corner of the schoolyard. Joe challenged Clarence to do him a favor.

“Can you ask Camila Mainer if she likes me or Kelvin?” Joe asked.

“You are my best friend,” Clarence replied. “I would do anything for you. I will ask her right now.”

Clarence then walked over to Camila Mainer who was talking to a group of girls. She seemed surprised by the way, that Clarence was interested in talking with her.

“Do you like Joe or Kelvin?” Clarence asked. “I need to know.”

“Kelvin is silly,” Camila said. “Joe is funny. I am so pretty. Many boys like me. I have to tell my mother that I am prettier than other girls in school.”

“Who do you like?” Clarence asked.

“Both are silly,” Camila replied. “I have to talk with the girls to see who I like. Kelvin and Joe are weird.”

“You do not know who you like?” Clarence asked.

“They are silly,” Camila said. “I have to decide later. I want to know why I am prettier than the other girls.”

“Thanks Camila,” Clarence said.

Clarence then walked back over to Joe. He looked like he did not have either good news or bad news.

“Camila does not know who she likes,” Clarence said. “She may like you in a few days. Maybe you should buy her a gift.”

“That is a good idea,” Joe replied. “I will get her something special for New Years. Thanks for helping me, Clarence.”

“You are welcome, Joe,” Clarence said.

The lunch recess then ended. The kids returned to class.

Perry and Melanie talked to each other about Kiana's death. They tried to find a way to break it to Joe and Cody. They knew that it was going to be painful for the entire family. They talked after work before the kids came home.

"We have to let the kids see her one last time," Perry said. "They deserve that."

"I understand," Melanie said. "What will we do when we have to tell them that she has passed away?"

"We should do it in therapy," Perry said. "Joe might break down on us. We might not know how to deal with it. We should think about his safety. He going to need medical treatment when it happens."

"I am just sad for you, Perry," Melanie said. "It is so horrible when someone loses his mother."

"I am trying to cope with the grief and sadness," Perry said. "I feel more sadness for our kids."

"We will survive this," Melanie said. "We have to go home now to wait for the kids from daycare."

"Sure, Melanie," Joe said.

They then went home. They welcomed their kids from daycare. Joe had dinner before finishing his homework. Joe also tutored Cody for about thirty minutes. The day ended peacefully as everybody went to sleep.

Chapter 8

It was a Tuesday and it was the fourth week of December. It was two days after Christmas.

Joe and Cody were very pleased by the gifts that they had received for Christmas. Joe received a remote-control car and a video game console. Cody got a new bicycle. They also bought presents for Clarence and his brother, Roy. Clarence and Roy got two video games for their video game consoles.

Joe had an appointment to see Ellen Hayes and Dr. Adams in the afternoon. He was going to meet up with Clarence in the library. Cody was in daycare. Perry excused Joe from daycare.

Crossing the street by himself had always been a big issue between Perry and Joe. Perry had always said that he would not allow Joe to cross the street by himself until he was ten years old. Joe rejected that idea. Joe thought that he was much more mature than other kids. He felt that crossing the street was safe. He felt that he was eligible for the task.

Joe had become interested in astronomy books about the planets. He liked to see pictures of the planets in books and magazines. He was also interested in spaceships. He liked to engage in minor extracurricular studying.

Hannah Brier was going to escort Joe and Clarence to the library and to his appointment at the Effitsville Behavioral Health Center. She was going to talk to Joe about his stressors.

Hannah picked up Clarence first. Roy, his younger brother, was in daycare. Cody was also in daycare. Hannah then picked up Joe. She drove them to the library.

Joe and Clarence went straight to the Astrophysics section of the library upon entering the library. Hannah followed them. They sat down at the table.

Joe seemed fascinated by the books that he had taken off the shelves. The pictures of the planets Saturn and Jupiter impressed him.

Hannah then wanted to ask Joe and Clarence if they could tell her about any problems that they have been having.

“Do you feel ok, Joe?” Hannah asked.

“They do not want to fix what is wrong with my grandmother,” Joe said. “They will not let her come home. We miss her. The doctors are mean. Why is it that they cannot fix her so that she can come home?”

“I feel bad too,” Clarence said. “Doctors are supposed to fix problems with people. They go to the hospital for some time and then they come home. Why should Joe’s grandmother be any different?”

“Sometimes doctors have a hard time with older adults that are very sick,” Hannah said. “They have to try harder with people that are a lot sicker than other people like you kids. You just cannot blame the doctors. You have to try to understand.”

“I have to talk to Ellen about this,” Joe said. “Maybe she can punish the doctors.”

“That is not a good idea,” Clarence said. “We cannot just punish doctors.”

“Both of you have to talk to Ellen Hayes and Dr. Adams later,” Hannah said. “She wants to hear what you are thinking. I know how much you love your grandmother, Joe.”

“She is going to come home soon,” Joe said. “Grandmother has to help me to babysit Cody.”

“I know, Joe,” Hannah said. “Are there any books that you want to take home with you?”

“I have to books that I want to borrow,” Joe said. “I have my library card.”

“We will go to the front desk now,” Hannah said.

They then checked out the books with Joe’s library card. They then went to the pizzeria for lunch.

It was eleven o’clock when Perry and Melanie arrived at the Effitsville Hospice Center. They were there to visit Kiana Klinger. They wanted to talk to her about bringing Joe and Cody to see her. She looked weak and pale as Perry and Melanie entered the room.

“Hi, mom,” Perry said. “It is so nice to see you.”

“Hi, Kiana,” Melanie said. “We are here to see how you are doing.”

“I miss Joe and Clarence,” Kiana said. “They will not let kids in here. I want to see my grandkids. I love them so much. How is Joe doing in school?”

“Joe is doing much better,” Melanie said. “It is hard for him. He must take medication. He is trying hard. We know that he will be successful eventually. That is what really matters to us.”

“He was a wonderful baby,” Kiana said. “He was a beautiful toddler. I remember when we taught him how to walk. I remember his first words. He is special. I will miss him more than anything.”

“I know,” Perry said. “Joe always asks about you. We want to bring him here to visit you. Is that alright with you?”

“I need to see him one last time,” Kiana said. “He needs one more image of me. I need to say goodbye to my grandchildren. That is what God wants from you, Perry.”

“That is fine,” Perry said. “We will bring them up here in a few days.”

The unit nurse then entered the room. She talked to Perry and Melanie.

“We need to put her under sedation right now,” the nurse said. “We do not want her to feel pain. We must give her painkillers from time to time. I am sorry to cut your visit short.”

“I have no problem with what you have to do,” Perry said. “We have to leave now mom. These good people are going to keep taking care of you. We will be visiting you again soon. We love you.”

Kiana then drifted into a deep sleep as Perry and Melanie left the hospice to meet Joe at the Effitsville Behavioral Health Center for their one p.m. appointment.

Perry, Melanie, Hannah, Joe and Clarence all arrived at the clinic almost exactly on time. The receptionist greeted them warmly. Ellen talked to Perry and Melanie first before talking to Joe. Perry and Melanie sat down in Ellen’s office.

“How are both of you today,” Ellen asked.

“We are sad,” Perry said. “We just visited my mother. She does not have much time left to live. I feel bad. The worst part is how Joe will take it. I am afraid that he will just crash from the sadness and the grief.”

“I do not know how to tell him what is going on,” Melanie said. “We want the kids to see their grandmother one last time. I do not know if that will make things better or worse for them.”

“Relatives normally want to see a dying loved one at least one last time,” Ellen said. “I think that the kids deserve that. I think that Kiana deserves that. We are going to evaluate Joe’s condition to see if

he needs more medication to help him to maintain his functioning when Kiana finally passes away. We may ask him to stay in pediatric unit for two or three days for us to help him to adjust to the new medication. Joe is a good kid. He will get through this.”

“We are so happy to hear a vote of confidence from you, Ellen,” Perry said. “We are also concerned about his best friend. Normally, we would not have a problem with him. We do not understand the way that Clarence behaves. We are scared that Clarence might cause Joe to misbehave. We want Joe to socialize. We just do not understand how he could be interested in girls and be socializing at this age. We are worried. This is not normal.”

“We are going to watch over him, Ellen said. “We are going to try to make sure that Joe does not wind up traveling down the wrong path. Let us call in Joe to talk to him.”

“That is fine,” Melanie said.

Joe then entered the room and sat down. He looked sad and confused.

“How are you, Joe,” Ellen asked.

“The girl that I like in school might like some other kid,” Joe said. “The doctors still have not fixed what is wrong with my grandmother. They are mean. They will not let her come home so that she could help me to babysit Cody. I feel bad.”

“The doctors are doing everything that they can for your grandmother,” Ellen said. “Your grandmother is very sick. Sometimes it is hard to deal with that kind of thing.”

“When is she coming home?” Joe asked.

“You are going to visit her soon,” Ellen said. “She wants to see you. You will get a chance to talk with her. Is that alright with you?”

“I miss her,” Joe said. “I really want to visit her.”

“Your parents are going to take you to visit her,” Ellen said. “You have to be a good boy. You must stop saying nasty things about doctors. They always try their best to help us when we are sick. Sometimes, it is harder for some people and it is easier for others. We all love you. I do not want you to upset your parents.”

“I will try hard,” Joe said. “I just want to go home now. Thank you, Ellen.”

“You have to see Dr. Adams before you leave,” Ellen said.

“We want you to make us very proud of you,” Melanie said. “We do not want you to be a sad boy.”

“We are going to take you and Clarence to the mall to buy gifts for both of you,” Perry said. “That will help you to feel better.”

“That sounds better to all of us,” Ellen said. “Joe has to see you, Perry and Melanie, and Joe before you leave. He is waiting for you. Have Happy New Year if you can. Take it easy. I will see you in a month.

They greeted each other and then went to talk to Dr. Adams. The doctor gave them prescriptions and then sent them home. Perry and Melanie then picked up Cody and Roy and went to the mall. Nathan, Clarence’s father, met them at the mall. Perry bought presents for all the kids on top of what they received for Christmas.

They then went home and relaxed for the rest of the late afternoon and evening.

Chapter 9

It was the first week of January. It was the first day of school after the Christmas recess.

Joe had given a lot of consideration about how to impress Camila Mainer. He had thought about talking to her. He wanted to flatter her. He even thought about giving her a gift.

He had found a locket in the basement that said, "I Love You" written on the front of it. He discovered it two days before while he was in the basement of his house. He secretly decided to take it and to give it to Camila to try to impress her. He hid the locket inside of his school bag so that his parents would not know that he was going to bring it to school with him.

Melanie was surprised when Joe was awake and washed up when she came to wake him up in the morning. His anxiety about what he wanted to do with the locket probably woke him up early.

"I am surprised to see you awake so early, Joe," Melanie said. "You must be looking forward to going to school."

"The Christmas recess was kind of boring," Joe said. "I want to go back to school to start learning how to read and to do math. I like to do that kind of thing."

Cody then entered the room. The conversation woke him up also. He was enthusiastic about returning to daycare.

“They are teaching me some really good stuff in daycare,” Cody said. “I really like to play with the kids there. It is really fun.”

They all continued to prepare for work and school. Joe would not talk about his crush on Camila. He also would not talk about his plans for the day. They had the normal conversation at the breakfast table before heading to work, school, and daycare.

Hannah came to get Cody while Melanie prepared to take Joe to school. Perry proceeded to go to work.

Joe arrived at school about fifteen minutes early. He met up with Clarence in the schoolyard to talk to him about his plan with the locket.

“Hi Clarence,” Joe said. “It is good to see you,” Joe said. “I have to tell you something.”

“Is it good or bad?” Clarence asked.

“I think that I found a way to impress Camila,” Joe said. “I brought her a special present. It is this locket. It says, “I Love You” on it. Kelvin would never be able to give anything like this to her.”

“That looks good,” Clarence said. “She would definitely reject Kelvin when she sees that thing. Do you want to give it to her now? Do you want to wait until late?”

“I think that I can do it now,” Joe replied. “It is not much of a problem. She deserves my gift.”

“Camila is over there talking with the girls,” Clarence said. “Let us go and talk to her.”

“That sounds like a good idea,” Joe said.

Joe and Clarence then approached Camila and the other girls. Joe felt tense and anxious. He gave Camila a smile as he began to talk to her.

“I have a present for you,” Joe said. “It is really nice.”

“You are a silly boy,” Camila said. “All of the boys like me. The girls are jealous. I do not know what my mother is going to do with me. What is the gift?”

“It is right here,” Joe said.

He then took the locket out of his book bag. He gave it to her. She looked at it while she started smiling.

“That is nice of you, Joe,” Camila said. “I like you a lot.”

“Do you like me more than Kelvin?” Joe asked.

“He is not as nice as you,” Camila said. “I am going to talk with my friends about who is best to be my playmate at lunchtime. You are funny. Kelvin is not as nice as you are. Thank you for your gift.”

Kelvin then approached the gathering of boys and girls.

“What is going on?” Kelvin asked.

“Joe gave me a beautiful locket,” Camila said. “He wants to be my playmate at lunchtime. I am sorry Kelvin. I think that he might be nicer than you.”

“That is ok,” Kelvin said. “Maybe I will find someone that is better than you.”

“That is mean,” Camila said.

The conversation ended when the teachers called in the students for the first day of classes of the new school year.

Ms. Manson found out what the kids were doing in the schoolyard. She was very concerned about the crush that Joe had on Camila. She was going to discuss this with the playground monitor and the principal, Percival Dodd.

Ms. Manson challenged Joe to study a higher-level reading material today. He was very excited when he saw the textbook and the workbook. He started working on his assignments right away.

The kids formed a problem at the lunch recess. Joe announced that Camila rejected Kelvin. All the kids were laughing at Kelvin. Joe said that Kelvin could not impress girls in the school.

"I am a real boyfriend," Joe said. "I won Camila over Kelvin. That is because I know how to treat a girl. She is a queen."

"You are a phony," Kelvin said. "You just want to cause trouble here. Many girls are better than Camila. You are stuck with someone that is average to everyone else."

"You are a mean boy, Kelvin," Camila said. "You like to say bad things to me. That is not right."

"You cannot say that there are better girls out there than Camila," Joe said. "You should find a girl that is as nice as Camila. I want to meet her."

Agnes Burns, the schoolyard monitor, then broke up the conversation. She then took Joe and Kelvin to the principal's office. The kids then had to face Ms. Manson and Percival Dodd.

"So, both of you like the same girl?" Mr. Dodd asked Joe and Kelvin after they sat down. Tell me about that.

"She likes me more than she likes Kelvin," Joe said. "I like her because she is pretty."

"I used to like her until Joe gave her that locket as a gift," Kelvin said. "Now I am looking for someone that is better than her."

Ms. Manson was trying not to laugh. Mr. Dodd also felt like laughing at these two first-grade boys.

“What do boys and girls do together when they are in the first grade?” Ms. Manson asked.

“They are playmates in the schoolyard at lunchtime,” Joe said.

“What do you think that boys and girls do together in the first grade, Kelvin?” Mr. Dodd asked.

“They do homework together,” Kelvin said.

“Joe gets to do homework with Camila later,” Mr. Dodd said. “Kelvin has to hang out with Joe and Clarence to play video games in someone’s house. We do not want either you, Joe, or you, Kelvin, to hate each other. We want everyone to be friends. We just do not like crushes that happen in the first or second grades. They make our school look bad. We are sorry to tell you that, kids. We will not punish you for this. You must talk to your therapist about this, Joe. Do you understand us?”

“Yes, Mr. Dodd,” Joe said.

“Of course, Mr. Dodd,” Kelvin said.

“Both of you should go back to class,” Mr. Dodd said. “We will be talking to your parents later. Have a good day kids.”

“Thank you,” Joe said.

Ms. Manson then escorted the kids back to class. They then studied arithmetic.

Percival Dodd had a conversation with Joe’s therapist, Ellen Hayes. She asked Melanie to let Hannah Brier to bring Joe to the clinic after school to discuss what went wrong in school that day. Melanie had no problem with Ellen’s request.

Hannah brought Joe to the behavioral health clinic after school. He then met with Ellen to discuss what had happened.

“What went wrong today, Joe?” Ellen asked.

“I tried to impress Camila by giving her a locket that I found in my house,” Joe said. “I wanted her to reject Kelvin so that she could be my playmate at lunchtime. Then the principal got mad at us. I am nervous and embarrassed. I do not know what to do. Kelvin says that many girls are better than Camila. That is mean.”

“It is wrong for a young kid like you to be involved in a crush on a girl in the first grade,” Ellen said. “That is not a good thing for your school.”

“I do not know what I did wrong,” Joe said. “I just feel bad. Kelvin made me jealous.”

“It is not right for you to be trying to get a girlfriend at this age,” Ellen said. “You have to wait until you are older to do that.”

“The principal wants me to do homework with Camila in a few days,” Joe said. “That will be fun. He wants me to play video games with Kelvin. I feel bad. I do not like him that much.”

“You have to be nice to Camila and to Kelvin,” she said. “You cannot be hurtful when you deal with them. You must make all of us proud of you. Remember that.”

“I will try hard, Ellen,” Joe said. “I will do my best to do a good job.”

“I am going to talk to you parents on the phone,” Ellen said. “Hannah is going to take you home now. I think that you are doing very well. We really like your progress. We are hoping the best for you. We will see you here in two weeks. Take care of yourself.”

“Bye, Ellen,” Joe said. “Thank you for your help.”

“It is not a problem,” Ellen said.

Joe then left the clinic with Hannah Brier to go home. Ellen had a short conversation with Melanie about what happened in with Joe in school. They were laughing at Joe’s introduction to adolescence.

Joe went home and began working on his homework assignments. He also tutored Cody later in the late afternoon.

He talked to Perry and Melanie about what happened with Kelvin and Camila. Perry said that they could not allow Joe to have a girlfriend at such a young age.

Perry and Melanie laughed amongst themselves when they discussed the situation after the kids went to sleep. They then stopped for the day.

Chapter 10

It was the fourth week of January. It was a Saturday.

It was ten o'clock in the morning. Joseph and Cody were playing video games after they had finished eating breakfast.

Perry was comfortably reading his newspaper while Melanie was doing the laundry. Joe was going to call Clarence in about two hours.

Milford Drake, Kiana's oncologist (cancer doctor), called Perry with some bad news. The phone rang at about ten a.m. in the morning. Perry answered the phone call.

"May I please speak to Perry," Dr. Drake said.

"That is me," Perry replied.

"This is Dr. Drake," he said. "I have some bad news. Kiana has taken a turn for the worse. She is coming closer to the end of her life. I would like to give your family members a chance to see her one last time. Most of the family members that we deal with want to have one final experience with a dying relative."

“How long does she have?” Perry asked.

“She has a few days at the most,” Dr. Drake said. “I am so sorry that we could not do more for her. We do our best with all our patients. Would you like to bring your kids to see her today?”

“Yes,” Perry said. “We will be there at about one p.m. Thank you for calling me. I will see you later. Bye, doctor.”

“Bye, Perry,” Dr. Drake said.

Perry then walked into the basement where Melanie was doing the family’s laundry. He was crying as he confronted her.

“Dr. Drake just called with the bad news,” Perry said. “My mom is not doing well. We should go to see her one last time. I feel so sorry for the kids. I am just sad.”

“I know,” Melanie said. “We are all sad. That is your mother. The kids always loved her. We will miss her so much. I do not know how Joe will take it. I do not know if will be able to continue to function.”

“We will do our best with Joe,” Perry said. “We have to tell the kids about what we are going to do right now.”

“Let us go and talk to them,” Melanie said.

They then went to Joe’s room where Joe and Cody were playing video games. Perry tried to distract them from the television.

“We have to go to see your grandmother, Joe and Cody,” Perry said. “She really wants to see both of you. Let us get ready so that we can go to visit her.”

“Did she say that she wanted to see us?” Joe asked.

“Yes, she did,” Perry replied. “We should go to the hospital to talk with her. She needs to know that we love her.”

“I want to see grandmother also,” Cody said. I miss her because she used to babysit me.”

“I know, Cody,” Perry said. “Let’s get ready to go.”

The kids then prepared to go to visit Kiana Klinger. Her doctors transferred her from the hospice to the Effitsville Memorial Hospital and Medical Center for intensive treatment for pain and other symptoms.

The Klinger Family arrived at the hospital at about twelve-thirty in the afternoon. They parked their SUV in the visitor’s parking lot. They then entered the hospital lobby. A volunteer directed the family members to Kiana’s room. Joe felt like crying when he saw her.

“Hi grandmother,” Joe said. “How are you?”

“I love you so much, Joe,” Kiana said. “You are a wonderful boy. I remember you when you were a baby. You were a big and fat baby. You weighed a lot. You were walking at eleven months old. I remember when you started talking. We were so proud of you. We are so proud of Cody also. Cody is a blessing for all of us.”

“When are you coming home, grandmother?” Joe asked.

“The doctors will not let me leave the hospital right now,” she said. “I am so sorry, Joe. I wish that I could go home to be with you. I will always pray for you. I want you to always remember the love that I have had for you and for your brother.”

“Are you saying that the doctors cannot fix what is wrong with you?” Joe asked.

“The doctors are trying hard, Joe,” Kiana said. “I am so sorry that I cannot come home to be with you.”

Perry and Melanie were crying. Joe decided to walk out of the room and into the hallway. He sat down on the floor with his back to the wall. He started crying. Nurse Janet Lindsay went to him to talk to him.

“Hi,” she said. “What is your name?”

“I am Joseph Klinger,” he said. “The doctors cannot fix what is wrong with my grandmother. She cannot come home. That is not right. We need her to come home with us. Why is it that the doctors cannot fix what is wrong with her?”

“We try hard with all of our patients,” Nurse Lindsay said. “Some patients do better than others. “We do our best with our patients. I am so sorry that your grandmother cannot come home right now. Why are you crying like that?”

“She is sick,” Joe said. “No one knows how to make her feel better. They always give me medicine when I get sick. Why can’t they give her the medicine that they give me?”

“Your doctor asked us to give you some medicine to help you to go to sleep,” Nurse Lindsay said.

The unit had been talking with his parents and with his psychiatrist, Dr. Marcus Adams. They received the authorization to admit Joe to the pediatric unit for at least two days. They were going to give him sedatives.

“We want to give you some medicine that will stop you from crying,” she said. “Please come with me. Your parents want to talk to you.”

“That is ok,” Joe said.

Perry and Melanie then talked to Joe in a conference room.

“We think that you should stay here because you feel sad,” Perry said. “They are going to help you to feel better about what is happening with your grandmother.”

“I feel like going to sleep,” Joe said.

“We want you to be a nice boy,” Perry said. “These nice doctors and nurses are trying hard to help kids like you. You are going to be in a room on another floor for another two days. We will bring you home after that.”

“We just want you to stop feeling so sad,” Melanie said. “Things will be alright. You must believe in God. You have to understand that.”

“What is God?” Joe asked.

“God is the Force that has made all of us,” Melanie said. “He creates all life.”

“We want you to learn more about God later,” Perry said. “Right now, we just want you to stop feeling so sad. Can you do that for us?”

“I will try hard, Mom and Dad,” Joe said.

Joe then had fallen asleep. The nurses then transported him to the pediatric unit. Perry then talked to Dr. Marcus Adams about Joe’s treatment. Perry used his cell phone to talk to the doctor.

“Thank you so much for your help, doctor,” Perry said.

“It is my pleasure,” Dr. Adams said. “We are going to try to relax Joe with sedatives for the next day. His grandmother may pass away within the next two days. We really want him to be in a secure environment when he hears this bad news. We going to decide if we need to treat his sadness and how to treat it.”

“I understand,” Perry said. “Is there anything else that we need to know?”

“A death in the family is the most traumatic event in a child’s life,” the doctor said. “We have to understand that some kids can get very sick when they face this situation. We must do everything that we can to maintain Joe’s level of functioning. He should be fine. Ellen will visit him if Kiana dies within the next forty-eight hours.”

“Thank you so much for helping us,” Perry said. “Have a good day. We look forward to seeing you in the future. May God bless you.”

“Thank you so much,” Dr. Adams said. “I will send the same to you. Bye.”

The conversation then ended. Perry, Melanie and Cody then went home. Joe went into a deep sleep in the pediatric unit of the hospital.

Kiana Klinger slipped into a coma a few hours later. Her vital signs started getting worse. She had signed papers, which stated her that they would not use life support to keep her alive.

Ellen began to prepare to visit Joe in the pediatric unit in the event of Kiana’s passing. Ellen felt very sad. She felt a lot of sympathy for Perry and Melanie.

The day ended peacefully even though Perry knew that Kiana was in a coma.