

Dog gone it! What part of no didn't she understand?

It's not okay for her to plop down next to me. Who does she think she is?

She needs to get out of my space. Can't she tell that I don't want her sitting next to me? She should be able to tell that no one wants anything to do with me. What's the matter with her? Is she blind? Can't she see that I need sleep? Read my mind gal – get lost.

She's making my head pound even worse than it was. She's not helping my stomach either. It hurts.

No one was to show up up here. I want to be alone. I want to so bad just to keep my eyes closed. I need to shut out everything. There's no way that I want to be around anyone. Why doesn't she get that?

Where did she come from? Did I crash? Those were definitely determined eyes. What is it that she thinks that she has to tell me? How come she looked so surprised when I told her no – that I didn't want her to sit down next to me? Then why the curious look? I can't believe that this nervy gal thinks that she has to talk to me. Why can't everyone just leave me alone?

Get your act together guy. Just tell the thoughtless gal to leave. Stop telling yourself that it's really true that you're a loser. What does a guy do when his brain is totally fried? What I would do for a smoke.

What's this big joint anyway? Why didn't I just go to the john and leave? It serves me right for deciding to hang out here instead of going back to the car. What's she doing up here anyway?

What's that arrogant fool doing now? Using both bathroom sinks to spike up his hair . . . no one will ever catch me rubbing gook into my hair. More power to him if he wants to look like an idiot. What was that don't get close to me look about when I came out of my stall? What's his beef? That egotistical slime ball sure thinks that he owns the stage. Forget the ignorant punk and . . .

If I had someplace to go . . . why are you thinking about leaving? You know how warm and muggy it has gotten. If that gal really has something that she needs to say to me, she needs to tell me what it is right now and leave. This is my place. I got here first. No one invited her. All I want to do right now is to put my feet up for a couple of hours. I've got to get some shut eye. Get the message gal – disappear.

Why are people filling up those rows and rows of chairs downstairs? That's not good. What's that stage down there used for anyway? Why would anyone want to sit up here with all that space down below? Somebody must've gotten a special deal on gobs of chairs with blue seat cushions. You need to be glad guy that you don't have the job of making rows and rows out of those things. It looks like a military cemetery down there. Thank goodness for this row of those chairs up here that's butting up against the back wall. It's wrong that she showed up in my space. She won't hurt my feelings if she decides to leave. Why is she staying? Can't she tell that she's big time on my nerves?

You should've disconnected the end chair from the rest of the chairs. It's too late now. Face it guy – you're stuck again with another should've. You're trapped. If I'd known that a brazen gal would think that she had the right to . . . and what was your plan B going to be guy? Why can't just one thing fall my way instead of . . . are you having fun guy – feeling sorry for yourself again?

Those are sure tall rows of windows on each side of this place. Those clouds floating past are getting way too dark. It's going to rain. You don't have to look at the clouds so guy stop it!

Why are there identically stained glass windows on opposite sides up here? Aren't stained glass windows supposed to have some kind of scene in them? Somebody must've had a thing about different colored stained glass panes. The panes should be all the same size – right? Why are the two corner panes at the bottom of each window twice as tall as the two square corner panes at the top of each window? Then the unbroken panes between the corner panes . . . you're a real dud – getting all wrapped up in a pair of stained glass windows when . . . no matter how hard you try guy, you're never going to escape what you did.

No one else better show up here. It was like being alone at the lake until she showed up. She doesn't belong here. Maybe if I find a darker place, my head will stop throbbing. I can't think anymore.

Why did she have to show up here? I just can't deal with anything else right now. If only I could forget what happened yesterday. It was my fault. Going home was a really bad idea. You should've known what would happen. No one in your family wants you anywhere near them. Okay – lil sis is on my side.

What could've I done differently? Did I have any other choice but to immediately get off the farm?

Why keep reliving yesterday? What good is it going to do you guy? Okay – yesterday started out just like every other day since I got home. I do like getting up before dawn. I liked helping with the milking. What would've it taken for dad to stop pretending like he didn't see me? Bro got his wish. He no longer has to ask me over and over again when I'm going to leave as my help isn't needed. It was really getting old acting like nothing was wrong. Bro should be very thankful that I didn't follow through on the urge to beat all of his cockiness out of him. Where did bro get the right to constantly goad me? How come he gets to have the farm? He's going to run the farm into the ground. He couldn't be any lazier than what he is.

Why can't I run the farm? It should be my place – not his. There's always something that needs to be done on the place. Dad needs to care more that things got done. Dad isn't going to change. You didn't need to dad stop caring. Why do I always end up messing up the lives of everyone around me?

Yesterday seems so long ago. Be glad you lazy bozo of a bro that lil sis and I hauled in the alfalfa bales that you hadn't picked up from the last cutting. Lil sis did great driving the tractor while I threw and stacked bales on the flatbed. It didn't take us long at all. Those bales were all picked up and stacked in the barn's haymow by lunchtime. I should've taken lil sis with me when I left yesterday. Lil sis can't keep on being the one who fixes all the meals, who cleans the house and who does all the washing.

Oh for a couple of packs of peanut butter crackers right now. That's all that I ate yesterday. A smoke would be even better. I should've found something else to do yesterday afternoon besides cleaning the gutter. I'd much rather be cleaning cow manure out of the barn's gutter right now than sitting here next to a flake who I don't know and who I've no intention of ever getting to know. How could this presumptuous gal think that she has the right to sit down right next to me? There's no way that she knows the difference between a tractor and a manure spreader. She has probably never been on a farm.

Why is life constantly throwing me curves? I'd much rather be hauling a load of straw right now to the barn for fresh bedding for dad's milking stock than sitting here next to someone who thinks that she owns the world. Why did I decide yesterday to head to the lake to catch some bullheads instead of staying home? I wouldn't be in this place right now if . . . what was I thinking? All I wanted to do was to get to the lake to get my lines into the water. Why didn't I walk to the lake instead of deciding to drive the old wreck there? I could've put the tin can of worms in the empty five gallon paint pail and carried the pail with one hand and my rods and the tackle box with my other hand. That's what I always used to do.

How could I've completely forgotten to check to see if the old mutt was sleeping under the old wreck? I'm never ever going to forget that ominous thump followed by that whelp. Why didn't I check before I started backing the old wreck out from under the big ash? The old mutt had to have been trying to crawl out from under the old wreck as I started to turn it around. The passenger side front tire . . .

How am I ever going to be able to forget the sight of the old mutt laying there not moving? You killed the old dog with grandpa's old car. You ran over grandpa's dog. It's your fault that grandpa is dead.

How long did I stand there staring at the old mutt? Why can't time ever back up? When did bro show up with a spade? Bro always has to be angry with me. He sure was scary mad this time. The numskull didn't give me a choice what to do. It was bury the old mutt in the grove behind the house and then get out of everyone's sight. Why can't I remember burying grandpa's dog? You must've as there was dirt and blood all over your hands when you went to wash them off after the first time that you filled up the old wreck's gas tank. Why guy does your hands always seem to have blood on them? You're bad news to be around.

What're you going to do with the old wreck? Who'd want the thing? The paint on the thing's hood and roof has been splotchy and discolored for years. Baling wire ties down the trunk to the back bumper. It had to have been dad who took out the back seat so that bags of seed and fertilizer could be hauled to the fields and garbage to the dump. The manifold needs a new gasket. The tires are showing thread. Nothing works on the dash. The license tag fee hasn't been paid since you killed grandpa.

You get the credit for that dent in the clunker's right front fender. No one except for grandpa ever found out that you caused the dent. Grandpa didn't have the chance to even tell grandma. Why did grandpa die?

Why are you always so careless? You didn't have an excuse for forgetting about the light post that's in the front yard. Grandma trusted you to drive to the field with coffee and cookies for grandpa for lunch. It was just like grandpa to tell you not to worry about what you'd done – that everyone will mess up sooner or later. I still can't believe that as I was backing up that I turned the right front of the car into the light post. How did grandpa always know what the right thing was to say to me? I still felt really awful.

You have to stop thinking about home. Grandpa and grandma are no longer alive. Just because it's your fault that . . . why did grandma's health go downhill so fast after grandpa . . . you caused dad to lose his right hand man and ma to lose her best friend. It's your fault guy that your happy, warm home became overnight a place where . . . it's your fault that ma changed from being happy-go-lucky to looking like a shriveled up prune. Grandpa and grandma would be alive today if it weren't for you. You should be dead.

Why didn't I go back into the house before I left the farm? Why didn't I stand up to bro when he told me to get the old wreck off the yard? Just because the dimwit doesn't want anything on the place that reminds him anymore of grandpa, that doesn't mean that he had the right to kick me off the place. I've had enough of his black looks. There's going to be a day bro when I'm going to . . . why doesn't the gal do something else besides sitting next to me? Why won't she find somebody else to irritate? Talk about being annoying.

Where has the old wreck taken me? Why did you let the thing go where it wanted to go? You've no idea where the thing took you. Why didn't the old wreck stay on rural roads? Why can't keeping people happy be as easy as feeding a car a quart of oil each time that it needs gas? The only thing that I remember from last night is the thing having a flat back tire. I'm so tired. I don't want to think anymore.

If I had only kept my mind on driving the old wreck instead of . . . what good did all the screaming and cussing that I did last night do for me? The blown tire did give me an excuse to vent big time. I never ever want to change a tire in the middle of a pitch black night again.

What are you going to do guy? You're broke. You need a cigarette. You used up all the money that you had with you on gas and oil. That jar of pocket change on my dresser back at the house sure doesn't help me now. I need to figure out how to get my debit card and checkbook that're in the dresser's top drawer.

How come things can't happen normally for me? Why couldn't the old wreck have just run out of gas instead of running smack dab into a four lane expressway? There was absolutely nothing the thing could do but to turn right as . . . you had to get the thing off the highway. There was no way that the old wreck could keep up with the fast moving traffic. A snapping turtle can go faster than that heap.

Why did I let a convertible make the decision for me where to turn? Where did that sports car come from that was on my left honking like a scared goose? The gal driving the thing was sure acting loco. Who did that diva think she was pointing at me while turning towards me? She didn't give me a choice but to veer right so that she could cut in front of me. She didn't give me a choice but to go the same direction that . . . why did that big dude wearing an orange vest wave me and not her to a dirt parking lot? Where am I?

Why doesn't the gal stop staring at my shoes? Her shoes are nothing more than a bunch of straps. I can't help it that I'm not dressed to kill like she is. Why would a spoiled rich gal want to sit next to me?

She'd be the kind of snippety gal to want to wear those owl looking, white rimmed dark glasses that are sticking out of that thing that's attached to her bag. Hey – I've seen them before. She's the . . .

*Did that brazen bum just say no to me? I don't believe it. No one has the audacity to ever tell me no. That obnoxious cad is going to find out that no one ever says no to me.*

*Who is this tactless yahoo anyway? Those bloodshot eyes of his sure told me that no means no to him. Okay – if he doesn't want to hear what I want to say, tough, I'll just . . . why did I just sit down next to him?*

*He's disgustingly grimy. Gross. The guy obviously hasn't taken a bath in days. He probably doesn't even care that there's a dark smudge on the side of his nose. The obviously socially challenged rube reeks like cigarettes and . . . what's that icky smell? He's sure stinky filthy. Why are you staying sitting next to him?*

*He looked awfully exhausted. Okay gal – what was it about the guy's haggard, rugged face that captivated you? His eyes – they're . . . and you thought that you were following an old codger up to the balcony to tell the guy that you're sorry for having cut him off. The dirt bag next to you can't be much older than you are.*

*It's daddy's fault. Daddy made me late again. Your uncanny knack daddy of always calling me just as I'm ready to leave my tiny condo to . . . why does daddy always have to get on my case? So you didn't call him immediately after yesterday afternoon's showing. Why can't daddy ever wait to hear what happened at a showing. Why couldn't daddy have waited until lunch to get the details instead of . . . this insisting that he needs the information right now is just a bunch of hooey. Why does daddy always think that he has to question everything that I do and say? Your courtroom questions daddy are really getting on my nerves.*

*Why doesn't daddy act like he's just as interested about what I did last night with my new beaux as he is about yesterday's showing? That's a rhetorical question gal. You know that he doesn't care about you.*

*Accept it gal – the only thing that daddy thinks about anymore is real estate. Okay – having the largest and the fastest growing real estate agency is a big deal but . . . if it wasn't for me daddy, your agency would be tanking and you know that. You really need to learn patience daddy. You're starting to rub off on me.*

*What would you do if you were a coalminer's kid? You probably would leave home for a better life just like daddy did. But to take off right out of high school – driving that old rust bucket that daddy says that he's never going to get rid of all the way here, you could never do that. When are you going to ask daddy why he has never gone back home? And like where are you going to get the nerve gal to ask him that? There're so many off limit things in your life daddy that I really would like to have answers for someday.*

*I don't buy your motto daddy that you live by – which you say lets you to do whatever it takes to make money. That better life that you claim began when you met and married mother hasn't equated to a happy marriage has it? Everyone knows that you married mother because she ended up with a large settlement before she met you. Face it daddy, it's mother's money that got your real estate business off the ground. I know that it was money that mother got after her folks were killed by a drunk driver precipitated accident.*

*Why are you working anyway for daddy? You can easily get a different job using the business degree that you have from the state university. I could've right out of school having graduated near the top of my class taken one of those jobs that were offered to me. I'd be making a lot more money than what daddy is paying me. Daddy's wheeling and dealing has burnt a lot of bridges. Okay – having daddy count on me to put together closures for him . . . maybe someday daddy will tell me that I'm doing something right. Why is it so important to you daddy that you need to always have to tell me how utterly incompetent I am?*

*Your call this morning daddy was just like your other calls. Why don't you ever ask me how I'm doing? Why is it daddy that the only time that you ever call me is when you've a house or a piece of property that you want me to show or that I've shown for you? Why don't you ever get it that a showing that you've set up . . . why do you keep going there daddy that every showing will end up in a sale? All that young couple wanted to do yesterday afternoon daddy was to check out the townhouses in the new complex.*

*This always asking me daddy about a closure date is getting really old. Why do you always have to be so brusque with me? That sinking feeling of having disappointed you again daddy always . . . you're not going to start cursing at me daddy are you like you sometimes do at mother? Why do you have to do that?*

*Why doesn't daddy get it that my life is different now than what it was before I stayed in that dorm at the state university. If I had to still ask daddy for his permission to . . . you know that he'd never let you leave the house. If he knew about my night life . . . daddy can live with his motto that the only value that money has is to make more money. It's not my motto. Having a fun time at a nightclub isn't wasting money.*

*Why were you looking forward to seeing your new boyfriend this morning? You're not sure yet about him are you? He does know all the good discos. The guy can dance that's for sure.*

*You made me late daddy. It's all your fault. You know how important it is for me daddy to arrive early to claim those three front row seats before someone else does. Your untimely call daddy delayed me just enough to . . . my mind was replaying your intrusive call when the turn where I was to turn right was right there. I wouldn't have ended up here in the balcony if . . . why does daddy always have to be like he is?*

*I wouldn't have been in the passing lane daddy if . . . an old beat up has been of a car that looked just like your old car with a billowing plume of smoke following it was in the right hand lane. The thing wouldn't let me over. Why weren't you paying attention gal to where you were when you swung out to pass that piece of junk? The guy driving the car acted like he was deaf. You had to keep honking and honking before you got his attention. Then you had to keep pointing to the nitwit what you wanted to do before the road hog slowed down just enough to let you slide in front of him.*

*I'm sure glad that I'm right now in some sort of public facility. The guy sitting next to me could be anyone. You were really disconcerted gal weren't you when you suddenly realized that an unkempt guy driving an old clunker who you'd just cut off was following you. You better be glad gal that the big bruiser who was directing traffic directed the smoking wreck to the dirt parking lot. You owe him big time gal.*

*How can it be that it was just a few minutes ago that you were parking your new car in a space right in front of the back entrance? It's always check your makeup and put on a hat before . . . you're a creature of habit gal. I do like my new hat. I like the angle how it sits on my head. Just as you were getting out of your car wouldn't you know it – you had to see the guy who you cut off heading for another entrance. The guy sure looked gangly. That slight hitch in his long strides wasn't quite a limp but . . . who are you guy?*

*If I had just headed for those front row chairs where my two best friends from my state university days are already sitting instead of . . . why was it suddenly so important to you gal when you saw the scraggly guy coming out of the guy's bathroom that you needed to apologize to him for having cut him off at the corner? If you hadn't stopped to try to talk to your boyfriend when you saw him coming out of the men's bathroom, you would've caught up with this grungy hayseed before he got to the balcony steps. Okay – if, if, if, if . . .*

*Why couldn't my boyfriend have said something to me? You know now why while he was looking at the disheveled vagrant going up the balcony steps why he squeezed his nose with two fingers and then did a circling motion with a finger near his ear but . . . he could've at least told me that he was glad to see me.*

*There it was again that feeling of disappointment fleetingly sweeping over me again. He could've stopped for a few seconds to chat with me. We had a lot of fun last night together. The self-absorbent guy instead left me standing there with that empty feeling that I've had too often. That feeling is really getting old.*

*What were you thinking gal when you went up the balcony steps? The tramp looked like he was already sleeping. He had his legs stretched straight out, his arms folded across his chest and his baseball cap pulled down over his eyes. He didn't have a clue that you were there until you spoke to him.*

*The repulsive vagabond had not right to tell me no when . . . you didn't expect him to say no to you did you? Why did you sit down next to him? You never do something so impulsive like that.*

*Why are you looking at his boots? Don't you have something else to do? His boots look like something that a guy would wear in the army. They sure could use a cleaning and a shine. That icky smell is coming from those boots. What's that dried stuff sticking to the side of the boot nearest me? The bum probably doesn't know that there's some yucky stuff caught between the heel and the sole of that boot.*

*The guy obviously doesn't want me sitting next to him. Why is he looking at my purse? How come he pulled his knees up and slid back into his chair? Just grab your purse gal and run as . . .*

*The guy's hands . . . they're the most muscular, masculine hands that I've ever seen. What I wouldn't do for suntanned hands and arms like his. Those capillaries on the back of his hands look like rivers. Look how long his fingers are. They make his hands look even bigger. What're those calluses all about on the inside of both of his index fingers? He really needs to clean the dirt out from under his fingernails. A manicure would take care of how uneven and chipped they are. They're dreadful looking. The guy is really disgusting. Doesn't he have any pride? Has he been living in a dump? He sure looks like it.*

*What's this thing about rolling up one's shirtsleeves? Does he want the whole world to see how strong and sinewy his forearms are? How did he get all those small scratches on his wrists and forearms? Where would someone get those kinds of nicks? The guy really needs to wash his shirt and pants. He sure has the nerve to show up in this place looking so unkempt.*

*You need to stop trying to take peeks at the filthy creep. So what that he has an L-shaped tear in his trousers. The guy obviously doesn't wear cutoffs. His leg clearly hasn't seen any sun. That's one nasty looking scar crossing through that bared area. What's that scar to you anyway? Stop staring.*

*Who flipped on the balcony lights? You need to get out of here before someone comes up here. Now you know what it feels like to be caught in a quandary. Make a decision gal. Like you're good at . . .*

*My friends need to stop looking for me. They'd be totally mortified if they saw me sitting right next to a . . . the guy probably looks like from a distance one of those guys who stands on a street corner with a handmade sign begging for a handout.*

*Daddy better not see me up here. It'd really push his hot button if he caught me sitting up here in the balcony. I know daddy – per you, only the dregs sit in the balcony. Why does it have to be so important to you daddy that I'm always having to make a good impression for you with your contacts and cohorts.*

*There's daddy and mother. No one got your seats before you got to them daddy. Just because you think that those seats are designated for you that . . . you're looking dapper daddy in your dark pinstripe suit. You really need to do something about yourself mother. Your petite built is making daddy look heavier. Daddy has enough trouble with being short. Why does daddy have to always be such a meathead?*

*Did you comb your hair this morning mother? It doesn't look like it. You need to get another dress too mother. Don't you have something that's more fashionable? Don't you ever get tired of wearing drab? Why do you wear that dowdy dress every time that you go someplace? It really hangs on you mother. Why do you always have to hunch over so much? You're doing a great job of embarrassing daddy – and me.*

*What happened to that vivacious, mischievous gal that one of your cousins told me that you used to be? I just can't begin to ever picture you being beautiful let alone being fun-loving.*

*What was mother's family like anyway? How come no one from her family ever visits us anymore? Maybe it's true what you say daddy that mother's family has said that you weren't good enough for mother.*

*Why has daddy stayed with mother? You don't really need her do you daddy? Mother never wanted me. Why did mother always have daddy dress me when I was little? Why didn't mother ever help me with my schoolwork? Why did I always have to count on daddy to help me? Daddy is who always gives me money when I need money. As difficult as you make my life most of the time daddy, I don't know what I'd do if . . .*

*I've got to go downstairs – like right now, but . . . I'm glued to the chair right next to . . . who is this dirty outsider anyway? He's so revolting. You should be feeling really creeped out by him? Why aren't you?*

*Oh no. You noisy, insufferable teenagers don't belong up here. There's hope – the callous stranger can actually move more than once in a lifetime. Maybe he's going to leave? Here's hoping.*

It's because of those ridiculous looking sunglasses that I'm in this place right now. I didn't want to ever again hear someone telling me what to do let alone jabbing their finger at me. You really should be used to it by now guy to having a finger pointing at you reminding you over and over again that you killed grandpa. I'll never get used to it. This spoiled gal's pushy way of cutting me off really burns me. Why is it that everywhere I go there's someone ready to point out to me that grandpa is dead because of me?

Where did she get the hat? She wasn't wearing a hat when she was pointing to me to . . . how come she's wearing a hat? No one else anywhere in this place is wearing a hat. Who are these people anyway who're starting to fill up this place? What kind of nightmare am I having? Why do I have to keep on living?

She has no right wearing something that looks like grandpa's hat. Grandpa's hat better still be in the room where I was staying in on the farm. It's my hat. I can't help it that no one wanted the hat when grandpa died. So the hat's brim is all frayed. I don't want to forget you grandpa. I don't want to forget anything about you grandpa. Why didn't you make me listen to you grandpa?

Why can't I stop seeing grandpa? Why did grandpa always have a smile on his face? I miss how your eyes always lit up grandpa when you saw me. Why can't I find it as easy as you did grandpa to be different? You liked being a non-conformist didn't you grandpa. When I get old grandpa, I'm going to have the same kind of long, white pork chop looking sideburns that you had.

You have to lose that hat gal or . . . you have no right gal wearing a hat at an angle just like grandpa used to wear his. Your hair gal would make grandpa's wispy, white hair look . . . why does she want to cover up her hair? Grandpa wore a hat to keep his bald head from getting burnt by the sun. So why are you wearing a hat gal? Who does she think she is? What would she do if I grabbed her hat and stomped on it? Why won't she leave? I really can't take it anymore being reminded over and over again what I did to grandpa.

Why are you staying here guy? Why don't you leave? I want to leave but . . . why is she staring at my hands? Haven't you seen hands before gal? Now she's staring at where you ripped your pants yesterday on a nail that was sticking out of the edge of the flatbed? Doesn't she have something else better to do?

Why do I feel like I'm sitting next to you grandpa? Why did you always try to encourage me? You never criticized me. You trusted me grandpa didn't you. Thanks for always listening to me. I know that I was special to you. Everyone was special to you grandpa. Why did you always feel like you had to encourage everyone? How could you trust everyone like you did? Why can't I listen like you did grandpa? It sure would be great to always know what to say just like you always did grandpa.

I have so many questions that I want to ask you grandpa – like when you and grandma retired, why did you give dad the farm? I know – ma was your only kid. I wish grandpa that I had been one of your kids. You were always so good with kids. I know that you and grandma always wanted more kids. It just isn't right that you and grandma didn't have more kids besides ma.

Why did ma want to marry dad anyway? Dad's folks were dirt poor. Their small, dilapidated shack didn't have electricity or indoor plumbing. It probably was true the rumor that dad's dad was the town drunk. What did you do grandpa to get dad to start going to church after he married ma? And why do you have to think about this right now guy? Why doesn't the gal just tell me what she has to say and leave? The last couple of minutes have to have been just as uncomfortable for her as they've been for me.

How could grandpa and grandma have totally accepted dad like they did? Dad probably went to church to make grandpa and grandma happy. If you were still alive grandpa, I know dad and ma would still be going to church. It's my fault that dad is drinking and that he has become a couch potato. Everything is my fault.

It's wrong that dad let bro take over running the farm after grandpa died. Bro trying to look like and be like dad is really . . . I sure wouldn't want to have a beer gut like dad. Plus no one will ever catch me wearing bib coveralls. Even I can't out cuss bro. How can he spend all of his time in front of a TV the way that the farm looks? It's really embarrassing how unkempt the granary, chicken coop, barn and even the house look. I should've gotten some paint yesterday instead of deciding to head for the lake.

No! No! Turn off the balcony lights. I'm leaving. Why won't my legs cooperate? Why can't everyone just give me space? Why couldn't I just sit up here in the dark and sleep? Please go away gal.

Why doesn't she leave? Who is she? Those painted nails, all those rings, perfume smell, the clothes that she's wearing all scream money. Her hands look like they've never been used for anything else but to put on her makeup. She must spend half of her time in a beauty parlor the way that her hair looks. You must have a lot of extra time on your hands gal to be fixing yourself up the way that you look. Why would you gal want to stay sitting next to a guy who hasn't taken a bath in several days, whose clothes are ripped and covered with dirt, grease, manure and blood stains and who really, really doesn't want you sitting next to him anyway? Just get lost gal. Please.

Why are four teenagers showing up here alone in the balcony? What should I do? You need to leave.

Why did the first kid give the gal a really angry and puzzled look? He obviously knows her. If you'd just get your mop of hair cut shrimp, you wouldn't have to be pushing it over all the time. Why are you sitting in the back row with us? There's already one too many bodies up here in the balcony.

You probably know chubby that you and mop hair make a weird pair. You really need to do something about your weight. You're fat. Your buddy is half your size. You didn't have to act like I'm your friend. What's this hey dude thing anyway? I don't do friends. Just take your oddball gang and go far away.

Why do some kids think that it's okay to deck themselves out in black? The other two are misfits. Why don't they want to live in the real world? No guy in his right mind would wear something with chains dangling from it. And why would he want to have a Mohawk haircut? And what's the gal with him trying to prove dying her hair purple, wearing gloves without fingers, wearing a ring in her nose and a bar thing in an eyebrow? She's totally out of touch with . . . and why does everyone have to have a tattoo these days? No one is ever going to convince me to get one. What's the matter with teenagers these days?

Cork it punks. I'm not in the mood for your laughing and for your messing around with each other. You can move further down the back row from us. You didn't have to sit a seat away from that obnoxious gal who . . . why are you so bugged guy by where those noisy teenagers are sitting. You don't plan to hang around here – do you? So then why are you staying? You're not glued to the chair.

If you're so uncomfortable sitting up here with me gal, leave. You've my permission. So – take it and . . .

What's her problem now? Why did she put her face in her hands? What was that deep breath all about? I'll never ever understand how a gal thinks or why a gal does what she does. Just be really thankful guy that you haven't had a gal in your life. All a gal knows how to do is to bring drama into the world. The last thing that you've needed guy is to have more drama in your life.

What's big sister doing? And why are you thinking of her now? She's out of your life. She was right that no gal will ever want anything to do with you. She didn't though have to constantly remind me of how skinny I was or that my ears look like sails or . . . you couldn't help it that you stuttered. It's not right to poke fun of a stutterer – even if he's your kid brother. Why wouldn't she let it go that you killed grandpa? You didn't plan to kill him or to mess up everyone's lives. How come you've messed up so many lives?

You need to put your big sister behind you. She was nothing but grief to you. You don't have any pity for her. She didn't have to get married right after grandpa died. It served her right that the local guy she married didn't want to move to the big city with her. She didn't have to leave her husband to move on her own to the big city. How can lil sis be so different? Why does lil sis want to stay in touch with her? It's big sister's problem that she has ended up with a couple of kids, no job and living in a place in a slum.

You should be glad guy that you don't look like and act like big sister and bro. Be thankful that you take after you ma's side of the family. Why don't you forget your family guy? Stay in touch with lil sis but the rest of the family has to be history. How can lil sis stay living with dad and ma? I sure wouldn't like if it dad always called me an accident. I've got to find a way to get lil sis away from them.



How come dad and ma didn't want more kids after I was born? Why isn't lil sis sitting right next to me now instead of a gal who wouldn't look at me twice if she hadn't tried to run me over to get to whatever this place is? What's this place used for anyway?

Why do so many troublemakers want to sit up here? Why doesn't the couple who just showed up with a mob of kids sit downstairs? There's lots of room down there. What're the older kids to the four clowns who're sitting on the back row with us? How do they know each other? Guys – keep the noise down. Good – sit with your parents. It's pretty bad when one family needs to take up a row and a half of seats just to be able to sit together. It was my fault that my family stopped sitting together as a family in church.

Not another couple. Gal – you just got another really black look. Why would that couple want anything to do with the four weird teens who're sitting in the back row with us? Why all the serious hugging? And they're crying? Why? This is really embarrassing.

Those two kids in black and the overdressed gal sitting next to me sure look out of place compared to everyone else. You probably look like a bum guy. You should probably leave. You can nap in the car.

Don't come over here. You don't have to shake my hand. I don't know you guy. So why did I shake his hand? The guy definitely uses those massive hands for something. They're really calloused. So what's this all about that I'm glad that you're here this morning? Where am I this morning?

The guy's wife sure has a pleasant smile. You just got a look gal from the guy that could kill. Why? What kind of reputation do you have gal? You're not liked much are you? I'm glad that I don't have to like you.

This place is sure starting to fill up with people. Those chairs up front downstairs seem to be mostly filled. The way that people are coming up here this balcony is going to fill up, too. That's not good. Is this a regular get together? There sure is a lot of talking going on in this place.

You need to get out of this place. How? Where did that guy come from who just showed up with a couple of kids? Why did you let him know? You'd have that same haircut too guy if . . . you'd have to tell your wife that . . . she's not a happy camper. You just got a look guy from her that she's going to talk to you. Good luck gal as . . . she sure had a desperate look. Doesn't she notice how shabby and dirty I look?

You're an active little mischief-maker aren't you? I bet you keep your dad and ma on their toes don't you kid? If you think that you can stare me down kid . . . you can't. I win. What did he say to his dad? His dad doesn't seem very impressed with me by that look that he just gave me. I don't blame him for . . .

Thanks guys for sitting down in the bench in front of me. Your baby better not stay sleeping.

What would you be doing right now if grandpa was alive? What day is this? You've lost complete track of time. A couple of months have already gone past since . . . how could they do what they did to me? I really liked what I was doing. Their decision has totally messed up my life. I'm not suicidal. I couldn't help it that my job put the lives of guys around me in jeopardy. Why did some guys have to die because of decisions I made. I should be wearing a sign that reads stay clear if you want to stay alive.

I'd do anything to be at the lake right now with you grandpa. You could really catch fish. Why did you like that steel rod so much that you got before I was even born? You were always straightening out that thing. How long was that islet missing? The thing's open face reel was always causing backlashes. I sure could use your patience grandpa. You'd know what to do with the gal. She has to go.

I sure could do hunting with you again grandpa. I really miss going out shooting with you. How could you knock down a couple of pheasants with your pump at the same time that I'm knocking down one pheasant with a single shot? Why did you listen to me grandpa?

Why did you just tense up gal like you just saw a ghost? You're glaring at him. His wife looks like she wants to get out of here as badly as I do. She doesn't like you either gal does she? What did you do?

*He's not leaving. I'm mortified. What's daddy going to say when he finds out that you sat up in the balcony? You can leave gal. Why do I feel stuck to the chair that I'm sitting on right now? Are you enjoying sitting next to a bumpkin? It's horribly humiliating. Everyone is looking at me like I'm a freak. I'm not a freak. How come they don't look at the guy next to me the same way? He looks like a . . .*

*So help me if the preacher's kid tells his father that he saw me sitting next to a strange guy in the balcony. It's just my awful luck that the kid showed up in the balcony with three of his cronies. You better be glad you big brute that you didn't step on my toes as you walked past me. You tried. What was that derisive look for anyway? Maybe I won't go back to your father's office for my dental care. How'd he like that?*

*Who are the gothics? They probably are one of the reasons why the couple who was hired to work with the youth was fired. The couple had clear cut job descriptions. Why couldn't they've just done what they were hired to do? What's so hard about planning social events? There're lots of high school kids around. What made them think that they could invite kids off the street to their youth functions? Daddy said that he'd have them pay the price if . . . what would daddy do if he was told that he had to do something?*

*Those four raucous teenagers think that they own the balcony. Who do they think they are to sit only a chair away from me? Now I know what daddy meant when he told me that the preacher had told him that his youngest kid was hanging out with some really rough kids. The preacher's little squirt better . . .*

*You need to get out of here gal. The last thing that you need is to be labeled a reject. I can hear daddy calling me that now when he finds out that I sat in the balcony. He already knows that I'm not with my friends. Daddy can't find out that . . . it sure feels like an invisible handcuff has me handcuffed to that knucklehead sitting next to me. There has to be a way gal that you can start this day over again.*

*Oh no – no. Not someone else who knows me? You're really caught now. Crawl under your chair gal. Like that's going to help me. You've got an incredulous look on your face guy. Someone should've introduced that couple to birth control pills. They did give you gal plenty of babysitting opportunities. How were you to know that this couple and their tribe always sat in the balcony? It answers the question why you haven't seen them around here ever since the governing board made their decision to . . .*

*The older kids by the way that they're hugging them obviously know the motley quartet who're sitting on my row. Why are they looking at me like they don't know me? Have they forgotten that I babysat them? It's pretty bad when a family has to use two rows of chairs so that everyone can sit near each other. You know don't you gal who they're whispering to each other about. Why can't everybody leave me alone? What've I done to them? Nothing. Why am I being blamed for something that the board did? Okay – so daddy is on the board. Besides – I'm definitely on daddy's side on this one. Blame me then if . . .*

*Gal – you really need to be sitting with your friends up front. You always sit with your friends up front. You'd be within feet right now of where your boyfriend and his music team have everything set up to begin. It's a good thing that the guy is sharp looking as . . . hey – what do you know – the guy actually is acting like he's concerned that I'm not sitting where I always sit. He sure can be a lot of fun. I just wish though that he would talk about something else other than always talking about himself. The last thing that I'm ever going to let happen to me is what happened to daddy with mother. The lucky guy who I decide to let marry me needs to know that he's going to have in me an equal partner in whatever it is that . . .*

*Weren't the youth leaders told to . . . a youth leader isn't supposed to be so tall and blond and who looks like a model. How many times did she wrap her arms around those gothic kids? How could she let that grossly obese kid hug her? Why the long teary hug with the pastor's kid? His father needs to make him get a haircut. Stop it you guys with the sappiness overkill. How could that couple who was hired to babysit the youth have the audaciousness to show their faces here after being summarily fired for insubordination?*

*Where did she come from anyway? Please don't stand in front of me. I'm really sorry lady but . . . I do appreciate your smile but . . . I don't want to be near your husband. Do you know that your husband is adamant that daddy will never ever again sell another one of his houses? Please tell your husband to stop staring at me with that look like it's my fault that . . . why am I always in the middle of daddy's messes?*

*You're not feeling very welcome up here in the balcony are you gal? You're an outsider. The guy sitting next to me probably feels the same way. When he gets up to leave, I'll leave with him. It's wrong for me to be up here in the balcony. My friends expect me to sit with them. I can't have daddy catch me up here.*

*What was that all about? Why the weird wave and quick nod to the family who just walked into the balcony? How can the scruffy stooge know the guy? Who else in this place right now knows who the insufferable, smelly hobo is who's sitting next to me? Who has their hair cut in a military buzz cut anymore? What did he just say to his wife? He sure got her to turn around in a hurry to stare at the grimy looking guy sitting next to me. Talk about looking really stressed . . . you're going to do whatever you can to find a way to talk to the guy before you leave aren't you gal? Good luck.*

*How come parents think that they have to have their kids sit with them? How can parents be so oblivious to how disruptive their kids are? They could've sat someplace else instead of a couple rows ahead of me. Their kid is definitely way too overactive. Why won't parents leave their kids in the nursery? They have to know that's why there's a nursery in this place. Daddy is right that there're times – like right now, when adults need to be with adults and kids with kids. I don't have any more tolerance than you do daddy for parents who don't keep their kids quiet. And you really want to be like daddy don't you gal?*

*Don't get worked up gal about who is sitting up here in the balcony. You're leaving just as soon as . . .*

*No – it can't be. Not a baby. Please don't sit on that row of chairs in front of me. What're they going to do with their baby when . . . you know that their baby will not stay sleeping. One of them has to head for the nursery when their baby wakes up. Daddy is going to hear their baby cry. Daddy gets really irritated when he hears a baby crying. How is it daddy that you can hear a baby crying a mile away when you've trouble hearing what I'm trying to say to you? You're always turning around what I'm saying to you. Why do you always have to have things done your way? Accept it gal – daddy doesn't do listening.*

*Why does daddy always think that he has to be right? Why won't he let me be right just once? I hear you daddy – where would I be today if it weren't for you but . . . why hasn't mother ever been a part of my life?*

*You're ashamed gal aren't you that the timid looking, sloppily dressed woman sitting next to daddy is your daddy's wife and my mother. How come mother won't become just as involved in daddy's life – and in my life, as she is in doing her philanthropic stuff? How come she has never ever wanted to do something with me? Doesn't mother know that helping out every week in a soup kitchen, spending time giving unwed gals counsel, visiting regularly the children's wing that she had built with an endowment from her inheritance and . . . that whatever it is that she does sure isn't helping to make peace with daddy – that's for sure.*

*Why is it mother that you've never made an effort to . . . you know that we've never had a serious talk – just the two of us. Okay – so you're pleasant to me. But why does it seem like there's an invisible wall between us? Why can't you be there for me just like daddy always is? What doesn't daddy get it that I don't want him to call me anymore his princess? Has there ever been a time when daddy hasn't been mad at mother? How can mother always act like she doesn't hear daddy when he gets livid? Has daddy ever said anything nice to mother? Probably not. Come on gal - just tell that sap sitting next you that you're sorry and leave.*

*How do you plan to escape your dilemma gal? At least I'm not breaking my neck right now. I can read the announcements now without . . . it would've make my life easier if those screens had been set further back.*

*Okay - I don't have any kids so . . . playing sports is something that I've never done and that I never plan to do so that announcement doesn't apply to me. I'm going to have to put that picnic on my calendar. You really need to find a way to get daddy to stop doing picnics. The blatant way that you do glad-handling daddy . . . why do you think that you have to get into everybody's back pocket? You sure embarrass me sometimes daddy the way that . . . what's it going to take daddy to get you to stop counting on me to . . .*

*What's he doing here? How dare he take that reprehensible wench with him to where he knows I'm going to be? That insufferable thing doesn't deserve him. Why can't that insensitive bore tell that I don't want that woman anywhere near me? Just take her someplace else guy. I don't want her anywhere near me.*

*You ungrateful fool. After all those years that you lived down the street from daddy's house, after all those years that we went to the same schools together, after all those high school dances that you took me to, why would you marry a dull librarian. It was all set; I was to marry a banker's kid. I'm just a miserable dupe. How did your father like losing daddy's accounts?*

*How could you not tell me guy until . . . how was I supposed to know that the good gal friend that you sometimes mentioned to me was someone who you'd end up marrying? That skinny, opportunistic leech has absolutely no right to him. He was mine. I really don't need this right now.*

*Daddy was infuriated with me guy when you married that cheesy floosy. I deserved that yelling tirade that daddy gave me. You really dissed daddy guy when you didn't ask his perfect daughter to marry you. Why gal do you still have that feeling that your daddy was more upset that he wouldn't be able to tell the whole world that his daughter's father-in-law is a banker than he was because you didn't catch the banker's kid. This daddy always having to be around guys who you consider to be prestigious is idiotic?*

*You're going to be lambasted by daddy for sitting up here in the balcony. It's not going to be pretty. How did I get myself into this appalling mess? Why didn't I do what I've done ever since I started coming here? You really should be sitting right now gal in a front row seat next to your two best friends waiting together for the fun to begin. Was it worth it gal trying to do the right thing? Why do I always make things worse?*

*Blame it gal on the Neanderthal sitting next to you. The guy shouldn't have been on any road with that abysmal wreck that he's driving. Why did he have to follow me? I can do blame casting just as well as you can daddy. Why can't some days be rewound?*

*No, no, no – please don't look this way. Lean forward you big lunk-head so that he won't see me. Why are he and his wife sitting up here in the balcony among all the rejects? He has to be still furious with daddy for having him kicked off the governing board. Thinking that being one of the founding fathers of this place meant that he . . . just because he's financially invested in this place . . . you were per daddy deadwood on the board – that you don't have a progressive bone in your body. You're a dinosaur guy.*

*I didn't need that you old geezer. I wouldn't wish on anyone that cold, steely glower that you just gave me. And you claim guy to be a . . . why do I get the blame for everything that daddy has done in this place? Just maybe daddy is on the right track and they aren't. Everyone needs to understand that the reason that daddy has gotten himself in the position that he's in now is so that he can get things done around here. Okay – daddy's a control freak. Why do I have to suffer though for daddy's pernicious behavior?*

*The old cranky relic and his wife must have guests. My guess is that they're about retirement age. The guy sure looks crotchety. His tall, pleasant looking wife sure has a welcoming smile. She looks like someone who I wouldn't mind getting together with to chat. You could maybe talk with her later.*

*What should I do? My two gal friends are having conniptions. You're going to get a crick in your neck daddy if you keep turning your head around trying to find me. Don't look this way.*

*What's that boyfriend of mine doing now? Just stand there guy and strum your guitar like you don't know what to do next. Why won't he let me be on the stage with him? I liked being up there. I miss singing in front of everybody. Why doesn't that turkey want me on the stage to do interpretive dancing? Who does he think he is that he has to hog the stage? What happened? How did it happen? It's wrong.*

*How did he come to think that he needs his so-called band to lead the singing time? Gal – you need to talk to daddy. Just because the board thinks that having professionals lead the singing time will . . . why aren't there some younger people on the board? What does a group of old fogies know what young people like me like about music? Because you're the board chairman daddy, you have to say the board is doing a great job but . . . but being proud that you got the meetings down from three meetings to one meeting . . .*

*Just start doing your thing guy on your guitar. Get your purse gal. When everyone stands up to sing, head downstairs and . . . that sounds like a plan. I can't wait to escape this trap.*

What's going on now? You clearly have an issue gal with that couple. I can feel darts shooting from your eyes at them. Why is the dude staying up here? Can't he tell that that sweet gal with him doesn't want to be anywhere around here? Why aren't you doing what she wants you to do? Why don't they just leave?

Did that couple ever trigger something in that crazy gal sitting next to me. She sure looks like she's ready to use her fists on someone. Be thankful guy that you don't have to worry about her getting mad at you.

Now what? Announcements? I don't want to hear announcements. I'm just fine with leaving those white screens blank. What kind of place is this anyway where parents are told that they have to leave their kids in places with weird names? With all the kids sitting up here, someone should get the hint that no one wants to leave their kids in those kinds of places? What's wrong with kids sitting with their folks in this place?

Softball. No one is going to catch me playing softball again. It's because of softball that . . . whoever is looking for softball players for that upcoming tournament just better be glad that I won't be on his team.

Why did I have to go so hard into second? Why didn't the shortstop get out of my way? Why couldn't he have been another kid? Why did the shortstop have to be who was going to quarterback my high school to its first ever football state title? What good is it going to do you guy replaying over and over what . . .

How could you've done that to a friend? The guy was really counting on a football scholarship. You know that you didn't mean to bust up his knee. You were just trying to break up a double play. What happened in that split second totally ruined the football season for your high school and for your town. Why am I the one who's always ruining lives? Stop beating yourself up guy – you deserve to have your life ruined.

How come you ran to me grandpa instead of to my friend? The guy was rolling around on the ground – screaming like a stuck pig. Why did you have to stop the centerfielder from . . . you should've let him hit me after he barreled into me. I had it coming grandpa. It was all my fault.

You were always at my games grandpa. Why? Did you ever play slow pitch softball? I was a good first baseman wasn't I? Our church really did have the best team. The softball season ended for everyone when I . . . there hasn't been a softball league in town since grandpa. You messed up a lot of lives guy when . . .

Have you forgotten guy that you were your school conference's best tight end? Everyone said so. The fall before you busted up his knee, your friend teamed up with you with a ton of passes. And then what kind of basketball season would your school have had if . . . he was all everything. You know he would've made All-State as a point guard if . . . and you would've started your last year in school as the power forward.

What happened sure ruined it for me for sports didn't it. Because of sports, my life became a real mess. I was everybody's friend guy before I . . . only you grandpa would have anything to do with me after . . .

Why can't there be a way to undo something? How's a guy supposed to forget his classmates' angry looks, their snide remarks, their cold shoulders? And you thought then guy that your last year of high school would be the worst year of your life. It wasn't even close. This year has been totally the pits.

I really wish grandpa that I had thanked you for talking with me the way that you did after . . . why couldn't everybody see what happened the way that you did – that it was just one of those things that happen – that life may not be fair sometimes but that . . . I'm still hearing what you said grandpa but the truth is . . . here I sit grandpa years later going over and over again what happened. I don't feel any better now than what I did then. How could you always be no matter what so positive and upbeat grandpa?

You saw grandpa how dad and bro reacted. They didn't even see what took place. They weren't at the game. They just knew that it had to have been my fault. You saw grandpa how they were even more upset with the high school not going to be able to win the state title because . . . than with my friend getting his ACL torn. Why couldn't you get them to listen to you grandpa? Then I ended up killing you grandpa.

Why does it have to be that it was my fault that you were killed? I know that it was – but why?

Even the people at church didn't do anything to make my life easier after I . . . I know grandpa that you wouldn't be happy if you knew that I don't go to church anymore but . . . why do I want to have anything to do with a church? Tell me grandpa how people can say that they believe something and then . . . I'm just not going to be caught anymore grandpa in a place that's full of hypocrites. What right did everyone have to judge me? There's no way grandpa that I'm going to go to a place where people . . . why can't everyone be like you were grandpa? You made everyone grandpa feel so welcomed and encouraged.

Boy does she ever get spooked easily. What is it about those two older couples that . . . how come she doesn't want them to see her? Don't try to hide behind me gal. You deserved that look. I'm there with you old man – I know exactly how you feel. I hope that the old grump doesn't think that she's with me.

About ten minutes in this place guy is long enough. There's way too many things happening in this place right now for me to . . . what's keeping you guy from leaving? If I knew that the gal wouldn't follow me, I'd . . . she's so random. How did she get on so many people's bad side? Like you don't know guy?

Now what's on those screens? Welcome to . . . what does meeting place mean? It's obvious guy – this is a place where people meet for one reason or another. Okay screens – tell me what the meeting is all about.

This has to be some sort of community building. Maybe different bands are going to do their gigs here this morning. Spiked hair and the motley guys with him are . . . they're setting up to do something. The guy is sure into himself. If you're going to do something dork, do it. You look utterly ridiculous walking around the stage holding your guitar way up in the air while you're . . . what's he trying to do? If this is for sure a music thing, I'm out of here. There's just no way at all that I'm going to sit through listening to a bunch of wannabe guitar pickers thinking that . . . how can anyone begin to enjoy blaring garbage? I sure don't.

Okay – so you wrote a song that you want to sing to everyone this morning. Who's supposed to be impressed? If people came here just to watch you play a guitar and to hear you sing, they're wasting their time. Guy – you wouldn't last ten seconds in some of the places where I've been the last handful of years.

Now what's agitating her? There're those clenched fists again. Hey gal – would you stop bouncing your leg. You're shaking my chair. Gal if you don't like it up here, leave. You won't have me stopping you.

Why don't you stop putting yourself through this misery guy? All you have to do is leave. And where will I go if . . . I'll give you one minute guy to make me want to stay here so . . .

If you really want me to understand the words that you're singing guy, please tell your drummer and your keyboard guy to cut back on the noise that they're making. Good grief. You're going to make everyone deaf in this place. There has to be someone around here in control of the sound system.

Applause? You gotta be kidding. What did he do to deserve applause? Who does he think he is that he can tell everyone to stand? In your dreams guy. I'm not going to lift up my arms and dance while you're singing the next song. No way am I going to stand up because you . . .

She stood up. Why? She's going to dance? And where's she going to dance? Has she thought about who would want to dance with her? Why did she put her hands down? Who are you looking at gal? You didn't have to sit down next to me again. Why are you covering your face with your hands? What a fruitcake.

If those words on the screen are what's being sung by . . . why would someone want to sing like a sick dog? How come God is mentioned in the words on the screens? This can't be a church. What day is this?

How can this place be a church? There wasn't a sign anyplace that said . . . this can't be a church. There's no way that I'm going to stay sitting here if . . . you keep saying that guy so . . . so why don't you do it?

No one has a bulletin. There're only a few suits around. Everyone else is doing casual. This place isn't a church. You would feel it guy if this place was a church. There's absolutely nothing here guy that . . . where's a pulpit. Do you see any Bibles around here? Wouldn't there be a cross hanging someplace if . . .

Church was so different grandpa when you were alive. How come the church changed so much after you died? Going to church was something that I just wanted to do when you were alive. How come you died grandpa when I was really needing you? It's your own fault guy. You killed your grandpa. If I had only listened to you grandpa . . . this messing up other people's lives . . . I just can't keep going on like this.

And why would I want to sing to God? What has God done for me? Nothing. All God does with me is make me responsible for other people dying. Thanks a whole lot God. Why haven't you let me die?

I really do want to get on with life grandpa but . . . going to church every week grandpa is just not going to happen with me. What was it about always being in church grandpa that was so special for you?

Now what? That creep really does think that he's God gift to everyone here. No one ever tells me that I have to do something. Who's he anyway to tell everyone in this place to . . . there's no way that I'm going to give the gal next to me a hug. Why should I stand up just because he . . . I'm staying sitting.

You can stand up gal. Everyone else is standing up but us. Don't worry – I'm not going to do anything.

I don't want you to shake my hand. Okay – if it's that important to you . . . hey chubby – that's not cool at all shaking my hand and not her hand. So I don't like it that she's sitting in my space but . . . you don't have to be mean to her. Please don't cry gal. I wouldn't blame you if you do but . . . what've you done?

I must've gotten that grease on the side of my nose last night when I was changing that flat. You're the last gal I would've ever expected to think to wipe grease off my face. Why are you doing it? No one has done anything nice to me since grandpa died. It just never happens. What else do you have in your pockets besides the hand wipes that you're using to wipe off my nose? Why gal are you and your friend decked out in all black? Why do you have to have all those piercings? I don't get why . . . then having your hair dyed purple . . . you're obviously a really sweet, pretty young lady but . . . that's okay – I don't do hugging. Thanks for the hug. Nice perfume. You've made my day. I should've stood. You must smell awful guy.

It's the tyke. You want to shake my hand, too? Good. How about a high five? You missed kid. You know guy it's kind of immature deliberately missing a kid's hand when he thinks that you're going to . . . but they always think it's funny. What's it about me that kids like? Why does dad hate me?

Maybe the kid should sit with his dad and ma instead of . . . he doesn't have to stay standing next to my chair. The kid has to see that everyone has sat down. I'm okay dad with your kid standing next to me. Why do kids always want to hang around me? That's okay kid – you can put your hand on my knee.

Kids were why you were looking forward to going back there. You sure didn't see it coming. Why did some of my guys have to end up being killed? Because I was okay with dying doesn't make me suicidal.

This singing thing has gone on long enough. If you're supposed to sing along with that clown up front, it's just not going to happen. If those words on the screens are supposed to be words for a Christian song, how come no one seems to be singing the song? Who are you kidding guy if you think that everyone is going to sing with you. Are hymns sung in this place? When is the last time guy that you've sung a hymn? Years.

What I wouldn't do right now grandpa to have you sitting here next to me instead of an obviously disliked rich gal. You'd really be enjoying this wouldn't you grandpa? You'd have a big smile on your face. How could you like church so much grandpa? You didn't have any trouble with being in church guy until . . .

There sure aren't many happy looking people sitting up here in the balcony. Why do they want to be here? How come you're still here? Where would I go? Are you thinking about staying here now guy? Those clouds are getting awfully dark looking. The last place guy that you want to be in right now is in a storm. You've had enough storms in your life. Maybe there's a basement in this place where . . .

Why is it so important to you – you bombastic idiot, that everyone has to listen to you? You've really gotten on my nerves. I sure hope that this isn't his day job. He's an arrogant . . .

*About time. You were to start singing a couple of minutes ago. Don't be surprised if daddy gets on your case for starting late. You don't want to get on daddy's wrong side. If you don't play daddy's game . . .*

*Okay – I'm out of here. You did what? You wrote a song last night? That's disingenuous. You couldn't have written a song last night. Like I'm going to forget guy what time you dropped me off this morning at my place? You were so smashed. You're lucky that you made it back to your place last night without . . . I'm actually kind of surprised that you made it here this morning.*

*I wrote those words. What gives him the right to take what I wrote and . . . he better be really glad that I'm not sitting in the front row right now. I've had about all I can take of his voracity.*

*Okay – so he wrote the music but . . . so help me guy, you're going to wish that you'd never said that you wrote the words. After I tell daddy that . . . daddy will . . . how many times have I told you that no one ever messes with daddy. Daddy may think that you're a cats' meow right now but when I get done . . . you're going to be out of here. How could I let myself be attracted to you? You're a bigger loser than I am.*

*How could it have happened again? Something gal that you thought was a good thing has . . . this has happened to me too many times. How could've I let that narcissistic fraud fool me – making me think that he was nice guy? Why did I convince daddy that it was a good idea to hire him to be the worship leader?*

*After you pushed that pompous fool and his band on daddy, he . . . it took you just a week you audacious liar to break your promise to let me sing with you and your band. Did you really think gal that calling him your boyfriend would . . . I want to scream. I need to do something. I'm going to wring his scrawny neck.*

*Sure – applaud the bigheaded freak. Feed his ego. If you were sitting in the front row right now gal, you know that you'd also be . . . you're a hypocrite gal. Okay – so I'm a hypocrite. What're you going to do about it? Like you're going to be able to do something up here gal around a bunch of rejects and misfits?*

*Why is he looking at my hands? Tell him to stop it. I don't want him to know me. And do you really think that he . . . daddy would take one look at him and . . . you're just like daddy aren't you gal? You really scare people sometimes daddy. Do you know that? You wouldn't care if you did know that. You scare me.*

*Great! This is going to give me the chance to get up, act like I'm singing and do some dancing and . . . okay – everybody stand up. What part of stand up don't these malcontents up here understand?*

*So you're the only one standing up. I don't care. I'm going to sing and I'm going to dance. It isn't your fault gal nor is it your problem that the balcony is filled with old stooges. Join me you teenage yokels.*

*Oh – no, no. Did he see me? He had to have seen me. He was looking up here. He has stopped . . . daddy wouldn't have stopped waving his arms like a . . . if he hadn't seen me. What's he saying to mother?*

*You don't have to keep looking up here daddy. Where can I go? I've got to hide. This isn't happening. You wouldn't be in this mess gal if it wasn't for the big galoot who is . . . it's all his fault. I'm going to cry.*

*Why is God doing this to me? How can I sing to God up here in the balcony when no one else up here wants to sing to Him? There's just a bunch of uncooperative blobs up here. You need to be with your friends. You're never going to hear the end of it when they find out that . . . you sure did it this time.*

*There's no way gal that you can praise God with all these malcontents around you who don't want you anywhere near them. The gall of that overweight punk to laugh at me when I started dancing with the music. Why should I care what anyone thinks? God obviously doesn't care at all that I'm here. Has He ever done anything for me? All He ever does is make my life miserable. I'm so going to get it from daddy.*

*What? You want everyone to do what? You've never asked everyone before to . . . no way am I going to hug a stranger who smells like . . . the guy can't be anymore grimy. I totally cannot stand it up here anymore. You've got to help me God. Get me out of here. Please. I'm begging You.*



*The dead up here are able to move. Why are you all shaking the guy's hand? He could at least take off his grubby cap. No one is going to shake your hand gal let alone give you a hug so . . . no one wants you here.*

*She's wiping the grease from off the side of his nose. That's sweet. You could've done that gal. Sure – like you'd wipe grease off the nose of a bum. I don't think so. You're a snob gal. You've always been a snob.*

*You're hugging him, too. Who do you think you are? Just go and do your gothic thing someplace else instead of here. Don't you know that you aren't welcome in this place? When daddy finds out from me who the pastor's kid is hanging out with, daddy will . . . the pastor is going to lose points with daddy.*

*Okay little imp – what're you doing? Go back to your dad. Do you think that he cares who you are? That was totally lame. The kid was giving you a high five and . . . hey kid – stop looking at the guy like he's your favorite uncle or something? You don't know him. You can't trust him. Just maybe you shouldn't put your hand on his leg. Okay – maybe the guy doesn't have a problem with kids but . . . you've got problems with little fiends. You are the real ogre gal. I'm so in the wrong place right now. Get me out of here.*

*You've never spent a more humiliating ten minutes or so in your life gal have you? How come you haven't learned that it never pays to try to do the right thing? Daddy's thing about everyone being against him is true. It's too late for me to join my friends. Daddy already knows that I'm up here. Everyone up here treats me like I'm scum. So – why are you staying? If you left now, where would you go? Why did you have to think that you had to say something to the ingrate sitting next to you? What's it about him that . . .*

*What would I have to do to get you to let me sing up on the stage with you? What did I do that you won't let me . . . you know how much I like singing that song that you're singing right now. You know that I've got a good voice. You need to listen to yourself singing. You don't sing to God. You're just performing.*

*This place has sure changed in the last couple of years since . . . you used to look forward gal to being in this place for the end of the week meeting and then for the two meetings the next day. Coming to this place now is like I'm doing my duty so that daddy . . . when did God decide to leave this place?*

GJL

*What's this place going to be like if it keeps losing members? Why are you worried about it? It's getting to where there are just guys from hicksville, kids off the street, hired staff who won't listen to let alone cooperate with the governing board and . . . where's everyone going who're bailing out of coming here?*

*What're you planning to do daddy about what's happening here? It doesn't bother you at all does it daddy what this place is becoming. You've gotten your buddies to come here. If you didn't think that being here on Sunday was important for the business, you wouldn't darken this place's door. There's no other reason why you're here. And you thought inviting daddy here would . . . you're so naïve gal. When will you learn gal that daddy only thinks about himself. He's not interested in you. He's using you. He uses everyone.*

*You've just been playing Christian yourself gal. Where did that come from? You know that you've stopped making living a Jesus-filled life the most important thing that you do. What is it that you really care about anymore? You don't care about anyone who's up here in the balcony. Like who up here cares about me? You like your pity parties gal – don't you? You've gotten really good at feeling sorry for yourself.*

*You can't go back gal to when . . . your university Bible study group has scattered. Why are you acting like you're lost. Remember. Jesus found you. How could I think that daddy would . . . he's too lost.*

*Where do you think that you'd be right now if your roommate and one of her friends hadn't convinced you to go to their Bible study? I'd probably be hunkering down in my room and . . . they've been so patient with me. They've got to be worrying about you right now. They're always concerned about you. You need to listen to them. When they start going to another church, you need to . . . why don't they blame someone else besides daddy for . . . daddy does mean well. When are you going to stop being in denial gal?*

*This thing daddy about a guy being ascribed respect because of all the money that he has – you're like Zacchaeus. Why couldn't you get it daddy that no one respected Zacchaeus even though Zacchaeus . . .*

*You really do think daddy that being the governing board President gives you the right to . . . your daddy gal is responsible for turning a spirit-filled church into a weekly social outlet for his elitist crowd. What were you thinking gal when you talked to your daddy about becoming a Christ-follower? All you did gal was set in motion . . . what made you think gal that your daddy would see himself as being a Zacchaeus just like you did? You need to get out of your fantasy world gal and start living in the real world.*

*It was suddenly there – like out of nowhere, that you realized that you'd been missing what you needed to know. Your friends had been laughing hysterically at you as you were telling them how much daddy was like Zacchaeus when the small group leader asked you if you were like Zacchaeus, too. That shut me up.*

*You were making a real idiot of yourself that night gal. You were totally ignorant of what was in the Bible. Okay – I still don't know what's in the Bible. Your small group was to come up with three reasons why it was so important to Zacchaeus to see Jesus that he climbed up some kind of tree in order to see him.*

*You just had to think of daddy as the story about Zacchaeus was being read out loud in your small group. Daddy is height challenged just like Zacchaeus was. Daddy has a real complex about being short. You're always saying daddy that you've one strike against you because you're so short. Daddy doing something though that's embarrassingly humiliating like what Zacchaeus did – like climbing a tree, forget it; it isn't ever going happen. Daddy – you do guarding your overbearing persona like your life depends on it.*

*Daddy ever been respected – I really doubt it. He probably has always been seen as a bloviating buffoon. What daddy is really good at doing is pulling strings. Once you hoodwinked enough people daddy to elect you to the governing board, it sure didn't take you long to manipulate the board to vote to . . . I can't have anything more to do with you daddy. The years being away from home and in college daddy were the best years of my life. Being back doing all your legwork daddy has gotten awfully old.*

*You aren't stealing money from someplace are you daddy? And what has made you think gal that he is? Zacchaeus' story implies that Zacchaeus stole money. Why would Zacchaeus say that he would repay everyone if . . . daddy always just tries to take advantage of someone. Mother's money got his agency off the ground. Does he always pay you for something that you've done for him? Okay – but daddy does give you money when you ask him for money. Yah – like you're okay gal with always asking daddy for money?*

*You know what daddy, I don't care that you know that I'm up here. This is where God wants me to be.*

*Do you seriously believe gal that this is where God wants you to be? When has the last time been when you seriously thought about your Father God? Didn't singing in front of everyone earn you points with God? What would you do gal if you didn't have a critical spirit? Why is it so important to you gal that . . . is that why you're the only one who wears a hat to church? You want to be seen don't you?*

*That Bible study during my university days was . . . you need to start reading the Bible gal. You could start praying again, too. This place used to be known as a place of prayer. It's so sad what has happened here.*

*This place should still be called a church. You got your way didn't you daddy. You wouldn't have gotten your way if everyone who voted on this place's name change knew why you wanted this place called a meeting place instead of . . . your mindset daddy of always looking for a way to make a buck went over the pale when you . . . sure – there're some real fat cats who're coming now to this place who wouldn't come here otherwise but . . . can't you tell daddy that they're using you just as much as you're using them?*

*To renovate this place when it didn't need to have anything done to it is one thing daddy but . . . you just had to find a way to get rid of the pastor who started this church. Then you dumped the music director for the reprehensible gadfly up front right now who's pretending that he's . . . now there isn't a youth pastor here. That old elder up here has reason to be frustrated with daddy. Daddy sure pulled his chain. The old pastor sure could explain the Bible through his verse by verse sermons. There was nothing wrong daddy with the old pastor inviting whoever to come forward to ask for healing or to make a commitment to God or to . . . you just had to make going forward to become a church member the only thing that old pastor could do or . . . and you really thought daddy the old pastor would jump for you. What did I do to you God?*

What's that song? Am I supposed to know the song? Why does the goofball up front think that he's the only one who can sing the songs? Why does that geeky nerd think that he has to prance around the stage? Is he trying to put on a show? The way that everyone is clapping down below why isn't anyone up here applauding God for whatever it was that he just . . . what's this about applauding God? That's . . .

This has to be some sort of a Christian band performance thing or . . . no way can this be a church. Why would anyone want to sit in a balcony? It's obvious that hardly anyone up here really wants to be here.

So why doesn't anyone like the overdressed, stuck-up gal sitting next to me? Okay – the lady who came in with those two cantankerous looking old dudes did give her a very pleasant smile. How come ma no longer wears her hair long like that classy lady does? The way that she lets her beautiful white hair fall around her face and down her upper back . . . the old duffer next to her probably doesn't have a clue how lucky he is.

What're you doing dad? You're happy that I'm gone aren't you. You didn't want me around. I sure do hope that you're enjoying your beer. You're always nursing a beer. Your world is so empty. Do you know how badly you're mistreating ma? So help me if you ever hurt lil sis. If you don't let lil sis leave home dad when she finishes high school . . . don't go there guy; you're never going back home.

You like me don't you little buddy. Glad that his dad let him stay. The little munchkin cares that I'm here. That's more than I can say about . . . why in the world would she want to sit next to me? If she really wanted to say something to me, she could've just said it instead of ignorantly invading my space. She sure looks like a lost puppy now. Are you starting to feel sorry for her? There's no way that'll ever happen.

Not another song. Is this noise going to go on forever? Please guy – turn down those amplifiers. You're going to make everyone deaf. You could let everyone sing with you instead of . . . there're some of us here who can't keep a beat. You don't want me clapping.

How can this be a church? There has to be a pulpit if . . . there hasn't been anyone praying. This singing and singing and . . . there isn't anything wrong with the words but . . . the songs don't have to be sung so loud do they? It's a good idea to have the words on screens to . . . does the imbecile know any hymns?

You'd try to sing with him wouldn't you grandpa? How come I don't have your voice? You could sing. How come you could always do so much? You'd know what to say to the gal. You always could get a smile. Why did you die? I need to talk to you. I want to stop running. No one wants me around.

Just concentrate guy on the words. What's this about you being led to the cross? What cross? And you've been brought down . . . your knees guy have gotten really sore from being slammed over and over again to the ground. I've never doubted that my sins were forgiven when . . . grandpa – you told me that what I did was right. But grandpa – if it was so right, tell me why so many bad things have happened to me?

Hey guy – you're not thinking about the words that you're singing are you? You're just . . . if you really think that you've got a good voice, you're living in wa-wa land. Your singing sounds like a crazed loon. You're singing about God. Do you know anything about God? Doesn't sound like it. If a song says that God is to be praised, you better sound like you're praising God versus doing self-adulation or God will . . .

Why won't you tell me God what I did to you? Why have you for the last bunch of years been running me through a threshing machine? You could've taken me out of my misery when the opportunities were there. You just keep punishing me – don't you? Why? Can't you find someone else to torture?

Your pious friends grandpa treated me like I was dirt when you died. They've been playing religion all their lives. Grandpa – you never . . . would you want me to do what everyone else is doing who goes to church? I'm just not going to grandpa fake my way though life. How come everyone has to put up a façade in order to be accepted? No one puts up a front over there. You could be over there now guy if . . .

Well gal – it sure looks like we're going to be spending the rest of the day listening to that egomaniac up front. You're not going to catch me leaving this place right now. The clouds are looking really ominous.

How could I've ever liked being in church. Hurting my friend's knee . . . would a real friend let someone tearing up his knee break a friendship? He wasn't really a friend was he?

Grandpa was a real friend. He never stopped caring about me. A lot of good that did grandpa. He's dead because of me. Have you ever made an effort guy to make a friend?

What would it be like to be sitting in a real church right now – if there's such a thing as a real church? This sitting next to a really mixed up gal who obviously wishes that she was someplace else is . . . you need to give her credit though for staying sitting next to you. It has to be awfully humiliating for her the way that you must look and smell. The gal is definitely not the type to have anything to do with a dirty grunt like me. What you need to do guy is to find someone to take a picture of you sitting next to her. Big sister would . . . big sister and this thing that no gal will ever have anything to do with me because . . . okay guy – have you ever given a gal a chance to . . . have you ever tried to get to know a gal? It isn't going to happen.

Why am I all of sudden thinking about girls? It's like I'm back in high school or something. I'm so wiped. Can this show just end once and for all so that . . . you're starting to hallucinate guy.

If this was really a church, wouldn't everyone be dressed in their very best? Most of the people here look like they're taking a pit stop before heading out to a picnic or something. What's this place anyway?

Grandpa – you always said that a church is a place where God's presence can always be felt. How come I never felt God's presence in church grandpa after you died? If God's presence is here, I sure haven't felt it or sensed it. There was some talking going on in this place before the music started but . . .

Do you remember what you told me grandpa when I told you that I thought that the church looked really lonely sitting on that knoll on other side of the lake? You told me grandpa not to worry about what a church building looks like – that God's presence doesn't need a building. I did hear you grandpa loud and clear then but . . . you told me that God's presence just needs a heart to . . . how can God's presence keep on living in a heart that hurts as bad as my heart? If God loves me so much, wouldn't He stop the pain?

I know grandpa – God's presence will never leave the heart of someone who has . . . did that joker up front just tell everyone to sing louder so that God will show up here? Doesn't the schmuck know that God was here before he was – that God is always sending out invitations to . . . what am I missing? Why have you made my life lessons God so hard? I know that life on planet Earth is a temporary assignment but . . .

Who's going to teach me to pray like you prayed grandpa? You always talked to God grandpa like God was sitting in a chair right next to you. If this is a church meeting grandpa, this meeting didn't start with a silent prayer like . . . and hymns aren't being sung here. Hymns can be sung together by everyone. There's no way that I can sing along with that . . . and they should've said that creed thing together by now if . . .

What? Where did that thought come from? I'm to forget what everyone has done to me? But . . . I'm not wanted anyplace. Everyone back home made me want to leave just as soon as . . . you know that God – don't you? You know that even dad and ma wanted me gone. There's no way that I'm going to . . .

They needed to let me sign up again. I would've been okay. Guy – they weren't worried about you; they just didn't want anyone else dying around you. Can you blame them? You've been left hanging guy. Now what're you going to do with your life? You don't have any skills. You don't know anyone.

At least guy you'll never have to relive your last year in high school. Knowing that the army was waiting for you just as soon as you graduated . . . that was the only thing that kept you sane wasn't it guy? The army became your family. You had that family turn on you, too. They could've found something for you to do. Why didn't they? They knew that I would've done anything to . . .

How many times are you going to go over and over again what happened? Stop wishing that grandpa hadn't died. But if I had just . . . just accept the blame guy and . . . maybe you can give me a hint God what I should do. Like you haven't noticed God that I don't have any friends or a job or even a life.

Has God ever listened to you guy? If He has, I don't remember. What's this – I love you, you love me. How can that turkey be singing those words? They don't have any meaning at all to him. You sure are struggling guy telling God that you love Him. How many more guys are going to die because of me God?

Basic training grandpa was more community than what church was back home. Guys in my units trusted me. I didn't have any choice but to trust the guys in my units. Why can't church be like that?

What're you thinking now gal? You can't keep your hands over your face forever. Who are you? Like you really care guy who she is? She does give me the feeling of lil sis sitting next to me. It's obvious that she doesn't need anyone to . . . she must have money.

You should've gotten up the nerve guy to go into a base chapel. This standing outside a base chapel while the chaplain . . . and how would a chaplain have helped me? My family and my so-called friends at church will never forgive me for messing up the guy's knee. Even if they did forgive me for that, they for sure would never forgive me for being responsible for grandpa dying. How can a church full of self-proclaimed Christians be so . . . face it guy, churches are all alike – they collect in one place angry and bitter people.

Okay – the kid was different. The kid genuinely cared. The kid died because . . . it's not worth caring.

You'd never say grandpa that I'm not a Christian if I don't go to church but . . . it's no big deal anymore for someone to be a Christian. Christians make up rules to follow just like every other religion does.

How did you ever come up with it grandpa that being a Christian was never like my decision but God's decision; that it's all about me having the relationship with God that God is behind having designed for me to have with Him? Guy - you should've listened a whole lot better to grandpa's insights. How could grandpa have gotten to know so much about . . . okay grandpa – if what you told me is really true and if I'm in a church right now, wouldn't I feel being welcomed right now instead of feeling like I'm AWOL?

And grandpa – if God is the driver behind the building of a relationship between Him and me, why is He allowing all the hurting that . . . you and your thing grandpa about God unfolding life experiences to be teachers to help a guy's faith grow; that isn't happening with me. All my life experiences since you died grandpa have taught me that God has this thing about tearing up lives instead of . . . He's sure not into stopping people from being killed over in . . . they can't even go to a nearby market to buy food without . . .

Where do I grandpa find this loving God who you said loved you? Why is He hiding from me?

There've already been too many guys hurt and killed because of me. God doesn't seem to care that . . . His letting one guy hurt or kill another guy . . . why can't everyone be like my little buddy here? You can learn from him. He's taking it really seriously being a friend to you. Why can't I just be a kid again?

If you knew grandpa that your teaching me to tune in on the sounds around me and how to shoot a gun would have me become the leader for platoons that were assigned to find and to kill enemy combatants, would you still have taught me those things? Okay grandpa – I know, it was really important to you that the country is always ready to be there for people who . . . you fought. How come you never talked to me about your days as a soldier? Were you disappointed that dad didn't enlist?

You're so exhausted guy you're feeling nauseated. This show can't go on much longer. Then what?

No one is ever going to listen to you guy. Okay – lil sis listened to me but . . . she deserves a medal. She never stopped sending boxes to me during my deployments. Rarely a week went by when a box didn't show up from her. She sure had a handle on knowing what the kids liked.

Now what gal? You're blubbing. What're you looking for in that wannabe purse? That's a Bible. That's a bookmark sticking out of her Bible. There's something written on it. Can I look at it?

Why did she gasp?

*I'm so lost. I just can't go on anymore. I've got to get away from daddy before I go crazy. I just can't keep doing what daddy is making me do.*

*You need to go downstairs gal to where your friends are sitting. You need to talk to your university roommate about . . . she probably saved your life.*

*I've got to first apologize to whoever he is though before . . . it wasn't his fault. It was my fault. What does the little imp see in the lummoX that I'm not seeing? There's definitely an affinity between the two.*

*What could those small cuts on his wrists and lower arms be from anyway? I hear you daddy – curiosity killed the cat but . . . there has to be a logical reason for them. What about all those scars that crisscross your stomach and the tops of your legs – how did they get there?*

*How can anyone live day after day with why do you have so many lights on, turn them off. How can you do your schoolwork without any lights, turn some lights on. If you studied more, you'd get better grades. I need your help; don't worry about your homework. You're not going to stay at a friend's house until I meet your friend. No you cannot have a friend stay here overnight as I need your help. You didn't miss a day daddy demeaning me. There's absolutely no way to please daddy. Do you like destroying lives daddy?*

*You've done really well daddy at causing pain. Because of you daddy, I'll never be able to wear a bikini. No guy is ever going to want to marry me when they find out that . . . how has mother been able to over these years live with daddy? Why wasn't mother ever there for me when . . . she had to know.*

*Count yourself really fortunate gal that you've your own place. Now figure out how you can stop working for daddy. What would you do gal with the condo mortgage, car payment, credit card payments, the other bills if . . . if you quit buying things that you don't need, stop charging stuff, quit partying . . . how did I ever get myself into such an awful mess? If daddy would just pay me what he pays everyone else who can stand working for him, I'd have enough money to . . . you want me to beg for money from you don't you daddy?*

*Stop looking up here daddy. Your face even from way up here looks darker than the clouds outside. You're making a fool of yourself – again. Did you really think gal that you could help daddy? How can someone so totally incorrigible like him be helped? Don't try to force me daddy to take those pills again.*

*You're going to be mad at me daddy after church when you find out that I didn't put out those sale signs that you told me to . . . be mad. I don't care. You can spend Sunday afternoons daddy bored out of your skull in the new development's sales office waiting for someone to show up who really isn't interested at all in moving to a new place. All they're doing daddy is using walking through model homes as something to do. If you think that they're actually prospective clients, then daddy you sell them a house.*

*How come my friends won't look up here? They're acting panicky. They're always worrying about me. You need to talk to them. You know that they'd understand. They'd tell you what the right thing is to do.*

*What if another gal had been my roommate? She sure got into my face when she saw my stomach. She knew immediately that I was . . . I needed to hear what she said to me. If she hadn't told me that I was to go with her that night to her Bible study . . . if she had given me a choice not to go with her, I know that I would've stayed in my dorm room and . . .*

*You need to start listening gal to your friends again. You know that they know what you'll do to your body again if . . . they've been warning you. Why won't they look up here?*

*There's no way that you could've known what the group leader would say to you. The guy didn't seem at all surprised when you started blurting out how totally lost you were. The nights and nights that you cried when you were a kid doesn't begin to compare to how hard you cried that night. Your friends were there. They heard your sad story. Here you go again. How could you gal let yourself be caught up in whole 'nother mess? When is the last time gal that you've brought God into anything? It has been way too long.*

*This is horribly embarrassing. You can't cry. What would he think? Who cares what he thinks.*

*There has to be a Kleenex in here someplace. What's this? When did I put my Bible in this bag? The last time that I took this bag anyplace has to be months ago. Gal – you haven't opened your Bible for months. You don't have any right now asking God to help you when . . .*

*What's your problem guy? Haven't you ever seen a Bible before? That's nervy. Ooh.*

*That's a ghastly looking scar on his neck. What happened? That round, fiery looking scar sure looks like something a bullet would make. Like gal you're an expert on gunshot wounds? Who's this guy anyway? What kind of trouble has he been in that . . . how many years has he spent in jail? I sure wouldn't want to meet him in a back alley – that's for sure.*

*Who does the uncouth clod think that he is that he could just reach over and take the bookmark that was sticking up out of my Bible? Okay – so the place where you bought the Bible gave it to you but . . . the guy probably is very used to just taking whatever he wants so . . . he can have it.*

*Good grief guy – the bookmark isn't on fire. You're looking at the thing as if you're looking at a ghost. It's just a bookmark guy.*

*Why do you have the feeling gal that the guy is right on the edge of going off the deep end? I wouldn't hang on to his hand like that little guy. You don't know him. You could take his other hand. Where did that come from? What's happening with me? You need to be scared of the guy. Why aren't you?*

*Great. The bookmark was where the Zacchaeus story is in the Bible. How are you going to find that story again? Huh – the Bible opened right up to the page. Okay – always having the bookmark stuck in the same place probably . . . that should tell you gal how many times you've read the Bible since you bought it.*

*How many times gal did you underline for the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost? Those words sure meant everything to you when . . . you hadn't thought of yourself as being lost until . . . once you stopped crying, it was so easy to tell everyone what you had been doing. You knew what you were doing wasn't right but you kept on doing it. You hadn't thought that anyone cared. Mother has never cared. Daddy – all he ever cares about is that I'm doing whatever it is that He has told me to do.*

*What did I know about Jesus before . . . nothing. It just made sense when . . . Jesus looking for me was like my roommate telling me that I was going with her to her Bible study. You're so ignorant gal about what's in the Bible. Why don't you start reading the Bible? Are you really serious gal about wanting to change? You know things have to be different in your life so . . . how did you get into the nightclub scene?*

*How come I haven't wanted to read the Bible? I used to like going to church – especially when I got to sing with the worship team. The new preacher's preaching is . . . the old preacher's preaching was a whole lot better but . . . he just always left me feeling like I still wasn't who God wanted me to be. The new preacher is just a stuffed shirt. It makes sense that daddy would like the blowhard. The guy never wants anyone leaving a church meeting feeling guilty about something.*

*When did the singing time get so long? Does the guy really think that he's up there to entertain? This isn't a disco. How can anyone get into the worship time sitting up here in the balcony?*

*When was this time changed from being called a worship time to being called a singing time? Can worship still happen in this place? What's a church for if . . . people are still showing up here. You keep coming here. Okay – the guy up front . . . and you thought that he . . . gal – you've been behaving like a lovesick adolescent and now you're an irresponsible fool for ending up here in the balcony.*

*What is it gal that you really want? You want daddy to stop thinking that he has to minutely explain every detail of anything and of everything that he asks you to do – as if you don't know what it is that needs to be done. How come daddy always thinks that he has to treat me like I'm a dolt?*

*Is getting daddy out of my life gal what I really want? I don't know? So – why did you ask yourself that question? Why is it so hard for everyone to get along with each other or to listen to each other or to respect one another or . . . why can't everyone fight for peace instead of . . . wars are so wrong.*

*Why are you always so worried gal about everyone else when . . . what's it going to take for someone to notice you? You're so being used. Why did you leave me Jesus after you found me?*

*What is it guy about that bookmark? He can have it. What's he doing now? Okay – there's no money in your wallet. So you're broke. What did he just take out of your wallet? The tag says sinkers. You want me to read what's handwritten on the tag? Okay – it looks like the tag and the bookmark have the very same thing written on them. So what? Does he really think that his little Velcro friend can read?*

*You know you could've shown more interest in what the guy wanted to show you. How can you stay sitting next to him? He's disgustingly putrid. Your clothes are going to reek from sitting next to him.*

*Why would a rough looking hoodlum have something stuck in his wallet with Bible verses on it? What does he know about the Bible? What's he running from anyway? He's sure not going to get very far in that rattletrap that he's driving. Just be glad gal that you're not in that piece of riffraff's circle of friends.*

*So gal – why are you staying sitting next to him? I've no clue other than . . . you're having a bad dream. When I wake up . . . okay – the past twenty minutes or so haven't been a dream; they've been a nightmare.*

*What? Who's she? How come she's going to sing? The self-absorbent loon didn't tell me that he was going to have a floozy sing something today. Why wouldn't he ask me to sing? He knows I sing. He knows that I want to be singing with him up on the stage. How dare he?*

*My friends must think that I'm a real dingbat. This is so not right. If he thinks that he can treat me like this after I recommended him to daddy . . . guy – you're not going to want to still be here when . . .*

*You and she composed over the last couple of days the song that she's going to sing? You couldn't have. You were with me. You're a deceitful creep. You can't trust anyone anymore gal.*

*You call that singing? All you're doing is repeating the same few words over and over again. Anyone can sing Jesus I adore you, yes, I adore you . . . wait a minute, she's singing a song that the worship team used to sing. You can't take credit for a song that . . . do you have a veracity bar guy?*

*I'm feeling sick. This used to be a place where God's name was . . . what has happened here? What've you done to this place daddy? You're the one gal who . . .*

*God was being worshipped when I started coming here. You got to sing a lot gal with the worship team. How come there can't still be a worship team? How come the church no longer has praise services? No one has the chance anymore to go forward here for prayer for whatever. When is the last time gal that you've heard an amen during the sermon or seen someone standing up at the end of a sermon because . . . how could the old pastor makes his messages so meaningful? God is no longer worshipped here.*

*When is the last time gal that you confessed your sins? Go ahead gal – just put your head in your hands and shut out the world. There's nothing that you can do right now – nothing – nothing. What sin would you confess anyway? How about how you feel about the guy sitting next to you? How about the gal who married your banker friend? How about how you feel about your daddy? Okay – okay – okay. Just leave me alone God. You've really done it to me this time. Why don't you help me instead of . . .*

*This singing time has to stop? The percussions are making my chair vibrate. The blaring is making my head throb. This hat has to come off – like right now. Why do I wear these things? Why am I so bothered by who is sitting next to me? What's wrong with sitting up here in the balcony? There're people up here who know me. Can I call any of them a friend? No one wants to be my friend. Why? Stop blaming it gal on daddy. You've really become gal an expert blame caster. I'm lost again God.*



She must've seen my neck. If you didn't figure it out gal – which I'm sure you haven't, that scar is from a bullet. That bullet should've killed me. I wish it had.

My apologies gal for taking this bookmark out of your Bible but . . . I should've asked her if I could have it instead of pulling it out from where she had it in her Bible.

They had to have been the verses. What other verse begins with trust in the Lord? Your hands are shaking guy. It's okay kid. I know that you don't want my hands to shake but . . . grandpa has to be here.

Those are the verses that you wrote grandpa on something right before you . . . where's that . . . it's in my billfold someplace. Here it is. See gal – the very same verses are on this tab that're on . . . look – read – trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding but in all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths. I know grandpa's handwriting looks like a scrawl and that there wasn't hardly any room on this tag to scribble the verses but . . . see kid – these really are the same verses.

Grandpa – you trusted in the Lord and . . . how come the Lord had you killed? Why did it have to be me grandpa that had you killed? The Lord sure hasn't done a very good job directing our paths has He?

How come everyone – accept for you grandpa, abandoned me after I slid into the shortstop's knee? You and those God driven life lessons that're seen as failures but really are catalysts to teach . . . what failures did you have grandpa that taught you? Why wouldn't God look at failures like everyone else looks at failures? So grandpa – when is my faith going to begin to become more reliant on God because . . . those stomach wrenching things that you called life lessons are just making me . . . if I'm supposed to be God's adopted kid grandpa, why is God always so mean to me? My faith in God definitely hasn't grown. That path grandpa that you said God will always direct me on has just been way too hard for me to follow.

Just what you wanted guy – to be reminded of what you did to grandpa. Why won't you just accept what the Bible says just like grandpa did. Grandpa never messed up another guy's life. You're the one who did. Are you enjoying messing up the life of the gal sitting next to you? You know that you are as . . .

She probably never saw a bullet wound before. Someone who's as prissy as she is wouldn't have a chance of lasting ten seconds over there. She wouldn't even make it through the first day of basic.

You do have God to thank for the reminder that you'll always have on your neck. It'd be really nice God to be able to forget what happened to the kid. Why did you have to . . . he was a really good kid.

You should've found a way to stop that armored vehicle. The driver saw you waving at him to . . . he had to have seen your platoon standing there alongside the road. If he hadn't kept coming and coming and . . .

Why did they have to make me a platoon leader anyway? You were made a platoon leader guy because everyone learned real quick that you had a sixth sense that . . . you always could tell when something wasn't quite right. Grandpa taught you well to always to . . . the kid still died. It's my fault that he's dead.

You shouldn't have let your platoon be assigned to go out that day. You always wanted to go out on night patrols. Nights were just more quiet than day. Bad guys were easy to spot using night goggles.

The reason that you wanted to do night patrols guy was because it gave you the chance to do things during the day that you wouldn't have had the chance to do otherwise. Why can't I go back there? I want to be back there so bad. How can I get back there? You do know enough of the language to . . .

Is the school having classes? Playing soccer with those kids made me feel so . . . kids cared about me. I know that they liked me – a lot. Why can't guys get along with me? No one understands me. Have I ever given anyone a chance to get to know me? This always hunkering down in a corner . . .

They wanted guys out there that day who were willing to draw fire. Your platoon wanted to do it. Why did you listen to your guys? You should've said no. You wouldn't be stuck in this place right now if . . .

You never talked with the kid. How come? The radio that the kid carried was bigger than he was. Wouldn't you like to be like the kid? What did it get him? At least he died instantly – just like grandpa. Your first tour shouldn't have ended the way that it did. You've no excuse for not talking to him.

What gave him the nerve the first time that you met him to tell you – his platoon leader, that he was praying for you? Then the first time as we were getting ready to go out on patrol the new kid having the gall to ask if it'd be okay if he prayed. What could you've done guy when your guys . . . the kid had to be a couple of years younger than anyone else in your platoon. How did it get so right for him to pray every time that we left the command center to . . . I hadn't lost a guy until . . . why couldn't it have been me who got shot.

Where has she been? Now that's what I call a beautiful voice. How come she wasn't singing earlier? What she's singing sounds like . . . the song definitely isn't a hymn but . . . the words sure do sound like a church song. You would sing something grandpa that said Jesus I adore you.

What has gotten under your skin now gal? You're acting like you're wanting to throw rotten tomatoes at somebody. You're making the fat kid's day. Look at him laughing at you. Do you care? You probably don't care. It must be nice to be able to live a self-centered life. Are you having fun yet?

You need to get it out of your mind guy the picture of that corkscrewing armored vehicle. You knew that something had to have been buried in the road. The kids who'd been hanging around had disappeared. There weren't any dogs around. There were always dogs around unless . . . it had gotten way too quiet.

Wouldn't you like to find the dunce someday who decided that when an armored vehicle stops that the chance of it taken a mortar round is greater than if it keeps moving. It still should've stopped instead of . . . why didn't it fall back on its' tires instead of ending up on its' side?

What happened guy is history. You need to forget it. You can't get the kid back. The kid was prepared to die so . . . why couldn't I have died grandpa instead of him? What was God thinking when He . . .

You shouldn't have gotten the purple heart. Why did you climb up the armored vehicle's underside instead of making sure that your guys had taken cover? You know that the guys inside couldn't have gotten out without . . . you couldn't leave them to burn to death. Why couldn't it have been someone else who . . .

The vehicle's front side opposite of where I was standing with my platoon took the blast causing the thing to do a three-sixty. Then when fire broke out . . . what was I supposed to do? Let four fellow soldiers die?

I should've tried to push the vehicle back on its wheels instead of . . . you know it was too heavy. There was so much smoke. The yelling . . . you were screaming. How come I didn't hear the bullets ping as they ricocheted off the undercarriage of the . . . it shouldn't have taken as long as it did for air support to arrive.

They were piled on top of each other. They were hurt. The driver's door came right open. It seemed like it took forever to get the last couple of guys out. It probably wasn't more than . . . the kid was exposed as he helped me lower each of the guys to the ground. One of the other guys should've been there instead.

You're replaying it again guy. Is it doing you any good? You did what you had to do. Sure – the kid was doing what he was trained to do but . . . he died. I didn't. I got commendations. He got them, too, but . . .

The kid was just lying on his back. There was the same contented look on his face that you had grandpa when . . . he had been leaning over trying to protect the last guy who . . . when the sniper got him. Then the vehicle exploded and . . . you know guy that you came really close to being burned alive in that thing.

That was really a dumb thing to do guy shaking your fist at the top of the building where that sniper had you in his sights. A couple of inches lower and the bullet would've hit your vest. A fraction of an inch over and . . . the doctors were probably right that you were within seconds of dying by the time that they got you to triage where the bleeding could be stopped. A hero doesn't get his own guy killed. How come you never talked with the kid? He would've had answers for you. Why did you kill a kid God who . . .

You sure got a grip big guy. You aren't going to let go of my hand are you? You aren't any different than those kids over there.

So little dude – how come you're here in this place? Are you here because your dad and ma made you come with them? Are your dad and ma here because they want to be here or because they think that they have to be here? What's this place used for anyway? Is this place supposed to be a church? I know little feller – you can't read my thoughts. I sure wish that you could.

Is that nerve jangling noise ever going to stop? What you wouldn't do right now guy to have the chance to deflate spike-haired gorp's overblown ego. The guy wouldn't last a day in the army. That wasn't right that they wouldn't let you re-up. You always did what you were asked to do. Why didn't that count?

Okay grandpa – I really did hear you; life doesn't play fair sometimes. Tell me grandpa how I'm supposed to be learning from life experiences that have beaten me over my head? How could you always be so thankful? You wanted more kids. You knew what kind of guy dad is. You waited on grandma like she was a queen. Your glass grandpa wasn't just half full; it was always full. How did you do it?

What am I supposed to do grandpa? I'm totally alone. No one wants me around. Okay – just because the little waif made me his friend . . . the gal sitting next to me acts likes I invaded her space instead of . . .

Do you really think that the snooty gal sitting next to you has any friends? By some of those snarky looks that she got, there's no way that . . . and what do you honestly think of her guy? Okay – she obviously cares about herself by her appearance. She wears her feelings. Her eyes sure communicated a whole lot the couple of times that . . . she's probably survives just fine. So – why is she sitting next to me? Okay – that wasn't a kind look that you gave to her when she cut in front of you but . . . would it be that important to her to have to tell me that I could've been more . . . she doesn't give me the feel of being a vindictive kind of gal but . . . maybe you should just tell her that you feel bad about having given her a really irritated look. Maybe if you do, she'll leave and . . .

She has stopped looking in her Bible. Maybe she'll let me have it and I can look up the verses.

Why did she seem so surprised when I asked her if I could have her Bible for a few moments? You're curious aren't you gal why I asked you for your Bible? Look at these verses gal – they're the same verses that're on your bookmark and what grandpa wrote on that plastic sinker bag's tag. Why are you looking at me like you don't believe what you're seeing?

Where's your verse grandpa? I know it's here someplace. You first started quoting that verse to me grandpa when I wasn't any bigger than my little buddy here. This is it – a bondservant must not be quarrelsome but he must be kind to others, apt to teach and patient when wrong. You're the only guy grandpa who I've ever heard who'd replace words in a verse with his name – like grandpa mustn't be quarrelsome. Grandpa is to be kind to others. Grandpa is to be always teaching through his life. When grandpa is wronged – and he'll be wronged, he's to be patient. You were sure teaching me a lot grandpa before . . . if I had just listened to you grandpa when . . . I didn't mean to kill you grandpa.

It feels really strange to be holding a Bible again. How come it seems so right? Do you know how to smile gal? Okay – I probably look like a hobo but . . . I really don't blame her if . . . I sure would definitely think twice about being seen with a guy wearing torn pants, a filthy dirty shirt and stinking like who knows what.

I hope that she's okay with me keeping the Bible for now. Anything to not to have to watch that doofus on the stage acting like the world has stopped for him. He needs to sit down. No one is clapping anymore. There's no one up front anymore doing that ridiculous twirling, waving, whatever thing. So – why don't you just give it up guy whatever it is that you're trying to do? That big-headed fool better have a day job.

How come the gal had that bookmark stuck where the story about Zacchaeus is located? Why did she underline that verse? She did a real overkill underlining lost. Wonder why she did. What does being lost mean to her? She sure doesn't look like she's lost to me. You're the one who has gotten lost.

*Things have to change. Things are going to change. How can I get daddy to change? Is there anything in your life gal that you should change? If daddy changed first . . .*

*What has happened here in this place? It didn't use to be like this? Everyone used to sing together. No one sings now except for . . . it's not hard to figure out why no one can sing along with that egomaniac. You're so totally culpable. It's your fault gal that party boy has been the worship leader since . . . why did you have to listen to me daddy? Okay – you thought that if . . . the guy would like you and . . . it really has worked out hasn't it gal. Aren't you feeling just thrilled that becoming a party girl has led to this fiasco?*

*So help me daddy if you fall for that egotistical bore needing strobe lights to do his thing? The guy really does think that spotlights were made for him. It'd make my day if that insipid cretin tripped over a microphone cord and broke his leg. It would serve him right for not letting me sing with him.*

*What other changes are you going to have made around here daddy? You've already seen to it that the stained glass panes downstairs have been replaced with . . . if you do what that arrogant dimwit wants you to do, he'll have you covering those windows with dark shades. Whoever sits up here each Sunday is going to miss looking out through the windows. It's definitely going to do some serious raining real soon.*

*Why doesn't that spastic psycho just give it up? He doesn't even realize it that he's making a total idiot of himself. Doesn't he see that no one is standing up any longer? What would you be doing gal if you were down there? Would you be still standing and . . . you know gal – you'd still be standing.*

*What've I done to myself? You're making yourself look like a fool. The dentist's kid better stop poking fun of me or . . . the dope needs to look in a mirror instead of looking at me and then saying something to his friends that he thinks is really funny. What's he calling me? Would he like it if you called him obese?*

*This isn't worship. This isn't even entertainment. I can't stand this anymore. The music is way too loud. There's no way that I can understand what he's singing. That's not even singing what he's doing. Why wouldn't he let me sing with him? He knows that I've wanted to sing with him. There's no way that I'm going to have anything more to do with that . . . he's history.*

*Have you ever been happy daddy? You never look happy. That has to be the seventeenth time that you looked up here at me? You really messed up gal when you suggested to daddy that he come to this place. You should've known that daddy would do whatever to become the top dog around here. You know daddy has a mindset that being in a secondary role isn't okay and that being wrong makes a guy a loser.*

*You've been a negative influence around here daddy. You really have been. Just like at home. What would you do daddy if mother disagreed with you? Do you care that everyone is scared to disagree with you daddy? Do you know how many guys have moved on or have been moved out because of you daddy? Why is it so important to you daddy to always belittle me?*

*It's your fault daddy that I'm having to endure right now all those preposterous up front shenanigans. You didn't have to hire that supercilious prima donna. Look at your watch daddy. The guy has already used up his allotted twenty minutes. How come you don't call him down daddy when he . . .*

*Aren't you the hypocrite gal? You never had trouble before with him going over his time. How could you've had your head in the clouds over him? It's because gal you do vacuous really well.*

*The next time you look up here daddy I'm going to . . . and what is it that you going to do gal? You make me so infuriated daddy. Why can't you just talk with me like I do with my friends instead of . . .*

*Why are you grinning at me? You really should be sitting with your parents. What makes you think that he's a good guy? You're seeing something good in him aren't you? You know what kid, I've a feeling that your adopted friend is feeling more uncomfortable sitting next to me than I am sitting next to him.*

*He wants my Bible? Why? Okay – I wasn't really doing anything with it anyway so . . . he can have it.*

*Now what's he doing? Okay – so it's obvious that he's not a stranger to a Bible. You didn't even know gal that there was a book by the name of Proverbs. There's nothing on the bookmark that says where . . . you don't have any excuse gal for not knowing the names of the books that're in the Bible.*

*What's that tag torn off from anyway? Can't you tell guy that your buddy is too young to read? The little scalawag still has to be in kindergarten. And why guy did you have to prove to the kid that the verses on that torn piece of . . . are in the Bible? What's it about those verses that . . . and just go ahead and read them out loud so that the whole world can hear you. He doesn't care that everyone is turning around to . . .*

*How come you don't trust me daddy? You should talk gal – you don't trust anyone. You taught me daddy not to trust anyone didn't you. How often has daddy hammered it in you that if you give someone an inch that . . . okay – you're right daddy – that's what invariably happens but . . . it just shouldn't be that way.*

*You'd never been able to trust that fake wannabe Christian rock star. Why were you letting yourself be duped gal to . . . you don't come close daddy to that manipulating, exploiting blockhead.*

*Who is worse – a guy like daddy who's always looking for a way to empty someone else's pocket or a guy who as of right now is my ex-boyfriend who's always looking for an opportunity to do self-promotion? You got the critical spirit down pat gal. You're making being a pessimist a real work of art. Why would your college friends still want to be friends with you? You haven't been making their lives any easier you know.*

*What's it going to take to get that deranged dunce to stop from making all that noise? How can he not tell that everyone has tuned him out? How can that buffoon not have a clue how idiotic he's acting?*

*Why are you here today anyway gal? You're here today because you know that if you didn't show up, daddy would have a conniption. Okay – the truth is you were really looking forward to being near that bigheaded fool up front who you thought less than an hour ago was the coolest guy to be around.*

*Do you want to go gal to why you started coming to this church? It had a lot to do with your persistent college friends already being members of this church. And also gal – remember – you really did want to know what the Bible says about whatever.*

*You have to admit gal that when you first started coming here, you honestly enjoyed being here. The day that you were baptized was probably one of the most meaningful days of your life. You got to join the worship team. Why did the worship team have to be disbanded? What're those paid musicians doing during the worship time that the music team couldn't be doing? Daddy's idea that having some paid professionals . . . it's all your own fault gal that you aren't up front right now singing. It's your own fault gal that you're sitting right now on a chair in the back row up in the balcony next to a backwoods type.*

*You just had to insist gal that daddy and mother needed to see you baptized. What were you thinking? You should've known that daddy would see dollar signs sitting in every pew. Daddy doesn't care what the Bible says. Mother didn't seem at all bothered that I wanted to be baptized. How come you never talk to me mother like other mothers talk with their daughters? You're always so cold to me.*

*You're just going to just sit there gal aren't you and whimper like a . . . why won't someone tell me what to do? Why don't you stop acting like you're the victim? The grubby dude next to you didn't ask you to sit next to him. There's probably a very good reason why the guy is dressed the way that he is.*

*What's he looking for anyway in my Bible? He's staring at the verse that I underlined like . . . okay – so I've underlined lost. I was totally lost. I still feel lost. Does he know what it's like to be lost? You're lost aren't you guy? Why are you lost? You know don't you that I'm lost. How come I feel like you know who I am? Who are you?*

*You could smile back at the dentist's kid instead of glaring at him. What has the kid done to you? Nothing. You can let go of the bitterness that still eats away at you because of the guy who you were going to marry marrying that . . . he never once hinted to you did he that . . .*

*What good is it gal to worry now about what daddy is going to say? You could pray for him. You don't know how to pray. You don't know what prayer means. Your friends know how to pray. This thing about praying against powers and principalities and . . . Elvis stopped. He's getting off the stage. It's so quiet.*

*Just make the announcements that you're supposed to make instead of stroking the idiot's ego with kudos. He doesn't deserve them. Now you're saying that we're to thank the loser for having invited God into our presence as he . . . you've got to be kidding? The ignoramus had to have bored God into deciding to leave.*

*You're liking way too much guy your ten seconds of fame. If everyone would just show up early, they could read those announcements from off the screen. Besides – who cares about a softball team?*

*You can stop rambling guy and . . . okay – get the offering out of the way.*

*What's this about needing funds to . . . what does daddy know about that? He knows everything gal – you know that. What's wrong with this building? What do you mean – this building looks too much like a church. What's a church supposed to look like?*

*You're unequivocally behind this aren't you daddy? You don't go to church to listen to a preacher preach do you daddy? You just want a place where guys with deep pockets will show up so . . . daddy you and your always looking for an angle to separate someone from their money. Why aren't you normal daddy?*

*Why is that little rascal staring at me again? He's looking at me like I'm a freak. I'm not a . . . okay – I'm an impulsive simpleton. No one in their sane mind would ever sit down next to a guy who probably is a serial killer or worse. You need to wake up from the bad dream that you're having gal.*

*You're not dreaming gal. You're still having that nightmare. This can't be happening. How come you followed him? You wanted to tell him that you were sorry that . . . how could you've known that you'd end up trapped on the balcony's back row? So – why don't you just tell him what you . . . and leave?*

*There's no way that you want to be up here. You're sitting between a couple of weirdoes and a hayseed. Just leave. But . . . what's this but all about? You've got to be the most indecisive airhead that has ever been planted on planet Earth. Why can't you just tell daddy to stop trying to make all your decisions for you. All daddy ever does is mess with minds. You sure have messed up my mind daddy.*

*About time kid that you sat back down with your folks. They need to put a rope on you.*

*Who sent you up here to . . . I know – I know, I always sit downstairs but . . . stop glowering at me like I've done something wrong. Take your empty bucket and go back downstairs. I can't help it that it's empty.*

*Stop whispering about me. How am I going explain to my friends that . . . maybe they don't know that I'm up here. Sure – just like daddy hasn't seen me sitting up here. I'm going to get daddy's patent tongue lashing. I deserve daddy's ire but . . . why does daddy always have to put me down in front of everyone?*

*Please stop turning around daddy to . . . I can see you clenching your fists from way up here. Your face is looking even darker now than the clouds outside. How can mother continue to put up living with daddy?*

*Does the guy know how bad he stinks? What's the smell? That stench is starting to really get to me.*

*Okay – let's move on with the show. You don't have to talk and talk and talk and . . . just because you're on the church board doesn't give you the right to take up the preacher's time. And you really want to hear the new preacher . . . one has to really wonder where the guy gets what he calls a sermon from anyway?*

*Where's the old pastor? I'd gladly listen to him today if . . . the new guy doesn't begin to hold a candle to him. The new guy knows that he better not say something that . . . the new guy has to be one of the main reasons why this place is being abandoned. Why don't I stop coming to this place? Why am I still going here? Daddy would . . . it wouldn't be pretty. Gal – you really need to stop letting daddy control your life.*

It feels so right to be holding a Bible again. You really liked the Zacchaeus story didn't you grandpa? You were always using how Jesus invited himself to Zacchaeus' house as an example of what He always did. How did grandpa always know what to say to me to make me feel better?

How could you grandpa call bro a Zacchaeus. Bro was always being mean to me. How come you always gave him a pass? He didn't deserve it. He didn't respect me. He was always picking on me grandpa.

You told me grandpa that Zacchaeus probably was hoping to see Jesus because he had lost hope. That's where I'm at right now. What do I have to look forward to anyway? Nothing. I really should be right now with my buddies over there. The base shrink was wrong when he decided that I've a death wish. Who's he anyway to make the call that I'm not psychologically fit for . . .

You also told me grandpa that because Zacchaeus knew that no one respected him that . . . the wee little tax collector climbing up into a sycamore tree still doesn't tell me that he wasn't respected. Okay – because no one would give the rich bloke a place along the street to . . . and who has been showing you respect guy?

Why would dad want to respect you seeing that you don't respect him? Dad needs to wake up to the fact that he's a disgrace to the family. How could grandpa respect dad when grandpa knew that dad was taking advantage of him? If you never see dad again . . . great attitude guy. And then you wonder why you never have friends. It sure isn't because you've got big ears.

At least you haven't stolen money like Zacchaeus did. Knowing that breaking a Jewish law would keep him from going to heaven . . . the guy had to be feeling desperate. Zacchaeus had to know that just seeing Jesus wouldn't be enough to . . . how many are dead guy because of you? You need to pull a Zacchaeus.

Why don't you do what Jesus did with Zacchaeus when He . . . sure – like I'm going to invite myself into the life of that gyrating goof up front who thinks that he's wooing the world. The guy is clueless that there isn't anyone anymore tuned into his one man show. How come there hasn't been congregational singing?

You could invite yourself into the gal's life. Yah – sure. Why would you want to find out why someone would wear weird sunglasses and a goofy straw hat? She could care less who you are. She has no reason to . . . how can she stand staying sitting next to me? You know that you've to be stinking like a barnyard.

This inviting myself into someone's life wasn't that hard over there. They respected me. They taught me so much. Why can't I be there instead of here?

What would you do if you had the chance to personally see Jesus? Like that's really going to happen. Just give the gal her Bible back and . . . are you really wanting to leave this place guy? Where would you go? What would you do? Face it guy – you're at the end of your rope. There isn't anyone around to bail you out of this jam. Like there has been someone in the past who . . . okay – beside grandpa. If only I could talk to lil sis right now. I need to get her to send me my debit card as soon as she can.

He's done? About time. Miracles do happen. If I never see him again . . . my ears are still ringing from all his racket. What was he trying to prove anyway?

Who are you? How come you're stroking spike hair? That wingnut didn't do anything to deserve what you're . . . there's no way that that self-righteous dupe through his guitar waving invited God here. You're an uninformed dope. How could he say that God had to be asked to . . . how can this blabbermouth not know that he's here right now because God invited him to be in this place at this time because . . . doesn't he know that there isn't a place or time when God's presence isn't already present? The bloke needs to be thanking God for having invited him to come to this place to celebrate being with Him instead of . . .

You need to listen to yourself guy. Did you hear what you were just thinking? If you really believe guy what you were just thinking . . . you need to be thanking God right now for having you here. You made knowing God grandpa so easy. If God's plan is to reflect His glory through . . . grandpa and grandma sure had a real handle on . . . what would joy look like anyway in my life? Is that where you want to go guy?

This is what you could've done for me God. You could've given to me whatever portion it was that you gave to grandpa like what you gave to Elisha from what Elijah had. Why haven't you God made my life a whole lot easier than what you have? Who put who on the back burner God? Just because I haven't opened a Bible in years doesn't mean that . . . okay – who am I going to blame anyway for how my life is going if I don't blame you. I'm not about to start reading the Bible hoping that if I do that You'll . . .

Okay – those announcements are the same announcements that were on the screens earlier. Apparently no one knows how to read in this place.

What's this big deal about sponsoring a softball team? Doesn't anyone play softball around here? What do people do for fun in this part of the world anyway? No one around here is impressing me that's for sure.

I know grandpa. I hear you. I'm not going to get anyplace if I let a critical spirit drive my thoughts. How could you always stay so positive grandpa? You never let anything get you down. How did you really feel grandpa when ma told you and grandma that she was pregnant and that she wanted to marry dad?

Okay gal – what was wrong with that announcement? You didn't know that there're plans to replace this building with something else – did you? What's wrong with this place? It seems plenty big enough to hold everyone – especially if the crowd never gets any larger than what is here right now. Who are you anyway that you think that you need to be in the know?

You can stop fidgeting gal. You're acting again like the sky is going to fall down on you. Do you know that you're coming across like a control freak – like everything has to go your way or . . . is that true?

Great – the place wants some money and I don't have any. What shall I do? You better go sit down little man with your dad while . . . this not being able to put something in a collection plate is embarrassing.

Don't they have something else a whole lot more appropriate to collect an offering in than some cheap, uninviting plastic buckets? Good grief people. Why don't you buy some collection plates instead of . . .

I don't care who you are, you don't have to stare at the gal sitting next to me like . . . what has she done to you? That look guy sure wouldn't make anyone feel welcome. I don't appreciate her either but . . .

There's nothing in the bucket. How many rows did it go down? No one has put anything in it. You're not going to put anything in the bucket either are you gal? You sure look like you can. I would put something in the thing if . . . doesn't anyone give offerings here in this place? Where's this place going to get enough money to build a whole new building? Something sure doesn't feel right about this place.

How long are you going to keep rattling on guy? You sound like a car salesman.

Who're these folks anyway who're sitting up here? Most of them seem like they're just filling in some sort of obligation to be here. Something has to have happened in this place that has them sitting up here.

What's supposed to be happening around here anyway? The oddball bunch of teenagers sure isn't taking being here seriously. What're you telling your dad little guy? I sure do hope that you're telling your dad some good things about me. Why can't everyone be just as trusting as that little dude?

Not another turkey. What's this one going to do? You are who? If you're really this place's pastor, why are you wearing something that looks like a walking flower garden? You can't be the preacher. A preacher always has to be dressed in a suit and tie.

When is the last time guy that you've been in a church? You never made it to a church service after you enlisted. You didn't make it to any chapel services either during your enlistment.

You wouldn't be proud of me grandpa by how well I've lived out my faith after you . . . be glad guy that grandpa doesn't know that . . . would you go to a church grandpa where everyone blames you for . . .



You know the answer guy. Grandpa would keep right on going to church even if everyone blamed him for whatever. Can you see grandpa ever being blamed for anything? Why don't you ever try to be more like you grandpa? Do you really want to be more like grandpa? If the impossible was just possible . . .

Why does it ever have to storm? My hands are already sweating. Where can I hide?

Here's your Bible gal. You probably will want to follow along with what the preacher guy is planning to read. That's a long passage guy that you're going to read.

Why are you just staring at the Bible gal like . . . the passage is in Luke – the same book that has the story about Zacchaeus. Do you know how to look for something in the Bible? You want me to find the passage for you? Okay

Here it is. You want me to hold the Bible, too? Do you always get someone else to do things for you? Why are you looking at me like . . . you could pretend guy that she isn't sitting next to you. You could tell her that you don't bite. Do that guy and . . . she'd probably bite your head off. She could try smiling once in a while. Okay guy – what've you done to make her feel comfortable with you.

It really wasn't cool of her though to get into my space. She should've known better. It's like everything has to revolve around her. She better not have forgotten to put her convertible's top up before she came into this place as . . . it would serve her right though if . . . can't you guy just make the best out of each situation that you're in and learn from them instead of . . . yes grandpa, you're coming through real loud.

You're going to speak on this passage that you're going to read because . . . you couldn't have said that. Everyone knows the meaning of this passage. If that's where you're going with the passage, you're really going to do some serious stretching of what's really quite obvious.

Communion will be celebrated after your message. What? Why? Did everyone know that taking communion was part of what was going to happen this morning? I don't think so. It's apparent that the gal didn't know. She sure can get agitated in a hurry.

The prodigal son. I could easily be the prodigal son. Bro sure fits the older son. The dad could be grandpa. Dad for sure couldn't be the dad in this parable. Dad and giving an inheritance to me will never be on the same page. Dad is well on his way drinking up all the money that grandma's inheritance left ma.

How much money does the gal have? Her dad must have a ton of money. She sure seems to be paying attention to what the preacher is reading. Why would the preacher say that everyone who has left this church to go to another church is like the prodigal son? Has the guy gone to Bible school?

You need to listen guy instead of . . . all those years growing up going to Sunday school classes, having to learn all the Catechism answers, Christian school through eighth grade . . . you do know something about the Bible. You know that the words that make up the Bible are alive. The preacher has no right to . . .

Okay – the prodigal son eating husks just seems a little farfetched. It's a Jesus story guy. The footnote says some kind of pods. Pods of what?

Has anyone around here ever been around pigs? You should tell the gal that you know how to make slop. You know that she isn't going to know what slop is. This not getting any sleep since yesterday morning is really catching up with you. Maybe you can take a nap while the preacher does his thing. Grandma sure was good at taking naps during a sermon. How could she always know what the preacher preached? This thing grandpa about always taking notes while the preacher preached and then . . . you listened to the sermons didn't you guy. How come grandpa you always gave a pass to big sister and bro when they couldn't answer one of your questions while I felt like I had really let you down when . . .

How come you smoked grandpa? Did you ever inhale? Your cigarette would hang in your mouth while the ashes would grow longer and longer. Focus guy – focus. I need a smoke so bad.

*Why are you staring at me like I'm a pinhead or something? Look up guy. You don't need a Bible to follow along with what he's reading. It's up on the screens. Okay – take my Bible. You sure know how to get on a gal's nerves. Why don't you just leave?*

*You've picked what to read? You're going to preach on this parable because . . . no way. You're going to use the parable's story to honor everyone who's here today? You want us all to know how thankful that you feel because we haven't left our church home like so many have over the past months since . . . you poor guy. How in the world could those who've left here take with them an inheritance that they earned from having been members of this church? How am I supposed to make any sense of what he just said? Where did the board find this babbling flake anyway?*

*He didn't just say that? Please – no. Why communion today? You haven't had communion since . . . daddy – you're behind this aren't you? You and your benevolent fund. Have you ever given anyone daddy anything out of that fund? You know that you haven't. You just like having a money pot that you can control. Why did you ever invite daddy to this place? He's destroying everything here.*

*Where does the guy get those shirts that he wears? If he likes wearing those kinds of shirts so much, why doesn't he go live on a tropical island? You can get on his case daddy about what the guys wears. Okay daddy – you only wear a suit to church because you want everyone to think that you've been successful. What're you going to do daddy when everyone finds out that you're nothing more than a pompous cad?*

*You know what daddy; the guy sitting next to me – torn pants and all, probably has more class than what you have. You daddy and this thing of always looking for that edge to . . . I can't be around you anymore daddy. How can mother continue to put up with your charades – like everything is all hunky-dory? No wonder mother completely leaves me out of the life that she lives. Why can't mother be different?*

*What's the guy reading anyway? Do you really care? No. You need to right now get out of this place. There's no way that you're going to have anything to do with communion.*

*What's communion about anyway? You need to be sitting with your friends. They always know what to do. The guy is going to think that . . . you do know gal that you do really well being the consummate harebrain.*

*What are pigs doing in the Bible? You need to listen better to . . . better still, you need to read the Bible.*

*What's happening with me? When did I stop enjoying going to church? When did I start going to church to please daddy? What did I see anyway in that . . . talk about someone who lacks integrity; that numskull sure does. If he ever gets back up on that stage and starts swinging his guitar around like a . . . what would you do? How could that conceited pig – after a night of drinking and dancing, sing songs that supposedly glorify the name of Jesus? If you looked in a mirror gal, what would you see?*

*You don't belong here gal. Talk about being duplicitous – you've been really good at blaming your problems on everyone else. You made the choice to spend your evenings in nightclubs instead of spending your evenings at a Bible study with your friends. What're you running from gal? Like you don't know?*

*Everyone who has left this church is a prodigal? Is that what prodigal means? You're not convinced that it means that do you guy? Keep shaking your head like that guy and maybe your cap will . . .*

*Great – I can't remember one single thing that the new preacher has preached about since he . . . when is the last time gal that you listened to a sermon? Where's the old pastor these days? How come daddy always blames the old pastor for so many members leaving this place? Daddy is just never going to get it that the old pastor quit because . . .*

*You really need to talk to your friends about finding another church. This place is coming apart. And it's all your fault gal. How's a new structure going to change anything? Do you really believe daddy that an expansive type of edifice is really going to attract the local fat cats to want to . . . when are you going to wake up daddy to the fact that your only expertise is getting people really offended with your pushiness?*

*Daddy sure ruined what was a good thing here. Why isn't daddy ever satisfied with the status quo? Why does daddy always have to change things to suit what he wants?*

*You run my life daddy. Why do you? I need to get away from daddy. Where would I go? What're you thinking gal? You know that you're stuck doing what you're doing. You know that daddy will never . . .*

*This can't be happening to me. How did I get myself into this trap? How come I'm not sitting in the front row with my friends? Why is it that I'm starting to feel sitting up here in the balcony isn't so bad? I'm not supposed to feel this way. You really don't want to know anything about the guy sitting next to you. Are you being honest with yourself gal? The guy is piquing your curiosity isn't he?*

*He's not the type to know anything about the Bible. How come someone who reeks like he has just smoked a pack of cigarettes while cleaning out a sewer drain knows where to look in the Bible for anything?*

*You're really getting into the sermon aren't you guy? Why? Are you really concurring with what the preacher is trying to say? It all sounds like a bunch of hocus pocus to me.*

*No, no, no – don't cry baby. Please don't cry. Daddy will hear you. Please stop crying. Take the baby out. At least give the baby a bottle. How come the couple didn't leave their baby in the nursery? Why have a nursery if . . . do something. Daddy is turning around.*

*Thank goodness. How come the baby is looking at him? What's he doing? He's not funny. You don't want him to hold you. He's cruddy. Don't look at me. I don't know him. Don't cry baby. Please.*

*About time she came up with a bottle. What has this guy have with kids? They're not bothered by him. Why? Why does the big oaf give the time of day to kids when he won't have anything to do with me? Do you really care? You do care don't you gal. It's important to you what people think about you. You want people to like you – that they think that you're someone special.*

*Why doesn't daddy like me? What do I've to do to get daddy to . . . you know what daddy, I'm really tired of you always ordering me around. I'm so sick of showing places, setting up inspections, figuring out amortizations. I never want to see another sign daddy. You push the signs in the ground daddy as your cronies drive past you. I'm just not going to do it anymore. How many times have you said that gal?*

*Do you really think that daddy is going to say okay – you've my blessings to do whatever it is that you want to do? I don't think so. Who put the money up for the place where you're living? Who bought the thing that you're driving? Where are my friends when . . . it's just not me to use the Bible to find the answer for whatever plus how would they feel if I stopped the world to pray for them every time they . . . like they ever have a problem? They could at least ask me first if they could pray for me instead of . . . if being like them is what I'm supposed to be as a . . . , I'm never going to make it. This Christ-follower thing can be their thing. Why can't I just live my own life without everyone telling me how I should be living it?*

*You need to listen to the sermon gal. Why? He's going to say something that . . . this is getting really old being told what to believe, what to do, what to say, what to . . . why am I having to live everyone else's life? How come I just can't live my own life? Can't I just sit up here in the balcony if this is where I want to sit?*

*You know that no one up here in the balcony came here to listen to that blithering addlebrain up front who is no more a preacher than . . . is their loyalty to this place supposed to impress me? It doesn't. The guy's verbosity doesn't even begin to touch the old pastor's sermons. Everyone up here are all frauds.*

*What's your problem gal? You don't want to be here. You don't want daddy here. You want to be happy. You want a normal life. What's a normal life? Do you know what you want out of life? If someone really cared about me instead of . . . it's like it's wrong for me to have dreams or to be happy or to . . .*

*You're hopeless. Don't you ever get tired gal of feeling sorry for yourself? Maybe I like the feeling?*

*Guy – you don't have to memorize those verses you know. If you really think that you can explain those verses better than what the preacher is doing, you've my permission to go up front and . . . no one would notice. He's boring everyone to death – including me.*

*You know that you could pretend that you're going to the lady's room and . . . what would the sheriff do if I called him? The guy definitely has to know what the inside of a jail looks like. More than likely he stole that car that he's driving. What a junker. Why am I staying here sitting next to the crook?*

*Can you just stop looking at those small cuts on his arms? You really don't need to know where they came from – do you? But what about that bullet scar in his neck, I wonder how he got that.*

*And you've the world by the tail don't you gal? Why does it always have to be about you? Those are real people with real feelings who're sitting up here with you. You babysat at least half the tribe sitting in the front two rows. Did their folks ever complain about how you babysat their kids? No. Is it right for you to be critical of them for wanting to keep coming to this church? Why have you suddenly gone there now gal? Why don't you think about what daddy has planned for you to do this afternoon instead of . . .*

*What has happened to me? Why have I gotten so critical? I'm becoming more and more like daddy. Is that who I want to be like? I sure don't want to be like mother.*

*Should I know the couple sitting next to the old elder? Here's hoping that my hair looks like the wife's hair when I'm her age. Why could a lady who looks so classy be married to someone who has been cloned from a toad?*

*The youth pastor sure has a lot of nerve to show up here after daddy had him fired. His wife should get a job as a model. No one should be that tall and that . . . are you jealous gal? They should've known what would happen to them when they bucked the board. Everyone knows that crossing the board means . . . there isn't anyone left here who was here a year ago. How can the governing board really think that it's doing a great job when well over half of the church members have left this place?*

*Celebrating communion as a way for everyone to congratulate themselves for having stayed here in this church instead of abandoning their faith by . . . prodigal sure doesn't sound like something that I'd ever want to be called. That word sounds like it's describing someone who's really revolting.*

*Okay – so a prodigal is someone who takes his or her inheritance and wastes it. Maybe I should ask daddy for my inheritance? And do you really think that he'd . . . I'd get a lecture about what an ingrate I am.*

*You're giving a lot more information preacher than what I need to know about what the new church is supposedly going to look like. I don't care what role you've had daddy in getting this new church built; no one is ever going to catch me going to it. I'm going to find another church where I can . . .*

*You're daydreaming again gal. What else is there to do until . . . communion. I totally forgot all about communion. I can't take communion. It'd be wrong if I did. I haven't come close to being whatever it is that I'm supposed to be. I just spent a night at a couple of bars and nightclubs. I didn't get drunk. I just danced. Daddy – you wanted me to be with . . . excuses aren't going to help you. You know better. You know very well gal the difference between right and wrong.*

*I've got to get out of here now. He's so into my Bible he won't even notice if . . . where did he get those hands? Why are his eyes so bloodshot? He looks terribly exhausted. He's probably coming off a binge.*

*That was just a loud thunder clap. What's wrong guy? You're trembling like leaf. Stop it. You're scaring me. Why are you rubbing your face over and over again? Please stop bouncing your knee. You're scared of thunder aren't you? You're a whoose.*

*Are you thinking that you can help him . . . go sit back down with your folks. At least stop looking at me like I'm your worst enemy. It's not my fault that that he's scared of thunder. What do you want me to do?*

Here's hoping that the guy up front has a day job. How can his understanding of what he's using for his scripture text be so off target? Where does he get that the parable is all about the older brother. The older brother is totally clueless about caring – just like bro is about me.

I should've done some dental work on bro before I took off yesterday. Someone needs to stop his bullying. I needed to get away from him.

What would you do grandpa if you were here right now? Like you really can hear me grandpa? The guy has no idea what it's like feeding pigs. Does the guy really think that the husks that the kid was eating were corn husks? The spiritual food that you're making everyone eat here guy is like dried up old husks.

You've tuned out gal. Do you know that? What's she thinking so hard about anyway? Has she always gone to this church? Did I sit where she always sits? Is that why she's so ticked off at me? She doesn't seem like a gal who ever sits by herself. She looks like someone who has friends. Where are they? She definitely doesn't fit into the crowd who's sitting up here. She probably has everyone wondering up here why she's sitting next to me as . . . she doesn't look like someone who'd give the time of day to a guy who looks like he lives on the street. I've got to give her credit for not leaving. That gutter that I cleaned less than twenty-four hours ago that was full of cow manure had to be just as stinky as a pigpen.

What's she thinking? Her mind is whirling. I don't blame her if she doesn't want to listen to the preacher but . . . this parable does have a good message. She probably doesn't understand why Jesus told the parable to the crowd that was listening to him. And what would you guy take out of the parable's message?

That sure wasn't an appreciative look that she got from that guy who looks like he spends most of his time outdoors. Why? Why did she act so upset when she saw that young couple walk in up here? Who are they to her? Why is it that she keeps acting like she doesn't want to be seen? I don't blame her if she doesn't want to be seen with me but . . . she'd still make me a very happy camper if she decided to find someplace else to sit. Why doesn't she?

How come she's dressed up like she's going to a party or something? Will she take communion? You were still alive grandpa the last time that I took communion. How did you manage to end up in a church again guy? A church is a place where I never wanted to be in again. No one cares that I'm here – just like back home. Why didn't I take lil sis with me? Okay – she isn't about to leave ma but . . .

Everything would be so different grandpa if I hadn't killed you. How come there wasn't a body bag over there with my name on it? There's absolutely nothing ahead for me to look forward to doing or to seeing or to . . . you sure got it rough don't you guy?

Are you always so uptight gal about everything? There's nothing that you can do. The baby is hungry. Babies do crying. It's normal. You don't have to go into a tantrum gal just because a baby wants to cry.

Who are you trying to hide from gal? You're acting like the baby is the end of the world for you. You weren't listening to the sermon anyway so . . . just try to humor her guy. Maybe she'll go away.

Come on little bumpkin – you can cry louder. You like my scrounged up face don't you? What other funny thing would you like me to do? Bet you can't wiggle your ears. You're lucky that I'm not grandpa. Grandpa would probably be sticking his false teeth out at you by now.

Why do kids have to change? Why are kids so alike when they're little? You're right grandpa – just a little attention and . . . it sure was like that over there. It always felt so good to feel wanted when the kids saw me coming. I sure miss those ragamuffins always wanting me to do things with them. I miss going into their homes and . . . why did it always feel kind of like I was back home before . . . where did those kids always find so many things to show me? Can't there be just one more time of visiting and eating with them and with their folks? Why did everything have to change? There has to be a way that I can get back there to be with them again? There's no reason to stay here. No one wants anything to do with me in this corner of the world so . . . always running away aren't you guy?

You're staring at me again gal like I'm a monster. I can feel your eyes. Why do you keep looking at my arms? Those nicks are from carrying alfalfa bales. Like you'd know gal what an alfalfa bale is let alone what it feels like to be jabbed by dried alfalfa stems? Do you know what a farm is? I doubt it.

That's over the top bad. If this is where pastors have gone to please whoever shows up, there's no way that I'm going to be seen in a church again. How can a guy who calls himself a pastor not know who the parable's characters represent? Is he trying to twist or slant the parable to try to make everyone here feel good? The guy is a phony. You've your hands over your ears don't you God?

Does anyone in this church know anything about the Bible? What kind of church is this anyway? This can't be a cult gathering – can it? If only grandpa was here.

It sure would be nice to be able to connect with people like you could grandpa. You would've befriended everyone sitting up here in the balcony. You would've started with the headstrong gal sitting next to me. Doing hugging whoever is one thing that I didn't inherit from you grandpa. The gal probably could use a grandpa hug about now. She's not going to get a hug from me that's for sure. Anyone who invades my space . . . you should do something guy about always wanting to do payback.

You definitely would get the Druids talking grandpa. Why would anyone ever want to dress up like . . . how come some kids have to go out of their way to look weird? They act like decent kids.

You should talk guy. You probably look really crummy to everybody sitting up here in the balcony. You could take off your cap. Who cares what your hair looks like? Does anyone care that you're sitting up here in the balcony? What do you think that the gal wanted to say to you? Why didn't you just let her go ahead and say it to you? This getting impatient so quickly does get you in trouble a lot doesn't it guy?

There're probably some okay people sitting up here in the balcony. How can they put up with the kind of tripe that they're hearing right now? The guy preaching has no respect at all for the pulpit. He looks like he could be at a ballgame instead of . . . keep up the great attitude guy. Like – look how you look and you may be in a church. You haven't done anything that'd tell the gal that you're glad that she sat next to you. Why would I want to communicate to the gal sitting next to me that I'm glad that she's . . . why couldn't grandpa's dog have found someplace else to sleep instead of . . . what I wouldn't do right now to crash.

The governing board has decided to build a new structure so that . . . he's got to be kidding. What has that got to do with his sermon? And the musicians know that the worshipping God time would be so much better if there were disco lights and a different sound system? What? How could a spike-haired fool who thinks way too much of himself . . . when did a church become a place where a bigheaded muttonhead can make the church's platform a place to do self-absorbed croaking versus a place where a preacher preaches about God? God is being mocked here – not worshipped. That's wrong. You can't stay here guy.

How long ago has it been since I put you on the shelf God? Okay – I've tried periodically to talk with you but . . . when is the last time God that you did what I asked you to do? Have you ever done anything God that I've asked you to do? How come you've never listened to me God? Why have you stuck me in this hole? If what you always told me grandpa is true, this being here right now sitting next to this brash gal hasn't happened by chance. I want to believe that but . . . why would God have you die grandpa when . . .

No – no – no – no – stop! God – no. Why? Please don't make it thunder anymore. Please don't let anymore bombs go off.

Why did You let me lead my men into the house when . . . four of my guys died God. You know that. Why did You let it happen? Why couldn't it have been me? Why?

The guys trusted me God. They trusted me to keep them safe. I should've known when I busted through the door and . . . how come You had them wait God until I was on top of the flat roof before . . . You had the guys crushed in the house when the bomb blew. Why didn't I go room to room before heading for the roof? Their folks – their wives – their kids trusted me God to keep them alive and I let them die. Why?

Why do guys keep dying around me? You aren't safe gal sitting next to me. You need to get away from me – like right now before . . . please God – no more loud blasts.

If enemy combatants want to kill someone, why don't they just stay in their own country instead of going to another country? Can't they tell that no one appreciates what they're doing? Why doesn't God just let the people over there live their own lives instead of . . .

Okay – I know – my job there was to kill their supposed enemies. How many are dead today because of me? There're a good number of enemy combatants who're dead because of me. I've to admit that I was a good soldier. If I was so good at fighting over there though, how come I'm not over there now? It's not right God that You closed the door for me to fight for my friends there. My friends over there need me.

I know tiger – you came back here to help me but . . . I can't help it that my legs just won't stop wanting to take me someplace to hide. If my legs would just stop shaking . . .

I hope that the leg stops hurting soon? At least I can walk okay using it. And the doctors told me that I'd never be able to walk on the leg again. Kid – you could be standing right now next to an amputee but . . . having the doctors cut off that leg just wasn't an option no matter how mangled it was from having gotten caught in the roof as it was caving in on my guys. I should be very thankful that some of my guys were still outside the house when . . . I would've been a sitting duck for the snipers across the street who . . .

I'm going to find out someday who set that trap and . . . if he's still alive, the guy better hope that I never ever catch up with him. Those were really good guys who didn't deserve to die. I deserved to die.

She put her hand on my leg. Why did she do that? If my legs shaking like they are . . . you don't know me gal. I'm a total stranger to you. Why does she want to be nice to me?

I'll try to keep my legs from shaking. It's just that . . . you don't know what it's like to hear the sudden blasting sound of a bomb exploding and then everything just literally falling out from under you.

She probably has never seen someone die. I hope that she hasn't. Life doesn't seem like it has messed with her like it has messed with me.

Don't feel obligated to care about me gal. I'll survive without you just fine. My little buddy here will always be here for me no matter what. Got that little partner? He's wondering about her, too.

Why are you wishing now guy that she had kept her hand on your leg? Having a gal care about me . . . do you ever hope to go there guy? Why would she want to put her hand on my leg? How nice have you been to her? Have you ever done a thoughtful thing for a gal?

That better have been the end of the storm. Yah – sure. Like those aren't lightning flashes that you're seeing or thunder rumblings that you're hearing?

There's nothing but darkness in my life anymore. Thanks God. You're really taking care of me.

Okay – so alcohol never has interested me. The stuff sure has taken over bro's life. You could feel sorry for him. Yah – sure. He's nothing more than a crude, rude selfish klutz who's going to do no more with his life than what dad has done with his life.

First it was really loud music that couldn't be understood that went on and on and now it's really dull preaching that just isn't interesting that . . . you can send a lightning bolt God right now and . . . the guy needs to be zapped by something. If his day job is selling used cars, he can't be selling many.

You didn't really just say that? You said it again. You can't believe that? You can't believe that the father in this parable represents . . . you need to know that there's a bolt of lightning with your name on it that's going to whap you good for . . . this place is nothing more than a pride pit.

*Why did you just do that? What made you do that? What made you think that you could put your hand on the barbarian's leg? Does he even know that you put your hand on his leg? He's looking at your hand.*

*He didn't pull his leg away from your hand. His legs don't seem to be bouncing as hard as they were. What happened anyway? Why would a loud crack of thunder put him in such a tizzy?*

*You don't own him you little rascal. Stop looking at me like I've invaded your territory. Go sit down next to your dad. Stop staring at me like . . .*

*That was a smile. You're okay with me having my hand on his leg aren't you? Thanks. You're kind of likeable for a . . . your folks trusting you being out of their sight . . . why couldn't I've grown up in a home where my parents trusted me – at least by daddy. Mother probably wished from day one that I was never a part of her world. Why hasn't mother ever wanted me? What did I do to her?*

*It wouldn't have been hard at all to keep my hand on his leg but . . . he seems to have gotten himself under control again. The guy has some serious muscles in that leg. Who is he anyway? He isn't who he looks like is he? Maybe after church . . . sure gal, the guy is going to want to talk to you? You still haven't told him that it was wrong of you to cut him off the way that you did. You need to tell him that. Why? How hard is it for you to get to sleep knowing that someone just might be angry with you? Just tell him.*

*What do people do when they're in church while . . . do they actually listen to the sermon? The preacher sure is a whole lot more animated today than he normally is. And where does daddy's hired gun think he's going to get the money to build a new structure? What's wrong with this building? How can he not see all the empty chairs in this place? It wasn't that long ago when this place would've been filled during all three services. This place has really . . . it's down to one service and . . . and now the governing board has decided that the answer to getting more people to show up is to build something that wouldn't be seen as offensive for someone to be caught going to on a Sunday. All you want daddy is money showing up for a Sunday morning performance that you can . . . you're nothing more than a blatant shyster daddy.*

*If you're finding coming to this church so demeaning daddy, go find another church where you . . . you're becoming more and more despicable. Do you have any inkling at all daddy how your repugnant actions are affecting me? The reputable builder who's sitting right now just a few chairs in front of me looks daggers through me daddy every time he sees me because . . . he's a respected, reliable contractor daddy who doesn't need someone like you telling him how he needs to build a house. The guy is ethical daddy. He's not about to begin to use cheaper building materials so that he can lower the selling prices of his houses so that . . . he was always considerate towards me daddy before . . . I really miss his friendship.*

*How can that old elder stand being in the same church as daddy? Why does the old geezer stick around here anyway? Inviting another couple to come here with him . . . that doesn't make sense. Is this what it's like sitting in the balcony – getting a chance to . . . it's not so bad up here. Why do I always sit up front?*

*He ticked you off again didn't he? You can unclench those fists. Good – open up the Bible again. When did he close it? How come he knows so much about the Bible? He went right to where Luke is in the Bible and to those verses. Where did he go to church? If it's nearby, do you think that he would take you if . . . sure – right away, the guy is going to ask you go to church with him. Why would he want to do that?*

*You're getting intrigued with the guy aren't you gal? The guy is a dirtbag. You can do so much better.*

*Hey pastor – the guy next to me wants to throw rotten tomatoes at you. Was that really funny gal? You do know guy that you're coming across right now as being scary. Your look right now could . . . look at the little dweeb standing next you. He's laughing at you. Can't the twerp tell that his hero is really mad about something that the pastor has just said?*

*Instead of having the new church's plans up on the screens, why won't the new guy put up the verses from the pig parable so that . . . let me have my Bible? I want to read the verses. Where do I find those verses? How did he know that I wanted to read those verses?*



*Okay – a guy had two sons. The youngest kid decides that he wants his inheritance so that he can leave home. How did that work way back then? So where was the distant land that the spoiled kid went to blow his dad's money? Serves the kid right to end up living with pigs for wasting his inheritance doing partying.*

*Was the kid delusional to think that his dad would hire him as a . . . daddy would tell me to get lost if . . . how many times have you told me daddy that you'll not clean up a mess that I've gotten myself into if . . . if you've been worrying that I will . . . don't worry daddy, I'm not planning on getting into any kind of mess. The last thing that I ever want to happen is for you to . . . what would you do to me? Would you start treating me like you treat mother?*

*What's wrong with the older brother getting upset because his younger brother came back home? Okay – killing the calf seems to have annoyed him more than seeing his younger brother again. What's a calf? You could ask . . . forget it. Do you really want him to know how ignorant you are?*

*What's the big deal about this story? I don't get it. There's nothing in this story that's plausible. No one eats something that pigs eat. Who uses their backyard to fatten up a calf to eat? Why is the preacher using this parable thing to . . . he seems to be oblivious to the fact that fewer and fewer people are showing up to hear him doing haranguing.*

*What would you do pastor if a guy decided to come back to this place? Would you give him one of your aloha shirts? You're so funny gal. Isn't that what he's supposed to do if this is what the story is all about? How did this story end up in the Bible? Where did this legend originate from anyway?*

*If you're to do what this far-fetched tale says that you should be doing if you're what you're saying you are, you're to give the guy next to you your best shoes and your favorite ring. Then you would invite everyone in the church over to your place where you'll put on a spread that'll beat all spreads. Yah.*

*It sounds awfully egotistical to me guy for you to identify with the dad. You're saying that the dad being the head of his house is like you being the head of this church? That's outlandish. You need to be more careful what you say guy. There're governing board members who probably think that this church can't function without them. You need to be real thankful that daddy has been on your side. You don't want to get on daddy's bad side. I know what daddy's bad side is like and . . . you won't be around long if . . .*

*What's the deal with the big brother in this story? If I had a little brother who decided that he wanted his inheritance from daddy and . . . the dad really should've done something for the older brother for staying home with him. It sounds fair to me that the dad could've at some point killed at least a goat for him. Goat meat sounds awful. What does it taste like?*

*Whatever point guy that you're trying to get across to everyone here, the hombre who's sitting next to me doesn't seem to be at all buying into what you're preaching. I'm not sure that I agree with what you're saying either. You want me to believe that the church here represents the farm in the story – that seems to me overreaching guy. The story has to mean something else. Ask the guy sitting next to you what . . .*

*Now you want me to believe that every person here today is represented in the story by the big brother. Okay – if that's the case guy, no one here right now would be okay with someone deciding to come back to this place to stay. Have you thought through what you're saying guy? You're wanting to use this story to tell us how grateful that you are for everyone here staying in this church when we could've taken all that you've taught here and gone someplace to . . . like so many have already done like the younger brother did.*

*This is getting really confusing. You want communion to represent the feast that the farmer put out when his youngest kid showed up back home? Aren't you missing something pastor? Wouldn't you want to wait until someone came back to this church to stay to have communion to celebrate that person's return here?*

*You want to honor the older brother through celebrating communion because the older brother never got to be honored by his dad like he should've for staying home and being faithful to him – just like everyone here now who're continuing to keep on coming back every single Sunday? Talk about a bunch of crock.*

*By the way that everyone is shaking their heads and looking at each other, you're not the only one up here gal who's befuddled by what the guy is trying to sell. The guy though does seem to have gotten everyone's attention. Will he make everyone up here take communion? What if I don't want to take communion?*

*Why is he keeping his hands over his ears? Is he trying to tune out the pastor or is he trying to keep from hearing those cracks of thunder? What does he have against storms? By the looks of those storm clouds, it's not going to stop raining anytime soon. The guy looks awfully fatigued. He probably should find a quiet corner someplace in this place and . . . he won't have me stopping him if . . .*

*What happened that you're not the one sitting next to your old banker friend? Why wouldn't he want to marry me? What does the guy see in that blah looking thing who he married? Good attitude gal. Why don't you go tell her that you're happy for her that she married your best friend?*

*Like you're going to get up, crawl over a bunch of people and . . . you got to be kidding that you'd even think about . . . why would you want to do that? She doesn't deserve you being angry at her. She doesn't even know you. Maybe you should get to know her. Maybe you should just go downstairs.*

*This guy sitting next to me is really spooky. You can go through life now gal saying that you sat right next to an ax murderer. Do you really believe that you are? What has the guy done to make you think that you should be frightened of him? His little friend is sure idolizing him. The kid is seeing something in him that you're sure not seeing.*

*And what're you going to do when the service finally ends? You're going to really need to book it out of here and . . . then where are you going to go? Your friends know that you're here someplace. What're you going to say to them when you see them again? What're you going to say to daddy when you see him? It won't be the first time that daddy has berated me in front of my friends. Why did I come here this morning?*

*We're going to have communion now? You could've done me a favor you know by forgetting? So it's something that you've been really wanting to do - so? What're you going to do now gal?*

*What's communion all about anyway? You did what your friends did when the old pastor was here when you took communion together. You need to be paying more attention now to what the guy is saying instead of . . . maybe no one will come up here to the balcony to . . . why would they?*

*You can watch what others do if someone does come up here into the balcony to serve communion. That sounds like a plan if . . . you're going to read something now in preparation for celebrating communion? Where's that in the Bible? Is there really a book by the name of Corinthians? There isn't anything being put up on the screens. Give him the Bible again. Maybe he'll find the place for me in my Bible.*

*How did he learn to find those books in the Bible so quickly? Thanks for finding the verses. You can read them with me. Don't worry. I won't bite.*

*That fits. The people weren't agreeing with each other. Sounds like this place. Are you reading along too daddy? Have you ever agreed with anyone?*

*Okay – so communion has to do with the suffering and the death of Jesus. You knew that didn't you gal? You so don't know anything about the Bible. This guy seems to know everything about the Bible. Instead of spending the last couple of years trying to make daddy's agency profitable and partying, why didn't you spend your time finding out what's in the Bible? How many times have your friends invited you to the Bible study where . . . your friends have been having to put up with a self-absorbed fool haven't they?*

*What's this about making sure that before you take communion that you've made right with whoever you've offended? Where does it say that? It does say that. You can't take communion gal. Great.*

*This has to be the most awful day that . . . you're sounding gal like a real brat. You're sounding like the older brother who didn't like it when his brother got so much attention. Are you liking being like him?*

What a bunch of hogwash. The guy is a quack. He's totally misconstruing why Jesus told this parable to His followers. Does that deluded joker honestly think that he can use this parable to make himself like God? It sure sounds to me like that's what he's doing.

Why does she want her Bible back? If she's looking for . . . just find the passage for her.

Why did my little partner have to go and decide now to sit with his papa again?

So – what do you think gal? Are you falling for all that stuff that your preacher is claiming this parable says? I hope not. The guy is totally missing why Jesus told the parable. The parable was one of grandpa's favorites. Grandpa was always looking for someone who . . . how many youngest sons did you end up with grandpa? You really took it seriously grandpa being a significant other person to . . .

Listen you egotistical sap – the farmer in this parable is God not you. Got that? I doubt it. Now you're telling me that the farmer's two sons represent the people who're here today and the people who no longer come here. So you're saying that the oldest son represents me? You know what guy – you're warped.

There's no way gal that you can convince me that you've spent any kind of time reading your Bible. Your Bible looks like it has hardly been open. When is the last time that you opened a Bible yourself guy?

Okay – if she's like the oldest son because . . . then you must be like the youngest son because . . . that's a fit. So guy – when is the last time that you talked with your Father God? When is the last time guy that thought crossed your mind? You had reasons to totally give up wanting anything to do with God.

So what has God done for you guy since you took out your friend's knee? Other than God making a bad situation even worse by grandpa dying because you guy . . . absolutely nothing. God should've had you die over there instead of . . . no one except lil sis has given me the time of day since grandpa died.

And why do you think that the gal sitting next to you is an okay gal? Where did that come from? Like you really care if . . . what is she doing? Is she trying to memorize the parable? She's chewing on her tongue just like lil sis does when she's really trying to focus on something.

Have you figured it out yet gal? The youngest son is a young guy who turned his back on God. After he decided that he wanted his portion of the inheritance that he'd get some day anyway from his dad, the kid took it all and left home. If grandpa was right – which he always was, the kid's inheritance share would've been a third of all that his dad owned while his older bro would get the other two-thirds. It doesn't sound fair to me but . . . I'll never get an inheritance. If there's anything left when dad and ma . . . yah – after dad gets done trying to pour the farm down a beer bottle, even bro probably won't find much to claim. Good!

How could grandpa ever have let dad marry his only daughter. You wouldn't be around now guy if . . . but still grandpa, how could you be so accepting of dad when you knew dad's background. It sure didn't take dad very long to find the bottle after you died. Why did ma have to give up like she has? If I'd only listened to grandpa instead of . . . grandpa would be alive today. I'll never ever escape what I did.

My bet is the marine is getting a break from a tour to be with his family. That's a pleasant looking family that he has. Sure hope that he doesn't rush right out after this charade is over with in this place. It'd be good to talk to someone who has been recently over there. More than likely we'll have been in the same place at one time or another. I sure miss that place. I really do need to find a way to get back there. How?

The way that it's pouring buckets right now no one is going to be hurrying out of this place. Once everyone leaves though, I need to find a place where no one can find me and . . . then what?

Have you figured it out yet gal why Jesus told this parable to the crowd listening to him? Can you picture the young guy heading for home? The kid probably hadn't taken a bath since who knows when. His clothes had to have been dirty and torn. He probably looked emaciated from not having eaten anything decent for who knows how long. Look at yourself in a mirror guy. Maybe Jesus was talking about you.

Like dad would be standing outside the house hoping that you'd come home. Yah – right away. Dad probably doesn't even know that bro kicked you off the farm. You really need to call lil sis. Why did you leave all your stuff on the dresser in the room where you were staying in the house? You should've . . . what're you going to do about grandpa's car? Fumes aren't going to take you anyplace.

Come on guy – stop beating the bush about you being the farmer and all of us in the church right now being the older brother who stayed home. Comparing taking communion together to eating the calf is really a reach. What's that shallow hoot owl really wanting to do anyway – make everyone here feel good about themselves? You're really making a mockery of Jesus' teachings.

And what gives you the right guy to judge? Okay God – what'll you do for me if I . . . you're inane guy; you know exactly what God will do for you if . . . so God – why have you put me on planet Earth anyway?

Okay – not talking with God, not wanting to have a Bible around, not wanting anything to do with church, not wanting God's help, not . . . and you once told me grandpa that God always has a big smile on His face as He watches His adopted kids go through each life lesson that He takes them through to teach them to . . . what am I supposed to be learning from You God? I'm so tired of always failing Your life lessons.

What now? I'm supposed to find what for you in the Bible? Oh – the preacher is getting ready to read some verses that talk about communion. He's probably going to read these.

When did I fall asleep? How did that mindless preacher get from making himself the pastor of the year to talking about taking communion? Are you planning gal to take communion? Do you know why you would want to take communion if . . .

Now what gal? You're coming across like you just read something that isn't sitting very well at all with you. If you've made a decision of faith gal and if you're a member of this church and if you aren't crosswise with someone, you can take communion. If my gut is right – which it usually is, you probably have been doing something that you shouldn't have been doing. What's the deal with the convertible?

Just get to it and get it over with. If there's someone here who doesn't already know that the bread or whatever they use here is symbolic of Jesus' suffering on the cross and the grape juice in the cup is symbolic of Jesus' death on the cross, then that someone needs to . . . who are you sermonizing to guy?

It sure was a big deal to you grandpa when I accepted Christ when I was in junior high. You sure grilled me after I told you about what I had done. I had expected you to be really pleased with me grandpa when I decided that I wanted to make a public profession of faith in front of everyone in church but . . . you kept asking me to tell you what it meant to me to having accepted Christ. You weren't satisfied until . . .

That balloon that you used grandpa to explain to me what happened when I accepted Christ – I still have it. You sure could explain everything grandpa in such simple, understandable ways. That balloon illustration that you used sure made sense at the time to me.

If you hadn't died grandpa . . . why did you have to die grandpa? No one has been there like you were to help me hang around God's throne that you said was in the center of the balloon. It has been so easy to spend all my time hanging out near the inside of the balloon's skin looking at what's happening out there in the world. Just by what you told me grandpa, I accept that I'm inside the balloon but . . . being inside the balloon though grandpa doesn't really feel any different than how I felt outside the balloon. Why?

Why am I believing that the gal sitting next to me has gone through what you always referred to grandpa as the faith grace door while I'm having a really hard time believing that the guy speaking has an inkling what God's faith grace door looks like? If everyone who's inside the balloon grandpa are there because God as God the Spirit led them first to and then through the faith grace door then past a crude cross that's covered with the blood of God as God the Son when He died, why aren't there more guys inside the balloon like the PFC who carried the radio over there who . . . how can a guy get to be like him? Why does it seem like that there're not that many guys around who're like him? Why am I . . . I haven't wanted to go there since . . .

Are you just going to think about it or are you going to do something about it? You believed what grandpa told you didn't you – that you becoming a Christ-follower to join all the other Christ-followers inside the balloon just didn't take place coincidentally at that moment. What were all those things that happened to me grandpa when I – okay, when God as God the Spirit used you to guide me to the balloon's opening where God gave me just enough faith to go through the door that He had opened up for me to go through? How come it seems like I haven't left the space outside the balloon behind which you said was the world? You said God opened that door for me because He could and because He wanted to show off His grace. Since He had me to go through His faith grace door grandpa, God sure hasn't shown much grace to me – if any.

You've never had any trouble though believing that Jesus' death on that cross that you figuratively passed when you went through the balloon's small opening was a ransom payment for your sins so . . . isn't that why you've never really worried about dying like some of the guys did who you had in your units?

Where are all these memories coming from now? You don't want to relive the past. Grandpa is gone. Isn't it about time guy to . . . is there a church out there now that'd be glad to see me walking through the front door looking like I look right now? The last thing I ever want to hear from a preacher is that I need to change because . . . or that I need to do something that I haven't been doing so that . . . or that . . . like I'm never going to be enough. Just because the church's pastor back home was like that doesn't mean every other preacher is like that – does it? This guy here is from another planet. He doesn't count.

This taking communion today is definitely a big deal to the preacher. Is this something that they do here all the time? How does he get it though that taking communion for everyone today is to celebrate having not left this church like so many have? How big was this church? Why doesn't this place look like a church?

You have to be turning over in your grave grandpa. The preacher here thinks that everyone who's here right now is here because of him. You're sure getting close guy to being more into yourself than that crazed guitar waver who seemed to believe that no one anywhere can play a guitar or sing like he can. You're pushing preacher the sky falling down on you or the earth opening up and swallowing you as . . .

You've sure gotten an attitude against church don't you guy? Why shouldn't I've an attitude? No church has ever done anything for me.

So – what've I done for a church? Nothing. There's no way that anyone is ever going to catch me in any kind of place that's filled with whining phonies.

What would you say to grandpa if he was here right now? One thing that I'd tell you grandpa is how glad that I am that you never ever showed that you disapproved of me no matter what I said or how I acted towards you. What I miss about you grandpa is seeing your eyes crinkle up and that silly smirk which always told me that you . . . how can I stop grandpa from always thinking about what I did to you? There's always a massive blackish greenish thunderhead hanging over my head dumping baseball size hail on me.

Now what's she going to do? Where's she going? She's finally leaving? Is she running from something, too? I've no problem with her wanting to get away from me. I'd want to get away from me, too.

What is she doing? Why is she trying to get down that row? You're making a scene gal. Why are you feeling embarrassed for her? She can do whatever she wants to do.

You're putting yourself in a hornet's gal. Just because there's an empty chair there doesn't mean that . . . you saw how that guy's wife looked at you. I saw that look that you gave to that guy. You had something going with that guy at one time didn't you? His wife sure wasn't a happy camper when she saw you. You were probably the last person that she expected to see sitting up here in the balcony.

This is going to get interesting. Talk louder gal so that everyone can hear what you're saying to the guy and to his wife. She has just made that guy's day. He looks like a kid who just opened up a Christmas present and got something that he really wanted but had never expected to get. What did she say to his wife that has her going from really looking like she was going to strangle her to crying and hugging her?

*This isn't fair. I can't. I won't. She had no right. He was mine.*

*If you're going to take communion gal, you're to make things right. That's what it says here. If I'm really supposed to do everything what the Bible says . . . okay - if I'm serious about making changes in my life, maybe this would be a good place to begin. Go do it.*

*What're you thinking? You don't ever do anything spontaneously. So – why are you doing this?*

*This is absurd climbing over the legs of the old elder and his wife. The old codger was half asleep. You scared him. He's definitely awake now. Now to get past the couple who came with them. Sorry guy to have to make you move. You better be telling your wife everyday how lucky that you are that she married you. Under what rock did she find you anyway?*

*Why did there have to be an empty chair next to them? What do I say to them? What do I want to say to them? How does someone go about making things right when . . . you can start by admitting that you've been very self-centered in the way that you've acted immaturely towards them.*

*He doesn't have to act like I'm going to hit him. Remember – we used to be really good friends. Okay – he has every reason in the world to be really furious with me. You know how it feels to carry anger around all the time. It's been a gut wrenching feeling. I don't want him to have to feel angry at me anymore.*

*Okay – he did hurt me when he told me that he was marrying her. But that doesn't make it right how I've been acting. I had no right saying what I said to him when he told me that he had asked her to marry him. I need to ask him to forgive me for what I said. Now – do it.*

*You need to tell her how blessed that she is to be married to the best guy friend that you've ever had. Why did she start crying? How do I get them to know that I honestly want the very best for them?*

*That wasn't expected. Talk about having a weight lifted off . . . why is it so quiet up here? That was totally random what you just did gal. Maybe I can just float back to where I had been sitting.*

*Thanks guy for standing up to let me out. The old duffer almost gave me a smile. It was close enough. I'll take it. Something tells me that you don't hand out smiles very often.*

*That was a bemused look that that big lug just gave to you. You could ask him what his name is. And why would I want to know his name? Maybe you should spend your time instead listening to the preacher. You might just learn something from his prattling. What else can that be called what he's doing? Why does the new pastor always try to come across as being God's gift to this church? You're very fortunate guy to be this church's pastor. If it hadn't been for daddy . . .*

*Why would you think that he just might forget to do communion? You did what you were supposed to do per what whoever wrote that book or letter or whatever said that you were to if you had wronged someone. I'm glad that I did it but . . . now what am I supposed to do? It has been months since . . . will someone walk in front of me with a tray of busted up crackers and another tray with tiny little glasses of grape juice? Someone always did that when I sat up front with my friends. It's easy to do the same thing that . . .*

*Daddy is going to serve communion? Daddy never serves communion. How come you're serving communion today daddy? I don't like the uneasy feeling that . . . something not good is going to happen.*

*Yes – I've got it. After I take a piece of a broken up cracker, I'm to thank God for the unity that's in this place after all the suffering that everyone has had to go through because . . . we're the ones who've been left here to take care of the farm after so many have . . . can he just stop talking in riddles and . . .*

*Let me see those verses again. How okay is it to twist a verse to fit whatever? The old pastor sure wouldn't have perverted a verse's meaning. This new guy sure seems to me to be taking a lot of liberties with the Bible. Even his kid is shaking his mop like his dad has lost his marbles.*

*Hey kid – you're not the only one being embarrassed by a dad. That diminutive stump in the suit – who's standing in front of your dad, is my daddy. You probably already know who my daddy is. Daddy always manages to somehow make himself really visible. How come you always have to be so obnoxious daddy?*

*The cup is symbolic of what? You can't be emblematic of the farmer. You don't own this church.*

*Isn't communion supposed to be something that's to remind me that Jesus got Himself nailed to a couple of crude crossed beams just for me? The old pastor could explain a Bible story a whole lot better than you can guy. Do you know why you're here this morning? You're supposed to be preaching truth not . . .*

*Don't look up here daddy. You're not coming up here are you daddy? You've got to get out of here gal. Where can I go? How did daddy get up here so quickly? This isn't good.*

*Please stop staring at me like that daddy. If looks could kill . . . why do you have to look at me like that daddy? Do you know how often that you have that look on your face? Would you be able to tell me the last time that you smiled at me daddy? You've been doing a great job of making me feel smaller and smaller. It's going to be such a relief to get away from you once and for all.*

*Why do you keep buying me stuff daddy? You've got me trapped. It's wrong what you're doing to me. You've never given me any space daddy. Talk about having to live a sheltered life because . . . how often have you let me go away with my friends? Never. Just stare back at daddy like he's staring at you. Pretend like you don't care. You do know that everyone is watching. So what if everyone is watching?*

*You can't take communion feeling like you do towards daddy. I won't take communion. If daddy doesn't like it that you don't take communion, tough. Come on daddy – just pass the crackers and grape juice. What a nightmare. The tension up here feels as stormy as it looks outside. You look like daddy what thunder must look like. Go downstairs daddy, take a pill and . . .*

*Everyone is taking communion. How can that be happening? Even the guy's little pal's daddy has let his kid take a piece of a cracker and one of those little glasses. That little rascal can't know what he just did when he ate that piece of cracker. He's licking out the inside of the glass. Gross.*

*The nerve of daddy to expect me to . . . just take a piece of cracker gal. Give the tray to the yokel so that he can . . . why is he staring at the tray instead of . . . just pass the tray to the others in the back row. It's all yours guys.*

*Why is the pastor's kid giving the tray back to me? He knows that I don't want it. Here guy – take the tray. Okay then – you take the tray daddy. Will someone do something? What don't you do something? Why don't you stop letting daddy have such a sway on your life? Why don't you start caring about other people's lives instead of your own life? Who cares about the guy sitting next to me? Why don't you . . .*

*If he's not going to take a piece of cracker out of the tray, give him half of your cracker. It's not a very big piece but . . . will he just please take it. Thanks. Now will he just put the piece in his mouth like you're doing and . . . that wasn't so bad was it? His eyes are telling me that he's not sure. It's okay.*

*You stay true to form don't you daddy. It was a sure bet that you wouldn't give me the tray of grape juice. You didn't like it at all did you daddy that I gave that grimy guy sitting next to me half of my cracker piece. This grubby looking guy sitting next to me I've a feeling has it all over you daddy. The guy doesn't seem to mind anymore at all that I'm sitting next to him.*

*Why is she wearing that ridiculous looking black outfit? How come she has messed with her hair the way that she has? No would catch me dying my hair purple. For a gal who looks so . . . she sure seems sweet. Daddy never thought that you'd hand me the grape juice tray. Real nice of her.*

*You're going to have a heart attack daddy. If you could only see how purple your face is . . .*

*I'm going to take one of these glasses of grape juice whether you like it or not daddy. If whoever he is who's sitting next to me doesn't take a glass, I'll give him half of my glass. You not taking a glass guy doesn't surprise me so . . . here's half of what I had in my glass. He won't die drinking after me. I tried not to get my lips on the glass' rim. Thanks for humoring me. That look that you just gave me guy must be like what a hug feels like. When is the last time that someone gave me a hug? The guys who've tried . . .*

*You can leave now daddy. Why doesn't it ever register with him how much he disgraces himself? What did you just do gal? You'd do it again wouldn't you if . . .*

*Where did you ever come up with daddy that everything that's in the world is for you to find a way to take? Have you ever been satisfied with anything? Sure there's always another way to do something but . . . just go back downstairs daddy. You can yell at me later. I'm not sorry for what I just did daddy. Go.*

*You know what you just did gal you did to spite daddy? Be quiet. You can't keep on letting daddy run your life. Are you really okay with daddy taking back the car? Where will you live if . . .*

*How come you dislike daddy so much? You really hate him don't you? You should. What kind of life has he allowed you to have? Has he ever affirmed you for something that you did – like for selling one of his properties for an obscenely shameful profit? Has he ever approved you for always knowing to keep your mouth shut – especially when he's on your case about whatever his pet case is against the world for that day? When has daddy ever made you feel accepted as his daughter? You're a sad sack. Just head back to your place just as soon as this despicable show is over with and . . . daddy is never going to change.*

*What're you going to do guy after this sham has ended? Do you really care gal?*

*Stop looking at me. I do feel bad having put him on a spot but . . . I understand why he could be upset with me. I've had to learn to live with people who . . . I never can please anyone no matter how hard I try. How about God, do you think that you pleased Him by what you did? How am I supposed to know?*

*He's not annoyed with me is he? He's not even making me feel like I'm an alien from another planet. Maybe the guy knows what it's like to be living in a world that's driven by constant criticism. No one can know how demoralizing it is to always be derided by someone – like daddy always does to me.*

*Congratulations daddy – you made it to the front. You define hypocrisy daddy. How can you stand up front daddy in an oddball lineup and have the new pastor feed you communion? Don't be surprised if one of those bolts of lightning suddenly nails you. God – how can you put up with daddy?*

*If you want things to change gal, you need to get out of your poor me funk and start listening to what the pastor is saying. Like what he says is going to help you? Why don't you start with your attitude gal?*

*Okay – what's become obvious is that the guy who's sitting next to me may look like he's a bum but he isn't one. How do I know? I don't know but . . . no one can know as much about the Bible as he does and not be a good guy – right? And the way that he acts with kids . . . his eyes though – why do they look so haunted?*

*What about the high school goof-offs who're sitting in the back row with you? What about them? You've been thinking that you're better than them. Are you better than them?*

*You didn't hear him say that. You couldn't have. Now it makes sense. Always the spin isn't it pastor? You're sure working at being daddy's stoolpigeon.*

*Because daddy decided that he wanted to have another benevolent offering taken, he told you to preach on something that'd . . . and now saying that because God's will cannot be thwarted that I'm to dig down deep into my pocket and . . . you never do anything with the money daddy that's collected so why collect more?*

*Sit down daddy. You're not going to help collect the offering – are you? You never do that. You're not coming up here again. No. Please no.*



You're feeling kind of good about something aren't you gal? You're a real piece of work you know that.

This loopy gal next to me . . . she's not like anyone you've ever met. She's definitely not the type who'd sign up to fight on the front line but . . . you sure lucked out guy not having any gals fighting alongside you. Gals are sure taking the fun out of a guy's life who thinks that he's supposed to protect them.

The gal definitely though has a lil sis feel about her. Why? Other than those eyes that always seem to be trying to figure everything out with one look, she doesn't begin to look like lil sis.

How many here do you think that you fooled preacher with your off the wall interpretation of one of Jesus' parables? Even if I'd asked the elders here if I could take communion, there's no way at all that I'd take communion after the way that you've twisted that parable.

Communion is going to be served by that motley bunch. You've got to be kidding. There's only one guy dressed in a suit. All those women . . . women aren't supposed to serve communion.

If I'd really wanted to take communion today – which I'm not going to do as the guy has made a real mockery as to why Jesus used the Passover to instigate the Lord's Supper, who'd I talk to anyway around here to get an okay to take communion? How would someone find out who the elders are in this place?

What do you mean that you want everyone to take communion? What do you mean by everyone? Doesn't that fool of a preacher know that only by first making a decision of faith can someone take communion?

Guy – you're a dunce. Turning around something like taking communion to making it a church family unity pat on the back kind of thing is . . . taking communion is remembering Jesus – it's not about stroking you. I've to be having a nightmare as . . . this kind of heretical preaching can't happen in a church – can it? You'd stop it wouldn't you God if . . . why do you let bad things happen God?

I know grandpa – you told me that there're false teachers everywhere who're using God's word as a way to make a buck. Who did you know grandpa that . . . how did you really feel about the pastor in our church back home? I know that you tried to . . . he didn't visit grandma once after you died. He has never visited dad and ma. As long as the boor is there, I wouldn't dream of going back into our church back home.

This isn't good. I've got a bad feeling about . . . this is when you'd order your platoon to take cover. The one guy wearing a suit had to be the guy who would show up here to . . . why did you just give that gal sitting next to me a look like . . . whoa. He's got to be bro's mentor. That's one nasty look.

Aren't you up here guy to make sure that the communion trays are . . . hey – watch it – you'll have to go through me to get to her if . . . I don't care what it is that she has done to you, she doesn't deserve that kind of mean, cruel look from anyone. What has she done to you anyway? How do you know each other?

Why did you let that little tyke take communion? There's no way that he can know yet the meaning of the bread and of the cup. Why are you making it so personal guy? Before you killed grandpa, grandpa helped you to know why you'd want to take communion. Communion is too important of a sacrament to . . .

Get that out my face right now guy before . . . that was nice of the gal to take the tray. How come she didn't take a piece of a broken up cracker? Why did she pass the tray on to those rowdy teenagers? Just because I didn't take communion, she can take communion. Good – she has the tray again. Now . . .

Is she just going to sit there holding the tray? The pinhead isn't going to take the tray from her until she takes a piece of a cracker. I'm not about to touch that tray.

That sure didn't look like something that she wanted to do. Now what is she doing? She's breaking that little piece of cracker in half? Why? Why is she giving me that half? You can't make me take it. Why did I take that piece from her? Why did I eat the piece? Does she know what she has just done? She's like the farmer in the parable. The guy keeping the trays moving has to be like the brother.

That's really juvenile guy not handing her the tray of glasses of grape juice. Let her decide whether or not she wants to take one of those glasses. Walking in front us to flop hair to . . .

That was sneaky girl. If the swanky suit decides that he's going to throw you out of this place, he's going to need some help. He's doing a really good job of playing being an idiot. He doesn't care. What a . . .

Good – she took a glass. I'm glad. Guy – now just take the tray from her. No one is going to make me . . . about time the apoplectic overgrown fireplug took it. He needs to leave now. No one wants him up here.

What? She wants me to do what? She wants me to drink the rest of the juice that's left at the bottom of her glass? In your dreams gal. Why is she looking at me like that? Okay – I'll do it. I hope she's happy. She is isn't she? You're glad that she's happy aren't you guy? She's okay.

Are you going to keep staring darts at her guy? Ignore him gal. Don't make his problem your problem. You conceited shrimp – if he thinks that he's going to stay up here . . . it'll my pleasure to escort the uncouth bore from being up here. The arrogant goon will learn that messing with me . . .

Wow – that was different. That felt like a firefight. Is this what it's like in this place all the time? There has to be wounded people around here. This place feels like it could be a war zone.

Now you're standing up front guy while the pastor gives you the communion elements like nothing has happened. Even you grandpa would have a hard time wanting anything to do with that thug. Communion is served here way different than it is back home. Isn't communion supposed to be always served the same way? When is the last time guy that you've given a thought to what's in the Bible? It has to be years.

All that self-promoting that you're doing pastor is getting really old in a hurry. How's he getting people to want to come back to this place to listen to him? What kind of church is this anyway?

Having a fund to help the poor is a good idea. Our church had a benevolent fund didn't it grandpa? If I had some cash on me . . . okay – if I had any cash on me, I would've gone back to the old wreck and . . .

No – not you again? Why is it so important to you to be up here again? You didn't get it – no one wants you up here. Whatever happened to collection plates? Why would someone want to put something in a plastic bucket? The thing is getting passed down the rows like a hot potato. Are you having fun yet guy? Talk about someone being spitting mad . . . you're looking at someone who's on the verge of detonating.

No one has given anything. That's not right. You're not going to give anything gal? How come? I'd give something if . . . look guy – there's nothing in my billfold. My pockets are empty, too. See.

Maybe someone can fix up grandpa's car and . . . it'll need some work but . . . here's the key to the car.

What's the matter guy? You're looking really spooked standing there with your mouth wide open like . . . it's just a key on a keychain plus that thing with the bomb's make and year on it. I probably should tell him that the key works for the ignition – that there's no key for the trunk – that the trunk is wired closed.

Why is he holding the keychain up in the air? He looks like he has just seen a ghost. Come on guy – put the key in the plastic bucket. Are you trying to make me look stupid? You're doing a great job of it.

Just put the key in the bucket and go downstairs. Stop holding the key up for everyone to see. Do you like everyone looking at you? Can someone give the guy a push towards the door? The guy has gone whompy.

This walking down the aisle to the front while holding the key up like that is . . . has the guy lost his mind? Don't wave the key to everyone in the church. Why did you give him the key? He has gone over the edge.

He just told the pastor no. What did the pastor ask him? He's kneeling in front of the stage. Is he crying? He's shaking like a leaf. I don't know lady – you should stay away from him. You're hugging him?

Now you're rubbing his back. The guy is blubbering like a baby. He doesn't seem to care that . . . what're you going to do now hotshot pastor? You look like a rug has been pulled out from under your feet.

Why is everyone downstairs . . . don't they know it's raining? It's emptying out down there like . . . it's the fastest that I've ever seen a place being vacated. I don't blame them for not wanting to be anywhere near a grown guy who is . . . this has been the most bizarre hour that I've ever spent in my life.

You're not going to be able to stop anyone pastor from leaving. You better hope that no one falls down.

You were planning to do some more performing? Screaming at everyone to stop – that they're going to miss some really good music if . . . does he really believe that there's someone still here who'd want to watch him do more of his gyrations? I doubt if anyone came here to listen to him in the first place.

What am I going to do now? How do I get out of here? It's my buddy again. How can he be cloned? His dad looks like he has been working triple shifts. The little feller probably keeps his folks on the run.

You should say something to the gal before . . . why is she waving to those two gals? She's wanting them to come up here. Why? How does she know them? Why is she looking down again at the demented guy who's still on his knees up front? He's still sobbing. If she has something to say to me, now would be . . .

You're wanting to know why I'm here? Am I looking for work? You need a guy to do grunt work on a construction job that you have? It's okay that I've never worked construction? You still have a problem guy. You don't have a place to stay. They've an extra room at their place where you can stay until . . . that's really nice of him but . . . what's going on here? Why isn't anyone leaving from up here? They don't have to all gather around me.

Ask the guy if he's on an R&R. Just getting home yesterday and then coming here this morning . . . a couple of weeks isn't long to . . . doing okay is good? He's right – it gets brutal at times but . . . I'd sure be glad to change places with him if . . . why did I like it over there? What does he think about the kids? If everyone knew what life would be like here if it was known that a bomb could go off at any moment – that even schools wouldn't be safe from a suicide bomber if . . . everyone needs to spend time living in another country where life is living behind walls, razor wire on top of walls, bars on windows . . .

Did I see anyone get killed? That's the downside of a war. Her guy will be fine. She needs to understand that there're a whole lot more people over there who're glad that we're there than who aren't. Being in their homes a lot . . . so why aren't I over there right now? She would have to ask me that. If you'd done some things differently . . . it's true though that you're really hoping to get back there sometime again.

Hope no one hears my stomach rumbling? You have to be really smelly. How can anyone stand to be near me? How come everyone wants to talk with me? Where did she go? You're worried about her? There's no reason at all why she'd want to have anything to do with you so . . . you know that you look awful.

This can't be happening. An hour ago I was sitting here wishing that everyone would leave. Now I'm standing here wishing that everyone will stay. This isn't you guy. This not having any sleep . . . maybe the storm will keep them around. Everyone sure seems to be enjoying talking with each other. It's like it's something they don't do.

So – that's how I'll get to your house? We'll walk there together? What're they thinking now – now that they know that you don't have anything with you? The only clothes that you have are the clothes that you're wearing. This is really getting awkward. How much do I tell? Is it really that important that anyone knows where I'm from? Probably not.

Must be a couple of the gal's friends who just showed up. They're too old to be acting like a couple of schoolgirls. You were looking at me gal. You aren't acting any more mature than your friends. You don't even know my name. She wouldn't have the nerve to come over here with those gals would she? She would. There has to be someplace where I can hide. Is that what you really want to do guy?

*Why daddy? Why can't you stop making a disaster of everything? Will you just stop thinking of yourself all the time? Can you start thinking about me and what I want to do? Doesn't it ever bother you that mother lives her own life?*

*The benevolent fund doesn't need any more money in it. You just want the new pastor to know how much weight that you carry in this place. What good is it daddy to build another building when fewer and fewer are showing up here? Do you really think that most people go to a church to be entertained? I don't think so daddy? Going to church isn't a social event daddy; it's a time to . . . what's church supposed to be?*

*Okay – the worship time was why I liked coming to this church. Why did daddy think that he needed to replace the worship team with a band? Who made you an authority daddy on what's to take place in a church? You don't even know what a home is supposed to be like.*

*You really think daddy that someone is going to give something to that fund that you control? You're wasting your time up here. Except for the grimy dude sitting next to me, everyone up here knows who you are. Everyone knows that you were the perpetrator behind getting rid of the old pastor and you were one of the culprits behind firing the youth pastor.*

*If you really think that I'm going to put something in the bucket daddy, you're out of your mind. Just take the bucket and . . . you want to put something in the bucket? Why? Okay – so you don't have anything in your billfold. Not even a photo of a . . . and why was that important to you?*

*The guy can stand. Don't hurt your neck daddy looking up at him. I would've stepped back too daddy. He's actually a nice guy. Like you know. Maybe daddy thinks that he's a . . . that would be hilarious.*

*He doesn't have to pull out all his pockets to show daddy that there's nothing in them. He's going to give daddy the key to that smoking piece of junk that he was driving? What's daddy going to do with that beat up old thing? Wait 'til you see what it looks like daddy. When you see that car daddy . . . why guy are you apologizing to daddy for not being able to give money instead of your heap? Daddy doesn't care.*

*Way to go guy. You just made my day. Would I like to see daddy's face when . . .*

*Put the key down daddy? Stop waving it around. You're making a real twit of yourself again. The key daddy isn't for something that you're going to be happy to see. I know – I saw it.*

*You're scaring me daddy. You've acting totally bizarre. Do I need to help you back downstairs? Are you going to be okay daddy? You're looking awfully pasty. Is this what someone having a coronary acts like?*

*It sure has gotten quiet up here all of a sudden. It's like a storm has passed and . . . daddy – stop that. You're embarrassing me again. Don't walk down the aisle waving that key like it's some kind of trophy. Where's your pride daddy? Have you lost your mind?*

*Why is daddy getting on his knees in front of the stage? No one ever does that.*

*That wasn't bright pastor. You've never asked daddy to pray before – why now? That was an overkill on a no daddy. Everybody in this place heard you say no. If anyone in this place had any respect for you before today daddy, they sure don't have it now. Don't you care anymore what people think of you? Daddy is crying? That's him sounding like a . . . good grief daddy, you probably can be heard out on the street.*

*What are you doing mother? You're hugging daddy. You've never hugged daddy. You're rubbing his shoulders. What's going on mother?*

*Everyone is leaving? The service isn't over – is it? Everyone has checked out on you pastor. Everyone sure wants out of here. Keep screaming guy – like someone is going to decide that they want to hear more of your nonsense. I know that I shouldn't be feeling so glad that he's toast but . . . he'd never go inside a church if he couldn't be the guy up front. How could I've been such a . . .*

*Hey gals – please don't leave. I'm up here. They see me.*

*You should really find out if daddy is okay. You're getting out of here pastor as fast as everyone else is pastor? What's your hurry? If you really think that you're that farmer in that story guy, aren't you supposed to . . . like you'd really be able to help daddy right now. No one is ever going to be able to help daddy. Daddy is a lost cause.*

*It feels like a party up here. No one is leaving. Great – everyone wants to talk to him. Take the job. The guy is a good contractor. He'll treat you fair.*

*Now he's coming towards me? Hey – it's daddy you should be talking to – not me. You're not going to blame me are you? There was no way that I could stop daddy from telling you that he wasn't going to sell anymore of your house unless . . . you meant that didn't you? You just hugged me. No one hugs me.*

*Did you get that guy? You now have a place to stay. The old elder lives about a block away from here. You can walk there from here. And why gal are you so glad that your nemesis has a place to stay?*

*Mother is acting like a kid. What's that skipping bit that she just did coming down the aisle? She saw me looking at her. A thumbs up? Have you gone whacky, too, mother?*

*They made it. They really didn't know that I was up here? Do they really want to know why I'm up here? They're gawking at the big dude. Why do they want to know his name? They're not believing you gal that you don't know him. If they're wanting me to . . . it looks like they're going to have to wait.*

*What's daddy and mother doing up here? Daddy isn't allowed up here anymore. Mother – you were taking daddy home – weren't you? How come you've never looked so happy before mother? How come you're holding my hand? Do you remember when the last time was mother when you held my hand? Do you think that you can start holding my hand like it's something that you've always done? You and I have been in two separate worlds probably ever since I was born. You never wanted me. You made daddy take care of me. Now you want me to . . .*

*What did you say daddy? You're asking me to do what? You want me to forgive you? Everybody heard him. They're all . . . what do I do? Why doesn't everybody stop staring at me? There has to be a place around here where I can hide.*

*Didn't your banker friend and his wife forgive you when . . . why won't daddy stop looking at me like a sad little puppy dog. What's happened to daddy? That's a new flash? He certainly has been a difficult person to be around. Daddy hasn't just made my life miserable, he has made a lot of lives miserable.*

*Do you know how hard those words were that you just said to daddy? Talk about a contrite look. Don't dream gal. Daddy won't ever change. Neither will mother. Just go back to sleep. This can't be happening can it? Do I really have to tell daddy that I forgive him? Why wouldn't I want to forgive daddy? I can't forgive you daddy just like that. How can I forget all the hurt that . . .*

*How come daddy didn't yell at me when . . . how could daddy stare bullets at me just a few minutes ago and now he wants me to . . . you're saying daddy that you'd understand if I can't forgive you? Why did daddy have to say that? How can I forgive him?*

*You don't want anyone to see you crying in public gal so . . . why can't I stop crying? Can mother just be quiet? How does she know that everything is going to be okay? I don't know who my mother is. She has to know that I don't know her – right? How can she know that everything is going to be different? She's been praying for this day ever since she and daddy were married?*

*No one can change one minute from being a pompous, selfish imbecile to . . . okay daddy – you aren't giving me a choice – I forgive you daddy. Daddy is hugging me. Why are you hugging him back? And now mother is crying. So this is what feeling happy is like.*

*What's mother doing now? Just go right over there mother and put your arm through his arm like . . . who do you think you are mother? You don't do that to someone you don't know.*

*Now what's daddy doing? Do you really want to talk to him? He knows that you were behind getting him off the governing board. Everyone knows your shenanigans daddy. You're asking him to forgive you for what you did – that you know that what you did was underhanded and . . . you're forgiving daddy? Just like that you're . . . how can you do that? You could've just shaken hands with daddy instead of . . .*

*You're going to talk now with the youth pastor and his wife? You're telling them that you're sorry what happened to them – that you're going to do whatever you can to get their jobs back for them – that you knew that they were doing a good job. She's tall isn't she daddy?*

*There's no one downstairs anymore – is there? Someone would have to want to get out of this place really bad to want to go into that downpour. How are you going to take it daddy when I tell you that I'm going to find something else to do? Who are you going to find daddy to cover for you at the office after I . . .*

*What are they doing talking to him? They call themselves your friends. Will I ever get a chance to talk to him? He probably wouldn't care if . . . you still haven't apologized to him for cutting him off. When are you going to do that? You can't keep putting it off.*

*This is so . . . is this what church is supposed to be like? You're the only one who isn't talking to someone.*

*You want to tell me how much it meant to you that I'd . . . just to ask us to forgive you for being such a snob. You were being a self-centered brat. Really – you're very happy for both of them. They really have forgiven me. I'm glad that they want to stay in touch with me. I really hope that they do.*

*Are you sure gal that you aren't dreaming? Okay – you're not dreaming but . . . this last hour has been . . . go talk to him. You can let go of him now mother.*

*You sure would shock everyone if you walked over to him and took his other arm. Why don't you? I can't.*

*What's going to happen now? Everybody is probably going to wait until it stops raining. No one seems to want to leave. If you're going to talk to the guy, now is probably as good a time as any.*

*What do you want say to him? What if . . . do you still really want to go there gal? He really was shaking. How come he has so many scars? That scar in his neck sure does look like it was made by a bullet. What makes you an expert gal on what a bullet scar looks like?*

*Don't you wish that you could mix so easily? His little buddy is glued to him. Just go talk to him. He's not going to bite you. What if . . . what if what? What if he doesn't want to have anything to do with me? What makes you think that he doesn't want to have anything to do with you?*

*Why don't you just ask God what to do? How do I begin? What do I say to Him? Where are you God? You're here aren't You? You made this happen didn't You? Why him? You know that I don't know how to talk to a guy. Can you kind of like . . . it isn't that I really want to talk to him, it's just . . . you're sure one conflicted gal. God – You know that don't You?*

*So God – if You're wanting me to talk to the guy, You're going to have to make it happen. And God – I honestly don't want to go to nightclubs anymore. And – will You change the church here so that it's like what it used to be? How do I know that You've heard me God? No one has ever taught me anything about talking with You. Where can I look for You?*

*So – if you just happen to be listening to me God, what should I do now? You're going to have to show me.*

*That had to have been really close for the electricity to go out. It's sure dark up here without any lights. Who's yelling take cover? Why would someone yell take cover? Whoever you are – stop yelling.*

It's him again. What's he doing up here again? Did you come up here to give the key back? What was all the bawling about anyway? He looks different. Who's that with him? How come she looks so excited? She's sure hanging on to him like she's never going to . . . he can't be the same obnoxious guy who . . .

Somebody sure isn't happy to see them. Wonder why? There isn't room under a chair for you gal so . . . looks like guy you're not going to find out what she was wanting to tell you. If you don't find out from her what she wanted to tell you . . . you're going to need to find out or . . . what's this head shaking all about like you don't want to do something? The guy just won't leave her alone. What did she do to him?

If you're begging her to do something guy, you're going to have to get on your knees. Can't you tell by her look that she really doesn't want anything to do with you? Do I need to go over there and . . . oh great – how often have you been someplace guy where everyone in the world wants to . . . feels good doesn't it?

You want to know my name? That didn't hurt did it? Where am I from? How can I change the subject? No one guy is trying to be nosey with their questions; they just . . . why does everyone think that they need to know where someone is from? What would you ask a stranger if . . .

Why don't you ask them to tell you who the guy and the lady are who're talking to that girl over there? That's her parents? She obviously isn't any happier being around her folks than I am being around my folks. You've got something in common with her. And why is that suddenly important to you?

Don't do something gal that you don't want to do. Stand up to your dad. Let him know what you're thinking. And who made you guy an expert on communicating with parents? Did you spend any time talking with your ma when you were home? Why not? You never put off anything. You know that you should've talked with ma. You've no excuse. So what if ma still blames you for killing her father. She still is your ma. The least that you can do is to let her know that . . . what are you thinking guy? Like you're going to walk downstairs right now from that upstairs bedroom and . . .

She's going to cry. She's looking at her ma like . . . don't let him hug you. That was a halfhearted hug gal. Now her ma has to start crying. When did it get so quiet up here?

Now what's her dad going to do? Talk about a guy looking like he's going on a mission. He has trapped the old guy like . . . did he just ask the old guy to forgive him for . . . and the old guy says he forgives him?

What – who would have the nerve to put their arm through my arm? Her ma? What does she want? Why does she want to know my plans are for lunch? Because I don't have any plans yet for lunch, you're telling me that I'm going to have lunch then with you and your husband. What if I tell her that I don't want to go to lunch with her and her husband? Now you know where she got those eyes.

But . . . why would she want to be caught in public with me. Look at my clothes. I haven't taken a shower since . . . she's smiling at me like she has known me all her life. When is the last time ma smiled at me?

She knows these two gals because they're her daughter's best friends? She's asking them to . . . how are you going to pay for your meal guy? How do I get out of this? She'll for sure ask her daughter to . . . it'll be interesting to see their reactions when they find out that we don't know each other.

Hope that she was okay with having to talk with that young couple again. They sure wanted to talk with her. Whatever it was that . . . it seems to have gotten patched up. You're feeling glad for her. Why?

Instead of just looking over here, she can . . . is she hoping that I'll just disappear in blue air? That isn't going to happen. She's stuck with having to eat lunch with me. Sorry. Are you really sorry guy? You know that you aren't. What I wouldn't do now though for a shower, a shave, some cleans clothes . . .

Okay guy – why don't you just leave your little world and walk over to her and . . . why do you always wait for someone to come into your world. You've got to stop using the excuse guy that you're an introvert and that . . . do you want to spend the rest of your life finding corners to . . .

Keep yelling take cover. Where are my guys? What exploded? Make sure everybody stays down.

Why am I screaming? Why are you holding me down? Let me up.

Where am I? Who was killed? How come everything is so dark? Why are there women here? They need to get away from me. The kid doesn't belong here. He needs to leave right now before . . . why are you telling me that everything is going to be okay? Everything isn't going to be okay.

Where have I seen her before? Her hair is purple. Why does she have her arms around me like . . . where are the guys? Tell me what happened? You're looking at me like I'm scaring you? Let me move? Let me help you. We gotta get out of here.

Tell whoever is screaming to stop. I need to find cover. Everyone needs to take cover. They're going to die if they don't take cover. Why isn't anyone listening to me?

That smell. I know that smell. It's grandma's garden. Why are you in grandma's garden? Why is the gal with the purple hair in grandma's garden? Why does she have her arms around me?

About time you showed up soldier. Why are you out of uniform? Why am I laying on the floor?

It's you. Why are you on your knees on the floor in front of me? How come you're holding my hands? Why is she crying? I'm crying. How long have I been crying?

How come there're people standing all around me? Why are they looking at me like . . . why don't they all go away? You're saying that you're going to stay and . . . you don't know me.

Guy – stop blubbering like a baby. Get control of yourself.

Why did she ask me that? There's no way that she can help me. You don't want me to tell you anything. You know guy that she's going to stay sitting on the floor in front of you until she finds why you're so . . . okay – does she still want to be holding the hands of someone who has hurt or killed everyone who has been important to him? She doesn't need to know that. Why doesn't she just leave me alone?

Can't she hear? Does anyone hear me? They really don't want to have anything to do with me. Why don't they just go back to living their lives and . . . when am I going to stop having this nightmare? It's going to be such a relief to wake up to see grandpa's old mutt again. You're going to have that talk with bro that you should've had when you got back home. And ma – I know that grandpa is dead because of me but . . . I want my ma back so please tell me ma what I can do to make things right between us again. I want you to be happy again. I know dad isn't the most ambitious guy around but he's my dad and . . . wakeup now guy.

Where have you seen those eyes before? She cut you off – remember. She sat down next to you after you thought that you had found a place in a balcony to crash. She's holding on to your hands like . . . she's asking you again to tell her what happened. You're not going to escape those eyes guy so . . .

Why are you telling her about spiking the shortstop? Stop shaking hands. How does she know that I didn't mean to mess up his knee? Couldn't she have come up with something else to say – like it is what it is? That's what everyone else always says to me. Why has everyone treated me like mud if it is what it is?

Why is everyone . . . there's no one around here who really cares what has happened to me. And how are you going to tell that to the gal who's staring right now right into your heart. Does she see Jesus there? Do you want her to see Jesus there? You haven't left me Jesus have you? I really need Your help right now. I'm so sorry that I haven't asked You for Your help since grandpa died.

It's kind of her to want me to . . . but . . . she can't know what it's like to know that you're the one responsible for the deaths of so many guys. She can't understand what happened. Why is she going to listen to me when . . . no one has ever listened to me before. She's not going to be any different.



Getting a chair was thoughtful. You were curled up like a baby on the floor Deal with it guy – she’s not going to let go of your hands. She’s going to get the knees of her outfit really dirty kneeling on the floor in front of you. Do what she’s asking you to do. Tell her how your tours ended. So what if she doesn’t really care?

You shouldn’t have your wife here guy. The last thing that she needs to hear right now is how soldiers get killed. They’re waiting for you guy to . . . I know that I was doing what I needed to do but . . . no one should’ve died – except insurgents. They had no right to shoot the kid. All the kid ever wanted to do was help. Why would God have someone killed who was always talking with Him?

The gal’s hands are a whole lot stronger than what they look. What does she do? Look at her guy. She wants you to tell her who else died because of you. Like she’s going to know what it feels like to be on the roof of a house that just had a bomb detonated inside of it. Like she’s going to understand what it feels like to know that some of your guys had followed you into the house and . . . you knew that moment when you kicked open the door that something wasn’t right. Why did you ask her? She can’t tell you why you didn’t listen to your gut this time when you always listen to your gut. Isn’t there someone who . . .

Why are you yelling at her? How can she just keep looking into my eyes? Why doesn’t she just leave me alone? Why doesn’t everyone leave me alone? I’m not looking for sympathy.

Look at everyone guy – no one is feeling sorry for you. They’re just listening. Let them listen. You don’t have to see them again after today so . . . why are you telling them about just running over grandpa’s dog? Who cares about a dog? No one wants to be around someone who’s spilling out his guts.

You just know gal don’t you that I haven’t told you everything. How long can she just sit there on her knees looking at me without saying anything? She has to be able to tell that I just can’t talk about it. How can she be so much like lil sis? Only lil sis believes that I really didn’t mean to kill grandpa.

She probably has never fished a day in her life. She isn’t blaming me for killing grandpa. No one here is blaming me. But it was my fault. It was.

They want to pray for me. They’re closing in on me. They’re putting their hands on me. I’m suffocating. You didn’t give them the okay that that could do this. You’re looking uncomfortable gal? Why now?

That’s a kid’s voice praying. Men are supposed to pray – not kids. Can someone really talk to God like that? Who is he to thank God for His love and mercy in my life? If God really loved me, all those bad things that’ve happened to me wouldn’t have happened. How can he know whether or not God really cares about me? What makes him so sure that everyone is being blessed to be able to celebrate with God this moment that He has me stuck in right now? You’re just a kid. But . . . he couldn’t have known grandpa. How come he sounds so much like grandpa?

How many are going to pray? How can you be so confident in what you’re saying lady? Why are you praying anyway? Who gave you license lady to use Jesus’ name to rebuke any evil spirit that’d keep me from experiencing a joy filled life? It just isn’t ever going to happen lady. Where would I begin?

Why is somebody pulling on my shirt? What does my little buddy want me to do? I know gal – but you’re going to have to give him a pass. How’s he to know that he shouldn’t talk while someone else is praying?

You didn’t pick the best moment little guy to want to get my attention. What is it that he wants me to see? Why is he pointing at the window? It’s just a stained glass window.

You’re saying the cross is crying, too. What cross? There’s a cross in the window? How come you hadn’t seen the cross? The sun just coming out . . . you’re right kid – the raindrops running down from the brown and through the reddish pane sections look like . . . actually kid, it looks like blood flowing from the cross.

What’s that word written under the cross? I believe you God! It has to be true! I know that I really am!

*It's him. Why is he curled up in a fetal position on the floor? Guy – it was just a really close lightning strike. Good grief guy – stop yelling. Why is he telling everyone to stay down? The guy has gone bananas.*

*Where did she come from? Who does she think she is? How's she going to help him? She needs as much help as he does. What are you thinking gal? Move. Do something.*

*Thanks guy for getting him to shut up. What are you looking for? You're looking at me. Why are you motioning me to . . . you take care of him. I don't know him. She wants me over there, too. Guys – really, I can't help him. I don't know him from . . . why am I going over there? What am I going to do?*

*You do know gal that you've just gotten on your knees and that you're now holding the guy's hands. This can't be happening. They don't have to all look at me. Why can't they all find something else to do? Where's daddy? Why are you looking at me like that daddy? Does that look mean that you really believe that I can . . . you've never looked at me like that before daddy. What's happened to you?*

*The guy probably doesn't even know what's happening around him. Why doesn't he stop sniveling? Why are you crying – you don't know what he's crying about. Just ask him to tell you why he's crying. How does he know that I can't help him? Maybe I can. I'm not leaving until he tells me what happened to him.*

*What does he mean that I don't want to know what happened to him? Who's he to tell me that I don't want to know? I really do want to know. Get him to look at you. Good. He has to believe me.*

*Why is he squeezing my hands so hard? It hurts. Why are you doing this gal? Everyone can see that this guy has real problems. Can't one of the guys around here take him someplace and . . .*

*Okay – after you slid into the shortstop totally messing up his knee, no one except your grandpa wanted anything to do with you anymore. What's a shortstop? I'm sure that he didn't hurt the shortstop on purpose. That has to be hard though to forget having hurt someone. Poor guy having to live with that.*

*Where did the chair come from? The guy can sit on the chair – I'll just stay on my knees in front of him.*

*As soon as he finished high school he enlisted. Okay – then what. Keep him talking. He needs to know that it's okay that . . . keep looking at him. Why do you want him looking at you? Just listen to him gal.*

*You liked being in the service. Your deployment was really going well. You got to spend a lot of time with the kids over there. You did mostly night patrols. You liked how quiet it always got at night. Your grandpa taught you to hear everything. You always knew when something wasn't right.*

*You were almost to the end of your first tour when . . . here goes. Here comes the crying again. The kid who carried the radio was killed because you exposed him when you did what? You were on a day patrol. Your gut told you that something wasn't right at the same time an armored vehicle turned a corner and . . . the driver wouldn't stop. You're saying guy that you crawled into the vehicle while it was laying on its side and that you were able to get all four guys out before the fire . . . guy, you're a hero. But wasn't the kid doing what you were doing – trying to save the guys from dying? You want me to tell you why God would have a kid killed who was always talking to Him? He's asking me? How do I know? What do you mean you should've been the guy who was killed instead of . . . that really is a gunshot scar on his neck.*

*Did I really mean it when I said that I want to hear everything? Of course I meant it. There's more? After you got out of the hospital and after . . . you were given the okay to return to your unit. You were glad when you were deployed back to the same area in the same country. You were learning the language. Your little sister would send you at least one package every week with stuff that you'd give to the local kids.*

*Why are you yelling? Okay – yell if you have to yell. It's okay little guy. He'll be okay. I hope.*

*You know that I won't understand? Of course you won't understand how he's feeling. How can you – you obviously gal have been living in isolation from the real world where . . . what've I been missing?*

*You need to just keep calmly asking him what happened. There're guys all around you if . . . you know he won't hurt you. Why me? Why can't someone else talk to him?*

*It's okay guy if you don't want to tell me what happened. What did he do? You were the leader of a response team that followed up on reports from informants of where . . . hope someone knows what he's talking about because I sure don't. This military stuff that he keeps talking about . . . how am I supposed to identify with him with what happened over there? This war stuff is . . .*

*You knew something was wrong the second that you kicked in the door. You knew that you should've aborted immediately going into the house but . . . he can tell me what happened. Those poor eyes . . .*

*You left your men checking the rooms while you ran up the steps to the flat roof where . . . you don't know why you did that? There was noise and dust everywhere. The roof disintegrated under you. Your leg got caught between broken pieces of roof. There wasn't any house anymore. He led his men into a trap? Four of his guys were in the house when . . .*

*Get him to slow down – that it's okay that . . . why does he keep screaming that it was his fault? Why was it his fault that . . . the four guys were killed? That's terrible. You wanted to die? You didn't want to die? You couldn't find your gun. Why did he need his gun? Who are insurgents anyway? They were shooting at you from a place across the street. Your leg was crushed? Your vest stopped two bullets before . . . you could've died guy. Isn't he glad to be still alive?*

*You'd be shaking too gal if . . . the doctors wanted to amputate his leg. Why? The doctors told him that he'd never walk again on that leg? He's right – he proved them wrong.*

*Why doesn't someone say something? Why is everyone just standing there like . . . I don't know what to say to him. He's looking at me like I'm supposed to feel sorry for him or something. Who is he? Why is he here? You're forgetting gal that he's here because you . . . why was he driving that old car? Something must've just happened that . . . he has to be running from something. What is it?*

*He ran over his grandpa's dog? That should teach him to have a pet around. No one will ever catch daddy wasting money on dogfood. Did he just say that he killed his grandpa, too? That's not funny. Let go of my hands. Why did he want to kill his grandpa? I knew that I should've . . .*

*So you and your grandpa were fishing at the big rock in your grandpa's pasture. Your grandpa always listened to you. I'm listening to you. Your grandpa saw you slide into second base. Your grandpa knew that you didn't mean to hurt your friend. What has that got to do with you killing your grandpa?*

*Your grandpa always caught fish. He said it was because of his crooked steel rod that he always caught fish. Your grandpa decided that you and he should go home because there was a thunderstorm blowing up on the other side of the lake? You told your grandpa that you wanted to throw out just one more time your red and white Dare Devil and then . . . this is probably not a good time to ask him what a Dare Devil is. So he hooked the biggest northern that he ever hooked in his life. Would daddy know what a northern is? I doubt it. Have you ever fished daddy?*

*His grandpa had the biggest smile on his face? You couldn't get the fish in because . . . guy – you look like the world just crashed in on you. He has to tell me what happened. Keep him talking somehow. I want to know. Everyone wants to know.*

*You were lying against the lake's bank behind the big rock. He doesn't know how he got there? His grandpa was lying on his back? He was totally still. He looked so peaceful.*

*It never rained. Not a drop fell. The rain has stopped here. The sun is shining.*

*You didn't know what to do. You called for help. No one could hear you? You drove your grandpa's car to the house. How's it his fault?*

*What did he do to his grandpa? Why is he asking me why God would have a lightning bolt strike his grandpa's steel rod? How would I know? The cloud was on the other side of the lake. Your grandpa was holding his rod and . . . why is he saying that he killed his grandpa? Why is he saying that everyone says that he killed his grandpa? How could he have known that his grandpa was going to be . . . it wasn't raining? Did he say that it never rained a drop? Did the doctor really tell him that his grandpa never knew what hit him?*

*You're losing it again guy. Why won't someone help me? Why does he keep saying that if he'd listened to his grandpa when his grandpa said that . . . how did he kill his grandpa? You've got to get him to listen to you – he didn't kill his grandpa. He has to listen to me. And then his grandma died a few months later because . . . why does he keep blaming himself for . . . doesn't he know that God is going to let happen what He knows is going to happen? How do you know that gal? How much do you know about God? It has to be that way if God is . . . and who told you that?*

*What are you doing God to this guy? Like I thought my life was the pits – good grief God – why have You put him through the mill? What do you want from him? I know that he believes in You. So why?*

*You're all going to get around him and pray for him? No – let me out of here. I don't belong here – I don't know how to pray. Who put their hand on my shoulder? Take your hand off. Please. I can't be touched. You're stuck gal. How many hands are on me? Who would dare put their hand on my head?*

*Why is there a kid praying? It's the pastor's kid. Who does he think he is? You don't sound like your dad. You're talking to God like He's right here. He's right here gal – don't you believe that? Why would God want to be anywhere near me after . . . I haven't done a thing for Him. What has He asked me to do for Him other than to just believe in Him? Nothing but . . .*

*Now who's praying? It's that lady. I've got to meet her. She'd listen to me if . . . how can someone pray with such . . . she really believes what she's saying. I want to learn to pray like that. Do I have to pray for him? Everyone will know that . . .*

*What's that little monster doing now? Why can't his dad put a rope around him and . . . why is he tugging on the guy's shirt? That's not cool kid what you're doing. Can't he tell that that lady over there with the beautiful smile is still praying?*

*What does he want him to see? Why does he want him to look at the stained glass window? You're telling him that the cross in the window is crying? Must be nice kid to have an imagination. That's just water from the rain still running down the window. Sorry to . . .*

*Why are you grabbing that little troublemaker like he's your long lost friend? Why are you thanking him like . . . I've been the one who has been listening to you. What's happened to you guy? You look like the weight of the whole world has just been taken off your shoulders.*

*Did something just happen here that . . . what've I missed? Why is the guy hugging everyone like . . . why does he keep saying it's true, it's true, it's true, it's true.*

*How come you didn't see anything when you looked at the stained glass window? Guess those drops of rainwater coming off the cross could look like tears. Just call them happy tears as . . . looking up there at the cross sure has changed the guy. How come it isn't working for me?*

*The guy isn't pointing to the cross; he's pointing to the plaque under the stained glass window. He's right! It's true! I am!*

*Where's daddy? He has to look at the plaque that's under the window. Does daddy see what's on it? He has got to know. Daddy can be, too – just like I know that I've been.*

*Forgiven.*