

Judge Not Lest You Be Judged

Week Ten Back to the Beach

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While making their plans to move to the beach, Ed and Amy hang around the University simply because their housing has already been paid for the entire semester. And, there are a few loose ends to tie up, such as withdrawing from their classes. Since they'll be around campus for a few more weeks, they'll still be able to attend the Interdenominational Campus Fellowship meeting and use the University's athletic center.

Mid week, Amy and Ed look online at homes for sale near the South end of the beach where Amy will be working. Finding a few possibilities, Amy makes a few notes, planning another trip down to the beach. Amy also checks her bank account, making sure she can afford the homes she plans to look at. And then, there are the wedding plans. Amy always wanted to get married on the beach. With the clock running down before they start work, Ed and Amy realize they have a lot of work to do.

Mitch, the division chief, has allowed Ed and Amy to stay at the bunkhouse as they make their transition to the beach. Mitch has told Amy that she can feel free to start whenever she wants, as long as it is before the Spring rush to the beach. Ed is a little less flexible. Ed's starting date is right at the beginning of the year, when the big annual rush to the gym begins.

Early on Friday morning, Ed and Amy pack up, ready to head to the beach for the weekend. Meeting in front of Amy's dorm, Ed asks Amy, "are you ready?" Amy replies, "more than ever. I can't wait to get out of this place." Ed asks, "do you mean permanently, or just for the weekend?" Amy replies, "well, kind of both." Amy then asks Ed, "did you see the difference between the people down at the beach, and the people here at the University?" Ed replies, "I see what you mean. Everyone down at the beach is really happy. Around here, most people are, well, you know." Amy clearly gets what Ed is saying.

Walking to Ed's Jeep with their scantily packed duffle bags, Amy is definitely looking forward to a weekend at the beach. Coming up to his Jeep, Ed suddenly drops his duffle bag on the ground, running to the other side of the vehicle. Hearing the sound of his tire punctured by a knife, Ed quickly moves in and apprehends the vandal. Ed squeezes the vandal's hand with unmerciful pressure, forcing him to relinquish the knife.

Once the situation is under control, Ed yells out to Amy, "call the police!" Amy, who videoed the altercation between Ed and Rodney, replies, "sure! No problem!" Rodney begs Ed, "please! Please, don't call the police! I'm sorry! I'll pay for the tires! I'm sorry!" Ed asks Rodney, "with what? The money you stole from the fellowship, junior?" Ignoring Rodney's apology, Amy calls the campus police, requesting that an officer meet her at the parking lot across from Ed's dorm.

Ed asks Rodney, "what was that all about, junior?" Sobbing like a baby, Rodney explains, "I'm sorry! I said I'll pay for the tires." Quite angry that Rodney slashed three of his tires, Ed asks, "suppose we showed up an hour later, Steele? Then what? Would you be sorry then? Would you offer to pay for the tires you damaged then?" Seeing that Rodney does not answer Ed, Amy tells Ed, "the only thing he's sorry about is that he got caught."

The campus police arrive. The officer walks over, announcing, "I'm Officer Branson. What's going on here?" Ed replies, "junior, here, just slashed three of my tires." Pointing to Rodney's knife, Ed tells Officer Branson, "his knife is over there, on the ground." In a moment of desperation, Rodney exclaims, "I did not! I've never seen that knife before in my life!" Amy tells Officer Branson, "he's lying," and shows the officer the video she took of Rodney with the knife in his hand. Officer Branson, who is no idiot, reviews the video, clearly seeing the evidence.

Officer Branson tells Rodney, "the young lady has a video of you in an altercation with this gentleman. During the altercation, that knife laying over there is clearly in your hand. I am going to give you an opportunity to revise your story. Go ahead. I'm listening." Rodney relents, telling the officer, "okay! Okay! But, I told him I'd pay for his tires." Hearing Rodney's confession, the officer obtains Rodney's student ID card, cuffs Rodney, and places him in the back seat of his patrol car. Rodney sobs himself a river, desperately thinking of a way to get himself out of this one.

Officer Branson explains to Ed, "this is a property damage issue. This is what I'm going to do. I'm going to take him down to the station, and get his info. This case will then be referred to the dean." Ed asks, "how about my tires?" The officer explains, "I've seen cases like this before. If

he doesn't pay for your tires, the dean will expel him. And, since the perp is a senior, I strongly suspect that he will gladly pay for the damage, otherwise he won't graduate. And, if he doesn't pay for your tires, you can always take him to small claims court." Although Ed breathes a sigh of relief, he and Amy will not be getting on the road anytime soon.

Officer Branson leaves, taking Rodney away. Quite upset, Amy asks Ed, "now what do we do?" Ed replies, "I call a tow truck, and have the Jeep towed to the tire shop on Spring Street. Once I get new tires, we'll be on our way. We should be out of here by lunch. When we get back, I'll hit Steele up for the bill." Amy tells Ed, "you make this sound so easy." Ed replies, "I've been reading the *Eddie, The Mechanic* series. Obstacles are only obstacles if you let them be obstacles."

After lunch, Ed returns to campus with his Jeep and five new tires. After all, the spare tire needs to match the other four tires. Ed and Amy load up the Jeep, and head out to the beach. Meanwhile, Rodney is sitting in the police station where the campus police are in no rush to deal with him. Making Rodney wait for hours is the police department's way of sending him a strong message. While he is waiting in the holding cell, Rodney reviews the video that Amy was kind enough to email to both him and the campus police.

Ed and Amy finally arrive at the beach, albeit five hours after they planned. With the day winding down, Ed and Amy drive around and preview a few houses that Amy has picked out to look at with the real estate agent tomorrow morning. After the short tour around the neighborhood, Ed and Amy head to the bunkhouse. Once they are settled in, Ed and Amy head to the beach for the evening.

Walking along the beach, Amy tells Ed, "it's quarter after seven. The campus fellowship meeting is starting about now." Ed replies, "that's right! I wonder if Steele made it." Amy suggests, "why don't you text Pete and find out." Ed replies, "that's a good idea. I think I'll do that."

Ed texts to Pete, "Hey. Did Steele show up tonight?" Pete immediately texts back, "No. He's MIA." Ed texts to Pete, "He's probably still in the campus jail." Pete texts back, "What???" Ed stops, and texts to Pete, "Steele slashed my tires this morning. We caught him. Called the campus police. They took him away." Pete texts to Ed, "They're starting. Theresa is making an announcement. BRB." Ed shows Amy the conversation, who mentions, "wow! I wonder what's up with Rodney." Ed replies, "he's probably in his dorm room, drinking a six-pack of beer." Amy laughs, and tells Ed, "that could be!"

Continuing on their walk down the beach, Amy tells Ed, "the house we saw the last time we were down here was my favorite, from the outside,

anyway.” Ed concurs, telling Amy, “I agree. It’s made of concrete, and far enough in from the beach that, when there’s a hurricane, it will survive.” Amy replies, “I never thought about that!”

Along their walk, Amy takes her camera and, putting it on a picnic table, sets the automatic timer. Using the ocean as a backdrop, Amy and Ed quickly get into position and pose for the photograph. The picture is taken and Amy and Ed rush over to take a look. Amy tells Ed, “let’s get a few more. I’m going to post these online later.” Amy gets a few more photographs of her and Ed on the beach, and Ed gets a very special photograph of Amy with the lifeguard station on her future beach as the backdrop.

Interrupting Ed and Amy’s photo shoot, Pete texts to Ed, “Theresa says Rodney has to quit leading the fellowship. Concussion is bad. Says he can’t function.” Not quite believing that Rodney’s concussion is the reason for Rodney resigning from his leadership position, Ed texts back, “Yeah, right. Steele couldn’t function before his concussion.” Pete texts to Ed, “They’re asking if anyone wants to lead the group.” Ed texts back to Pete, “Let me know who they pick.”

Ed tells Amy, “Steele quit leading the fellowship. He’s apparently blaming his concussion.” With a bit of sarcasm, Amy tells Ed, “I’m sure that’s it. It probably has nothing to do with pilfering from the fellowship or slashing tires. Wait a second! If I remember correctly, one of Jesus’ twelve Disciple’s stole from the money box! His name was Judas Iscariot.” Ed mentions, “wow! That’s right! Now, I’m really wondering if Steele is a believer.”

Amy then digresses, and tells Ed, “we shouldn’t really judge Rodney.” Ed replies, “I get that. But, the Bible says, ‘you will know them by their fruits’. Steele’s fruit is all rotten. First, he gossips, and reposts pictures of you and Jenny online. Then, he steals from the fellowship for two years. And, yeah. I get that he confessed it. But, when I told him that I didn’t really know that he had a secret and that I was just messing with him, he got really ticked off. So, the only reason he supposedly repented is because he thought I knew what he was doing. Then, he slashes my tires and then he had the nerve to lie about it to the officer. That’s all rotten fruit.” Amy agrees, telling Ed, “you do have a point. Whenever you see a tree, and there’s rotten fruit on it, the fruit never goes back to being edible again. It just rots out more.”

Ed tells Amy, “I would just like to see one piece of good fruit on Steele’s tree. Just one.” Amy replies, “come to think about it, I can’t think of any.” Ed replies, “that’s because there isn’t any. He’s just like the Pharisees. Shiny and clean on the outside but, on the inside, he’s full of robbery and wickedness.” Amy replies, “I totally see that now.”

A while later, as they are walking down the beach, Ed gets another text from Pete. Ed takes out his phone, seeing a message from Pete that reads, “New leader. Mike Collins stepped up.” Ed texts back to Pete, “That’s good news.” Showing Amy the text from Pete, Ed tells her, “Mike Collins is leading the fellowship now. That’s a vast improvement over Steele.”

Amy comments, “I still can’t believe that Rodney said, ‘I’m sure we’ll all be glad to see Ed and Amy go.’ That was really in bad taste.” Ed laughs, and tells Amy, “and, he gets ticked off because I call him ‘Steele’? Then, he tells me that what I do is not very Christian like?” Amy points out, “he plays on people’s emotions.” Ed replies, “exactly. Dana and Donna do the same thing.”

After a long walk down the beach, Ed and Amy sit in the sand and talk for a while. With no pressure to wake up early in the morning, Ed and Amy take the time to plan their wedding, pick a tentative wedding date, and plan their move to the beach. At the top of the list for tomorrow, Ed and Amy again review the homes they planned to look at. Around midnight, Ed and Amy head back to the bunkhouse, finding all five tires on Ed’s Jeep in perfect condition.

The next day, Ed and Amy meet the real estate agent, who shows them the homes that Amy picked out to view. Going from home to home, in her mind, Amy keeps coming back to the home she saw during their previous trip to the beach. The home needed no work, was a few blocks from the beach, and, as Ed pointed out, is likely to survive a hurricane. By mid morning, Amy has made an executive decision and puts a contract on the cozy little cottage she just can’t get out of her mind. Ed, who is used to living in a dorm room, has no objection. Truth be told, all Ed needs is a place to lay his head at night.

Before lunch, Amy and Ed head to the church that Amy attended when she lived in the area. Amy and Ed speak with the pastor, and confirm their wedding date they chose yesterday while sitting on the beach. With everything falling into place so easily, Ed and Amy conclude that God is clearly at work in their lives.

Saturday afternoon, Ed and Amy head to the beach again. Lying in the sand, Ed tells Amy, “finally, I’ve figured out what I want to do in my life.” Amy tells Ed, “when it comes so easy, God must be at work. For a long time, I was trying to figure out what to do with my life. It was right there in front of me all the time. I can’t believe I didn’t see it.” Ed replies, “seriously. I know what you mean. It’s been right in front of me all the time too.” Voicing her pet peeve, Amy explains to Ed, “and, what’s really weird is that, if you find something that you really want to do, and it

doesn't conform to what everyone else thinks you should be doing, it's somehow not a 'real job'."

Amy gets up, sits behind Ed and puts her arms around him, telling him, "well, Ed Becker, I guess we're stuck with our not so real jobs." Ed replies, "good. I don't want a 'real job' anyway. A real job is when you wake up way too early in the morning and drive to work, sitting in rush hour traffic. Then, when you get there, you're stuck inside all day long, chained to a desk, with a half-dozen people telling you what to do. Then, when it's time to go home, you sit in rush hour traffic all over again." Amy tells Ed, "my dad used to call that 'live to work'. He always wanted to 'work to live' instead. But, he could never really figure out how to do that." Ed assures Amy, "we'll figure it out." Amy replies, "I think we already did."

Amy abruptly tells Ed, "let's go in the water!" Ed and Amy run to the water and head out into the ocean. Only a few people venture to go out in the water during the off season, for the water is a bit on the cold side. Observing the obvious, Ed tells Amy, "there's not a whole lot of people in the water today." Amy explains, "that's because the water is getting colder. A lot of the people out here right now are Canadians or from the Northeast. The water is warm here compared with what they get up there."

After an afternoon on the beach, heading back to the Jeep, Amy exclaims, "oh, oh, oh! I almost forgot! I have a surprise for you!" Ed replies, "really? What is it?" Amy smiles, and replies, "if I tell you, it won't be a surprise anymore, now will it?" Ed asks, "when do I get my surprise?" Amy replies, "how about right now, before we have dinner? But, we'll have to drive to your surprise. And, you can't exactly take it back to the University with you." Ed and Amy get into Ed's Jeep, and Amy directs Ed to his surprise.

Arriving at the county park, Amy tells Ed, "I would tell you to close your eyes, but you're driving." Ed laughs, telling Amy, "unless you give me very precise instructions of when to turn and when to stop or go." Amy tells Ed to pull into a parking space at the side of a building, where they get out of the Jeep. Amy instructs Ed to close his eyes, as they walk hand in hand around the outside of the building to get to where Ed's surprise is waiting for him.

Amy tells Ed, "okay. You can open your eyes now." Ed opens his eyes, seeing an Olympic size swimming pool, complete with a diving area having two high boards and one low board. Amy exclaims, "surprise! You can still dive when we move down here!" Ed exclaims, "wow! This is awesome, Amy!" Amy points out, "the icing on the cake is that there's a separate diving pool with diving platforms. I've never dived from a

platform before, though.” Ed replies, “neither have I. But, I dived off a cliff once.” Amy tells Ed, “this is where I dived when I lived down here.” Ed and Amy take a walk around as Amy shows Ed what else is in the park.

Sitting on a bench near the tennis courts, Ed tells Amy, “this is a really nice park. It has everything.” Amy replies, “there’s not many people here right now but, during the Summer, this place really comes alive. It’s kind of like that song, *Saturday in the Park* by the group Chicago.” Ed tells Amy, “I like busy parks. They feel alive. It must be really nice here in the Summer.” Amy replies, “it is. It really is.”

Amy asks Ed, “do you want to hear something really funny about a song?” Ed replies, “sure.” Amy asks Ed, “do you know that song *Kodachrome*, by Paul Simon?” Ed replies, “yeah.” Amy explains, “well, in the song, he says he likes to take a photograph. But, here’s the problem. Kodachrome is a color-reversal film. It’s used for making slides and movies, not photographic prints. Kodacolor is Kodak’s film for making prints. But, it’s kind of hard to get anything to rhyme with Kodacolor.” Ed laughs and replies, “I never knew that!” Amy tells Ed, “sometimes I think I’m the only person in the world who’s seen that.”

Amy then asks Ed, “do you want to hear something else that’s kind of funny?” Ed replies, “sure.” Amy tells Ed, “Paul Simon wrote another song, called *Mother and Child Reunion*. He got the name of the song title from a Chinese restaurant menu.” Ed interrupts, and asks, “how’s that?” Amy explains, “in a Chinese restaurant, the dish called *Mother and Child Reunion* is chicken and egg.” Ed laughs, and replies, “that’s really kind of funny.”

Amy tells Ed, “getting back to the park, the good part is that it’s a county park, so the tourists can’t use it.” Ed tells Amy, “this whole area is perfect. I don’t know why you ever left.” Amy smiles, and replies, “to find you, Ed Becker, and to find out what’s wrong with me. And, now I’m coming back to where I really belong.” Ed tells Amy, “I love you so much,” and gives Amy a big hug and kiss.

As they walk back to Ed’s Jeep, Ed tells Amy, “once we get settled, I want to coach a high school sport.” Amy asks, “do you think you can do that?” Ed replies, “I’m reading the manual.” Amy quickly recalls the first time she met Ed at the pool, when Ed told her that he read the diving board manual right before coming out to dive. Amy laughs, and asks, “and, just what manual is that, Mr. Becker?” Ed replies, “the *Eddie, The Mechanic Series*. Mr. Frazier is a really great coach.”

Ed then mentions to Amy, “I still want to know if Mr. Frazier is a real person or not. There’s just way too much stuff in that series that sounds real to me.” Amy reminds Ed, “Joe said he can probably find out for you.”

Ed replies, "I should ask him if he found out when we get back." After a nice tour around the park, Ed and Amy head down the road to find dinner.

After their nice relaxing weekend at the beach, Ed and Amy are totally convinced that they have made the right decision to move to the beach town near where Amy grew up. Early Monday morning, they head back to the University where they will spend the rest of the week skipping classes, going to the gym, and planning for their future.