

FINICUS MCFARLEY

01/23/20 – 01/25/20 | Episodes 5, 6, 7

In this story, the lives of two best friends are changed in an instant because of a lie and jealousy.

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Just who is “Finicus McFarley” and why is he important?

To hear him tell the story, Finicus would say, **“Who I am isn’t as important as what I do or what I have done, if I have done anything at all.”** So, to answer the question, **“Who is Finicus McFarley and why is he important?”** isn’t as important as what he said.

First a little bit of background.

Finicus, whose real name is “Charlie McFarley” is the only child of Mary and Charles McFarley of Rochester, New York. He was born on Sept. 6, 1960 in Newark, New Jersey. His parents were visiting relatives at the time. He earned the nickname “Finicus” from his mother because as a child, little Charlie McFarley was finicky about everything, particularly his appearance and how he dressed. Thus, the name stuck and “Finicus” is what he always answered to.

Unlike his parents, Finicus was a tall, lanky child; always sickly and not very handsome. In fact, some would say he was downright ugly. Because of this and for other reasons poor Finicus was always the brunt of someone’s joke or the favorite target of bullies, especially in elementary and middle school.

While young Finicus was tortured over the years by a variety of bullies who pulled every prank from pantsing him to putting glue on his chair, calling him names, placing him headfirst in the trashcan or school

toilet, etc., none were as loathsome to Finicus as Ebenezer “Vice Grip” McNulty – a former boyhood best friend who had gone awry and who had a personal vendetta against Finicus because of a lie told to him (McNulty) by a cousin who said at a family birthday party that Finicus had told some classmates that Ebenezer wet the bed.

While it was true that Ebenezer did in fact wet the bed until he was 12-years old, it was not true that Finicus had told his classmates. However, because it was a cousin who said it, McNulty believed it and the rest is history. Finicus was going to pay for his alleged wrongdoing for as long as he was where the Vice Grip could see him.

Why do they call McNulty “Vice Grip”? Because he stands 4 to 5 inches taller than most of his classmates and has the physique of Arnold Schwarzenegger. Once he gets you in a bear hug, it’s all over.

Let us fast forward to that fateful day in middle school when Vice Grip finally got the revenge, he wanted against Finicus.

On this particular day, Ebenezer had his cousin deliver a note to Finicus apologizing for all the times he bullied him and asked if the two could meet at the old McCloskey Factory at the edge of town in order to bury the hatchet.

Finicus thought it strange that Ebenezer would want to meet him there, but if it meant burying the hatchet and becoming friends again, he was on board. He told Ebenezer’s cousin, **“Tell EB”** (that is what he used to call Ebenezer) **that I will meet him as requested.”**

At the appointed time Finicus jumped onto his bicycle and cycled to the edge of town where the abandoned McCloskey Factory is located.

When he arrived standing just outside a door that led into a creepy old building was McNulty. He appeared to be alone.

“Hey Fin!” That is the nickname McNulty used to refer to Finicus as.
“Thanks for meeting me here.”

“Sure, no problem EB. But why here?” Finicus responded back. **“We could have met at my house...or yours!”**

“Yeah, I know,” Vice Grip retorted. **“I asked you to meet me here not only so I can apologize for how terrible I treated you over the years, but because there is something, I want to show you that I recently discovered. Kind of like what we used to do when we were kids.”**

“Never mind the apology, Eb. As long as we can be friends again, that is all I care about,” Finicus responded. With that, both boys shook hands before Finicus asked, **“So, what is this something that you want me to see?”**

“Oh yeah. That. It’s right here just inside this building,” McNulty responded back. He was referring to the creepy old building that he was standing in front of when Finicus first rode up.

Finicus could not help but notice that Ebenezer appeared nervous or agitated. That is when he asked his old friend, **“Is everything okay Eb? You seem nervous about something.”**

“Sure. Everything is fine Fin. No worries”, McNulty fired back. **“C’mon, let’s check out what I found so we can leave this place. Why I picked this place to meet you is beyond me. This place gives me the willies.”**

Finicus chuckled before entering the building first at the prodding of McNulty.

The building was as creepy on the inside as it was on the outside. In one corner of the building was some abandoned machinery and other miscellaneous equipment covered by layers of dust and cobwebs. There was also a door just on the other side of where the equipment was located that led into another building.

“Is this what you wanted me to see?” Finicus asked, pointing toward the equipment.

“No,” said McNulty. **“What I want you to see is located in the other building just beyond that door. C’mon, let’s check it out.”**

Finicus entered first. His guard was down having no reason not to trust his now best friend again -- or so he thought.

Just as they entered the building, Finicus felt a sharp blow to his back that caused him to fall forward, face down onto the dirt floor.

As he hit the ground, he felt the wind escape from his lungs with such a force that he passed out.

When he regained consciousness, Finicus found that he had been stripped of all his clothes save for his underwear. He was sitting on the cold ground with his legs and arms wrapped around one of several columns that were standing in the center of the building, held in place by duct tape.

He could barely make out the surroundings of the building for two reasons: He was not wearing his glasses, and, his eyes were puffy and bruised. No doubt a result of the fall to the floor.

After a few minutes had passed, Finicus heard a voice. It was Vice Grip McNulty. He was with two of his friends including the cousin who was the reason for all this, who said, **“Finicus! You are the piece of** (bad

word) **that I discovered here. Well, sort of. This isn't revenge Fin. It's payback. I warned you the day would come when I would get you back for telling everyone that I wet the bed. I want you to feel the pain I felt that day when some of our friends began making fun of me because of it.**"

Finicus was beginning to lose consciousness again, but not before saying two things to McNulty, **"Revenge and payback mean the same thing and it wasn't me who said anything, it was your ..."** Finicus passed out just as he was about to reveal to Ebenezer who it was that told their friends that he wet the bed.

McNulty turned to his two friends and cousin and warned them that they had better never tell what happened that day. **"What are we going to do with him?"** his cousin asked. **"Are we just going to leave him here?"** **"Yeah!"** McNulty shot back. **"But he could die!"** his cousin said. **"Fine! Then let him die for all I care,"** McNulty responded. **"He got what he deserved and that is all I care about."**

While the two friends who had joined McNulty and his cousin Kevin showed no remorse for what Ebenezer had done to Finicus, Kevin was a different story.

Kevin couldn't help thinking about Finicus and how McNulty left him duct taped to that column. He knew as they left the building that he not only harmed Finicus, he also ruined his cousin's football career should people learn the truth of what they did to Finicus. All because of jealousy and a lie.

Here is the back story of that short story.

Ebenezer and Kevin whose fathers are brothers had always been close since childhood. Ebenezer meets Finicus and they become best

friends. Ebenezer and Kevin grow further apart. Kevin becomes jealous of Finicus, blaming him for the demise in his friendship with his cousin. Hence the reason he told their friends that Ebenezer wet the bed but convinced Ebenezer that Finicus was the one responsible for spilling the beans. Which brings us to this wise old truth from Sir Walter Scott (1808) ... **"Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive!"**

Ten hours had passed since the incident. Finicus' parents began to become worried when their son had not returned home. **"He has never stayed out late before without letting us know,"** his mother said to her husband. **"Don't worry dear,"** her husband responded. **"I will go out and look for him. You stay here in case he comes home."**

Finicus remained unconscious in that cold empty building with nothing but the column to support the weight of his tired body. His body was leaned forward against the column as if to find some form of respite from the pain of being duct taped to it. He had been sitting on the cold hard floor with his hands and legs wrapped around the column for ten hours.

His father drove all over town in his attempt to locate his son, except the outskirts of town where the old McCloskey Factory was located. He didn't think to search there because that was a place, he was certain his son would never be.

Too much time had passed that even he began to show concern for his son. After checking with his wife to see if Finicus had returned home, which he had not, McFarley made a second sweep of the area he covered previously. McFarley decided that it was time to enlist the assistance of a power far greater than he.

At that moment McFarley made a hard U-Turn and headed toward St. Patrick's Church which is located, of all places, right next door to the McCloskey Factory.

Thankfully the church was still open. Father O'Reilly was inside the church performing some housekeeping tasks when McFarley walked in.

"Why hello there Charlie McFarley," Father O'Reilly said. **"What brings you to this happy and holy place?"**

"Fnicus, Father! Fnicus is what brought me here." His father said. **"He is missing. We can't find him anywhere. His mother and I are worried sick. He is my only son. I drove all over town trying to find him. No one has seen him. I didn't know what else to do except to come here and pray. I didn't want Maureen to see how concerned I am. Father, will you pray with me, please?"**

"Why of course we will pray together," the good reverend said. **"Let us not lose hope Charlie. Let us entrust our prayer to the good Lord through His Mother. What better person to petition on our behalf than she who once lost the good Lord himself - for three days mind you. But she found Him, and you will find Fnicus. Now, let us pray believing that our prayer has already been answered."**

At the very moment Charlie McFarley Sr., and Fr. O'Reilly began to pray, something miraculous began to occur in the factory.

Out of the darkness shone a bright light. And from that light came a voice, **"Fnicus? Fnicus? Wake up child. It is time for you to wake up. The Lord has heard the prayers of your parents and has sent me to help you. Wake up Fnicus. It is time to wake up,"** the voice said.

At that moment Finicus regained consciousness. The brightness from the light made it difficult for him to see. For the moment the room he was in was no longer cold. It felt warm and peaceful.

“Whose there?” Finicus asked with a weak voice. **“Who is calling me?”**

“Who I am is not important, little one” the voice responded. **“I need you to remain conscious for a few minutes more. Your father will be here soon.”**

“My father?” Finicus responded. **“Papa doesn’t even know I am here; where I am.”**

“He does now” the voice responded.

At that instant while praying with Fr. O’Reilly, McFarley Senior popped open his eyes and lifted his head looking toward the large crucifix that hung over the main altar and said, **“Thank you, Lord. I am on my way.”**

“What!?” Fr. O’Reilly asked. **“On your way? On your way wear my son?”**

“To the McCloskey Factory next door, Father,” McFarley responded back. **“The Lord showed me as we prayed that my Charlie is someplace at the McCloskey Factory. C’mon, we need to go now.”**

“Yes lad. You go. I will join you there. I just need to lock up the church,” Fr. O’Reilly said. Knowing McFarley wanted the good priest to go with him right then, Fr. O’Reilly said, **“Saints be praised. Lord Jesus, I have to run. No time to lock up the church. I am counting on your angels to keep the church safe while I am away,”** and off they went at a fast gallop to the McCloskey Factory.

They didn’t need to take the car since the factory was right next door.

As they exited the church and looked north toward the factory, both men noticed a bright light coming from the old storage building. McFarley knew the location because he worked for many years at the factory until it shut down.

“Look Father. Look there!” McCloskey senior said. **“There is a light. That must be where Finicus is!”**

“Praise the Lord,” Father O’Reilly said. **“Let me just grab a flashlight just in case we need it.”**

Finicus’ father ran toward the building ahead of Fr. O’Reilly when he tripped over something laying just in front of the door. He didn’t realize that it was Finicus’ bicycle because it was dark outside. Just then Fr. O’Reilly joined him just as the elder McFarley was lifting himself from off the ground.

“Are you okay?” Fr. O’Reilly asked.

“Yes, Father. I am okay. I tripped over something that was sitting in front of this door,” McFarley said.

Fr. O’Reilly pointed his flashlight toward the ground. It was Finicus’ bike. **“Where’s the light?”** His father said as he turned around to enter the building. **“I don’t see that bright light anymore.”**

“Don’t worry about that lad. We have a flashlight. C’mon, let’s go see if we can find Finicus,” Fr. O’Reilly said.

McFarley kicked open the door and began to shout for his boy, **“FINICUS! FINICUS! Are you here? It’s me...papa. Where are you son?”**

Just then Fr. O'Reilly heard a faint sound coming from the back side of the building. When he shined his light toward the direction from where the sound originated, both men could see a second door.

"That is where the sound seemed to be coming from," Fr. O'Reilly said.

"C'mon Father! C'mon," McFarley said as he pointed toward the door.

"I am right behind you," Fr. O'Reilly responded.

As the two men approached the doorway and shined the light of the flashlight inside, McFarley Senior was horrified by what he witnessed. He saw his son beat up and bruised duct taped to a column with nothing but his underwear on.

"Oh, dear Lord" Fr. O'Reilly said while making the sign of the cross. **"What manner of evil be this?"** he asked.

"Finicus!" the elder McFarley shouted, both with relief and anger in his voice. As his father began to cut the tape that bound his hands and feet he asked, **"Finicus! Who did this to you son? Who left you like this?"**

It was more than his father could bare. He broke down as he took his son into his arms, swearing that he would get even with whomever had left his son as he and Fr. O'Reilly had found him.

"No, McFarley!" Father shouted back. **"Revenge is never the answer."**

However, before McFarley senior could get the words out of his mouth, Finicus spoke up and said, **"Papa! Fr. O'Reilly is right. Revenge isn't the answer. We must forgive and we must pray for people like the ones who did this to me. That is what you and Mama have always taught me to do. Why should this be any different just because it involved ..."** At that moment, Finicus lost consciousness again.

“C’mon Father. Let’s get him out of here and take him home!”
McFarley Senior said.

After a few days of bed rest and some medical attention, Finicus regained consciousness and asked for something to eat. His father was at work, but his mother was home with him.

When she asked Finicus what had happened; why someone would strip him of his clothes and leave him duct taped to a, he said in response, **“I think I walked in on something bad mama. I don’t know who they were, but I am thankful that they did not hurt me worse.”**

His mother smiled as she stroked her son’s hair and said, **“Yes son. I suppose you’re right.”** However, call it mother’s intuition, she knew there was more to the story than what Finicus was telling. However, she decided not to push her son. In her heart she knew that he would eventually share what really happened.

Mom’s intuition was spot on. There was more to the story, but it was going to have to come from the one’s responsible and not from Finicus.

About a week after Finicus had been found by his father, Kevin, who was racked with guilt, went to the authorities and explained everything that had happened and turned in the names of those involved, including his cousin Ebenezer. Initially, Ebenezer was furious with Kevin, first for turning them in and second for lying to him about Finicus and the bed wetting situation.

Finicus did not want to press charges against Ebenezer and the other boys. Instead, he asked if he could meet with Ebenezer and Kevin so they could discuss what happened, how it all happened and what happens when jealousy and lying enters into one’s life.

All three boys met at Finicus' house with their parents present.

At the conclusion of the meeting Kevin apologized to Ebenezer and Finicus. Ebenezer apologized to Finicus as well and decided to forgive his cousin. It was at that moment that Ebenezer understood the gravity of what he had done and what could have happened to him had he not been found. He was deeply remorseful. Not just to Finicus but to his parents as well. That evening changed Ebenezer's life for the better. He went on to become a very strong advocate against bullying and anger.

Finicus looked across the table at both boys and said with a smile, **"I forgive you both. Now let's be best friends together."**

The three were inseparable from that point on.

What about the voice in the light you ask that spoke to Finicus from the darkness? Did Finicus ever mention that to his parents?

Yes, but not directly. He ended up writing a book about his experience and that light which he titled, "Let There Be Light!" It went on to become a New York Bestseller and many lives were changed because of it.