Seaside:
Coverups and Blowups on 30A

Series Bible

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A Word About the Setting

This story is the result of having lived in and around Seaside for several years in the 2010s. Nearly all these characters, including Buddy, are based on real people I knew and interacted with. Thus, I feel like I know each one of them better than might be typical in a work of fiction. Naturally, I have not used real names, and there is little identifying material.

Seaside is a popular destination for country music personalities as well as Nashville residents due to its proximity and culture receptive to Nashville in multiple ways. The annual 30A Songwriter's Festival features many performers connected to Nashville. 30A is a popular destination for Nashville residents both as homeowners and as casual tourist. Kenny Chesney, Luke Bryan, Keith Urban, and Jason Aldean are either frequent visitors, homeowners, or investors.

The ability to have guest acting appearances from country stars is a real possibility.

The story itself is of course a complete work of fiction.

Series Logline

When a beloved handyman vanishes from a picture-perfect Florida beach town, the secrets of its wealthy, sun-kissed residents begin to unravel, revealing affairs, blackmail, and a possible murder, all watched over by the town's eccentric voyeur who sees everything they'd rather keep buried.

Format

1 hour TV Dramedy. Season 1: 8 Episodes

A Little History

Historical Background (1882–1985)
Seaside's story begins in 1882, though its coastal environs remained largely undeveloped for nearly a century. In 1946, J.S. Smolian purchased 80 acres on the Northwest Florida coast as a retreat, passing this land to his grandson, Robert S. Davis, in 1978. At this time, the Florida's coastline along county highway 30A was undeveloped.

Around 1981, Davis teamed up with New Urbanist architects to craft Seaside's master plan. They built the first cottages and pavilions, implemented a strict urban code promoting variety and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, and positioned these cottages around a central square with shops and galleries. Seaside quickly became an influential New Urbanism model, known for its pastel cottages, winding sidewalks, and a strong community identity.

Rise to Cultural Landmark (1985–present)
With construction underway by the mid-1980s and initial sales surpassing expectations, Seaside's concept of "funky but sophisticated" design attracted architects, urban planners, and homebuyers alike . It soon became a cultural hub: the town hosted artistic gatherings, fostered a professional repertory theater, and nurtured a vibrant retail and culinary scene in its pedestrian square. Seaside's fame was cemented by its role as the filming location for The Truman Show in 1998 and by serving as a template for later New Urbanist communities like Rosemary Beach and Alys Beach. (Based on information at https://sowal.com/story/the-story-of-seaside-florida)

Series Overview

Seaside is a darkly funny, emotionally rich ensemble drama that explores what happens when the sheen of affluence is stripped away. Set in a sun-drenched town built on appearances, influence, and carefully buried scandal, the series unfolds around the mysterious death of Biff Hartley—a beloved single father with just enough enemies to fill a prayer circle.

Across Season 1, the mystery of Biff's death deepens, unspooling through multiple points of view, morally ambiguous decisions, and long-buried rivalries. From the calculating real estate matriarch to the famous country singer with something to atone for, every character is both suspect and witness. Local oddball Buddy serves as our Greek chorus, offering biting voiceovers that frame each episode with Southern-fried wisdom and dark humor.

With its blend of layered mystery, rich characters, and satirical edge, Seaside probes the emotional cost of wealth, status, and silence, where no one is as innocent as they claim.



Character Bios & Arcs

As an ensemble cast, it is difficult to define each character as good or bad. While the character list may appear long, several are generally together in a pod, each with its own ambitions and secrets. These pods do often cross-pollinate, figuratively and literally, and the lines tend to blur the deeper we get into the season. These characters may have dark secrets and ambitions, but each one is likable and relatable at the core.

Protagonist

There are few truly good guys in this story. Detective Hawks is probably our main protagonist. Amy certainly is innocent and a good guy, but she may not rise to the level of protagonist based on her limited appearances and narrow focus. Buddy certainly is a good guy, but he appears as an observer and Greek chorus more than an active participant.

Antagonist

All other characters are a mix of good and bad. Some more so than others. I might compare this cast to an Agatha Christie novel. Everyone has good points as well as secrets to hide. All come with a veneer of goodness, but with dark secrets that gradually reveal during the season. Nearly everyone had a motive to kill Biff. And the willingness.

Trudy McGuffin

Trudy was raised poor in rural Georgia and has worked her whole life to overcome – and forget – her past. Always in control, working harder than anyone else to prove something, but at least as many secrets as the next.

> Public Facade: Polished Southern wife, charming and composed. Gracious hostess, loyal wife to Blade, and local arts patron.
> Secret: Was having an affair with Biff. Still haunted by a traumatic past and deep trust issues. May know more about Biff's death than she lets on.
> Goal: Protect her son Brad and preserve her social standing.
> Arc: Trudy spirals from composure into desperation. By season's end, she must come clean or sacrifice someone else to preserve her image.

Blade McGuffin

Blade grew up poor in Louisiana, listening to country music, and vowing one day to make it big in Nashville. At 18 he set out to Nashville to make his dream a reality. With charisma, good looks, stage presence, and some good song writing (most in a minor key), he quickly became one of the highest paid country singers. Unfortunately, Blade has fought alcoholism since the age of 18. That penchant has gotten him into serious trouble more than once, and he now harbors terrible guilt, constantly looking for ways to amend. He loves Trudy deeply.

> Public Facade: Famous country music star. Charming, God-fearing, larger-than-life persona.
> Secret: Killed his abusive father as a teen. May have killed a friend growing up in Louisiana. Struggles with rage, and guilt.

Goal: Make amends for past sins and protect his family.
Arc: From stoic protector to emotional reckoning. Confronts the violence he's buried for years.

Brad McGuffin
Brad grew up around his parents, and amid the wealth, intrigue, and sense of guilt that permeates the family. Perhaps loved too much, he is spoiled and considers himself the rightful heir to follow his father into being a country music star. The walking embodiment of entitlement. He's talented and charismatic. But he has a dark, brooding, perhaps evil, side that does not endear him to those around him.

Public Facade: Troubled but charismatic. Blade's son.
Secret: Slept with Amy Hartley. May be conspiring with Lilith. Knows about Trudy and Biff.
Goal: Escape his parents' shadow and secure a future, by any means.
Arc: From wild card to puppet master. Or patsy. Loyalty and ambition collide.

RaeAnne Judd
RaeAnne grew up in Mobile, AL, and always wanted to move to the beach and open a wine bar. And after dropping out of college that's exactly what she did. Since high school she's had an unhealthy relationship with men as well as booze. The latter, well to be honest both characteristics, have limited her success. Never married, but longs for the picket fence, ideally in Seaside among her wealthy customers. Her frequent efforts to hit the jackpot have always been overshadowed by remorse and guilt for her previous lifestyle.

Public Facade: Stylish, self-made wine bar owner.
Secret: Involved in shady land deal with Mike. Holds a flash drive with evidence.
Goal: Preserve her business and reputation and make enough money to retire.
Arc: As she tries to control everything, it all unravels around her.

MIKE LORD
Mike has battled addictions since grade school. Mike grew up in a small rural town outside of Nashville and has always dreamed of being a star – like Blade. Mike resents Blade but keeps it well hidden. When given the opportunity be somebody, he'll do anything to achieve his goal.

Public Facade: Guitar-playing philosopher with a checkered past.
Secret: Partnered with RaeAnne in duping Biff. Struggles with guilt and addiction.
Goal: Avoid jail and emotional fallout.
Arc: Guilt drags him toward confession. Redemption or ruin awaits.

Lilith Salazar
Lilith grew up middle class and spoiled. She got married out of high school, but that marriage and the next failed because of her promiscuity. The little money from those marriages has now run out, and she's desperate to find the security and love she's always wanted. She'll do whatever it takes.

Public Facade: Sexy, manipulative trophy wife of Hollister.
Secret: Plotting with Brad to inherit Hollister's money. Biff knew.
Goal: Secure the estate before Hollister rewrites the will.
Arc: Grows reckless, spiraling into dangerous desperation.

Hollister Salazar
Hollister was one of the founding owners of Seaside, and he's lived here most of his adult life. He made his money in gulf oil rigs. Now as he lays dying it seems everyone is scheming to get their hands on his money. He's racked with guilt, and he plans to take his secrets to the grave with him.

Public Facade: Senile patriarch of Seaside.
Secret: Faking more than he lets on. Suspects Lilith's plans. Suspects his kid's plans.
Goal: Maintain control over his legacy.
Arc: Regains power and clarity in shocking, often hilarious ways.

Biff Hartley
Biff grew up in Valdosta, Ga but has lived in and around Seaside since dropping out of high school. He was known around Seaside as the dependable single dad and a handyman with calloused hands and a soft heart for his teenage daughter. His wife had been addicted to heroin, and left him and Amy when Amy was young. Biff was full of regret about the life he's been able to offer Amy. His sole motivation is to find a way to give her the life that others in town have.

Public Facade: Mild, sincere, loving handyman and loving father.
Secret: Blackmailing everyone in town to get money to provide for Amy.
Goal: Provide for Amy into adulthood.
Arc: None

Amy Hartley
Amy grew up in Seaside in a single-family home. Her mom left her and Biff when she was eight. She has significant abandonment issues. But through it all she knew that her father loved her to distraction and would do anything to protect her.

Public Facade: Quiet, emotional daughter of Biff.
Secret: Secret relationship with Brad.
Goal: Discover the truth about her father's death.
Arc: From naive daughter to determined truth-seeker.

Detective Hawks
Hawks wanted to be a policeman since his childhood growing up in St. Louis. He was a beat cop there after graduating from high school. His wife, before her death, begged him to move to the beach with her. He was able to get a job with the Seaside PD and has been working there for 20 years. He was made detective three years ago, and he lives to prove his worth in this job. He's thorough and determined.

Public Facade: Dry, methodical, a bit out of place in Seaside.
Secret: Disgraced in a past investigation. Determined not to fail again.
Goal: Solve Biff's murder and redeem himself.
Arc: From outsider to truth-bringer. Or target.

Sylvania Pettipiece
Sylvania grew up in the Upper East Side of New York. Her mom was a chorus line dancer, and she always say herself following her mother's example. As an adult, she soon lost favor with the city's entertainment world – primarily because she was untalented. Instead of being a nobody in a big pond, she hoped that by moving to Seaside she could rekindle her career she so craves.

Public Facade: Quirky theater director and newcomer.
Secret: A manipulative social climber hiding a scandalous past.
Goal: Use the theater to gain power and land a rich husband.
Arc: Her charming act begins to crack under pressure.

Buddy Templeton
Buddy has lived in Seaside until he was 20. His family was very wealthy, and he grew up in a large estate not far from the Green. Unfortunately, he suffered from alcohol addiction until he was in his 50's, when he finally dried out for good. He was kicked out of the house in his 20s, disowned by his parents, and lived on the streets in Atlanta for 30 years. When his parents died, he was suddenly very wealthy. He moved back to the house in Seaside but today is more comfortable in his shabby tent than in that big empty monstrosity behind him. Everyone knows him as he peddles around town in his rickety bike. Most call him the local weirdo and ignore him. But a few always smile and give him a friendly hello. He knows every secret this town has. But his job is to observe, not tattle.

Public Facade: The town eccentric. Bikes everywhere. Talks to his dead mother.
Secret: Knows everything. Watches, listens, comments via VO.
Goal: Stay out of the mess but keep poking the bear.
Arc: Becomes Seaside's cryptic conscience and comedic philosopher.

Elizabeth Salazar
Elizabeth is Hollister's daughter and grew up in the wealth and status that is Seaside. Unfortunately, her father believed in making your own way once you get out of college. She got her real estate license and has a small office in Seaside selling property. Unfortunately, she may not be the most motivated person so has always struggled to survive in adulthood. The logical thing to do as a woman in her shoes is to bide the time until her father's death. But now there's a wrinkle.

Public Facade: Ambitious real estate agent and Hollister's daughter.
Secret: Informed Biff about the mineral rights. Wants to expose Lilith.
Goal: Reclaim her family's legacy.
Arc: Torn between doing what's right and reclaiming status. Must choose whom to betray.

Jimbo Salazar
Jimbo's life has pretty much mirrored that of his older sister, Elizabth. Except in his case life has been a bit harsher. He has an old fishing charter boat bought by dropping out of college his junior year and taking the tuition funds. He fancies himself a charter captain. Only problem, he has no idea where the fish are, or how to catch them if he did. So he spends his days playing golf, partying, and biding his time.

Public Facade: Goofy, lazy fisherman.
Secret: In deep with dangerous lenders.
Goal: Avoid bankruptcy and get out clean.
Arc: Slacker turns desperate—could rise or fall based on a single decision.

Reverend Josiah Apollo
Apollo's relatives have been Baptist preachers going back 150 years. But only with him, did timing, ambition, and talents give him an opportunity to turn this gig into a moneymaker. He had his own mega-church in Little Rock, had 5 homes, and got heavily into politics. In the 2000s he was rocked by a sex scandal. He lost the church, his wife, and the love of 5 children. But, through hook and crook, he was able to abscond with most of his money – and a major portion of the church treasury. All in all, he figures he got the better deal. He still preaches on his radio show, syndicated on 500 conservative stations across the country, and 1 in The Caymans.

Public Facade: Folksy, retired evangelist with a radio show.
Secret: Rebuilding a disgraced brand under a veneer of wisdom.
Goal: Save others. And his own soul. And make some money in the process.
Arc: From lovable fraud to surprising moral guide. Or another manipulator.

World of the Show

Seaside is both picture-perfect and emotionally perilous—a coastal utopia with a rot beneath the white-picket charm. It's a master-planned community of beach homes, cobblestone walkways, wine bars, wellness studios, and secrets that smell like suntan lotion and scandal.

Every resident lives within walking distance of one another. Through an endless series of parties there's no real privacy, only the illusion of it. But everyone is okay with this status quo. Everyone waves, but everyone watches. Gossip spreads faster than a Gulf breeze, and every local business has its own agenda.

It's a town divided by quiet status wars: locals vs. transplants, old money vs. nouveau riche, homeowners vs. renters, believers vs. cynics. From the HOA president with a vendetta to the Southern debutante turned Pilates instructor, the town is a mosaic of characters holding tightly to what they think is theirs.

Key Locations
As envisioned by the original developers, everyone in Seaside lives within six or so blocks of each other. The old money or the super wealthy have homes south of Walton county highway 30A - on the sand. The simply wealthy live around the horseshoe-shaped green and along the radiating spokes traveling for several blocks.

- The Wine Bar: Owned by RaeAnne (and possibly others) it's where deals are whispered and threats are sugarcoated.
- The Seaside Community Theater: Sylvania's kingdom of failed auditions and inflated dreams—a comedic hub with unexpected emotional payoff.
- The Salazar Estate: Southern gothic, oversized, and full of twisted family dynamics.
- Trudy & Blade's House: Coastal elegance with cracks—both literal and emotional.
- Reverend Apollo's Studio: A mix of spiritual guidance and low-budget production value, where sin is confessed and occasionally monetized.

Tone & Style

Tone:
Seaside walks a fine line between sunlit satire and emotional noir. It's funny—often bitingly so—but the humor cuts deepest when it reveals uncomfortable truths. The tone blends biting Southern charm with unexpected emotional weight, often flipping from light to dark within a single scene. Think Desperate Housewives meets Big Little Lies, with a whisper of Knives Out.

Characters speak in loaded barbs, performative pleasantries, and emotionally charged subtext. Tragedy and absurdity often co-exist, especially in a town where gossip spreads faster than hurricane warnings and everyone's past is common knowledge.

Visual Style:

- Color palette: Bright coastal pastels (mint, coral, bone white) clashing with shadowy interiors and noir-style night scenes—mirroring the contrast between outer beauty and internal rot.
- Framing: Composed, symmetrical wide shots of Seaside homes and public spaces disrupted by chaotic, handheld close-ups in private moments.

- Pacing: Deliberate but layered. Scenes often end on sharp reveals, ironic twists, or cutting lines. Each act escalates the emotional stakes and deepens the mystery.
- Music: A mix of moody country ballads (Blade's music), vintage Southern soul, and ironic needle drops. Music often underscores emotional dissonance—celebrations masking deceit, laughter underscored by dread.

Comparables:

- Big Little Lies (tone, layered female characters, mystery structure)
- Desperate Housewives (ensemble drama, neighborhood secrets, dark comedy)
- Arrested Development (gritty procedural edge and complex small-town dynamics)
- Knives Out (twisty plotting, visual polish, character-driven misdirection)

Core Themes of Seaside

Seaside is a darkly comedic mystery-drama set in a luxury beach town where appearances are everything—and everything is a lie. When a beloved local father turns up dead after the town's swankiest gala, the ripple effect exposes the fragile egos, buried secrets, and long-simmering rivalries of a community built on charm and concealment.

At its heart, Seaside is about the masks we wear and the damage done behind closed doors. With every episode, the show peels back another layer of Southern hospitality to reveal the ambition, shame, lust, and guilt simmering underneath. It's a show where the stakes are emotional as much as criminal—where a smile hides a threat, and a porch swing can be a witness.

Told through a rotating lens of characters and anchored by the deadpan voiceover of local oddball Buddy, Seaside mixes sharp wit with emotional depth. It's Big Little Lies with a bourbon chaser—flirtatious, messy, and dangerous as hell.

1. The Facade of Perfection

Even paradise has termites.
Behind every perfect porch swing and HOA-approved lawn lies deceit, dysfunction, and secrets desperate to stay hidden. Seaside explores what people are willing to cover up to maintain appearances—and what happens when the cracks start to show.

2. Guilt, Redemption, and the High Cost of Silence

Everyone's done something they regret. The question is—how much are they willing to pay for it? From Blade's violent past to RaeAnne and Mike's shady land deal, characters are either running from guilt or trying to atone for it—often by making things worse.

3. Power, Money, and Inheritance
In Seaside, legacy isn't just a family name—it's a currency.
Everyone wants a piece of the pie. Whether it's the Salazar estate, land with secret mineral rights, or political capital in a small town, Seaside is a place where money—and the secrets attached to it—drive every motive.

4. Truth is Subjective (and Dangerous)
Some truths free you. Others get you killed.
The series explores how truth can be weaponized, buried, or twisted to serve personal goals. Detective Hawk may be looking for answers, but not everyone wants the truth to come out.

5. Small Towns Remember Everything
Reputation is everything—and no one ever really forgets.
In a town this intimate, history doesn't stay in the past. Old romances, betrayals, and rivalries linger in the air like salt. And when murder disrupts the peace, everyone's memory suddenly gets very selective.

6. The Theater of Everyday Life
Everyone in Seaside is acting. Some are just better at it than others.
Whether it's Sylvania literally directing Grease or Trudy pretending her marriage is intact, Seaside is full of performers—some on stage, some off. The real drama isn't in the script, it's in the lives they're desperate to control.

Series Engine
Seaside is a mystery-fueled character dramedy powered by a central murder, an ensemble of morally murky residents, and a town obsessed with keeping secrets buried.

At its core, the show asks: Who killed Biff Hartley? But every episode raises deeper questions: Who's hiding what? Who's protecting whom? And how far will they go to keep up appearances?

Structural Hooks:

- The Central Mystery: Biff's death (initially believed accidental or missing) drives the first season. Each episode peels back new layers of the night he died, revealing shifting motives and potential suspects.
- Buddy's Voiceovers: Our eccentric narrator frames each episode with deadpan commentary that offers both humor and thematic insight—a spiritual cousin to Desperate Housewives or Greek chorus structure.
- Flashbacks & Misdirection: Carefully planted red herrings, conflicting accounts, and misleading alliances keep the mystery evolving. Characters may be innocent of murder—but guilty of something else.
- Detective Hawk's Investigation: Provides weekly structure, slowly narrowing in on the truth as the town's facade crumbles.

- Theatrical Subplots: Sylvania's doomed production, local fundraisers, HOA meetings, and other absurd small-town moments inject humor, irony, and bring disparate characters into collision.

Recurring Patterns:

- Secrets Surface: Every character is hiding something. Each episode exposes a new revelation—from secret affairs to criminal schemes to long-held resentments.
- Power Shifts: Who controls Seaside—socially, politically, and financially—changes episode to episode. Lilith, Trudy, RaeAnne, and Elizabeth all claw for control.
- Guilt vs. Survival: Moral lines blur. Some characters try to make amends. Others double down. Few come out clean.
- Community Events as Battlegrounds: Galas, auditions, funerals, HOA meetings, and Sunday services become pressure cookers where the real drama bubbles over.

Why It Sustains:

Seaside thrives on tone and tension. Every resident is both a suspect and a narrator of their own version of truth. As one mystery resolves, another begins—because in a town this full of secrets, someone always has something to hide.

The Episodes

Season 1 of Seaside unravels the mystery behind Biff Hartley's death, revealing a tight web of secrets, betrayal, and buried motivations. The investigation fractures the town's facade of wealth and charm, forcing characters to choose between truth, loyalty, and self-preservation.

Episode 1: "Where's Biff?"
Biff disappears after a night of steamy secrets and southern charm at the Seaside Gala. Trudy feigns innocence. Detective Hawk arrives. Tensions build between Brad, RaeAnne, Mike, and Lilith as suspicions emerge. The episode ends with Biff's body discovered.

Episode 2: "The Cover Up"
With Biff out of the way, RaeAnne and Mike destroy evidence and conspire to make a windfall on a land deal. Hawk begins quietly tailing Brad. Flashbacks suggest Biff may have been blackmailing more than one person. Sylvania launches disastrous Greased Lightening performance.

Episode 3: "The Deal"
The secret land deal begins to unravel. Flashbacks reveal Biff was about to back out after Elizabeth told him about the mineral rights. RaeAnne and Mike grow nervous. Amy's grief sharpens. Lilith grows more desperate as Hollister's nurse grows suspicious.

Episode 4: "The Flash Drive"
RaeAnne hides the incriminating flash drive. Mike spirals. Hawk pressures Trudy. Jimbo and Elizabeth argue about their inheritance. Buddy starts voicing more cryptic truths. Brad threatens to blow everything open. Flashbacks reveal truths in Blade's childhood in Louisiana.

Episode 5: "The Choir and the Cross"
Mike confesses to Reverend Apollo. Hawk investigates inconsistencies in witness statements. Sylvania lures tourists into her theater scheme. Trudy and Brad's relationship hits a breaking point. Lilith plants evidence. Hollister continues holding on.

Episode 6: "Poker Faces"
Pamela Deets uncovers a financial discrepancy. Blade returns to town. Jimbo is threatened by loan sharks. Amy begins to piece together her father's last movements. Elizabeth plays both sides against Lilith.

Episode 7: "House of Cards"
Brad confronts Trudy with a shocking accusation. RaeAnne's flash drive is discovered—by the wrong person. Hawks makes a major connection, but someone breaks into his office. Blade finds out the truth about Trudy and Biff's relationship and schemes.

Episode 8: "Ashes and Alibis"
The final pieces fall into place. Flashbacks reveal what really happened the night of the gala. Hawk confronts the killer. A surprising arrest is made—but Buddy's voiceover warns: in Seaside, justice is just another performance.