

Waiting to heal

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It was a clear morning in late October and the tree leaves displayed bright colors of fall. David stood behind his window and watched the scene outside with a restless heart. Ever since his meeting with Elizabeth at her sixtieth birthday party, he wanted to see her. He was a fifty-five years old and had lived alone his entire adult life. His only sister, five years younger, had moved to Australia many years ago and his adapted father, Charley, was ninety years and lay dying with a stroke in a nursing home. David kept himself busy and had no interest in a romantic attachment; that is until he met Elizabeth.

This morning, he made up his mind to visit her after his work. She had given him her address and her phone number and so he knew where she lived. He finished his work early and decided to see Elizabeth. He drove home, took a quick shower, changed his clothes, and sat down on a chair in front of the television. Outside, it was still sunny and warm. He took a deep breath, stood up, came out of his apartment and ran down the stairs to his car. He drove to a flower shop nearby and bought a bunch of red and yellow roses. He placed them carefully on the front passenger seat of his red Mercedes and drove to Elizabeth's home. She lived in a medium size red brick house with an attached garage. The short narrow driveway was empty and the house was dark inside. David parked his car in front of the house and walked slowly towards the front door. He looked inside for any sign of activity and pressed the doorbell. Finding no response, he gently tapped at the door with his car keys. Feeling a little foolish, for being there unannounced, he was

about to turn back and return to his car, when he felt a gentle touch on his back. Elizabeth stood behind him with a broad smile. She was dressed in a loose plain white tee shirt with a smiley-moon logo, black track pants and running shoes. Her shirt was drenched and her face flushed. She had short hair with a black bandana around her head. She was happy to see him without notice. She held his hand and invited him inside. David offered her the flowers. She thanked him for them and told him that she loved roses.

Once inside, she took him in her kitchen and asked him to help her arrange the flowers in a vase. She put the vase on the center table of her living room.

"They are beautiful, thanks for bringing them. I am tired of sorting out Ted's stuff. I needed an adult company." She said moving closer to David and giving him an affectionate pat. David noted her smooth and glowing fresh face and asked her if she would go out with him for dinner that evening. Elizabeth quickly agreed.

She told him that she would like to take a shower and freshen up and he could wait in the living room.

"Make yourself comfortable. I will be back soon." She said and disappeared.

David stood there with both hands in his pocket as he casually surveyed the living room when he noticed a framed photograph of a woman with two men, one on each side of her. They looked young and happy. Each had signed their names, Ted, Elizabeth and George on their respective images. In one corner of the photo was printed a date of thirty years ago. David could recognize the young Elizabeth, she had tied her hair in a ponytail and looked young and fresh; When Elizabeth returned and stood next to him

she looked fresh and ready to go out. She explained to him about the two men in the photo. At the time, the three studied in college in Toronto. The photo reminded him of his own days in college; he too looked young with dark dense hair. His past imprinted in his memory like a brand on cattle was distressing and he did not want to brood over it, at least not tonight! He quickly looked away from the picture, turned around, and gently touched the woman standing next to him. She wore a loose light green cotton shirt and dark olive green tight fitting pants. Her LLBeen walking boots enhanced her athletic figure. She asked David about the place he wanted to go. David had not even thought of a place and so felt awkward. Elizabeth trying to ease his discomfort gently squeezed his hand and suggested Johnny's on Taylor Street She told him that they made the best Gyros and Italian Beef sandwich. David had never heard about gyros but had some idea about the Little Italy on Taylor Street. David was not sure if he wanted to take her to a fast food joint but being a good sport agreed for a "gyro night"

Elizabeth guided her to the place on Taylor Street in Little Italy. The sun had changed color and was about to set; the weather was mild with cool evening breeze. David parked his car in a small parking lot behind the restaurant. They walked hand in hand towards the restaurant and saw people sitting on the wooden benches on a large concrete patio. They were happy, talkative and seemed to be enjoying their meal. A strong smell of garlic mixed with spices filled the air. It bothered him a little but he ignored it. The late fall evening was still clear and bright. The gentle westerly breeze was cool and refreshing.

Elizabeth ordered Italian beef with sweet peppers, a Gyro with French Fries and two soda drinks. David was amused to see cartoons of

three witches and of a male in a large sombrero cutting and chopping meat and vegetables. The drawing amused him and he smiled to himself. Elizabeth insisted on paying for the meal. They picked a wooden bench outside, sat down on it, and waited for their order. Elizabeth seemed relaxed and in good mood. David unfamiliar with the neighborhood remained mostly quiet and seemed happy and contented sitting next to her.

As soon as their meal arrived, Elizabeth split each sandwich in two and began eating her share. The strong odor made David a little hesitant to take his first bite of gyro. Elizabeth reassured him and insisted that he would soon get used to it. Afterwards, they stopped at the Italian Gelato and shared a cup of ice cream. David mentioned that his mother made gelato at home with milk, cream, sugar and eggs and it tasted great. Elizabeth wanted to know about his childhood and his family but thought that it was not the proper time to ask. She felt that David was nice, simple and gentle and there would be plenty of time to ask him about his family.

During the return journey, David wanted to know if he could see her soon and she agreed. She told him that she too enjoyed his company and wanted to see him again. David told her about his volunteer work at a clinic for the homeless and was usually busy several nights a week. Elizabeth asked if she could also volunteer there as an aid. David agreed and told her that he would try to arrange it. He thought that it would be nice to have her work with him and he would be able to see her more often.

David's friendship with Elizabeth recharged him with fresh energy as if a new spirit took over him. She too saw a new beginning following a long struggle with her husband's illness. David now provided her peaceful and a

settled life. She no longer felt lonely and abandoned. Her work at the clinic also fulfilled her desire to do something for others. She had grown up in a small city in western Ontario. Her mother died of a mysterious illness when she was only a child. Her father raised her after her loss but was busy managing his huge business empire and was not close to her. She had left home after high school and returned only at her father's death, which occurred two years before Ted died. The twin tragedies left her sad but wealthy as she inherited their entire estates. She did not need to work for a money anymore. Working at the clinic gave her something to do and a satisfaction of helping others. It also brought her closer to David. She was now a happy woman!

The clinic was on south side of the Chicago and was busy. Most regulars were sick, poor and homeless. There was always a doctor, a nurse and an aid to staff it. Medical students from local medical schools helped cover the place also. For most patients, it was the only place, providing their medical needs. David had a reputation as a good doctor with a kind heart. He devoted his extra time in caring for the poor and homeless.

One night in December, just before Christmas David and Elizabeth were in the clinic when David got a call from a nursing home in Carbondale that Charley had died. He broke the news when the receptionist, MaryAnn and Elizabeth were in the reception room. Elizabeth asked MaryAnn about Charley and she told him that he was David's adopted father. He had suffered a massive stroke a few weeks ago. He was recovering from it and a few days ago, they transferred to a Nursing care unit where he died. Elizabeth stood up and went inside the clinic to look for David. She found

him in the staff room sitting quietly. He looked at her, stood up, and slowly came to her. He hugged her and she stayed close to him.

"He was all I had and now he is gone too, I feel lost". Elizabeth staying close to him gave him a gentle pat on his back.

"It will be okay, David."

Soon they both went back to work and after a long and tiring evening at work, they got in the car to go home. During their drive, David asked Elizabeth if she would stay with him that night. Elizabeth considered his request for a moment, touched his hand in sympathy and agreed. He told her that she could sleep in the guest room. She remained silent and they soon arrived at his apartment.

He lived on the fourth floor of a five-storey brick building. He parked his car outside and they took the elevator to the fourth floor. When they entered the apartment, the voicemail light was flashing due to unanswered phone calls probably from the nursing home. He turned the room lights on and went straight to the phone. Elizabeth wandered around in the apartment. The living room was spacious and furnished with a large brown sofa against the back wall. In front, there was a Mitsubishi television with a large curved screen. The sofa had cushioned upholstery and an ottoman in front. The oval wood center table with glass top had piles of medical books and journals lying scattered on it. In one corner of the room was a mahogany office desk with a Dell desktop computer and a twelve-inch cathode ray monitor sitting on it. On its right side was a wire basket, which contained a tuning fork, a pager and loosely arranged papers. Several pieces of unopened mail sat on top of the key board. A tall lamp stood on left of the desk. The living room led to the kitchen and the dining room. David, phone in his hand,

on other side of the room, signaled to Elizabeth to sit down and be comfortable. She paid no attention to him and continued to move around in the living room, inspecting various items. This was her first visit to his apartment and she wanted to know about his life. After listening to his messages, David asked Elizabeth if she would like a drink and she quickly agreed. She was tired but fully awake. He led her to an open cabinet on the wall between the kitchen and dining room. There he carefully took out a bottle from the wine rack, looked at the label and opened it with a corkscrew. He poured the content of the bottle, a red merlot in two glasses, handed one to her, and took one himself. They sat down on the sofa next to each other.

Elizabeth took a small sip of her wine and carefully put the glass down on the table in front, came close to David and put her head on his chest. David remained quiet for while. Then, he began to speak as if in a monologue.

"I had a dream a few nights ago. I was sitting with my sister on a sofa, in a large living room, way up on the top floor of a high-rise apartment. Through the open window bright white clouds kept moving from outside into the room. Inside, there was a clutter of beds, household furniture, unopened cartons and cardboard boxes. The place looked a complete mess but it was peaceful! My mother sat in a high chair near the front door. She looked calm and completely in charge; the family seemed to have just moved in this place and my mother was directing the activities inside. Charley stood in a corner behind a half-drawn curtain trying to block a bright light falling on my mother. I wondered about the light, it was not sunshine as it was cloudy outside. Mother wanted us to clean up the mess. I tried to tell her that I had to go and see my patients. I also could not find my car keys and was

upset. I was getting late for work; just then, Charley took out his car keys and offered his car to me. I saw my self as young boy in shorts and as an adult doctor. Charley held flashlight and he was following me. That is when I opened my eyes and knew it was only a dream but the effect on me was peaceful. I wanted to go back to sleep to continue my dream. I liked the calmness of it all, It ended so suddenly."

He stopped talking and apologized for his monologue. Elizabeth touched his arm tenderly asked him about his dad. David told her that he had never seen him in his dreams.

They emptied the entire bottle of merlot, their fatigue now gone and their bodies refreshed. They found themselves close to each other, which excited them. David held her face with his two hands, brought it close to his lips, and kissed her, first gently then passionately. Elizabeth responded equally. Where was this coming from? She asked herself. She had not felt such a passion since her last physical contact with her first boyfriend, George. That was many years ago, she said to herself. She had given up thoughts of physical love. Her marriage to Ted was purely for companionship; sex and passion did not exist with him. Memories of *George* were alive only in her dreams and that too was now distant. In her sixties, such passion completely surprised and shocked her. She moved closer to David's strong body embracing it and passionately responding to his kisses. David also responded to her touch with an intense desire. Such a longing for a woman frightened and pleased him. As a physician, he understood the physical response but deep in his heart, he felt strange. He asked himself, if it was Elizabeth, wine or his imagination. Soon, he lost control and surrendered

himself to the woman in his arms. Still clinging to each other, they got up, went inside his bedroom, and remained there until next day.

The morning was cold and gloomy; it was dark outside. The wildly shaking branches of leafless trees indicated a strong wind with a much lower wind-chill index. Elizabeth, wearing David's light yellow cotton shirt, was first to emerge from the bedroom followed by David in a bright red sleeping suit with blue polka dots. Charley's visitation was at four in the afternoon and David planned to drive for it to Carbondale. Elizabeth asked if she could come with him and he gladly agreed. David told her that if they left by ten, they should be there at least by three thirty in the afternoon. They would plan to stay overnight for the funeral on Sunday morning at ten.

Soon, the clouds scattered and sun came out, it became bright and a clear day. The couple drank coffee and decided to get ready for the trip. David took a quick shower, packed a few clothes for the weekend stay in a hotel near Carbondale. He put on a dark grey suit and a red tie given to him by Charley on his medical school graduation. He also picked up a photograph of himself with Charley taken at the same graduation. David in that photo wore a hood and a gown. He planned to display it at the visitation. He drove Elizabeth to her home for her to pack and get ready also for the trip.

The couple got in David's red 1992 Mercedes. He turned the engine on and shifted car's hand gear and it began to move smoothly. Elizabeth liked the ride of this 197 model Mercedes and loved its red color; the dials on the front dashboard were all white with sharp black rim and letters.

During the trip, David mentioned that he had bought this car to honor his mother who also owned a red Mercedes Benz, a 1962, 300 SE, a two-

seater coupe'. He said that he was sentimental about the red color of the Mercedes. Elizabeth asked him about his mother.

"She was murdered". David replied, "In 1962"

Elizabeth was not sure if she heard him right. She sat up and looked at David,

"You mean killed?" She asked.

"Yes, murdered! At the time I was eleven years old." He said, "My father had gone to attend a medical conference in Chicago. My mom, my sister and I were alone in the house. That first night, I had just fallen asleep after reading a book, when my mother's screams in her bedroom woke me up. I also heard sounds of kicking and fighting. It lasted hardly a few seconds before all became ominously silent. I knew that something horrible had happened in my parent's bedroom. My sister slept in the next room. I quickly hid myself under the bed because I thought some one might come in my room to harm me too. I was also worried about my sister. Confused, scared, and worried about my mother and sister, I stayed there for a long time. My parents had a bad marriage and they fought often. They even had bitter argument just before he left for Chicago. He had a terrible temper and berated us constantly. We were scared of him. When he was not home, we were happy and relaxed. Any way, I stayed under my bed for a long time. It was dark and very quiet inside the house. I was too scared to go and look for my mother. I carefully came out from under the bed, quietly woke my sister in the next room, and told her to be very quiet; we tiptoed downstairs, barefoot. Surprisingly, the front door was unlocked and so we sneaked out of the house. Outside was pitch dark and very quiet. I had my sister's hand in mine and I knew where we should go. She was only five years old and had

difficulty keeping up with me, but she hung on to my hand and we ran together towards Charley's home, a dash of about two hundred yards. I could hear my heart pound but we kept going until we reached the house. I rang the doorbell while Renuka, my sister, began to knock the door repeatedly with both her hands. The front door lights went on and Charley opened the door, very surprised to see us in middle of the night. Renuka began to cry bitterly. Without hesitation, he quickly picked her up, brought her to his chest and began to console her. He pulled me inside and asked me to explain the situation."

"I told him about the incident at our home. He called the police who were there within minutes. The events moved fast. The police found our mother's dead body in her bedroom floor; someone had brutally murdered her with a blunt object on her head. To this day, I could hear her cry for help. We remained at Charley's house until our father came to pick us up. He was calm and showed little emotion. The police caught a man and charged him for the crime. During the trial, the accused confessed to the murder and implicated my father for hiring him to kill my mother. Police questioned my father and while the investigation was going on and the murderer was in jail, some one strangled him to death. Thus, the police lost crucial evidence against my father. My dad was a known orthopedic surgeon and was influential in the community. The Grand Jury found no reason to send him to a trial because no solid evidence existed against his involvement".

David was now silent and concentrated on his driving. Elizabeth turned her head to face David with an odd sense of horror, shock and doubt. She was dumbfounded, put her left hand on his arm, and kept it there. The traffic was light and the landscape was flat, brown, and monotonous of vast

ploughed farmland broken only by silos, farmhouses, and occasional small brown and dried patches of uncut corn plants. Every now and then, one could see a small single engine airplane fly above against a clear blue sky broken by large white clouds. Carbondale was still miles away. Before the journey, Elizabeth had been hungry, but now, she lost her appetite. The unexpected tale of David's mother had troubled her. She did not wish to even suggest getting something to eat. Outside, the sun played hide and seek with the clouds. She pulled the overhead visor down to protect her from the glare. Reaching near an exit on the road, David slowed the car down and suggested that they should take a break and eat something. His voice was completely normal. Elizabeth suggested McDonald's for breakfast as there was one on the right side of the street after the exit.

The restaurant was busy with highway travelers. While David went in the men's room, Elizabeth ordered two McMuffin with egg and two regular coffees. As she was about to pick up the order, David showed up and ordered an orange juice for him and paid for the meal. They sat down at a table next to a window overlooking the Ronald McDonald playground. Before sitting down, he looked at Elizabeth and put his arm around her waist pulling her closer. He softly kissed her on her lips. She responded by putting her two arms around his neck and pulling him closer to her to kiss him. They ate their meal in relative silence. The horrible tale of his mother's death was still fresh in her mind. Soon refreshed, they returned to the car and resumed their trip. This was Elizabeth's first trip to Southern Illinois, and she was unfamiliar with its landscape and so, David showed her various landmarks of interest but she paid little attention to him. His mother's death continued to obsess her and she wanted to talk more about his family.

She turned her head towards him and looked at him intently while he concentrated on driving; she put her hand over his shoulder, tenderly moved it down to his thigh, and gently squeezed it, coaxing him to tell about his mother and his family.

David was one of two children of Raymond Burrstone and Margaret Thomas. Raymond was a successful orthopedic surgeon in Southern Illinois and his mother Margaret was a registered nurse. Raymond grew up in Chicago as the only child of poor parents, who had died during his college days. Margaret was born and brought up in Kerala, India and worked as a nurse at Chicago's Cook County Hospital, where Raymond completed his last rotation in orthopedic surgery. They fell in love, married soon after, and settled down in the city of Carbondale. Raymond soon became a successful orthopedic surgeon. Margaret gave up her nursing career to raise their two children. David was the older by five years. Their marital problems started soon after their daughter's birth. Raymond worked long hours, was in constant demand and earned big money. He built a large seven-bedroom home of a deep red brick façade, huge glass windows and a steep sloping slate roof. It sat on a large flat plot of land. It haunted Margaret and she hated it.

Margaret grew up in a small family in Kerala and attended a local Catholic church and school. She graduated from a local nursing school and after graduation, took a position at the Cook County Hospital in Chicago. In the big city, life was different from Kerala but she was happy. She made friends, found pride, and pleasure in her work at the county hospital. In the small city of Southern Illinois, she felt hostility of its cold weather, landscape and its people. She was lost and miserable and loathed her lonely

existence. Her situation got worse after she gave up her nursing career to care for his children. At least, her job provided her a sense of belonging, self-esteem and standing. When she complained to her husband, he would get angry and start shouting at her. She missed her old church in Chicago and wanted to join a similar church in Carbondale. Her husband wanted his family to go to an Anglican Church. She found the minister in this church aloof and its members distant. After a day of housework and caring for her young family, she felt overworked, drained and lonely. They hardly socialized and when they did, it was among the high and mighty of a small city crowd, where her husband was a prominent, sought after orthopedic surgeon. She felt completely out of place; it depressed her deeply. Their fights became frequent and fiercer. In her grief, she often turned to Father Charles Matteson, a Catholic priest who lived alone in a house next door about two hundred yards away. He understood her grief, and was sympathetic to her situation. He was in middle sixties and physically active. After retirement from his church, he decided to dedicate rest of his life in service of his community. He had built a beautiful flower garden in his front yard where David and his sister often played. He liked Margaret and loved her two children. She too liked him and fondly called him Charley and so did David and his sister

Margaret's tragic death robbed her two children of a mother's love and security. Relationship with their father was turbulent and unkind and they constantly tried to avoid him. David, though young himself tried to protect his sister from his father's anger. He had convinced himself about his father's involvement in his mother's death but he kept his feelings to himself. His father had hired a housekeeper, Nancy to care for them at

home. She was an elderly widow who had grown up children of her own. She lived only a few miles away, did her best to keep the two happy, and hoped they would soon forget the pain of their mother's loss. Charley often visited them on his rounds of neighborhood and Nancy too came to know him.

"How is it that Charley became your adopted father?" Elizabeth interrupted David who then told her about the day he turned thirteen and became an orphan.

It was a Sunday morning in early September just after the Labor Day. It was warm and dry after a week of steady rain. David's school had opened a week before and he was happy and excited about his new teachers and looked forward to it. He was a good student being among the top ten percent of his class. Nancy had taken two weeks off leaving the children and their father alone at home. David woke up that morning around eight o'clock feeling good, invigorated and grown up. His height had shot up during the last summer and he was now tall but still not as tall as his father was. He looked himself in the mirror and was amazed to see at an image of a fully-grown up man in front. He patted his face for signs of growing fuzz over his smooth skin; his voice had already begun to thicken; He noticed his pubic hair had become dark and thick and, his penis manly. The frequent penile erections on slightest touch or excitement constantly embarrassed him and he was afraid that others might see him in that state. He needed some one to explain his wet dreams. He became bashful of Nancy and his little sister. He started washing his own clothes. The increasing strength of his body gave him both coolness and alarm. He became irritable, impatient, and angry. His behavior towards his father became intolerable. He felt that his father's verbal and physical abuse had worsened and there was no one to

help him. He wished, his mother was alive; she would clear his tension and confusion.

That morning he woke up feeling happy and relaxed. He came down to the kitchen and noticed a gift package, wrapped in red and white paper tied by a bow of white silk ribbon. Nancy had left it there, a gift for him with his name on a small card. He thought of opening it when his sister woke up. He hid the gift in a closet and ran upstairs to his bedroom. His father and sister were still in bed. He reached the cabinet standing next to the window against the wall. He carefully pulled the middle drawer, groped under the folded clothes inside, and gently pulled out a smiling photograph of his mother. It was one-half of a larger photo, which showed both his parents just after their wedding. David had cut off his father's image and discarded it. He brought the photo closer to the window and was looking at it intently, absorbed in his thoughts when he noticed his father standing behind him. His presence startled him and he tried to hide the photo in his hand but his father quickly grabbed it from him and asked him about its discarded half. His tone of voice was angry.

"Dad, I have always had this picture with me." David replied firmly, facing his dad.

"You tore off the other half of the photo! Why?"

David straightened up as if in defiance and looked directly at his father and was about to say something, when Raymond swung his right hand hard and slapped him on his face. David, not expecting the blow, lost his balance and fell on the floor. Before he could recover, his father kicked him in his groin with his foot. David made no sound and no attempt to get up. He was too dazed and in pain to respond. His father made a strange gesture at

him before walking out of the room. David stayed there for a while, still hurting. Outside, all was silent. He heard his father stomp out of the house. He knew that his father had planned to play golf and would not be back for a few hours. As his pain subsided, he reviewed his situation. He wanted to run away from home, but was worried about his sister. He would never allow his father to raise his hands on her. He slowly got up from the floor, lay down on his unmade bed, covered himself with a sheet, and closed his eyes and soon fell asleep. His sister's happy birthday song woke him up. She stood next to his bed and wanted her breakfast. He looked up at his sister and jumped off the bed. He too was hungry. He ran to the bathroom to wash up and change his clothes. He did not care about his birthday anymore! He took his sister's hand and the two of them ran downstairs to the kitchen. He would make her a hot breakfast of egg, sausage and toast, her favorite. They could finish their breakfast before their father showed up. He said nothing to his sister about his spat with his father but he could not forget the shame.

He took out a cast iron skillet from the cupboard below, put it on the hot gas-cooking burner. He cut a medium size portion of frozen butter with a knife, put it in the pan to melt, and slowly increased the heat. He broke two eggs over the skillet. His father disliked hot oil splattering over the cooking top and had often warned him against it. David put four sausage patties next to the eggs. He took out a large loaf of bread and placed it on the chopping board. He then picked his favorite, a long sharp, double-edged serrated bread knife from the knife rack. He liked the knife because he could effortlessly cut thin slices of bread and meat. He told his sister to go wash up and change her clothes before eating. She quickly disappeared from the kitchen. He was completely absorbed in slicing the bread and forgot to

notice the splattering of hot oil on the skillet. While busy in his current activity with the bread, he felt a hard painful pressure on his right shoulder as if some one was trying to hurt him. Still mentally fully occupied, he reflexively pivoted on his right heel, turned sideways and repeatedly swung his right arm with bread knife still in his hand to protect himself. Instantaneously, he noticed his father behind him falling on the floor with a horrible thud a kick at his feet. He turned to see that his father was on the floor bleeding profusely from his neck. David stood there frozen in his place watching the fresh blood, spurting from his neck and gushing towards the ceiling. He was still holding the bloodstained knife in his hand. His sister who walked in at that moment saw the sight and began to scream. David now realized the gravity of the situation and quickly put the kitchen towel over his father's neck, hoping to stop the bleeding and then called 911. The paramedic arrived quickly and took their father to the hospital, where he died of massive bleeding.

Elizabeth could not hold herself from heaving; she took several deep breaths to stabilize herself and put her both hands over her face to cover it. David, quiet now, continued to drive. Elizabeth took several deep breaths to settle down and lifted her head to look straight at the highway ahead. She was hesitant to turn her head and look at David. Finally, David broke the silence,

"I killed my dad. We were now orphans, my sister and I. Charley came and took us to his house. There was a police investigation. The district attorney, a friend of my father, visited us at Charley's home. He was nice and sympathetic and called the whole matter an awful accident. According to

him, kitchen knives were common tools of serious injury and needed to be handled right."

Elizabeth still recovering from the story finally looked at David still trying to figure him out while he continued,

"Charley adopted us, cared and educated us. Nancy too stayed with us; she died several years ago with an ovarian cancer. My father was a good surgeon and his memory inspired me to become a doctor myself. When I think about that fateful day, I blame only myself because the knife that killed my father was in my hand and I should never have raised it on him and he should never have died."

They were only minutes away from Carbondale. The sky had turned dull, the wind strong and the temperature dropped further. Outside one could see the vast sea of yellow cornfield swaying back and forth in the cold winter wind mixed with wet snow. David opened his window slightly to feel the cold air, took a deep breath and prepared to take the next exit.

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