

The Trial

My hands were swollen, my fingertips were numb, my back and neck hurt, and my chest throbbed. My head was pounding, my throat was sore, and I was having trouble breathing. Someone must have dropped me off a cliff, or something. I hurt everywhere.

My wrists stung from the handcuffs pressing into my flesh. They felt like needles pushed deep into my skin. The cuffs secured my hands to a chain around my waste. I looked below the cuffs and saw the shackles. Someone wants to keep me here. Where am I? How long have I been here?

“Get up!”

The voice was gruff and the tone told me I had better do what he wanted me to do. I struggled to get up from the chair.

Two men had been standing beside me. They wore uniforms. Perhaps they were police officers or guards. One man was tall. He had a neatly trimmed mustache. The other man was shorter. He held a nightstick in his hand and slapped it menacingly into the palm of his other hand.

Each man grabbed one of my arms, just above the el-

bow.

“This way,” the shorter man said as he pulled on my arm.

“Where am I?”

“No talking,” the shorter man said. “Look at the floor; don’t look at nothing else.”

We started down a long hallway. Sounds echoed with each step as the chains on my ankles clinked along the tile. The floor was polished, shiny. The fluorescent ceiling lights mirrored up into my eyes. The building smelled of varnished wood, steam radiator heat, and disinfectant.

“When we get to the door, I’ll take off your shackles,” the taller man said. “Don’t do anything stupid.”

“I hope he does,” the shorter man said, mockingly. “I haven’t beat-up anyone since breakfast. I don’t want to get rusty.”

“Stop right here,” the taller man said as he pulled back on my arm. “Look at the ceiling.”

“If you take your eyes off the ceiling, I’ll break your nose,” the shorter man said; “that might make you prettier.”

I stared up at the ceiling, concentrating on the corner of a water-stained tile. These men wanted a reason to hurt me. Why did they think I deserved their punishment? Clearly, they did not know they were holding an innocent man.

The taller man lifted the shackles and said, “Step up to this line.”

As I started to step forward, the nightstick struck my right knee. The searing pain made my leg feel weak.

“Did I say you could look down?” the shorter man asked.

I returned my gaze to the ceiling tile.

“Good; now, you may look at the floor and step up to the

red line,” the shorter man said.

I thought I detected a hint of disapproval from the taller man. Perhaps he knows I am innocent.

Slowly, I took my eyes off the ceiling and stared down at the floor. I took two steps and stood with the front of my shoes just on top of the line. It all felt strangely familiar; yet distant, as if I had dreamed this, many years ago; or, perhaps I read a story about it happening to someone else and now I can't quite remember how the story ended.

“When that door opens,” the tall man said, “we will escort you to the table on this side of the room.”

Each man grabbed the chain around my waste. I heard them both begin to breathe deeply. Are they nervous? What would make them afraid?

“Get it right this time,” the taller man said.

“Get what right?” I asked.

“Shut up,” the shorter man said as he jerked on the chain. “Just get it right.”

The door swung open slowly, revealing a courtroom, filled with people. The room fell silent as I watched everyone staring at me.

“Let's go. No trouble for us means no trouble for you,” the taller man said as they both pushed me forward.

I walked into the room and approached the table closest to me. An older man sat at the table making notes on a pad of paper. Across the room, four middle-aged men sat at a table covered with files, briefcases, and loose pieces of paper. Two men seated at the table were staring at me; they looked familiar, yet I could not place them.

As we walked around the end of the table, the older man looked up and asked, “Can you take those cuffs off?”

“Ask the judge,” the shorter man said.

The old man slid a chair out from the table and said, "Sit down. We'll see about getting those things off. The jury will never believe you're innocent if you are wearing restraints."

"Do I know you?"

"I'm your attorney," the old man said. "You don't remember me?"

"No."

"Do you know why you are here?"

"No."

"What is your name?"

"I don't know."

"I want you to..."

His instructions were interrupted with the announcement, "All rise."

Everyone stood and I watched a tall, thin man wearing a black robe, walk to his seat. He sat down, rapped his gavel, and announced, "Be seated."

As the people in the courtroom sat down, the bailiff walked to an area in front of the judge and faced him.

"Proceed," the judge said and the bailiff turned and faced the courtroom and announced,

Hear ye, hear ye: Let everyone with information on this case come forward and speak their truth; let truth serve justice; and let every wrong be righted and every mind be at peace.

The judge rapped his gavel and said, "This trial is now in session. Is the prosecution ready with their case?"

"Yes, Your Honor, the prosecution is ready."

"Is the defense ready with their case?"

“If it would please the court,” the old man said. “We ask that the defendant’s restraints be removed for the duration of this trial.”

“Does anyone object to removing the restraints?”

“You can’t let him go!” a young girl pleaded from the front row of the courtroom. “He killed my cat.”

“Young lady,” the judge said, kindly. “We are not letting him go. We are asking for reasons that he should remain handcuffed.”

“He’s not going free?” the young girl asked. “You will punish him?”

“We are holding a trial to determine the reason for his guilt and then we will punish him,” the judge said. “You will have an opportunity to testify.”

“Your Honor, the prosecution believes the accused is not a significant risk. He has harmed everyone in this room and we believe he still wants to harm them. Everyone knows he is dangerous and we will protect ourselves. We have no objections.”

“Who is he talking about?” I asked the old man.

“Oh, he’s rushing things a bit,” the old man said. “He’s moving ahead to the charges against you. They’re always in a hurry—so many cases.”

“What charges?” I asked.

“It’s a long list,” the old man said, “too long for anyone to memorize. You didn’t think I would know all the charges against you, did you?”

“How many?” I asked.

“Counselor?” the judge asked. “If you are finished talking with your client, perhaps you will join us in this trial.”

“Sorry, Your Honor,” the old man said. “My client is not well. He is confused as to the reason for this trial.”

The men at the prosecutor's table all chuckled quietly and sporadic laughter crossed around the courtroom.

"Your client is confused?" the judge asked.

"Yes, Your Honor."

"Does your client appreciate the importance of these proceedings?"

"Yes, Your Honor, he appreciates their importance and he does not want to waste the court's valuable time."

"Counselor," the judge said, sounding frustrated. "Do you need time with your client or shall we proceed with this case?"

"We respectfully request that the court proceed with the case," the old man said.

"What?" I asked in a forced whisper.

"Counselor!" the judge announced. "If your client is not cooperative, we can reschedule this trial to a time when he will be cooperative."

"We are ready, Your Honor," the old man said. "Please forgive our hesitation."

The old man took his legal pad and flipped it open to a clean page. He smoothed out the paper, laid the pad between us, and began to write quickly:

We cannot delay; you do not have much time left. You must complete this trial or you may never complete the trial.

I stared at the words on the pad: *you do not have much time left*. I started to reach for a pencil and remembered the handcuffs.

"You honor?" the old man said. "May we have these restraints removed?"

"Yes," the judge said. "Remove the restraints."

The taller man who had escorted me to the courtroom walked up to the table to unlock the cuffs. As he slid the chain from my waste, he said, "Remember. Get it right this time." Then he walked away from the table.

"Feel better?" the old man asked, quietly.

"Yes," I whispered back, "thank you."

One of the four men seated at the prosecution's table stood and began speaking, "Your Honor we wish to assure a speedy trial for the defendant, and therefore we waive reading of the charges. We are ready to make our opening statements."

"Does defense accept waiver of reading?" the judge asked as he turned to the old man.

"Yes, Your Honor," the old man said. "We waive the reading."

I reached for a pencil and scribbled my question on the pad: *How many charges?* I slid the pad back to him. The old man wrote "83,220" right below my question.

I leaned back in my chair, looked at the old man, and then I closed my eyes and tried to remember if I was awake or asleep. If I was asleep and this was a dream then I could wake up. If not, then I must be insane; which is just a special kind of dreaming, except everyone else is awake.

One of the prosecutors was speaking. He had been speaking for a while and I had missed some of his remarks. Perhaps I could find out something that would help me decide if I was asleep or insane. I concentrated on his words:

...and we all share a common bond. We seek a verdict that serves truth. He has committed crimes against everyone in this room. His disregard for human decency, his indifference toward those who have been so generous to him and his single-minded ambitions have soiled the lives of everyone he has ever met.

I leaned over to the old man and asked, "Who is he talking about?"

The old man looked at me, furrowed his brow, and said, "You. Haven't you been listening?"

"That's not possible," I whispered, "I don't even know that little girl who said I killed her cat."

"Maybe you never met her," the old man said, "That wouldn't stop you from killing her cat, would it? You're not making sense and that is worrying me; we don't have much time."

"How could—"

"Quiet! Listen carefully to the witnesses," the old man said. "Maybe something will come back to you. Maybe you'll start to remember."

"The prosecution calls Ms. Rosemary Williamston."

A young, teenaged girl stood up and walked down the center aisle of the courtroom. She crossed to the witness stand, stepped up into the witness box, and sat in the chair.

"Rosemary," the judge said. "You need to stand up to be sworn in. Just do what this man asks you to do."

The bailiff began the swearing in, "Do you promise to tell the truth..."

"Who is she?" I asked.

"You don't know?" the old man asked. "You don't recognize her?"

"No!" I said. "I've never seen her. What is she doing here?"

"Just listen," the old man said. "Be quiet and listen!"

One of the men from the prosecutors' table stood up slowly and crossed the room to stand next to the witness.

"Rosemary?" he asked. "Tell me about the time the ac-

cused assaulted you.”

“I never touched her!” I shouted.

“Order! I will have order in this court!” the judge said as he hammered his gavel down. “Counselor, another outburst, and we will have a continuance until your client can control himself and behave appropriately at his trial.”

The old man looked at me and then tapped the writing pad that had the words, “you do not have much time left.”

“Be patient and listen,” he said softly.

I leaned back in my chair, crossed my arms, and stared at the girl.

“Rosemary?” the prosecutor began again. “Please tell us about the time the accused attacked you.”

“The first time or all the times?”

The old man grabbed my arm and squeezed hard. I sat there as motionless as I could.

“Please tell us what you remember,” the prosecutor said. “I know this will be difficult—go at your own pace. Tell us everything relevant to the assault and do not leave out anything you think may have provoked his action; and—as you know—everything you say must be the truth.”

“I was only eleven the first time he assaulted me,” Rosemary began, and the courtroom hummed with murmurings. “I was walking home from school and he...”

Rosemary talked for almost an hour. She accused me of attacking her at least five times; she described violence that had two members of the jury in tears. I did not know her. I kept trying to figure out who would put her up to this damaging charade. Who was trying to destroy me and what else did he have planned?

More witnesses took their oaths and spoke for hours about my violence toward them. I kept trying to make sense of their testimony. Everyone was lying; but I could not see a

pattern. I could not find the common thread that would help me identify who was conspiring against me.

Suddenly, everything became clear: *this cannot be real*. I had found the evidence that made everything unravel. During the hours of testimony—I had counted fourteen witnesses—the sun had not moved. The shadows on the jury box were unchanged. The old man kept pouring water from a pitcher and it never emptied! We had not had one break; no one had needed a restroom. I was not hungry! We had been in this courtroom for several hours, suspended in time: *it is a dream*.

I leaned toward the old man and announced, “This is a dream.”

“You’ve said that before,” the old man said. “Every time you say it, I say, ‘OK, then wake up and get me out of this’ and you can’t.”

“I’m just dreaming you are here,” I said. “I’m dreaming that you don’t believe me.”

“It’s not complicated,” the old man said. “If this is a dream, then wake up.”

“But the sun has not moved, the water pitcher is full, and we have not had a break since the trial began,” I announced with confidence.

“You are worrying me,” the old man said. “Thinking this is a dream will not make it a dream and you don’t have much time left. Either wake up and free us both, or start helping with your defense.”

“Listen to me,” I said. “You must listen to me. The sun has not moved for hours and the water pitcher is full. Look at it: full to the top. You’ve been drinking water from it for hours and it’s full. Don’t you get it? I am dreaming.”

“Look at me!” the old man said, quietly, yet with a strange intensity. “Your trial began three days ago. The prosecution has presented seventy-two witnesses and you

have not known any of them. Don't you understand what's at stake here? It's not a dream and thinking it is a dream will only waste the precious little time that you have left."

"But, what about the water?"

"They fill the pitchers each morning and we have just arrived. Settle down and don't say anything when the trial re-convenes."

"What are you—?"

"Quiet!"

The old man began to stand as the bailiff announced, "All rise."

After the judge entered the courtroom and the trial re-convened, the prosecution called five more witnesses. I did not recognize any of them.

"Your Honor," the prosecutor said, as the fifth witness stepped down. "We believe we have a method that will speed up these proceedings while safe-guarding the rights of the accused."

"Are you prepared to discuss the details?" the judge asked.

"Yes, Your Honor."

"Please approach the bench and I would like defense counsel to join us."

The old man stood, turned toward me, and said, "Hope for the best." Then he walked toward the judge and the prosecutor at the front of the court.

They conferred for about ten minutes. The old man nodded and nodded the whole time. The prosecutor kept making sweeping gestures toward the jury and toward the spectators in the courtroom. The judge picked up his gavel, struck it once on the block, and announced, "Proceed."

The old man returned to the table and sat down. He

leaned in toward me and said, "Stay calm, this is in your best interest."

"Ladies and gentlemen of the jury," the judge said. "The prosecution and the defense have offered a plan to assure a speedy trial and let you get to a verdict as soon as possible."

The old man grabbed my arm, squeezed it firmly, and whispered, "Calm, remember, stay calm."

The judge continued, "The prosecutor will read each charge against the defendant, then he will ask for a *show of hands* in the courtroom from those who were victims of the accused on that charge. This will help the court to get through the charges; as everyone knows, we do not have much time left."

A juror held up her hand.

"Yes?" the judge said.

"Should jurors hold up their hands, too?"

"Yes," the judge said. "That would be a good idea."

Another juror held up his hand, and then began speaking, "Your honor, will everyone be sworn to tell the truth?"

"Yes," the judge said. "The bailiff will swear in the entire courtroom."

"No! No!" I shouted. "How can I get a fair trial? How can I question my accusers?"

"The accused will stand," the judge said, angrily.

"I asked you to remain calm," the old man whispered as we both stood.

"You are the reason you cannot get a fair trial," the judge said. "You don't remember the victims and you don't remember the crimes. How can you possibly question your accusers? How can this court allow your forgetfulness to delay justice?"

I stared at the judge. The sun was exactly where it was when the trial began. The water pitcher was full. I did not feel hungry.

“Thank you, Your Honor,” the old man said. “We are grateful for your patience with us and we are ready to proceed.”

“Very well,” the judge said. “Bailiff, swear them in.”

The bailiff stood before the room, instructed everyone to rise, and administered the oath. The jurors stood, the prosecutors stood, the spectators stood, and the old man stood. I sat in silence, not understanding why I can’t wake up from this mad dream.

For several hours, one of the prosecutors would read a charge and then ask for everyone who had been a victim to raise their hand. Sometimes hundreds of people held up a hand, and at other times, only a few people would hold up their hand. The prosecutors took turns reading, when a prosecutor grew hoarse from reading, another would take over.

“The defendant stole twenty dollars from petty cash and blamed a temporary bookkeeper, a Mr.—”

“What?” I asked. “Read that again.”

“Calm,” the old man cautioned, quietly. “Stay calm. Don’t interrupt. We’ll get through this much faster.”

“No!” I snapped. “Read that again. Please, Your Honor, could I hear that charge again?”

“Very well,” the judge said, nodding toward the prosecutor who had read the charge. “Read it again.”

“Let’s see,” the prosecutor began as he fumbled with the stacks of paper. “Stole twenty dollars from petty cash and blamed a temporary bookkeeper.”

“Is there anything more?” I asked, beginning to feel uncomfortable.

“Yes,” the prosecutor said. “You have a copy of the charges.”

“Just tell me a little more,” I asked. “I seem to... I don’t know.”

“The theft occurred on May 22nd and was discovered two weeks later when the petty cash did not reconcile with receipts.”

“I was going to put it back, but they caught it before I could—”

“Is that an admission of guilt?” the judge asked.

“I took the money,” I said. “Yes. I am guilty. However, the following December, I gave one hundred dollars to a food pantry. I gave five times as much to help hungry people.”

“Giving money to help feed hungry people is not a crime,” the judge said. “That would not be relevant to this trial.”

“Your Honor,” I said. “I remember that money. It did happen.” Then I noticed that the sun was exactly where it was when the trial began. The water pitcher was still full, and I did not feel hungry.

“The prosecution may proceed,” the judge said.

“The defendant filed a fraudulent report with the Better Business Bureau regarding a car dealership.”

“I know that one!” I said. “I did that! That dealership was a bunch of crooks and con men. They ripped me off and did not refund my money. They deserved everything they got and more!”

“You admit to this crime?” the judge asked.

“I did it, but it wasn’t a crime,” I said. “They got what they deserved.”

“Very well,” the judge said. “If you can prove they de-

served what you did to them, then that would open a new case. Meet with the prosecutors to specify charges and we will schedule court dates.”

“Wait a minute,” I announced. “I just remembered! That bookkeeper backed into my car, dented my trunk, and drove away. That’s why I didn’t care everyone thought he took the twenty dollars.”

“He deserved that false accusation?” the judge asked. “Meet with prosecution about filing charges.”

“Wait a minute,” I demanded. “I remember! The girl who said I assaulted her—the one who made the jurors cry. I remember her! She was in my fifth grade class. She lied to the teacher. She said I cheated on a math test. I hit her for lying about me. She told my parents that I hit her, so I pushed her down on the way home. She told the teacher about it, so I tripped her on the playground. But, she lied about me first; she was the one that started it all!”

“She lied about you?” the judge asked. “Let’s schedule a court date. Mr. Prosecutor, charge her with perjury; she failed to reveal the actions that may have provoked his action.”

“Think about what you are doing,” the old man said. “Think carefully.”

“I am,” I said. “In fact, I can finally think clearly.”

“Are you?” the old man asked. “When you came in here, you did not remember them. Why do you think they would remember you?”

“What?” I asked. “They remember me, don’t they? How could they testify if they didn’t remember me?”

“They may not remember you in a hundred years,” the old man said. “These trials are difficult to schedule.”

“But they are my accusers!” I said angrily. “No one understands that they each deserved exactly what they got. We need a trial.”

“But they are saying the same things about you,” the old man said. “When you testified against them, every one of them accused you of crimes that justified what they did to you.”

“What are you saying?” I asked.

“I’ve told you so many times,” the old man said, shaking his head slowly, wearily. “I’ve told you and you have never believed me. Why would you believe me now?”

“Try me.”

“You have been in this courtroom since the beginning of time. Each time you walk out as the defendant, you return as a prosecution witness to get revenge on those who have accused you. Each time you walk out as a prosecution witness, you return as a defendant charged with crimes against the accused.”

“I don’t understand,” I said. “This doesn’t make sense.”

“What doesn’t make sense?” the old man asked.

“None of it,” I said. “The behavior is nonsense so the explanation is nonsense, too.”

“Listen to me,” the old man said, sadly. “Every time you think you are leaving, you return. Nevertheless, you come back because you want to come back. During every moment of your consciousness, either you are on trial or you are testifying against someone who has wronged you. You will spend eternity here.”

“No, you’re wrong,” I said. “You don’t understand. If I don’t straighten this all out, if I can’t get them to understand, I will never be free.”

“Free from what?” the old man asked.

“Free, just free,” I said.

“When you are free, how will you know it?” the old man asked. “Perhaps you are free, right now.”

“No, I’m not free; I can’t be free.”

“Leave,” the old man said. “Just tell the judge no one has wronged you and you will not testify against anyone else. Everyone you have ever known is innocent and you do not want anyone to suffer.”

“I can’t,” I said. “It would be wrong.”

“Wrong?” the old man asked. “When you didn’t remember the girl, you did not accuse her.”

“I couldn’t accuse her of something if I didn’t remember it, could I?” I said. “That’s seems simple enough to understand, right?”

“Now you remember her and because of your memories, she must be punished,” the old man said. “Is that simple enough to understand?”

“No,” I said. “You don’t understand the issues here. Truth is what matters and she lied about me.”

“Truth does not require defense,” the old man said. “Truth is not fragile or temporary. The biggest lies in the world cannot tarnish truth. People cannot say or do anything to you that changes who you are; your being is beyond this world.”

The sun was exactly where it was when the trial began. The water pitcher was still full, and I did not feel hungry.

“Maybe,” I began. “Maybe there is something to what you say. Someone lying to the teacher about me in the fifth grade really doesn’t matter, does it?”

“If you don’t remember it and it doesn’t matter, then it seems if you forget it, it can’t matter then, either,” the old man said as he leaned back in his chair and studied me closely.

“All right,” I said. “I’m going to trust you. Are you surprised?”

“Yes,” he said. “But, I’ve been surprised before; make

this one the final surprise.”

“Your Honor?” I said. “May I say something?”

“Yes,” the judge said. “Please stand and address the court. Have you discussed this with your counsel?”

“Not all of it, Your Honor,” I said as I stood. “Rosemary lied to the teacher about me in fifth grade. I don’t know why she did that. I was mad at her, I hurt her, and I am sorry. I do not believe the world will be better if Rosemary is charged with perjury. Please drop the charges. I will not testify against her.”

Several people in the courtroom applauded. I felt proud. I looked down at the old man and he looked grim.

“Very well,” the judge said. “The court directs the district attorney to drop the charges against Rosemary Williamson.”

“Is there anything else you wish to say to this court?” the judge asked.

The old man’s grim expression worried me. I had not completed all that I needed to do. He must doubt me: I must be overlooking something.

“Your Honor,” I began again. “The temporary bookkeeper I framed for stealing the petty cash; the man who backed into my car. Is there some way to make things right with him?”

“Yes,” a voice spoke out from the back of the courtroom. “I am sorry I backed into your car. My wife was in labor and I was rushing to get home to her.”

“I had no idea,” I said. “Please forgive me.”

“So ordered,” the judge said as he hammered his gavel.

I stood looking at all the people in the courtroom.

“Have I hurt everyone here?” I asked.

“Your life and theirs have connected in important ways,”

the judge said.

“Whose cat did I kill?” I asked.

“Mine,” a small girl said as she held up her hand.

“I am sorry. How did I do that?”

“She drank anti-freeze that you left in a pan behind your garage,” the little girl said, sobbing softly.

“Please forgive me,” I said, starting to feel her sadness. “I had no idea—”

Then I saw her.

A mind-numbing rage boiled in my gut and made my legs tremble.

“Why are you here?” I asked as I pointed at a woman seated on the front row, behind the prosecution’s table.

She hung her head and did not look up at me.

“Think carefully,” the old man said. “Think clearly. Time is running out.”

“What do you know about thinking clearly?” I asked. “What could you know about my life?”

“I might know everything,” the old man said.

“Then you’d know this woman was my wife,” I said. “You’d know she was a pain-pill addict! You’d know she drove our car into a train and killed our children.”

“Yes, if I knew everything, I would know that,” the old man said.

“Are you accusing this woman of homicide?” the judge asked.

“Yes!” I declared. “She killed our children and she killed herself and left me to a life of loneliness and despair.”

“She punished you after she died?” the old man asked. “You did say she is dead.”

“Yes,” I said. “She died in the accident.”

“Then what punishment does she deserve?” the judge asked. “How would justice be served?”

“A tragic, painful afterlife,” I said.

“She doesn’t have that now?” the old man asked.

“I don’t know.”

“You want to be sure that she suffers?” the old man asked and his expression grew more solemn. “Does her suffering make you happy?”

“No, it’s not that,” I said. “You don’t understand.”

“I’m glad to hear that I *don’t understand*,” the old man said. “If knowing she is suffering makes you happy, then your life is even more tragic than hers. You would be more deserving of her fate than she is.”

“I don’t want her to suffer,” I said.

“Punishment is suffering,” the judge said. “That’s the whole idea behind punishment.”

“I don’t want her punished,” I said. “I don’t want her to suffer; I am sorry for the hate and anguish and anger and revenge that have consumed my life. I cannot continue living each moment accusing others and planning their punishments.”

“What are you saying?” the old man asked. “Are you willing to give up all of this?”

The sun was exactly where it was when the trial began. The water pitcher was full. I realized nothing changes here; I was locked in a pointless struggle to judge and be judged and there was no escape.

“I don’t want her punished,” I said. “I don’t want anyone to suffer. I want this to end.”

“You do not know what you are asking for,” the old man said. “If you had known, you would have asked for it at the

beginning of time and known nothing but perfect peace and love. You made it; welcome home.”

“Time?”

“Five thirty-seven,” the attendant said.

“I think he’s finally at peace,” the nurse said as she put down the chart, turned off the light next to the bed, and began removing the I.V. that had kept the saline fluid dripping into his body. “I’ve never seen anyone struggle for so long.”

“I’ll call the family,” the attendant said. “He has a brother, right?”

“Yeah, he was in yesterday, during the evening visiting hours,” the nurse said. “He said if something didn’t happen by tomorrow, he would drive back home. He lives about six hours from here. I hope he’s still at the hotel.”

“He sure had a lot of visitors over these last three days,” the attendant said.

“They were all in for the funeral,” the nurse said. “God only knows how he made it through that crash and his wife and kids didn’t. There wasn’t a reason in the world for him to be alive for the past three days.”

“Maybe he just wasn’t ready to die.”

