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Happens Every Day

By Jeff Garrity

Even from the other side of the cafeteria, and with bobbing heads on the dance floor blocking and unblocking her view, Elaine could see that his eyes were on her. She looked away, and when she looked back he was working his way around the dance floor, weaving between college freshmen draped in bed sheets and standing in groups of threes and fours, their eyes taking in the faces around them and their heads nodding to Steve Miller singing about going through hell to get to heaven.

Elaine stood near the DJ's table with her roommate and her roommate's friend. She hoped he was after one of them and not her. The young man smiled as he neared and she turned away hoping to throw him off.

"You look thirsty," he said, holding out a paper cup filled with punch and leaning into her so she could hear over the music. "There's two shots of vodka in it. My name's Jeremy."

"I'm all set," she said. She pulled a bota from a fold in her toga and tipped it back for a swig of the Mountain Chablis her roommate poured into the goatskin an hour earlier while Elaine held it over their bathroom sink.

Jeremy wore a crown of leaves picked from an oak tree outside the dorm. He stitched them together using the sewing kit his mom put in his suitcase ten days before when he left his home in a Milwaukee suburb for his new one at the university in Madison. Most of the leaves had fallen off and one perched on his shoulder.

"You're shedding," she said after she capped the bota.

"What?"

Elaine flicked the leaf off his shoulder.

"Thanks," he said. "I was trying to look like Belushi in the movie. You ever see the movie?" He was leaning into her again.

"Everyone has," she said, keeping her eyes on the dance floor.

A man approached Elaine from behind and tapped her on the shoulder. He wore a suit with no tie and the nametag pinned to his lapel said MR. HONNECUT. FACILITIES was below his name in smaller letters.

"Miss, I'd like to see your ID," the man said when she turned around. "And you'll have to give me that thing you're drinking out of."

Elaine glanced at Mr. Honnecut and then at Jeremy. She dropped the bota to the floor, wheeled and walked through the crowd toward the door.

Mr. Honnecut picked up the bota, uncapped it and gave it a sniff. "What's in the cup?" he said to Jeremy. "And what's her name?"

Jeremy handed the cup to Mr. Honnecut and followed Elaine to the door.

*

He caught up with her just outside the double glass doors at the dorm's north entrance.

"Hey, sorry," he said, slowing to walk beside her.

She kept walking.

"There wasn't really vodka in the punch," he said. "I just wanted to talk to you."

"About what?"

"You. Me. Anything. It's a party."

They walked down the sidewalk along the north wing of Dolores and Frederick Peasley Hall. The dorm was on the north end of campus and there wasn't much beyond it, other than a commuter parking lot and a winding, wood-chipped path through a natural area with newly installed lights because of a rape there the previous spring.

"Where you going?" he said. "We're dressed kinda funny to go wandering around."

"We?"

"Let's go back inside. That guy made his point. He won't hassle us anymore."

They stopped walking. From the dorm cafeteria they could hear Mick Jagger's muffled voice singing about a mad bull that lost its way.

"I'll go away if you want me to, but there's nothing up ahead but woods," Jeremy said.

She looked back toward the dorm's entrance and saw her roommate and her roommate's friend just outside the door looking at her. Her roommate waved and Elaine held up a hand. Jeremy turned but all he saw were a couple dozen kids wearing togas outside the door.

"I've got a joint," Jeremy said. He raised his bedsheet and pulled it from the pocket of his shorts. He straightened the joint with his fingers and held it out for her to see. She looked at it but didn't say anything.

Jeremy nodded toward a three-sided enclosure at the edge of the dorm's parking lot. "That might be a good spot," he said. "I mean, if you're into it."

"You know there's a dumpster in there," she said.

He looked around but didn't see any other good options. "It'll just be a couple minutes. We could go in the woods but you don't know me."

She looked up and down the street and back at the dorm. Her friends were gone. A car slowed and stopped next to where they stood on the sidewalk.

"Hey toga chick!" a young man yelled to Elaine from the passenger window of an Impala station wagon just starting to rust. "Dump that loser and party with us. C'mon. We'll kick his ass for you."

"Go fuck yourself," she said, which brought hoots and hollers, and the rear window came down so the three guys in the back could join in. The car squealed away and ran the stop sign just ahead.

Elaine and Jeremy stood on the sidewalk watching its taillights. Jagger counseled from the cafeteria that love was just a kiss away. Two more cars passed by on the street.

"All right," she said. "Let's go."

"I could've taken them, you know," he said, hoping to see a smile, but she was already walking.

Inside the enclosure they leaned against the wall shaded from the streetlights. He pulled a lighter from his pocket and spun the joint back and forth between his fingers while he held the flame to one end.

“Go ahead,” he said, handing it to her.

She stifled a cough as she handed it back and then exhaled a cloud above their heads into the light coming from the street.

They smoked silently, passing it back and forth finger to finger until it was burned down to a roach. He offered it to her and she shook her head, so he dropped it.

“My brother would’ve eaten it,” she said.

“My brother wouldn’t have shared it with me,” he said. “Unless you were there.”

He stepped forward and kissed her and she let him.

“Something stinks,” she said, pulling away. “Let’s go back inside.”

*

When they were inside Jeremy took her hand and started for the dance floor but she held back.

“You can’t dance to Stairway to Heaven,” she said. “And I want to find my friends.”

Jeremy nudged her with his elbow and pointed out Mr. Honnecut, walking through the crowd and looking for someone.

“Let’s go,” she said, and pulled him onto the dance floor. By the time they made it to the center of the floor the song had wound down to nothing, but they stayed through the next three songs and then she nodded toward the DJ’s table and they walked off the floor. They stood near the table and she scanned the crowd for her friends.

“What’s your name?” he said

“Elaine,” she said, still looking.

“I’m Jeremy,” he said.

“I know. You told me. I see my friends. Bye. Thanks for the joint.”

He watched her walk away through the crowd until she blended in with all the other white bed sheets.

*

Jeremy had a morning class on the following Monday but nothing else until two-forty that afternoon so he spent a couple hours in the cafeteria keeping an eye on the north entrance and reading *The Scarlet Letter* for a class. After an hour Elaine walked in alone and picked up a tray. He met her at the salad bar.

“Good morning” he said.

She checked her watch. “Afternoon.”

“Just get back from class?”

“I’m going out with a guy from home this weekend so if you’re going to ask me out I’m kind of occupied. But I’m sure I’ll see you around.”

“Yeah,” he said. “I mean, we live in the same building.”

She spooned some croutons onto her salad and gestured behind her. “I put my books over there if you want to sit with me,” she said.

“Already ate. I’ll see you around.”

*

A couple Saturdays later Jeremy went to a party at a house where two of his friends from high school lived. After he walked through people standing on the front steps, he saw Elaine on the porch, sitting on a couch and talking with a guy he didn't recognize. She was almost sitting sideways, facing away from the door so she didn't see him and he didn't say anything. The guy she was talking with seemed to be explaining something. It was a warm evening for late September so he walked through the crowded house and into the backyard where people stood in small groups. He filled a plastic cup from the keg at the foot of the back porch steps and saw his two friends. They were both a year older and the three of them helped build sets for Brigadoon during the spring of his junior year. He spent a couple afternoons making out with one of them before her parents came home from work two summers before. They had been friends since.

He saw Elaine walk out the back door by herself, and she was about to walk past.

"Hi Elaine," he said.

She looked at Jeremy. "Hi." She looked at his two friends and then back at Jeremy.

Jeremy introduced his friends and she smiled at them. "I saw you earlier out on the porch," Jeremy said.

"You look familiar," one of Jeremy's friends said to Elaine. "You have Milten for Nat Sci, right?"

"No," Elaine said. She started to walk away but turned back after a couple steps. "Bye," she said, and kept walking.

Jeremy watched her walk between the scattered groups in the backyard.

"She's lying," one of his friends said. "She's in my Nat Sci class. I know it. Why would she lie? I mean, I'll see her there every Tuesday and Thursday."

Jeremy watched Elaine walk into the backyard of the house behind, and down its driveway to the next street over. He lost sight of her after she crossed the street.

*

Jeremy's friend, Susan, waited at the classroom door for Elaine and they both walked out of Natural Science 134. The class was on the first floor of one of the old brick buildings in the leafy part of campus.

"Remember me?" Susan said.

They stood outside the classroom door and students walked around them.

"Saturday night," Susan said. "You were at my party. The house on Scanlon."

"Right," Elaine said. "You asked if I was in your class."

"Yeah. This class."

Elaine smiled and shrugged. "So, you're a friend of Jeremy's?"

"Yes."

Elaine started down the hall and Susan walked with her.

"I told Jeremy you're a liar," Susan said. "I mean, he's my friend."

"I wasn't in the mood to talk," Elaine said.

Susan waited for more.

“My boyfriend from home broke up with me that night,” Elaine said. “Not that it’s any of your business. I just wanted to leave and didn’t want to talk.”

Elaine pushed open the heavy wooden door at the building’s main entrance and went into the bright sunshine and down the steps.

*

Jeremy sat in the cafeteria eating lunch and reading a letter from his brother, Joshua. Joshua had only been in the Navy for a few months but already hated it and needed to tell someone but didn’t want to tell their parents. Jeremy was about to flip the page when Elaine put her tray down across from him. She had a salad, a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and a mug of coffee.

“Letter from mom?” she said.

“My brother.”

“Mind if I sit here?”

“No.”

Jeremy folded the letter and laid it on the table.

“You can finish reading,” she said.

“They’re showing A Clockwork Orange Thursday night at Phillips. A buddy of mine saw it at Marquette where he’s going to school and said I have to see it. I’m not sure you’d like it but I’m going, if you want to go.”

“Why wouldn’t I like it?”

“I don’t know that you wouldn’t, but it gets pretty nasty. Real violent. And he said it’s just weird sometimes. He told me a bunch of people got up and walked out when he saw it.”

“I’ve got a paper due Friday morning and I haven’t started.”

“It’s playing Friday night too.”

She took a bite of her sandwich.

“Starts around eight, I think,” Jeremy said. “Maybe we could get some pizza after the movie at that place across the street from Phillips.”

She lifted a fork of iceberg lettuce to her mouth. Before she finished chewing she said, “Okay.”

*

“You are so full of shit,” Elaine said. “The guy’s a killer and a rapist and you say you’re feeling sorry for him? He does it for fun! If he raped me would you feel sorry for him?”

“Elaine, that’s crazy. I just don’t like what they did to him. They changed his brain. You think brain washing’s okay?”

“For a murderer and rapist? I don’t know. Maybe. But I can’t understand how you feel sorry for someone like that.”

“I’m not saying I feel sorry for him.”

“You two done? We’re closed.” The guy working the counter of the pizza shop stood next to their table. He wore a stained white apron and his hands were on his hips.

Elaine and Jeremy had been at the pizza shop for more than an hour.

“Yeah, we’re done,” Jeremy said.

“No we’re not. You’re still full of shit.”

Jeremy couldn't remember any other time he'd seen her smile.
They walked to the door and the guy from behind the counter unlocked it for them.

*

Early the next week Jeremy called Elaine to see if she wanted to come over.
"Maybe," she said. "I've gotta go talk to my advisor. His office hours are all filled up for a couple weeks but he said he'll be at his office after dinner tonight so I'm going there around eight. I don't know how long it will take."

"You want to see him about your dual major idea?"

"Yeah, I just want to see if I can do it and graduate on time. Mainly I want to get it settled in my head."

"Okay, I'll be here all night. Stop by after."

*

By eleven that night Jeremy assumed Elaine wasn't coming. He called her twice but the answering machine picked up and she didn't call back so he went to bed.

*

By the third ring Jeremy was awake. He sat up in bed when his answering machine picked up and he heard Elaine's voice. The words weren't clear because his roommate was snoring but she didn't sound good.

He got out of bed, but before he could play the message the phone rang again.

"Hello?"

"Jeremy," Elaine said.

"Elaine, yes, it's me."

"Can you come over? Stacy's not here. She's home at a funeral."

Elaine's voice was unsteady, fearful. He had never heard that before. "Sure. Sure. I'll be there in a couple minutes." He looked at the clock radio on his desk and it said 3:12. "Are you okay?"

"No," she said. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be sorry. I'm on my way."

Jeremy got dressed, walked out of the dorm's south entrance, and back in the north entrance where he had to show his student ID to the young man working the desk. He took the stairs to the third floor.

He knocked and Elaine came to the door and without a word she walked back to her bed and sat down. Her face looked sad and heavy and her eyes were red. Jeremy sat on the bed next to her. She stood and sat on the desk chair across from the bed.

"I'm sorry for this," she said.

"No more sorries."

"He attacked me," she said and put her head down and her shoulders shook as she cried.

Jeremy stood from the bed so fast he hit his head on the upper bunk. Without looking up she said, "Please sit down. Just let me say it. I need to say it." She put her head in her hands. "I feel so sick about this."

Jeremy didn't sit down. He stepped to her side and he put his hand on her shoulder.

"Please don't. Please."

He let his hand fall to his side but stayed standing next to her. She gathered herself and asked him to sit down and he did.

"Who?" he said.

"My advisor. Professor MacKenzie. I went to his office tonight. God damn it, why did I go there at night? That was so stupid. I hate myself for it." Elaine wiped tears from her cheek. "That's when it happened." She put her head down again and put her fingers into her hair on top of her head. "I'm so goddamned pissed off. Why did I do it? Why would I go there at night? It was so stupid!"

"Elaine. This isn't your fault." He stood up again. "Are you hurt?"

"Just let me finish. I need to say it."

Jeremy sat down. She stared at his shoes and he stared at the top of her head. Her fingers were still in her hair and he saw that her wrists were bruised.

"When I got there he was looking out the window behind his desk. He was holding the blinds apart and he said he wanted me to see something. I thought maybe there was an accident on the street. I walked to the window and he locked my arms behind me and wrapped something, around my wrists. And he pulled my face toward him and tried to stick his tongue in my mouth but I kept turning away and I was screaming and then his hand went up my skirt. He put his fingers inside me. I was still screaming but I couldn't get away. I was trying so god damn hard, I really was trying but I couldn't." She started to cry but gathered herself. "He pushed me down on his desk but I got one of my hands free and I hit him as hard as I could with my elbow. I don't know where. I grabbed the stapler off his desk and tried to hit him but he grabbed me again so I dug my nails into his face and held on as long as I could but he turned me around and got my arms behind me again and pushed them up so hard it hurt, it really hurt, it really, really hurt." She grabbed fistfuls of hair and her shoulders shook again. Jeremy stared at the white knuckles sticking out from her dark hair. "And he went up my skirt again. I couldn't stop him. He kept pushing me down on the desk and I couldn't get away. I couldn't. And that's when ..."

Her shoulders shook again. "I was so stupid. I was so stupid to go there."

"Elaine."

She took a deep breath. "After it was over he said to me, we aren't going to hear anything about this, are we? He started to untie my hands and when I had one free I grabbed the stapler again and hit him on the head hard and but he grabbed me again. His face was bleeding from my nails, and maybe his head too. He told me if I said a word he'd tell everybody I tried to take off his pants and I attacked him when he said no. Who would anyone believe? God damn it! I hate this!" Her fingers grabbed fistfuls of hair again. "I just want to crawl into a fucking hole and fucking die." Her hands slid out of her hair and covered her face. "God, I hate this."

"I think we should go to the hospital," Jeremy said.

Elaine rubbed her eyes with the palms of her hands. "No." She looked at the little finger of her hand, swollen and purple around the big knuckle.

"Did you call the police?"

"What are they going to do? No one was there to hear anything. Or see anything. I was so stupid."

“The police need to know about this.”

“No!” She glanced up at him, and then her eyes went back to his feet.

“Elaine, I don’t know what to do,” Jeremy said. “The guy’s a criminal. A rapist. The police need to know.”

“No!” Elaine said, almost shouting.

They sat in silence. Her hands covered her face and Jeremy stared at the top of her head and wanted desperately to do something. Hold her. Kill someone. Something.

“What do you need?” he said.

“Stay here tonight. Please. You can sleep on the pullout.”

“I really think we should go to the police in the morning.”

She looked up at him with an intensity he didn’t recognize. “We are *not* going to the police. We are *not*. Stop saying it.”

“All right. All right.”

“Jeremy?” she said, her head down again. “Thank you. And I’m sorry.”

“I can’t imagine what on earth you’re apologizing for.”

She wiped away a tear and stared at her hands. “Living,” she said.

*

Neither of them slept well the rest of the night. When Jeremy woke for good the room was bright and he turned to look at Elaine, asleep on the lower bunk. He looked at the clock. He had missed one class and his second was half over. He watched her breathe and hoped she would sleep for a long time. He decided he would stay until she woke up, and then he would stay as long as she wanted and he would keep his rage bottled up inside for now. He would go get his books if he was going to stay through another night. He sat up in the bed and swung his legs over the edge. He looked around the room and saw a Led Zeppelin poster he didn’t remember seeing before and thought it must be her roommate’s. There was a new succulent of some kind on the window ledge and water stains on the wall below it. He could hear voices in the hallway. Happy voices that reminded him that there was still happiness in the world. He watched her breathing again. She pulled the blanket down and rolled over, away from him, and then pulled the blanket up to her shoulders. He didn’t see her eyes open. He laid down and turned his head to watch her breathe.

*

Each morning before he left for class Jeremy would call the dean of the College of Education, Dr. Sampson, and he would call once or twice later in the day from a pay phone between classes. But Dr. Sampson was always unavailable. Finally, a week after Elaine was raped, he got through to Dr. Sampson.

“You are persistent, I’ll give you that,” Dr. Sampson said. “What can I do for you?”

“One of the professors in your department, Professor MacKenzie, raped a friend of mine and I’m going to make sure everybody knows. You need to do something about it. He attacked my friend and she’s really messed up over it. I’m sure she’s not the first and she won’t be the last unless you do something.”

“I have no police report,” Dr. Sampson said. “I have no victim. Please don’t waste my time.”

“She wouldn’t file a police report. I tried to get her to, but she won’t. Maybe she’ll change her mind, but you need to get that creep out of here or this will be on your head too the next time it happens.”

“I assume you’re talking about a Miss ... Elaine Hilder. I have in my hand a memo from Dr. MacKenzie detailing an encounter in which your friend walked into Dr. MacKenzie’s office for an appointment that she insisted on having that evening. He made a special trip to campus just to meet with her. When she arrived at his office she proceeded to sit on Dr. MacKenzie’s lap and attempted to seduce him. When he refused her advances, she attacked him by scratching his face quite badly, and then by smashing his head with a stapler. The document detailing the encounter is signed by Professor MacKenzie. He said he did not wish to press charges, although we certainly could, and frankly, I believe we should. He could have been seriously injured.”

“MacKenzie’s a liar and you know it.”

“I know nothing of the sort. He has a distinguished record and is a very important member of our faculty. And we’ve done some checking on Miss Hilder. That’s standard for something like this. We learned that she tried to sneak alcohol into a university function, even though it was forbidden and she’s underage. Her roommate gave us permission to search her room and we found paraphernalia related to the use of illegal drugs. She’s hardly the type we’re going to take seriously.”

“You’re protecting a rapist! I can’t believe what you’re saying.”

“I will not allow the careers of our faculty members to be determined by malicious rumors started every day by coeds across this campus. These young women are dealing with all kinds of emotions and hormones and they’re away from home for the first time and they can get hysterical, and suddenly the objects of their desire are transformed into their enemies. Happens in an instant. I’ve seen it.”

“Listen, she’s really messed up and it’s because Professor MacKenzie raped her. I am not going to allow that creep to get away with this. You do something or I will. Maybe it’s time you start believing some stories.”

“You’re saying that one of our esteemed professors assaulted a young woman. I’m saying it didn’t happen. The matter has been looked into and the matter is closed. And if you continue to make such accusations we will consider it harassment and you will suffer disciplinary actions under the student code of conduct. We can and will remove you from this institution if we feel it is warranted and that’s what’s coming next if I hear any more about this from you. I’m not going to ruin the career of a highly respected and popular professor because some drunken, pot smoking coed can’t control herself. Goodbye.”

*

Elaine lay on her bed staring at the bottom of the top bunk. Jeremy sat on her desk chair looking out her window, watching the sun sink behind Mantowic Hall.

“Want to see a movie?” Jeremy said.

“No,” Elaine said. “Not tonight.”

“How about some ice cream? There’s that new place by the water.”

“I just want to stay here.”

Jeremy looked out her window. It had been a cold day and an early snow was supposed to come later. “You doing all right?”

“I don’t know.”

“Maybe going somewhere would be good. If we get halfway there and you decide it’s not a good idea we can come back. Maybe just go for a walk.”

“How about you go get some ice cream and tell me how it was.”

Jeremy didn’t say anything.

“I don’t want to,” Elaine said. “That’s all.”

“Elaine, I don’t know what to do.”

“I don’t either,” she said.

“There must be something. There must be something between doing nothing and going to the police. I don’t know if I can live with this thing gnawing at me the rest of my life. Do I have to take it to my grave?” He stood and walked to the window. “I can’t imagine how it is for you.”

“Then stop trying.”

“I want to take a baseball bat to MacKenzie’s skull. Or at least his car.”

She rolled over away from him.

Jeremy sat on the bed next to her and he put his hand on her back.

“Please. Don’t.”

*

Jeremy walked to Professor MacKenzie’s office the next day after his last class and waited for a student to finish talking with the assistant at a desk outside MacKenzie’s office door. When the student left, Jeremy asked if the professor was available.

“He’s at the NACE conference all day today.” The middle-aged woman shifted her eyes to the wall clock behind Jeremy and then back to him. “He’s giving the keynote in seven minutes and there’s a reception so he won’t be back for a while. He might just go straight home.”

“That’s over at Lowell?”

“No, it’s downtown. The conference center by Monona.”

Jeremy thanked her and hurried the ten blocks to the conference center and saw a sandwich board in the lobby for the NACE conference with an arrow pointing down a wide hallway.

He stepped inside the large room and eased the door closed behind him. The lights were turned low, except where Professor MacKenzie spoke at the podium. The round, linen-covered tables were mostly occupied, but there were a couple empty seats at the tables nearby, so he picked one and took a step toward it but noticed a man with a closely cropped beard walking toward him along the back wall. The man held up both palms as if he wanted Jeremy to stay where he was.

“Do you have a ticket?” the man said when he was next to Jeremy. He wasn’t yet thirty and wore a V-neck sweater with a shirt and tie underneath.

“No,” Jeremy said. “I’m one of MacKenzie’s students. He said it would be okay to come just for his presentation. I know I’m a little late.”

“Supposed to have a ticket,” the man said.

“I get extra credit for being here,” Jeremy said. “I kinda need it.”

The man looked behind him and then back at Jeremy. “Okay, just sit over there. See?” He looked behind him again. “There’s a couple chairs. And you’ll have to leave before the reception. Okay?”

“Thanks.”

MacKenzie spoke for another ten minutes but Jeremy wasn't listening. The audience applauded when he was done and a few people began to line up at the microphone placed in the center of the main aisle. Jeremy walked to the line and stood waiting behind four others. He tried to prepare what he would say but couldn't focus. His mind seemed at once unsettled and at peace. He knew he was doing the right thing but he didn't know what he would do. He paid no attention to the questions or answers before his turn. His mind was empty.

Jeremy came to the microphone and MacKenzie smiled at him, waiting for his question.

"Just wondering how you got those cuts on your face."

"I assume you arrived late, and didn't hear," MacKenzie said. "So you must be one of my students."

There were a few chuckles.

"My cat got me the other night," MacKenzie said. "We were playing a bit rough, I guess. Is that it? That's your question?"

"I see you have many admirers here today, but I wonder how many of them would still admire you if they knew you were a liar and a rapist. You're lying about your face. You raped my friend and she cut your face trying to stop you. Look how far apart the marks are. That's a human hand. There's a written report signed by you saying the scratches were from one of your students. Dr. Sampson has it." Jeremy looked around the room. "Any of you want to see it, ask Dr. Sampson. There are a lot of lies in it but at least he admits one of his students cut his face. And hit him with a stapler, that's in the report too. She did it because she was being raped!"

The man in the V-neck sweater ran from his chair down the big aisle toward Jeremy.

"How many girls have you raped, MacKenzie?" Jeremy said. "Does your wife know you're a rapist? Does someone have to kill you to get you to stop doing this to ..."

The microphone went dead and Jeremy was pulled away by the man in the V-neck sweater and two others joined in. They dragged him up the aisle while he screamed "Rapist!" again and again. He almost broke free but two security guards rushed in from the lobby to join the fight and held his legs. Someone had already propped open the double doors and the men carried Jeremy into the lobby and dropped him to the carpeted floor. The security guards turned him over face down and cuffed his wrists. The man in the V-neck pulled Jeremy's wallet from his back pocket and found his student ID. He kept the ID and tossed the wallet onto Jeremy's back.

*

Jeremy and Elaine were expelled from the university the following Monday. Jeremy was expelled for creating a public hazard, violent behavior and slander. Elaine was expelled for assaulting Professor MacKenzie.

That evening Elaine had boxed up most of her things but still had two milk crates to fill when Jeremy knocked on her door.

She walked to the door and asked who it was.

"Can I come in?" Jeremy said. "Can't seem to reach you by phone."

"What the fuck were you thinking?" she said. "God damn it, I hate you! Everything was going to be fine. And then you had to go fuck it up. Just go!"

"Can we just talk for a minute?"

There was no response. Jeremy stood at her door, raised his hand to knock again but didn't. He walked down the hall and took the stairs to the first floor and walked out of the building to the south entrance and up the stairs to his floor. He took one last look around his room to make sure he hadn't forgotten anything before he left for good.

*

Jeremy went back to Milwaukee and spent a year at the community college, and then enrolled at Marquette University where he planned to finish his degree. He lived at home for the first year and got a job making pizzas. When he enrolled at Marquette he found a studio apartment not far from the university.

He called Elaine's mother soon after they were expelled but she didn't recognize his name from anything Elaine had said and she wouldn't give her daughter's number to a stranger. Jeremy gave her his number and asked her to pass it along to Elaine but he didn't hear from her. Every so often he would spend time calling directory information at Wisconsin colleges to see if she was enrolled there, and then started on Minnesota, where he knew she had relatives. He finally found her at Bemidji State University.

He didn't try to contact Elaine after he found her. Several times over the next couple years he looked at the phone and thought about calling her, but never did.

On a beautiful weekend in late May, with a semester to go before he finished his degree, Jeremy drove to Madison for friends' graduation parties. Late into the night he ended up on the roof of a friend's house with several others and they decided to stay up to watch the sunrise. It was an old roadhouse moved into town decades before and had a flat spot on the roof that was easily accessed through a window. They sat on folding chairs and lawn chairs watching the sunrise in silence. Oranges and yellows spilled out along the horizon, illuminating, for most of them, their first day as college graduates. They watched in silence until one got up to go to bed and everyone else followed. Jeremy found an empty couch in the living room.

*

The next day they decided to have a farewell meal at a diner near the state capitol on the isthmus between the lakes. The diner had been a destination for Sunday morning bus rides on many occasions for Jeremy's friends over the previous four years. They decided to walk the mile to avoid the rush hour traffic that overwhelmed the small side streets on the narrow strip of land between Mendota and Monona when state workers and university employees headed home for the day. And they wanted to spend a little more time together before they went off to their new lives. When they arrived at the diner they pushed together a few small tables to make room for eight.

By five o'clock everyone had left except Jeremy and Susan. One of the servers had pushed the other tables back to where they were. Susan had just finished her first year of graduate school and her parents were in town for her cousin's graduation. She planned to meet them for dinner so she and Jeremy were about to leave the diner when Jeremy saw Elaine walk in. She went to the counter and ordered a coffee to go. After she paid, Jeremy met her near the door.

"Elaine."

She looked at him with no expression. "Hi, Jeremy."

They stood looking at each other.

“You doing okay?” Jeremy said.

“I’m fine.”

He looked back at his table. “You remember Susan? You had a class together.”

She looked at Susan, and Susan smiled from across the diner.

“You disappeared,” Jeremy said.

“Tried to,” she said. She held her arms out to her side and looked down at her body to prove she hadn’t.

“I miss you.”

“Someone’s waiting for me,” she said. “I should go.”

“I don’t believe you,” Jeremy said.

“I’m sure you know by now I’m a liar.” She put her hand on the door handle to pull it open but looked back. “Good to see you.”

She walked out and Jeremy followed her. He stood outside the door and watched her walk two blocks to her car parked on the street. She pulled away from the curb and waited for the light to change at the end of the block. When it turned green Jeremy let two cars pass and then stepped into the street. Elaine hit her brakes hard and she stopped a few feet short of hitting him. Jeremy stood looking at her through her windscreen and she stared back at him. She spun the wheel and tried going around him but she didn’t see the car that had just pulled out from a parking spot on the other side of the street. The collision trapped Elaine’s car between the curb and the car that hit her. She threw it into reverse but the angle of her tires against the curb only pushed her against the other car, which was stalled and blowing steam from its radiator.

The car behind Elaine was rear-ended when it stopped suddenly to avoid hitting Elaine’s car, entangling its rear bumper and the front bumper of the car behind. Both drivers were out of their cars trying to separate the metal and plastic, backing up traffic on that side of the street too.

The intersections at each end of the block were soon gridlocked, bringing traffic to a halt on the perpendicular streets and raising a spreading chorus of honking horns.

A motorcycle cop pattered down the sidewalk toward the epicenter of the spreading snarl, starting and stopping his siren to warn pedestrians and bystanders out of the way.

People walked out of the bars and restaurants along the street to see what had stopped traffic. Most stood talking on the sidewalks, and a few had food or drinks in hand. Up and down the street drivers were getting out of their cars to get a better view of the problem. Elaine ignored the three men shouting instructions through her closed windows.

The cop parked his motorcycle by the diner and walked toward Elaine’s car with his radio to his ear. She saw him coming in her rearview and stepped out of her car.

“A bit of a pickle, huh?” the cop said to Elaine as he holstered his radio. “We’ve got a dolly jack on its way so we can lift you up and slide your car back and get your wheels turned.” He was almost shouting over the honking and a nearby siren. “You really got wedged in there good. You were going around a delivery truck, or what?”

Elaine said, “Three and a half years ago, around eight p.m on October eighteenth, nineteen seventy-nine, Professor Mathius MacKenzie raped me in his office on campus. Room 340, Denison Hall. I never filed a police report. I want to file one now. What do I do?”

“Okay, okay, I hear you, but we’re going to have to deal with all this first,” the cop said. “Then I’ll take you back to the station and I’ll get you to the right people. Something like that happened to my

niece. Broke my heart when I saw what it did to her. The guy's still free and probably still doing it. You said MacKenzie? He's a professor at the university?"

Elaine nodded.

"Yeah, we got a complaint filed last month against him," the cop said. "I'm not involved but I heard about it and they're going after the son of a bitch. I'm sure they'll be happy to talk to another victim." He looked at Elaine. "I didn't really mean happy, you know."

Elaine nodded.

The cop's radio crackled and he turned his back to her while he spoke. He turned toward her again after he finished.

"They're almost here with the jack. Shouldn't take long to get you out of there." He took a step to get a better look at the front of her car. "You should be drivable."

Jeremy hadn't moved since he stepped into the street. He watched Elaine talking to the cop and saw her point toward him. He assumed she was recounting his role in the incident and he wondered about the penalties for jaywalking. Jeremy waited as the cop made his way across the street.

"She wants to file a complaint about a rape from a few years back and she wants you to make a statement too," the cop said to Jeremy. "I assume you know her."

Jeremy nodded.

"She said you're the only one she told about it," the cop said. "The fact that she told you about it when it happened will help a lot with the credibility issue, which can really sink this kind of case. Let me get this mess cleared up and we'll go to the station, assuming you agree to come along."

"Of course," Jeremy said.