

*“Every day I wake up to a dark world. A world where my loved ones look like my enemies and I will never see the smiles on my future grandchildren’s faces. I will never be able to look at the picture of my beloved first wife again.*

*I am nothing like the person I used to be. What they say about one sense getting stronger is false. I have gained nothing yet lost everything. I am like a wounded dog; unable to help myself...stuck forever in this world of darkness.*

*That’s why I have Susie here. But she can’t take care of me if she can’t even take care of herself. She has been coming home way past midnight every night this week. I’m starting to become worried. I thought that she was better and wouldn’t relapse. She told me that her husband had...”*

“DAD!”

“Coming Susie!”

Charles quickly closed up his braille laptop and snatched up his cane from beside his desk. He slowly stood up and followed the sound of his daughter’s voice. Feeling the edge of the door frame, Charles entered his living room. He stood awkwardly in the doorway, not knowing what to do next.

Usually situations weren’t so strained with his daughter. They had been very close and always had something to do or something to talk about. But ever since the accident, everything had become so strange and stiff. Charles didn’t know what had happened to his sweet little girl. It was obvious that she was different; it was a drastic change. Maybe it was his fault. Had he begun to forget about her ever since Julie left? Suddenly Charles felt a hand on his shoulder and flinched in response. But Susie pretended not to notice, “Hi Dad. How are you?”

“Fine Susie, I’m fine. You know I can take care of myself. You don’t have to stay here. You can go out to a bar and have fun.” Charles tried to put as much disappointment in his voice as possible.

“Dad why are you talking to me like that?”, Susie sighed heavily and sat down, “You have been so angry ever since Mom left. She was wrong. She was drunk. She was the one who did this to you...to us. I may not remember everything but I know that she was a bad

person. You taught me that.” Charles winced at that last comment. He had taught her that. It was one of the things that he regretted to this day.

Susie stood up and started to pace around the room, “You are always talking to me like I’m the one who did it. I am not at fault here!”

Charles froze and shook his head slightly, “You’re right. I’m sorry Susie. It wasn’t you. It wasn’t you.” There was a moment of silence as Susie started to accept her father’s apology.

Charles stood up, “I have to go back to my writing now.”

The old man slowly walked back to his office and sat down in the hard, brown chair. He opened up his laptop and felt the familiar keys. He brushed his fingers over the small, raised dots that were now his new alphabet. With a small sigh, he started typing, *“It wasn’t long ago. But she still doesn’t remember. She hadn’t even remembered the next morning. But I remembered. I will always remember. I will always remember how she came in and how I had to lie after the incident.”*

*“It was late Saturday night. I was writing in my journal like I always do. Writing in this thing keeps me sane. It has helped me through the divorce with my second wife. She was never right for me. I had fallen back on her after my first divorce. We had been friends since high school but that is all that we were meant to be. Friends, but never partners.*

*Susie was even more disappointed than I was. She was 16 when we got divorced but she and her mother had been real close. After the divorce, she wanted full custody but I won after we went to court. She moved to Arizona in anger not even looking back at Susie. No cards, no emails, no birthday presents. Susie and I haven’t seen her since.*

*After the divorce Susie started to stay home from school a lot, claiming that she was sick. But I knew she was lying; she had been lying a lot lately. But I still let her stay home. I should have never done that. I was weak, weaker than her, and I wanted someone to be with me. I didn’t care about her grades, her friends, her teachers. Eventually, she started to notice how much I didn’t care; she saw that I would let her do anything and there would be no punishment. So she started to take advantage of that freedom and that is where it started to go downhill...*

*At first Susie would start going out to the house parties that kids throw these days. She would come home smelling of beer and would pass out on the couch. She would wake up at 1 in the afternoon only to go to another party that night. She would start to bring home friends*

*and more beer and they would sit around in the living room yelling and drinking while I laid in my bed counting the seconds until they left. I am still ashamed of what a coward I was. I was too timid to leave my sanctuary and tell those foolish children to get out of my house. I would just stay in my bed and wish them out, knowing that they wouldn't be leaving until they were too drunk to talk. Then they would stagger out the door and attempt to drive back to their own houses. In the morning, I would wake up and see plastic cups and half eaten pizzas scattered around the floor. I would check in the guest room to see if any of them had decided to invade even more and spend the night. I always let out a sigh of relief when I saw an empty bed.*

*The first couple of weeks that this happened I would just cry. I would cry for Susie and me. I felt sorry for her, for us, but then I started just cry for myself. I cried in anger and how stupid I was to let her bring in those people who she believed to be her friends. I was angry at myself for making her like that. Making her want to skip school and get tattoos and stay out drinking until the middle of the night. I took away her hope and her dreams for myself and that was the most selfish thing I could ever do. Sometimes I wonder if I was wrong to take away custody from her mother. Maybe she would have been better off with her.*

*That was how I felt for a long time. I even considered trying to call her mother and ask for advice. But I didn't. So I kept my anger inside of me and one night I tried to take it out on my daughter.*

*It was Saturday night. I was in my room writing in my journal like always. Susie had come home from a party and had brought even more friends than usual. They were being extremely loud and obnoxious. Nothing had been going well that week. I was late on some of my bills and the bill collectors were breathing down my neck. These kids were not the thing that I needed and I wanted them out. I decided to finally become the man that I should have been. I finally wanted to stand up and take back what was mine.*

*I slowly stood up and heard my old knees crack. But my heart was young in that moment. Young and ready to fight. I walked in to the living room, every step brought more purpose to my actions. Once I was standing in the living room doorway, I was fully confident that I would get my house back and teach my daughter a lesson. When I entered the room I saw about seven teenagers sitting around the coffee table laughing and talking loudly. There were empty beer cans scattered around the floor and a suspicious looking cigarette being*

*passed around. The window was open to hide the smell of it. That set me off. I stormed over to the cluster of teenagers and took the cigarette and threw it out the window, "I have put up with these invasions for far too long!" I yelled, "You all have 30 seconds to get out of my house!"*

*The teenagers looked at me for a second and the biggest one stood up. I recognized him. He was a junior and Susie talked about him a lot. Apparently he was the hottest and most dangerous kid in school. If you could get him to come to your party then you were pretty cool. I guess Susie was.*

*The kid stood up and looked me right in the eye. "Do you think we're scared of you old man? Do you think we respect you? Not even your own daughter respects you!" At that I had looked over at Susie and saw a glazy look in her eyes. She was swaying back and forth like an abandoned swing. She had been drinking too much. I wanted to go to her but the junior was blocking my way. He had turned around and was telling jokes to his friends. They were all laughing except for Susie whose eyes were starting to droop. I tried to push past the block of adolescence that was standing in front of me to get to my daughter but I was unsuccessful. I started to beat on his back wishing myself to be stronger but, of course, I wasn't. He turned around and pushed me to the floor shouting insults at me. The other kids stood up, some of them were laughing nervously while others joined in with just as much eagerness as Mr. Hotness. I could smell the hard alcohol on their breath. Susie was also standing, one of the nervous laughs but still part of the fun.*

*Suddenly, one of the kids picked up a piece of broken glass from the floor and started waving it around, pretending to threaten me. I tried to slide back to avoid the sharp edge but my back was already against the wall. Everyone was laughing and cheering on the boy with the glass. The sharp end started to get closer and closer and I started to cry. This only fueled the fire. While they were laughing, the boy with the glass loosened his grip and with a sharp jerk, it flew from his fingers. That's when everything stopped. I saw my whole life and everything I'd done wrong. How I had raised my little girl to become what she is today and how everything had led to this. I saw my first wife and the accident she was killed in. How that was also my fault. It's funny, at that moment I began to realize that alcohol abuse had been the root of my problems. I guess I had passed on my addiction to Susie. If I had had time to say something during those moments that the glass flew towards me I would have turned to Susie*

*and said 'I'm sorry'. But I didn't have time. The glass scraped across my face and into my eyes. I felt it stick into my eyeball and everything was immediately dark.*

*After that I heard screams. My screams, their screams, and the screams in my head. I heard hurried footsteps racing out of the door. Nobody had helped me, nobody had called for help, everything was quiet except for my pitiful whimpers. After about five minutes I bit my lip and decided to try to push past the pain. I needed to find help. Using my hands and knees, I crawled across the floor. I was waiting for my eyesight to come back. "Susie?", I called my daughter's name, not even sure if she was still in the room. Suddenly I felt her body laying on the floor. I hastily felt for a pulse and let out a sigh of relief when I felt one. It was extremely fast so I knew from my history of medical studies that it was alcohol poisoning. I cautiously stood up and stumbled to the kitchen counter where the phone stood. With some trouble, I dialed 911.*

*"911 please state your emergency."*

*"My daughter has alcohol poisoning. She's unconscious. I've also just been blinded."*

*The words had shocked me as they had left my mouth. I couldn't believe that I would never see again. I rambled off the answers to all the questions that the operator asked. My address, who was in the accident, and what happened.*

*"Do you know the person who did this to you sir?"*

*There was a long pause then I said, "It was my ex-wife."*

*That was the story that I told everyone. My ex-wife had come into my house in a drunken rage. She started drinking with my underage teenager which caused her to get alcohol poisoning. I heard them and I came out to see what was wrong. She started screaming and throwing me around, angry that I still had Susie and hadn't given them any time together. She smashed a bottle and scraped me across the eyes. I told this story to protect Susie. Even though she had betrayed me I still wanted her to have a future that didn't include jail time. The other teenagers were also relieved that they were off the hook.*

*The police found my ex-wife, hung in a motel room on the other side of town. I knew that she would be there just not in that physical state. She had been sending us threatening emails and letters, saying that she was coming to get her daughter back. I never showed them to Susie. She had always wanted to see her mother again and I didn't want to give her hope...or scare her. It was the last email that she sent that said she was staying in a motel*

*across town and wanted to see Susie immediately. I thought of that email when I was talking to the police. But thoughts of suicide were never mentioned in the emails. It turns out that she was extremely depressed and decided to end it there. Somehow I feel that I should thank her. Her decision helped to make my story more believable. Now I can keep Susie out of jail especially since she woke up in the hospital with amnesia and doesn't remember the downhill phase that she went through. So now she believes the story too...and she always will.*