

S W E E T

B A B Y

L O V E R

L A S T

C H A P T E R

46. Letting Go (last part)

January 24, 2012

When I saw Elaine last Saturday, before sitting on her soft leather couch, I picked up the big cotton quilt from her rocking chair. It might be Mexican, but I don't know. The colors are bright. We both sat on the couch, each at one end, and angled toward the other. At some point, as we talked through the list I had brought, Elaine set a box of Kleenex next to me. Never mind that there was a box on the table right behind me.

We were close to finished, but there was still time left in the hour. I drew the quilt up under my chin, remembering something I had wanted to talk about.

"I don't know how long I could have lasted, in Newaygo with Trent."

"I so honor you for saying that."

"I know we loved each other, and that was wonderful... but sometimes it was really hard."

"I'm sure."

"Especially after Jenna left. He would go out into the woods with his gun..."

"Even though you loved each other, you had this beautiful love, you still had to be watching all the time, alert for something going wrong."

Sometimes a tear will come out one eye and then the other. This time they were coming out both eyes, fast. The lump in my throat kept me from speaking.

Elaine continued. "Trent experienced joy with you, for one of the few times in his life, being with you and being with you in Newaygo. But there was a part of him that could not be healed. His parents—rightly he had anger toward his parents, toward his father for the physical brutality, but in some ways, what his mother did was much worse. Trent was never able to direct that anger at the people who deserved it. Instead, he took it inside and directed it at himself."

I held on to the quilt and listened to Elaine with wet eyes.

"Even though you created this space to love each other, there was still for Trent this pain. If he had asked me when it was going to stop, I would have told him, 'Never. It's never going to stop. You are going to need to learn to live around the pain.'"

As she said this, Elaine made a fist with one hand and the other flew in the air around it.

I swallowed the lump and asked, "Do you think he died because he knew I was wearing out?"

"No. Oh, no. He had hoped that when he got to Newaygo, it would get better. But it never got better. I believe there are some traumas that are so great, healing is not possible."

I agreed with her and said so, that if it is true in the medical world that sometimes a physical body goes past the point of recovery, it makes sense that it would be true of the psychological body as well.

Elaine and I always hug each other at the beginning and end of a session. At the beginning, I had hugged her strongly and almost lifted her off the ground. Now I gave a good hug

but a weak hug because I was spent. I had told Elaine my secret.

I don't know how long I would have lasted in Newaygo with Trent.

Perfect Time

The lease on the Newaygo storage locker that holds items marked with blue tape is up in November. Jenna has fallen in love and moved with her boyfriend to another state. I don't think she'll come back for whatever is still in there, so I'm planning on making one last trip, probably in April, when the Muskegon River is high and fast.

I miss kayaking, and there are times, still, when I miss Trent. We had our mantra in Newaygo, and I have my mantra for my life now. "He died at the perfect time" is what I say to myself whenever I start to think he should still be with me, still beside me, his blue eyes looking back at me when I wake up in the morning. "He died at the perfect time" is the short version. The long version is "I don't know what good things may happen because of this. I don't know everything there is to know about this. I do know that he doesn't have headaches anymore. I do know that he loves me." He told me this. He told me he would love me forever.

He died at the perfect time.

47. Update

October 30, 2022

Trent's mother died this past May. Cancer overtook her body after dementia took her mind. Her husband, Trent's father, died not quite three weeks later, the day before Jenna's birthday.

I remember how Trent and I used to wonder who would die first, his father or his cousin who struggled with drug addiction. We never would have guessed it would be Trent, and that he would die fourteen years before his father.

Jenna has now lived more of her life with her father off the planet than on it. On Father's Day this year, she posted that she has three fathers: Trent, her uncle Kris, and her grandfather. She wrote that her grandfather was the "greatest man who ever lived." It hurt me, for Trent, but then I remembered it's what he wanted. Trent wanted Jenna to have a good relationship with her grandparents.

Yesterday, Jenna got married, in South Carolina. Not to the boyfriend mentioned here, but to a man in Michigan, where they live. Jenna is a wedding and family photographer specializing in non-traditional families. In her photographs, she captures love.

I haven't seen Jenna since 2011, when she was eighteen and I gave her my Jeep. Because of the wedding, I recently had an interaction with the family that made it clear they don't want me involved. On those rare occasions when I

miss Jenna, I am doing with her what I did with Trent. I am sending her light and love, then dropping it.

As for Trent, he's gone, but he isn't. I'm convinced there are times he sends reminders that he still loves me. There is a hawk that lives on the field I tend in Kentucky, who flies close and circles overhead when I first walk the tall grass. I say hello to the hawk and ask him to say hello to Trent for me. I do this because people die, but love doesn't.

Love never dies.

SWEET BABY, I JUST TALKED TO YOU. I LOVE YOU SO MUCH. BABY, THE LOVE I HAVE FOR YOU IS SO HUGE YOU CAN'T SEE IT IN ONE DAY. SO I'M GOING TO SHOW YOU A LITTLE PIECE OF IT EVERY DAY FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE AND THERE'S GOING TO BE SO MUCH LEFT THAT YOU'LL SEE IT FOR ETERNITY. I LOVE YOU.

—TRENT PRICE