

Short Story Collection

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Hit and Run

[1]

Tom was about to climb into bed when his wife started up again.

"Why do you have to do this Tom? Why can't you let things be?" Katherine, his wife pleaded with him.

"Because I have to!" Tom answered wearily, tired of the same question night after night. Each time she asks him his mind plays through everything that happened. He goes back to March 15th, the day their daughter Lisa was killed by a hit and run driver as she walked home from elementary school. The car sped through a stop sign and slammed into Lisa as she was crossing the street.

He remembers how two months later the police stopped looking for Lisa's killer.

He never got over it. By the end of the second month the stress turned his hair grey, left bags under his eyes, and left his once smooth face filled with creases. He had just gotten home from work and was pulling the car into the garage when the detective called to let him know the news. For the next ten minutes almost everything in the garage was destroyed. Whatever he couldn't pick up and throw was smashed by anything nearby. Katherine heard him, but dared not move. She had gotten the call from the detective first and knew exactly how Tom felt, since she felt the exact same way. She just sat at the kitchen table and cried, getting her aggression out through Tom's rage.

The stress gave him a constant headache. At night he'd lay wide awake, unable to fall asleep. During the day he walked around like a mindless zombie. A little bit of relief came two days after the investigation ended, when he decided to go looking for the killer himself.

Almost immediately after making that decision his headaches went away. That's how he knew it was the right thing to do. That's when he knew it was his duty to bring the killer to justice.

Tom remembers going to almost every body shop in Scranton, Pennsylvania before he found a mechanic who remembered the car, a blue Toyota Corolla. Actually, the man remembered the girl who brought the car in. He told Tom that people usually want to know the price and try to haggle, unless insurance is paying. She was paying for the repair herself, in cash, and didn't even ask how much it would cost, just wanted her car fixed right away. She was a very pretty girl, but not good with money.

Katherine shook him out of his trance, the same way she's been doing it for the last week.

"Why don't you tell the police and let them handle it?" asked Katherine.

"So they can give her another chance?" asked Tom.

"It won't solve anything if you kill her." She pleaded.

"Yes, it will! It'll stop her from killing someone else!" he shouted.

"It's not going to bring Lisa back! All you'll be doing is making others suffer the way we did. And you'll get yourself in trouble." Katherine shouted back, tears streaming down her beautiful cheekbones.

"They're not going to catch me." He said, somberly, as he wiped away some of the tears with the palm of his hand.

"What if they do? What about me? I can't lose you too. I can't..."

She knelt down beside him, clasping her hands tightly to her bosom as though in prayer.

"Please, Tom, don't do it, for my sake. Remember you wanted to adopt? We can adopt a baby boy. You can take him with you when you go fishing when he's old enough," she implored excitedly, picturing Tom on the river with his son. The tears stopped at the possibility of finding happiness once again in what was left of their life together.

She waited a minute for his jaw to relax, but it remained clenched, the way it always got whenever he bottled up his emotions. It was his way of shutting out the world; to get focus on a specific task, objective or as is the case with Tom, his duty.

"Why do you have to be so stubborn?" she cried out.

Her eyes, watery from the tears she was trying to hold back suddenly gave sending them flowing down her cheeks and onto her hands. The emotions were far greater than any Katherine had ever known before.

"How much heartache can one person endure? What would it take for me to find just a little bit of happiness in my life," she wondered. She rocked back and forth as the tears came down, her sobbing noises becoming louder until faintly Tom could hear the soft words she kept repeating, 'please, please, please, oh God, please.'

Tom's heart became almost too heavy for him to bear and for a moment his jaw loosened as he wondered if what he was doing was the right thing. But it was a fleeting moment, gone as quickly as it arrived, as his jaw became as rigid as a giant boulder buried in the ground.

He couldn't stand it when she cried; it brought all the bad memories he was trying hard to suppress back into his head.

For two weeks after the tragedy, Katherine stayed in Lisa's bedroom, refusing to come out or talk to anyone; just feeling and holding her toys, clothing, and any odds and ends Lisa kept in her room. She wouldn't eat. Everyday he'd bring her food and leave it by the bed. Eventually she began eating. By the third week she mentioned adopting, something she refused to discuss ever since the doctors told her she couldn't have another child. But that was in the past; something he wanted to forget.

He went down into the basement: the place he always ran to when he wanted to be alone.