

Free Sample Chapter of 32 Linden Avenue which can be purchased from amazon.com or barnesandnoble.com in soft cover and ebook formats.

The aroma of the fresh baked bread wafted up the stairs with me as I brought Dolly a slice.

“That smells so good, how lovely of you to make it for me.”

She stared down at the plate, picked up the piece of bread and took a small bite, then put it down.

“I’ll save the rest of it for later.”

Just as she had saved lovely silk slips for years and never wore them, saving them for a special occasion, and then was never able to wear them for they were too short or too long or too something. Always saving things for later, and now later was here, but a later that allowed of no pleasures, all chances gone.

She said, “After Dad died, they found empty whiskey bottles in that dresser and in the closet.”

Now I knew why he had been called a hard-drinking Irishman.

She dozed off, her head turned toward the white framed window and the chestnut tree, lush and plump at the end of spring and the beginning of summer. Summer sounds, ripe with life, drifted in the window; the smells of summer, grasses and flowers drifted in with the sounds. Still in the bed, she dozed in the soft air, no longer aware of its caressing bounty.

Greg visited his grandmother and sat quietly on her bed, though he never sat quietly anywhere. He stared at her with his brown eyes, grinned at her, talked to her and brought her toys to play with.

“Sit over here by the window, Greg, while I make Grammy’s bed.” I changed the sheets, plumping the pillows while Dolly was in the bathroom.

“You ready, Dolly?”

A faint voice answered, “Yes.”

“I’ve got you, a few more steps, you can lean on me.”

I got her up on the bed in a sitting position, then swung her legs up, settled her on her pillows and covered her with a sheet.

“There, we made it, just rest a bit. Greg, you can come back and stay with Grammy if you wish.”

She turned to me with an intense look, and said

“Don’t ever leave John.”

On a sunny March afternoon in Berkeley, I held her letter and read “Your father never loved you, I was the only one who ever did.” Greg rode his trike in a circle around his suddenly weeping mother, “Mummy, mummy, don’t cry, I kiss it.”

Once again taken unawares, I stared and said,

“Of course not, whatever would give you such an idea.”

Sitting on the front steps, gazing out over the chestnut trees, watching Greg tumbling about, I tried to remember laughter and the good times.

Miriam sat down beside me, rubbing her shoulders against mine.

“Tough times, Kiddo.”

I smiled at her, took a sip of her beer, then handed it back to her. Mike joined us and sat close by me, sharing his beer in companionable silence. Some grey gleamed in his dark hair, a small amount of grey sprinkled the dark hairs on his forearms, dark against his white, short-sleeved shirt. Daylight faded. Upstairs in a solitary bed, in her childhood

home, on white ironed sheets, my mother faded from life. We three played with my small son past his bed time, our hearts eased by his laughter and gleaming young flesh.

