

drove her to it. It was all you."

Then she spun and swept out of the church.

A neighbour came up to me to take my hand and give me her sympathies, but I could only focus on my daughter as she walked away, looking like she was never coming back.

And she wasn't; I was right and God, how I didn't want to be so. I did not want to be the grandfather who never saw his grandchildren. I may as well have been dead then, but I carried on. I had a few girlfriends, joined a few clubs, kept Hot Chocolate for the Soul books by my bed.

I would like to say all those things worked, but again, horseshit. They kept the wound together, but never cured the redness.

Without hesitation, I hit the green button.

They say it takes twenty seconds for the machine to work. For me it is the longest time of my life. It amazes me that at the end of the day, or more precisely, this minute, I will be in my sweetheart's arms, forgiving, more warm than the night I found her, supine on the bed, her long lashes covering motionless eyes, a brown pill bottle on the night-table, flanked by tequila.

I often wondered how my Wendy could be content in heaven if I was not there - how could that be when she always said she was happiest with me? How can that be if this so-called heaven is the happiest place imaginable? I suppose time passes differently there: perhaps fifty years is nothing more than twenty seconds down here among the mortals.

The liquid pushes closer to my arm. I watch it, then close my eyes despite my plans. A tear, perhaps, slips out of my eye, but at this point, I know little - at least until I see my porch door open: reality floats to the surface like clumps of powder in hot chocolate, a day-old cup of it sitting next to the pills that have kept the pain from ruining my last few days.

I see a face. Black hair. A smile. Forgiving. It is a little imp who came to visit me even when her mother discouraged it.

I hear mumbles of something as she comes away from the brightness, a vision in a floral dress that reminds me of Monet, it's so blurry I cannot make out all the colours, they're far too vivid, blinding me, but it's good blindness, damned good.

I am glad I left my eyes open.

"I'm so glad I made it in time, Grampy," she says, so beautiful to my ears, long-deaf to words of love. "John was talking to one of the constables down at the detachment. He heard them say they had to check on you because ... because ... you had ... "

I am certain of the moment the liquid collides with my skin; it is also the moment the woman at my side takes my left hand.

The last feeling I have is of the warmth of someone's hand in mine as another reaches forward.