

Chapter 1

I used to think the innocent had nothing to fear. Now I know this is not true. The innocent may have more to fear than the guilty. I assume the guilty have at least had a chance to think about what they would do if they were arrested.

Chapter 2

April 4, 2009

It was Saturday, and my husband, Steven, and I had arrived back home from Texas only the previous Thursday evening. Home was our house in the foothills outside of Boulder, Colorado—as we liked to say, “In Boulder County but not in the city limits.” This was our way of saying that we didn’t consider ourselves “typical Boulderites.” We had lived in our home for over sixteen years, longer than we had lived anywhere else. That tells you that we liked living there.

Our home was set on approximately four acres at 7,300 feet elevation, or about 2,000 feet above Boulder and Denver. You could look out our east facing windows and actually see the Denver airport almost sixty miles away. On a clear day (which was most of the time), I think you could see Kansas. Even though our lot was not that big, our home was situated in a way that we couldn’t see any of the neighboring homes, and they couldn’t see ours. The privacy meant that we didn’t have any window treatment on the window in our bathroom, and never closed any of the blinds in our house. The only way someone could look into our windows was with a telescope. And at that point I would hope they weren’t too disappointed after going to all that trouble!

Though we liked our privacy, we also liked entertaining and sharing a bottle of wine and maybe dinner with friends. We were fortunate that we had good friends who lived on our lane and who enjoyed the same things. Tom and Jean had lived in their home for about five years and we had become good friends. They would water our plants and pick up our mail when we were gone. We would feed their cats and pick up their mail when they were gone. They would come over a few times a week to join us for a bottle of wine and dinner at the spur of the moment. I didn’t like to plan ahead, and found cooking for four no more work than cooking for two. And we enjoyed the company. They were the first ones I would call if we needed help for some reason and I suspect we were the first ones they would call.

Tom and Jean were both retired military. Tom was Steven’s age; Jean was about ten years younger. Tom’s background was as a meteorologist, though now most of his work was consulting. Jean was a nurse practitioner who worked two days a week. She had lots of interests that kept her busy the rest of the time. When Tom was traveling we tended to see Jean even more, as we often invited her to join us for dinner if we knew she was alone. It was a short walk from our home to theirs along our driveway. Though Tom and Jean’s politics differed dramatically from ours, we considered them very good friends and certainly the closest to our home geographically.

We had left Texas hill country on March 31, after spending two months there in our motor home. My husband, who was sixty-three and retired, had been on a quest for the last few years to find a place where we could begin to establish roots and make friends in anticipation of retiring. I wasn’t retired yet. I was fifty-nine and owned a small

manufacturing company headquartered in Boulder. Plus, my Type-A personality would have made retiring difficult. This was our second year of wintering for a few months in Texas. It hadn't been a good trip and we both agreed that we weren't retiring there. I didn't even want to visit there again.

Part of the problem had been the lack of amenities in the area. There were no good restaurants near the campground. One of the reasons we enjoyed Boulder was that we both liked to eat and drink, and there were a number of excellent restaurants in Boulder—more than you would usually find in a much bigger town. Marble Falls, Texas, didn't have any in 2009. There had been a few the prior year, but they had failed by the time we arrived on February 1. Ironically, the weather had been even better in Boulder than in Texas for much of the two months. And the folks in the campground weren't really interested in outdoor potlucks or drinking some good wine with us. We were glad that Steven's brother and his wife had been there with us, as they supplied our social interaction for the two months. By 8:00 p.m. the picnic tables in the campground were empty (except perhaps for ours), and the TV lights illuminated the inside of most of the motor homes. It was a pretty boring campground to be honest.

The other issues with the two months were more personal. Steven (I call my husband Steven, everyone else calls him Steve. His legal name is actually Mark Steven, but no one besides phone solicitors call him Mark.), his brother Gregg, and our sister-in-law Jane all had horrible colds for the first three or four weeks we were there. I'm not sure how I avoided catching the cold, but I did. I had three business trips out of Austin during those first four weeks though, so I was actually gone a lot. I know the colds weren't Texas's fault, but the three of them being under the weather made them reluctant to do much.

The saddest part of the trip was that we had to put our eleven-year-old Newfoundland, Samson, to sleep. He was pretty old for a Newf, but he was doing okay when we left Boulder with him and our other Newf, Bella. Bella was only four. Her job had been to keep Samson active and happy, and to make him live longer, which she probably did. Everyone thinks their dogs are special, but I am sure Samson was. He was massive—a hundred and seventy-five pounds in his prime with a huge, beautiful head. And he was gentle. But he was old.

I was at the airport in Cincinnati waiting for my return flight on the last Thursday in February when I called Steven. He was in tears. Apparently Samson's breathing had become labored that day. It was apparent that he wasn't going to last long. I wanted to be with Samson at the end. Steven wanted Samson to wait for me and, in reality, Steven didn't want to make this decision alone. I called Gregg and Jane and they said they would go to the Austin airport with Steven so he wouldn't have to drive there alone. My flight wasn't scheduled to arrive in Austin until after 10:00 p.m. that evening, and I was worried about Steven driving safely so late at night, given how distraught he seemed. All of them were in the Suburban to pick me up: Steven sitting in the back with Samson and Bella, Gregg and Jane in the front seats. Steven was holding Samson's head out the window so the breeze would help him breathe. Bella was confused. Everyone was crying.

The next morning Samson was worse. His breathing was even more labored and he wouldn't accept any water or a treat. We knew it was time. So we made an appointment and took Samson to the local veterinary hospital where they administered the drug to him in the car, while we cradled his head. Samson went off to the Rainbow

Bridge to wait for us. When they took him out of the car, Bella tried to follow him into the veterinary hospital. If you've ever had a dog that was with you almost all the time, you know how hard losing him can be. It was very hard on all three of us. Gregg and Jane felt the loss, too, as they had known Samson since he was a puppy. They had lost dogs over the years, so empathized with us and cried with us.

Bella was a different dog after that. She still ate, but she didn't want to play with any of the other dogs. She didn't want to go for walks. She just wanted Samson back. So did we.

Then at the very end of our visit, Marble Falls experienced the worst hail storm in its history. Our motor home was severely damaged, as was our trailer, our Miata sports car, and our Suburban. (When the Gesse's leave home for two months, they take a lot of their home with them.) The damage total, which was mostly covered by insurance, was over \$50,000. It was a dismal end to a pretty disappointing two months.

So it wasn't a great trip. Steven and I were both happy to be home. I think Bella was, too, though she walked through all the rooms looking for Samson when she first got home. Our home was a fairly typical mountain home. The entranceway, family room, and two guest bedrooms were on the lower level. Our entranceway opened to both levels with a staircase leading to the upper level. The kitchen, family room, and dining room were all one great room upstairs. Our bedroom, the master bathroom, and a study were at the other end of the upper level. After two months in a thirty-four-foot motor home with my beloved husband and dog(s), it was good to be home. It was going to be a luxury to not have full-time visual contact with my husband. Togetherness is good, but two months of seeing one another all the time could test the best of marriages.

I was actually enjoying being close to "my things" again. I took my time looking at all the family photos that lined the walls throughout the house. I didn't have any surviving family. I was an only child and both my parents were gone, so I enjoyed looking at their photos—some of which went back to their wedding in 1947. I took time to enjoy the "family" portrait we had taken a few years earlier with Samson and Bella, and to think about how glad I was that we had done that.

Perhaps surprisingly, I was looking forward to going back to work. I had a great management staff that ran the place very competently while I was away. As long as they could access me daily via e-mail and cell phone, and send reports via FedEx when necessary, the place ran smoothly. I usually worked two to three hours a day out of our motor home when we were traveling for long periods like this. But after a certain amount of time, I felt out of touch by not being there. I needed to walk around the plant and talk to people. It was time for me to be physically present again.

The first day home, I groomed my house plants and moved them from the kitchen counter where they had been relocated to make watering them easier on our neighbor, went grocery shopping, and made unpacking (and laundry) a priority. Because we lived in the mountains and the road to our house was a mountain road, we didn't keep our motor home at our house. It's amazing that although we have an attached three-car garage and a 990-square-foot outside garage, we were lucky to keep one or two cars in a garage at all. People would ask what we had in there. Well, the correct answers would have included the phrases, "It depends," and "A lot of very priceless junk that neither of us can part with." Also, on occasion our vintage BMW race cars and our motorcycle might be in the garage.

My focus for Saturday and Sunday was going to be sorting and washing clothes, bedding, and towels from the motor home. Steven's was going to be emptying the motor home of anything that might freeze when the temperature dropped again. On Saturday, it had begun to snow. The snow made everything look clean and good. I was happy sorting clothes and exercising the washing machine. Bella was happy to be home. Steven was busy making trips back and forth to the motor home. Pretty much an average day.