

EMP

By Wilson Harp

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ONE

The 108 turnoff had always been tricky for folks who came out to visit us. The new four-lane made it easier to see, but it would still sneak up on you if you weren't expecting it around the bend.

For me, it was all the same. I had made that turn off the main highway as long as I had been driving. I had known the shift and speed of the car as it made that turn since the time I was old enough to stand in the back seat and watch for deer along the woods as we came home from a trip to town.

Right now I was just frustrated with the radio as I came upon the turn. Every station out here was either country or local talk. My satellite radio was out of service and my MP3 device was in the trunk in the side pocket of my gym bag. I found an NPR station out of Rolla and was listening to some boring report about some solar flare that was going to happen soon.

Boring, to me at least, the physicist they were interviewing was very excited. But between the subject matter and the fact that the signal kept cutting out, I decided to just turn it off.

I was almost home anyway. Well, it felt like home. Kenton was the town I was born and raised in. Technically, I was born in Poplar Bluff, but my folks took me back to Kenton when I was three days old.

The place where I currently lived was Oak Park just outside Chicago. Currently was the key word. I wasn't sure what Lexi would decide this weekend. Things had been rough the last few months. I wasn't sure what she wanted,

apart from space and her need to sort things out. What things, were a total mystery to me.

My cell phone rang and I reached up and hit the earpiece.

“Hello,” I said.

“David, are you on the road?” My mom’s voice sounded frustrated.

“Yeah, I’m on the road mom. About five miles from town.”

“Did you pull over to answer the phone?”

“No, still driving.”

“You shouldn’t answer the phone while you’re driving. That’s dangerous. Pull over right now.”

I did not pull over. The thought went through my head to tell her if it was so dangerous for me to talk while driving, then perhaps she shouldn’t call while she knows I am traveling. I resisted the impulse.

“Okay, Mom. Pulled over. What’s up?”

“I just wanted to remind you to pick up the medicine at the drug store.”

“Okay. Just Dad’s prescription?”

“Yes. And it’s the white pharmacy, not Turner’s.”

Turner’s pharmacy had been closed for close to twenty years now. Mom was getting worse.

“Okay Mom. I’ll pick it up.”

“Thank you. And we are having green beans for dinner with some of those fresh tomatoes your father picked yesterday.”

It was early April, the tomato plants in the garden had barely started coming up. Dad must have picked some up at the store yesterday.

“Sounds great, Mom. See you in a little while.”

“Okay, David. We’ll see you soon. Love you.”

“Love you, too, Mom.”

I hung up the phone as I turned onto Dyer Street. I still expected the whine of the tires to change as I moved from the blacktop highway to the city street. It had always been that way growing up. But, all of the roads had been smoothed and resurfaced many times since then.

Turner’s pharmacy was now a woman’s clothing store on the corner of Main and Dyer. Hanson’s pharmacy was what most people referred to as the white pharmacy. Hanson had bad luck with his new sign when he opened. Lost it three times the first two months. He decided he was better off just leaving it down. His white building along a row of brick storefronts on Main stuck out like a sore thumb. There was no need for a sign anymore, though the bags still said Hanson’s Pharmacy.

A spot out front was open and I parked the car. Not as much traffic as I remember, but downtown hasn’t been the same for a long time. The new Wal-Mart in Wilcox has sucked away most of the day to day shopping. Kenton was a quintessential dying small town. Every generation seemed to get restless to move on, and while there were a few locals who had deep roots to the town, much of the new population were people trying to escape to the idealized, idyllic country life.

I got out of my car and walked to the glass door of the pharmacy. A tinkling bell alerted everyone inside that someone had entered.

“Well, Dave Hartsman! How are you?” Sue Parnell was the oldest sister of one of my buddies from High School. She was Sue Hanson now. She came over and gave me a hug.

“Hi Sue, doing good. How are you and Billy?” I asked.

“We’re doing good. Is Lexi here?” she asked as she looked out at my car.

“No, Emma had a school thing so they stayed up in Chicago this weekend.”

“Dave,” Billy called as he saw me. He was carrying something from the back room. He set it down behind the counter and came around to meet me near the front door. “Your momma called a few minutes ago. She said to make sure you remember to pick up your dad’s prescription.”

I sighed and nodded. “Anything else?”

“Yeah, we have her prescription, too. Make sure you don’t let her see you bring it in the house. She has a habit of accidentally flushing them down the toilet. Your dad normally crushes one up in her orange juice in the morning.”

He handed me the bag with my dad’s bottle as well as the bottle of my mom’s pills. I slipped Mom’s medicine into my pocket.

“Is it helping?”

“I think so. When she manages to find them and get rid of them, she calls me a couple of times a day. When she’s taking them... she’s better.”

“That’s something at least,” I said. Watching Mom go through this was hard at a distance. I can’t imagine what Dad must be going through watching it day by day.

“I have your receipts here,” Billy said. “I was going to mail them yesterday, but I figured if you were in, I might as well hand them to you.”

“Thanks,” I said as he handed them to me. I folded them up and put them in my shirt pocket.

“You’re a good man, Dave,” Sue said. “Not many sons would pay for their parents scripts the way you do.”

“Well, not many pharmacists would work with me like this, so thanks to you and Billy as well.”

“Not a problem. I have to admit, telling your folks their co-pay was five bucks a pop is pretty clever,” Billy said. “I think your dad knows, though. He always grimaces whenever he gives me the money.”

“I figure he does. But if we all pretend like it’s not happening. I think he’s happier.”

Billy smiled and nodded. “It’s good to see you, Dave. Give your mom a hug for me.”

“Will do, Billy. Have a good day, Sue,” I said as I left the store.

When I got in the car, I tossed the bag in the front seat and opened the glove compartment. Once I had stashed the receipts and mom’s pills, I sat back up and immediately jumped in shock as a face was pressed up against my driver’s side window.

Frank laughed as I opened the door.

“You are going to give me a heart attack one day,” I said as I crawled out of the car. I was pissed, but was very happy to see my old friend.

“Sorry, man. Saw you getting in the car and when you looked away, I just had to,” Frank said as he slapped me on the shoulder.

“Well, I’ll let it slide this time,” I said as I slapped him back. “What are you doing here? Don’t you live in Wilcox now?”

“Yeah, but I run my drops all over the place. I’m about to head out to Cape for a delivery, but I should be

back in the area tonight. Think you might want to head out to the Owl? Shoot some pool and down a few?"

"Not tonight, my folks will want to spend some time with me."

"Where's Lexi?" Frank asked as he looked in the car.

"She couldn't make it down this weekend, school stuff with Emma."

"Too bad, but that means we can hang out some tomorrow."

"Sure, swing by in the morning. I'm sure my dad will have something for us to do."

"It might be a little later. If you are going to be busy tonight, I'll probably hit a club in Cape and stay there," Frank said. "Do you remember Karen Sue? Her kid brother fronts a local band. He's playing at a club in town, and he's pretty good."

"Let me guess. You are staying with Karen tonight?"

Frank shrugged. "Sometimes I hang out with her when I head up to the Cape."

"So me bailing doesn't hurt your evening all that much?"

Frank laughed. "Aw, come on. I'd rather go drinking with you, but if you have to stay home, I'll call Karen and see what she is up to."

"Good luck."

"Thanks, and give your mom a hug for me."

Frank turned and walked over to his delivery truck.

I got back in my car and headed toward the house I grew up in. The trip across town was familiar and quick, although each time I drive through the old streets, I am surprised at what is and is not there. The old elementary school is there. I could probably walk in with my eyes

closed and navigate the halls. But there is a new high school just a few blocks down. It's been there for fifteen years now, but it will always be the new high school to me.

The town has swelled and shrank in size since I left, but the new housing areas never reached the south end of town. The only house I lived in until I left for college sat on a wide plot with fallow farm fields behind it. The city limits were just on the other side of the Johnson's property next door, and past that were the heavy woods and hills which made up this part of the Mark Twain National Forest.

I noticed the soybeans on McKay's farm were starting to sprout as I pulled into my folk's driveway. There used to be three houses across the street from us, but old man McKay had bought them and cleared the land to expand his farm. Frank used to live in one of those houses and he was my best friend from as early as I could remember.

My car door had just swung open when I saw Dad turn the corner of the house. He was carrying a bag of trash out to the can.

"Davey," he called as I stepped out of the car. "Glad you made it."

"Me too, Dad," I said. "I'm looking forward to resting this weekend."

"A shame Lexi and Emma couldn't make it down, but school is school, I suppose."

I opened the back door to the car and pulled my bags out. I hadn't told them about Lexi wanting a trial separation. I had told Dad I was coming down to check on them, but I really did want to get away from the situation with Lexi for a few days as well.

“Now, about your mom,” Dad said as he finished throwing the trash in the can. “She seems to think you are coming home from college. She says Diane will be by to see you tonight.”

I sighed and shook my head. Diane was my mom’s cousin. She had died of cancer twenty years before while I was still in college.

“So it’s that bad, huh?”

“It’s a bad day. They don’t happen all that often when she keeps taking her meds, but they are getting more frequent.”

“I picked up her prescription, they’re in the glove compartment.” The curtain at the front window moved as I was saying it.

“She’s watching, I’m sure,” Dad said. “I saw your eyes move to the front window. She knows there is something wrong, but she won’t admit it. Don’t bring it up if you don’t want to be yelled at.”

“Okay,” I said. I reached in and grabbed the pharmacy bag from the front seat and started to open the glove compartment.

“Don’t,” Dad said. “Just bring mine in. We’ll get hers later.”

“She’ll see?” I asked as I crawled out of the car.

“Yeah, if she thinks we slipped them in, she’ll find them and throw them away.”

I shook my head and picked up my bags. Dad shut the car door for me and we started walking toward the house.

“This way,” Dad said as he headed to the garage.

He pressed the button to lift the door and led me in. He reached up on a high shelf and took down an old

coffee can. He showed me the multiple medicine bottles that were in there.

“Six dollars worth of aspirin there, but it’s better if she flushes those than her meds,” he said with a wink. He took one of the bottles out and put the can back in its place.

“Here,” he said as he slipped the bottle in my jacket pocket. “You’ll see how good she is at this. She could have been a pickpocket in New York.”

I laughed as Dad opened the door to the kitchen and led the way in.

“Guess who’s here?” he asked.

“Who?” Mom responded, as if she hadn’t been looking out the door.

“Hi Mom,” I said as I stepped up from the garage. “Good to be home.”

“David!” she said as she came over from the stove.

I saw the confusion in her eyes as she looked at me in genuine surprise.

“I...” She hesitated as she tried to make sense of it. “I’m so glad to see you. Did Lexi come?”

“No, Mom, she had to stay in Chicago. Emma had a school event this weekend.”

“Emma. Yes, how is she?”

“She’s doing well. She told me to give her grandma a kiss for her.”

I kissed Mom on the cheek and saw Dad shaking his head. It must really be a bad day if she had forgotten her only grandchild.

“Well you take your bags to your room and I’ll get dinner set. Diane...,” she paused. “Diane would have

been 68 this year. I'm sure she would have loved to have met Emma."

"She sure would have, Mom," I said. I carried my bags through the kitchen and down the short hallway to the room I grew up in. Dad had converted it to a guest room several years before, but it would always be my room.

I set my bags on the bed and felt at the pocket of my jacket. The bottle was gone. She must have slipped it out when she hugged me. No wonder Dad had to trick her into taking her meds.

I hung up my jacket and made a quick trip by the bathroom before I headed back to the kitchen. Mom was pulling a chicken out of the oven. She had stuffed it with her traditional sage stuffing and had a green bean casserole and a pan of sweet potatoes covered with marshmallows already on the table. A plate of sliced tomatoes sat on the counter. Mom always loved sliced tomatoes with any big holiday meal. I had seen the pumpkin pie cooling on the rack when I first came in. She really thought it was Thanksgiving. She was probably in a panic when she couldn't find the turkey and had made due with a whole chicken.

"Looks great, Mom."

"Thanks, David. I don't know what came over me this morning, I was just in the mood for a Thanksgiving-like meal."

"I don't know why we don't eat like this all the time," I said.

She smiled, but I could tell she was embarrassed. I hated to see her like that, knowing something was wrong

but not being able to see it until the moment had passed. She was in a good state now.

Dad said grace as we sat around the table and caught up on news. The spring rains had come early and the fields looked good so far. Dad had planted a few tomatoes, but with his condition, he didn't think he could handle the full garden this year. Mom asked all sorts of questions about Emma and Lexi. It was hard not to bring up the problems, but I answered as much as I could.

The evening went by too quickly. I was glad I had told Frank I needed to spend time with my folks. As much as I had come down to help them any way they needed, they were helping me just as much. Just being away from the stress and pressure of my job, my marriage, my life was worth the eight hour drive and the extra vacation day. Tomorrow was Saturday and I would be able to help Dad with the repairs on his toolshed and could take them into Wilcox to stock up on any supplies they needed.

At eleven, they finally turned in. I thought about staying up and watching a ballgame from the west coast, but it had been a long day and I wanted to be fresh in the morning. I went and lay on the bed in my old room. The night was quiet. Not the quiet of silence, but the quiet of the country. The buzz of insects. The hoot of an owl in the woods. The distant cries of a coyote and the answering bark of dogs.

Sounds of my childhood comforted me as I slipped into sleep.

TWO

I sat up in a panic. My head felt like it had been dunked under rushing water and I felt as if I had been falling a great distance.

The room wasn't mine. Lexi wasn't next to me in the bed. I was at my parent's house. I took a deep breath as I recognized the room.

I closed my eyes and opened them again. I must have had a nightmare to have woken up that way. I looked around the room and wondered what time it was. There was enough ambient light outside to suggest it was morning, but the color of the light was wrong. The howls of the coyotes and dogs meant it was still late at night, but they were loud. And wrong.

I slipped out of bed as I heard movement in my parent's room across the hall.

"Davey?"

"I'm up, Dad. What's wrong?"

The door to my room opened and my dad stuck his head in.

"I don't know. Look outside."

I went to the window and lifted the curtain. Bright light poured in. Blue and green light. I squinted and looked up. The entire sky seemed to be on fire with shimmering sheets of light. Curtains of unnatural colors were visible in every direction.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Northern lights," Dad said. "Saw them occasionally when I was stationed in Maine with the Navy."

“Yeah,” I said as I twisted my neck to look around the sky. “We get them every once in a while in Chicago. Have to usually drive out a bit to get a really good view. I didn’t think they would get this far south.”

“They don’t,” Dad said. “Never even seen a glimmer of them before. But I doubt they get this way even at the North Pole. Something is wrong.”

I lowered the shade and looked at my dad. His voice had a strain to it, but this one was different than when he worried about mom, or worried about money. This was almost a scared sound.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“Listen to those dogs,” he said as he motioned outside. “Them and the coyotes aren’t howling at each other right now. And all the birds are riled up, not just the owls.”

I listened closely and could hear it. All of the local animals were upset.

“Let’s turn on the TV and see what the news is reporting,” I said. I started toward the living room.

“Power’s out,” Dad said. “No lights, no radio, no TV.”

“Let’s see if I can get a signal.”

I went to the side table where I had left my phone. I had set it as an alarm clock, but the screen was off. I tried to turn it on, but it was dead.

“I charged this before I went to bed,” I said.

“Your mom is looking for the flashlight in the kitchen,” Dad said. “Although as bright as it is, don’t think we really need it.”

I sat down and grabbed my jeans from the floor. I had just zipped up when mom came in the room.

“I know these batteries are brand new,” she said. “But it won’t work.”

“Go get some candles, then. We’ll get some light,” Dad told her.

I bent down and started putting on my shoes.

“Where are you going?” Dad asked.

“Out to the car, I can charge my phone out there. I can hit some news sites on the internet and find out what is happening.”

I picked up the keys from the dresser and headed outside.

The night sky was so bright, I felt like I had stepped into a large auditorium. I could see the stars if I looked for them beyond the sheets of color that rippled across the sky. I stood in wonder for a few minutes and just stared at the brilliant show nature was treating us to.

“Hey,” a voice behind me said. “Do you have a charger in your car?”

I turned and saw a teenage girl walking toward me.

“Uh, yeah. I do. I was about to charge my own phone on it. Who are you?”

“I’m Sarah,” she said. She pointed behind her at the Johnson’s house. “I’m staying with my grandparents this weekend.”

“I’m David,” I said. “This is my folk’s house. Let me see if my charger will fit your phone.”

We both had the same brand of phones so it looked like it would work.

“That was something, huh?” she said as I handed her phone back.

“What? The lights?”

“No, the flash. The lights were just there afterward.”

“I was asleep, I guess. Were you awake?”

“Yeah, I was texting a friend. Phone died at the same time as the power went out. Freaky coincidence.”

She was looking for confirmation, and she was scared.

“I guess. What happened?”

“Don’t know. Just a big flash outside, lit up my whole room. I screamed and woke up Grams and Pop-pop. When I settled down, I realized the power was out and my phone was dead. That’s when Felix went nuts and Grams had to let her out.”

“Felix?”

“Their cat. Just started screaming and running everywhere. Guess the flash spooked her.”

“I would imagine.”

“What are those lights in the sky? Is it something the government is doing? It’s kind of cool if so. Gives everybody enough light to see by if there is a power outage.”

I shook my head. “No, those are the aurora borealis, the northern lights. The sky does that when the sun hits the atmosphere a certain way near the North Pole.”

Sarah looked at me with a suspicious look.

“Are we near the North Pole? Isn’t that in, like, near New York or something?” she asked.

I laughed. “No, the North Pole is quite a bit north of New York.”

“Oh, well I’m from Louisiana so everything is north of us.”

“Sarah!”

We both turned to see Rose Johnson calling to her granddaughter.

"I'm here, Grams," Sarah called. "This man is going to let me charge my phone."

Mrs. Johnson walked closer. "Is that David?"

"It is, Mrs. Johnson," I said. "How are you doing?"

"Well enough I suppose, what with being woken up in the middle of the night with all of this," she said looking up at the sky. "What are you doing out?"

"My phone died and I have a charger in my car."

Mrs. Johnson fished out a phone from her tattered robe.

"My phone died, too," she said. "Do you think you could charge mine?"

"Get in line, Grams," Sarah said. "I already asked him and he said he would do mine next."

I smiled and nodded. "Sure, if the charger will fit, I'll get everyone's up and going."

I walked toward the car as I hit the unlock button on my key fob. No click. I tried it again and there was the distinct lack of the sound of my doors unlocking. I tried the handle, but the door was locked. I shook my head and unlocked the door with my key.

"David, are you out here?" Mom called.

"He's out here, Abbey," Mrs. Johnson said. "He's going to help us charge our phones with his car."

"Be careful, David."

"I will, Mom," I said as I slid into the driver's seat. I wasn't sure what she thought charging a phone entailed, but I would be careful.

I fished out the phone charger from the glove compartment and slipped the bottle of mom's pills in my pocket since I saw them. I would just have to make sure I

didn't walk close to the little pick-pocket when I went in the house.

I sat back up and jumped as Sarah had moved over to the car and was staring into the windshield with her face almost against the glass.

I thought about reaching over and squirting her with the windshield wiper fluid, but instead I just plugged in the charger and hooked my phone up.

"Did you find the charger?" Sarah asked.

"Yep," I said as I put the key in the ignition and started the car. Or at least I turned the key. The car didn't start. Didn't even try to turn over. I took the key out, looked at it, and tried again. Nothing.

"What's wrong?" Sarah asked.

"My car won't start," I said.

"So can you charge my phone?"

"Not if my car won't start."

"But, you said you could charge it." Her voice had the same whiny quality Emma's did when she was younger.

"How old are you, Sarah?" I asked.

"Fourteen. Why?"

"How long have you had a cell phone?"

"Since I was in first grade. My mom wanted a way for me to call her in case there was an emergency."

"I'm going to try my Dad's car and see if I can get my charger to work. If not, then you will have a story to tell your kids about how you were stuck without your phone for an entire night."

"Ha ha," she said. "I really want to take some pictures of the sky and send them to my friend Shelly."

I closed the door to my car and walked back to the house while laughing at the young girl. Emma was sixteen

years old and would have likely made friends with Sarah. They were both bright but naïve girls who focused more on their friends than anything else. I was focused on the growing feeling something horrible had happened. But I wanted to see if my dad's car would start before I thought about it too much.

“Mom, where is Dad?”

“He's in the house. Why?”

“I just need to ask him something,” I said as I left her talking with Mrs. Johnson.

I heard Sarah telling the older women how I wasn't going to be able to charge her phone as I entered the house. Mom had lit several candles, and the flickering light from their flames combined with the odd colored ribbons in the sky made the house seem more foreign to me than any time before.

“Dad?” I called as I moved through the house.

“In here, Davey,” Dad replied.

I found him in the bathroom holding his electric razor.

“Shaving?”

He looked at me. “No, but I should be able to,” he said.

He clicked the switch on and nothing happened.

“I leave this on the charger and shave with it every morning. Even with the power going out, I should be able to shave completely on the charge.”

He placed the razor back on the charger. “Something odd is going on.”

“I know,” I said. “My phone died and so did Mrs. Johnson's and her granddaughter's. And my car won't start, won't even kick on.”

“It’s like all electricity just suddenly stopped.” Dad had a very worried look on his face.

“Do you have anything that runs on 9-volts?” I asked.

“Not that I can think of. Why?”

“Just want to see something. What about your smoke detectors?”

Dad snapped his fingers. “Yes, they have 9-volts.”

I walked out of the bathroom and looked down the hallway. I knew there was a smoke detector just outside my bedroom door. I reached up and could feel it.

“Here, stand on this.” Dad had grabbed a small step stool from somewhere. I stepped up on it and pulled down the smoke detector. I quickly removed the battery and touched it to my tongue. The buzz and shock was there as the battery was live.

“Well,” I said as I shook my head. “Batteries are still working. Let’s see if your car will start.”

We walked through the kitchen and into the garage. His large sedan was easy to move around as the ambient light shimmered in through the dirty windows set high on the garage wall.

Dad unlocked the driver’s side door with his key and sat down.

“Here goes,” he said as he turned the key in the ignition. Nothing. Not even the sputtery sounds that would have given me some hope.

“It’s dead, Dad,” I said.

“Yeah, she didn’t even try to start up.”

“Not the car, the world,” I said. “Something horrible has happened and I don’t know what it is, but nothing electrical seems to be working. Which doesn’t make sense, because the battery was fine.”

Dad closed the car door and came over to me.

“You know,” he said as he squeezed my shoulder. “Back when I was in the Navy, they told us about all sorts of weapons that were being designed. One of those was something called an EMP bomb. Electric something or other.”

“An electro-magnetic pulse,” I said.

“Yeah, that sounds right. Anyway, they said if it was to go off, it would fry all the electrical systems but not hurt anyone. It was a way to knock out a city or a defensive position and take the people captive without having to kill them all.”

“I don’t know if that is what happened, though. Look at the sky. It doesn’t look like it was a local event.”

“Maybe, maybe not. But not much we can do about it tonight. Let’s see if we can get some news tomorrow.”

“Sounds like a plan. Wish I could call Lexi and Emma and make sure they are alright.”

“I’m sure they are. They are probably asleep and will see the news tomorrow and try to get ahold of you.”

I nodded. “You’re right, we should get whatever sleep we can. The animals are still freaking out. Don’t know how I will sleep with all of that racket.”

Dad laughed. “You live in Chicago! When we visited, I couldn’t believe how loud it was at night. I didn’t think I could ever get to sleep.”

“I live in Oak Park, Dad. The city itself is much noisier.”

He shook his head and held up his hands. “If you say so, but I constantly heard cars and trucks on the highway. Out here are only the sounds nature provides.”

“Nature is providing plenty of light and sound tonight,” I said. “But I bet I can get back to sleep.”

“I’m normally up about five. What time do you think it is?”

I shrugged. “Don’t know. Sarah said it was about three. She was texting on her phone with some friends when it happened.”

“Sarah?”

“The Johnson’s granddaughter.”

“Oh, yeah. I’ve seen her around a few times. Three is early even for me. I’ll go get your mom and we’ll try to get some sleep.”

“Night, Dad.”

I went back to my room and shut the door. I kicked off my shoes and shrugged out of my jeans. I lay on the bed and tried to sleep, but the room was too bright.

I was worried about Lexi and Emma. Is what happened affecting them? If so, would they be completely freaked out? Or would they sit tight and wait for news? I thought Lexi would be able to handle it, but she had changed so much in the last few years. It wasn’t like I was living with a stranger, but she had changed. We all changed over time. We grew wiser and more set in our ways, more mellow and more short tempered, all the contradictory changes that move us from adolescence into adulthood and towards old age.

But she had changed dramatically in the last few years. She had lost the joy and sparkle in her eye when I would walk in the room. She found ways to spend time alone when she could. I wanted to talk with her about it, but I always felt as if it would crumble apart in my hands if I tried to take hold of it. So I watched it slowly disintegrate.

That was the path I was on. I wished someone or something could show me how to stop it from falling apart.

With all of the fear over the events of the night, it was still my personal problems that meandered through my mind as I lay in my old bedroom. Somehow, I managed to fall asleep.