

Mr. Collins was a watcher. With his age weighing on his bones, the pills jangling around his intestines, with the cane that grew from his palm, his days of action were long behind him. He had mourned the loss of movement when his knee was painted iron, but now he cherished his creaky joints. It meant that he got to spend the morning slowly crawling about his room before he settled in his favorite chair facing the street.

His daughter worried what the neighbors thought of him sitting and watching the street all day, but he knew they did not mind. After all, it was through this method that he got to know them better than his daughter, better than anyone else.

Kitty-corner from his daughter's house sat a deep brown rambler. The cracked concrete of the driveway was tickled by weeds. A dinged-up Toyota sat in the driveway, and a soggy newspaper lay by the door. This was the home of Gregory Telk. When Mr. Collins had been younger, had strolled through the grocery store with his daughter, and without the age-old ache in his bones, he had often heard of Telk's success in college football. A small town needed something to talk about, after all. A local hero on the field, he swept through the other teams with ease under the banner of his new school. However, his strength was not natural, and when that was found out he had returned, his career and reputation ruined by the shortcuts he took. He did not often leave, Mr. Collins knew, but sometimes late at night he would slip out to his front lawn, pigskin in hand, and relive an old life when he thought no one could see.

Across the asphalt of suburbia, there lay a pale yellow, two-story house, the Davis Residence. The lawn was green, the path lined with stones, and with tulips springing from the plant beds. It was autumn, and the green of the grass was layered with the rich colors of the leaves that the many trees donated. Under one such tree sat a teenage girl. Willow Davis, he knew. She was a sweet girl, and wicked smart, and one of Mr. Collin's most regular subjects of

observations. She often sat there, reading a book under the shade of her favorite tree. Soon a boy with wild red hair would come whirling down the street on a beat-up bike. This was Aiden Lowell, from further down the street. He reminded Mr. Collins of himself when he was young, which meant that boy had plenty of trouble in him. Aiden would roll up to the house, throw his bike down on the driveway, and bound up to Willow with a grin on his face. They would talk, beating around something they both felt but were too afraid to acknowledge. He knew it better than they did.

Right on schedule, Aiden came rolling down the street, dropped his bike, and dropped down beside her against the tree. Willow closed her book, smiled at him, and their conversation began. He wished they would tell each other, that their fingers would find each other on the grass. He did not want them to look back and regret never taking a risk.

As he watched the two of them, he noticed a light blue minivan rolling into the neighborhood. He smiled fondly at the sight, recognizing his daughter's vehicle. She would be returning from her grocery run, and in the back seat of the car would be his granddaughter, Sandy, babbling away in that toddler way of hers. His daughter would be nodding along to everything Sandy was saying, acknowledging her words, and pretending like what she was saying was making perfect sense. She would drive past the home of Gregory Telk, and shake her head sadly. She would drive past Willow and Aiden and would laugh to herself at how blind they both were. His daughter would pull into the driveway, walk Sandy inside, dodge the family lab weaving between her legs in excitement, and call up the stairs that she was home.

As he watched her crawl at the residential pace, he noticed that maybe they should get new tires on the van. After all, it was carrying precious cargo. Out of the corner of his eye, a saw

a quick movement. Mr. Collins turned his attention away from his daughter's car to watch another. A black sedan, swerving and speeding and only barely missing the trashcans.

He did not know this car.

The following movements slowed to suspension. His daughter passed Telk's lawn, the car did not stop. The car continued to swerve. The squealing of the minivan's breaks hurtled through the air; they squealed in vain. The car swerved and sped straight into the blue minivan. The van crumpled like a tin can, the headlights smashing, the momentum of the upcoming vehicle, sending it crashing into the curb and the lamppost there. The black sedan only stopped moving when the light blue van had absorbed all of its movement.

Mr. Collins was a watcher. With his ages weighing on his bones, the pills jangling around his intestines, with the cane that grew from his palm, his days of action were long behind him. All he could do was watch as Willow and Aiden shot to their feet, as Gregory Telk threw open his front door, as they all ran towards the light blue van.

The light blue van.

The van.

The van that needed new tires.

The minivan that heald precious cargo.

The van with his daughter and with Sandy.

His body stalled, not moving fast enough, not moving at all. He reached for his phone, dialing and waiting. It was all he could do. His body was not moving at all.

A man came stumbling out of the black Sedan, body moving but stumbling. Gregory Telk moved with speed left from late-night practices, from a history long gone. He got there, pulling the man away from the wreckage, mouth moving fast and accusatory.

Mr. Collins was not watching them.

He watched Willow and Aiden, blind to each other but seeing what he could not. He watched as they pried open the crumpled doors together, he watched as Willow stuck her head in the back seat, skinny arms straining. He watched the violent red head of hair trying to slide in between the lamp pole and the car, trying to get to the front.

The phone's dialing finally stopped.

"911, what's your emergency?"