

Years 9 & 10  
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### Same Old Love

For some considerable time, Patrick knew he would kill his wife. Patrick was a creature of habit, and yet he had learned to accept his anonymity and predictability as a blessing, not a curse. He rose at the same time, dressed in clothes indistinguishable from those he wore on any other day, ate the same breakfast, took the same route to work. He filed insurance claims till lunchtime, and then he walked to the park. Here he sat for forty-seven minutes to read the newspaper, to eat his sandwich, and then he walked back to the office. To him, this routine had become a comfort.

Patrick had made no definite plans as to the means of disposal for her body, nor how he would explain her sudden disappearance to friends, family and neighbours. Perhaps he believed that once the deed was done, he would be struck by a brilliant solution, a streak of lightning, a bolt from the blue.

Patrick had decided on the manner of her death, however. He would stab her in the eye. The chosen instrument of choice was not a knife, but a knitting needle. He had bound half its length in duct tape as to provide a firm grip, yet with 15 centimetres exposed he believed that the needle – if driven suddenly, and with sufficient force – would pass directly through her eye and into the brain. There would be little, if any, blood, and death would be instant. She had given him fifteen years of comfortable, predictable marriage, and he did not wish to cause her any excessive pain or distress. In fact, Patrick did not think of it so much as a murder, but more of an execution for some unknown crime.

And so it was, on this cool summer evening, that Patrick and his wife sat at the dining table to eat dinner. She had prepared a chicken salad and opened a bottle of Chardonnay. They ate in near silence, the stillness interrupted by the odd pleasantries, the fact that rain had been expected but not arrived. "Perhaps tomorrow," Patrick had commented, finding it ironic that he was mentioning something which she will never know.

Patrick sat calmly, the knitting needle beneath his thighs. There would be no struggle, no raised voices, no desperation as she fought against hands tightening around her throat. There would be no blood splatter, no scuff-marks from frantic heels against the wooden flooring. She would find herself at dinner, and then she would be dead.

"You're not having any wine?" he asked her.

"No," she said, "I have a slight headache. The wine will worsen it."

It was then that Patrick experienced a sudden pang of something. She had smiled at him, and smiled in such an innocent way, and there had almost been a sense of sadness in her tone.

She could not know what he had planned, for he had planned nothing beyond her death. She could not suspect him of any deceit. Each day had been the same. He had done the same things, expressed the same thoughts and emotions and continued the same routine which had remained constant and unchanging for years. In fact, it was safe to say that the single most defining characteristic of their marriage was that nothing exciting ever happened.

But now he was feeling something.

Was it guilt? Regret? Was he now questioning the determination he had made to kill her?

Why was he experiencing this sense of disorientation, a feeling of agitation in his stomach, a fleeting wave of nausea?

Why did he feel so weak, so uncertain?

He opened his mouth to speak. His words were thoughts, but they were not sounds. She looked at him, the same sense of sadness in her eyes. The stab of pain in his gut was breathtaking. It snatched every molecule of air from his lungs. He had never felt anything like it. The pain did not last long – thirty seconds, perhaps longer. He felt the moist salad against his cheek and then he felt nothing at all.

Patrick's wife carried the wine bottle and the glass to the sink. She was methodical as she washed them, ensuring that every drop of evidence was removed properly. And then she stood in the kitchen doorway, and she looked at her dead husband. She suddenly realised that during this last week, as she was planning his murder, she had felt more than enough emotion to compensate for a decade and a half of feeling nothing at all.