

# Darkness at the Edge of Town

*a ghostly tale of family ties  
and madness*



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*a ghostly tale of family ties  
and madness*



**STAN ROGAL**



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*Dedicated to my mom—born a prairie girl—  
who had a story or two herself, to tell*





“It takes two to make an accident.”

—F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

“A man turns his back on his family, he just ain’t no good.”

—Bruce Springsteen, “Highway Patrolman”

“As if there could possibly be true stories;  
things happen one way and we tell them in  
the opposite sense.”

—Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*



*Welcome to Weyburn, Saskatchewan,  
largest inland grain gathering point in  
Canada. Summer, 2017*

**T**he house isn't grand; it's functional. Comfy/cosy/homey. Located on a quiet suburban cul-de-sac within a loose knit of neighbourly neighbours. Three-bedroom rancher, full bath, open-concept living/dining room combination, up-dated kitchen with *faux* chrome appliances. Mud room at rear of house, complete with stacked clothes washer/dryer unit. One small bedroom used as a catch-all and office space; one medium-sized bedroom for the kids—four-year-old Ben junior and two-year-old daughter Casey sharing a bunk bed—a larger master bedroom with en suite. Everything painted either off-white or soothing pastels. Furniture straight out of the Ikea catalogue with a few select pieces picked from the sales department at Home Depot. Front yard has a postage-stamp lawn divided by a concrete walkway. Decorative stacked red bricks delineate several compact flower and shrub beds. There's the usual mix of Canadian Tire plaster or plastic garden ornaments: forest animals, birds, gnomes, semi-naked wood nymphs. Decent-sized backyard with swing set and slide, pressure-treated wood deck enclosed in a gazebo of canvas with nylon mosquito netting, a Weber gas BBQ to one side, a huge

garage with automatic folding door that serves as storage area for every type of wheeled recreational vehicle as well as sports equipment and gym accessories: barbells, weights, mats, medicine ball, Ab roller wheel, skipping rope, Bowflex machine. The grey cinder block structure also functions as a workshop: steel bench, metal display racks of tools, labeled bins of nails, screws, nuts, bolts, a plastic pail of soiled, oily rags, rolls of duct tape.

Everything neat and tidy; a place for everything and everything in its place. Blame Ben, who—while not willing to admit subscribing to the worn adage that cleanliness is next to godliness—prefers order to disorder.

His wife Beth, not so much. Likes to say she strives for organized clutter, ‘strives’ being the operative word.

It’s late evening. The kids are asleep. The A/C hums. The soiled remains of dinner decorate the dining table: dirty cutlery, stained dishes, ravaged pork rib bones, crumpled paper napkins smeared in grease and BBQ sauce. Empty beer bottles leave a trail into the living room. Ben lounges on the couch with a goofy Cheshire cat toothy grin nailed on his wide face. Between his loose-parted knees he dangles a Canada Dry Ginger Ale bottle by the neck. The switch from beer was made a couple hours ago. He wears his official police uniform, still on-duty. His black hair’s cropped close to the scalp and his short sleeve shirt strains at the button-holes to contain his broad chest. Not a bit of bulge on him. He’s built solid as an oak tree; developed muscular arms from hours pumping iron and performing endless reps of push-ups and chins in the garage.

What one might admirably call the proverbial six-foot brick shit house.



The music of Bruce Springsteen blasts through compact Bose stereo speakers: *Glory Days*. Ray and Beth dance a slow sloppy jive in the middle of the parquet floor. Ray gives her a twirl. Stretched at arm's length, held by fingertips, she tosses her head backwards so that her hair hangs down, then laughs, spins back toward him, and nestles in his chest.

Ben rocks his head to the tune and hums along. He's interrupted by his cell. The ringtone is Wagner's, *Ride of the Valkyries*, straight off the movie soundtrack, "Apocalypse Now."

"Crap," he says, and answers. "Yeah?" He flaps the fingers of one hand toward the pair on the dance floor, *yakkity-yak*. They barely acknowledge. He pockets the cell.

"Whassup?" Beth asks. Her words carry a slight throaty slur from the effects of the alcohol.

"Same ol' same ol'. Got a problem at the precinct only I can handle. Needs my official John Hancock, apparently. We'll see."

Ray puts on a low southern drawl. "What happens, son, when you acquire a position of authority and responsibility in this here town."

"Yeah. Me and the dog catcher. Highly respected." He gets to his feet and dons his hat. "Gonna take me twenty/thirty minutes tops to be back. You still be here?"

"Not likely. Gotta hit the road myself. Gettin' late. Just finish my beer." He waves his bottle in the air.

"You can crash here if you want. Couch is a fold-out."

"Not necessary, but thanks."

"Sure. Anyhow, now you know where we are, don't be a stranger. Or maybe we can set up a once-a-week. You said you don't have a phone, right, cell or otherwise?" Ben shakes

his head, no, along with Ray and Beth. They all laugh. It's become an inside joke already, the subject having been flogged to death during the evening's early conversation, as: How can you exist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century without owning a cell?

"You got a milk calendar, anyway, yeah?" Ben nods his head, yes, like he's talking to an infant. "Circle Sunday nights."

Ray circles the air with a finger and dots it for emphasis.

"Okay, glad we got that settled. It's good to see you, Ray. Truly. Welcome back. We'll continue catching up another time. Maybe get you out for a few hours fishing." He kisses Beth tenderly on the lips.

"Leave this." He motions to the mess. "I'll clean up when I get home. No worries." He gives a relaxed half-salute to the pair, lifts his holster from a hook and hustles out the front door.

"Whee! I haven't drank this much in years," Beth says. Her voice is all warm and creamy. "Or is it 'drunk?' *I'm* drunk. Ha! It's kinda nice. Being tipsy. Been a while. I almost forgot." She raises her chin and locks eyes with Ray. The two are engaged in a sort of loose-armed embrace, their bodies set just close enough together you could barely slip a cigarette paper between them. "You look good, mister. Fit. Muscular. Not as full-out muscular as Ben. More like a wrapped-tight coil of razor wire, all sharp angles, edges and points. You could cut a person, really, if you weren't careful, just by casually turning your head. Don't get me wrong, it suits you. I like it. The time away hasn't hurt you any, looks wise, anyway. Maybe helped. Ya used to be skinny." She sucks a deep breath into her lungs and her breasts swell against his rib cage. "You gonna kiss me now, or what? Little brother's not watching." She pops her lips and grins mischievously.

“Hey. How’d the little boy mouse meet the little girl mouse? Remember?”

She crawls her hands around Ray’s neck and hauls herself up on tippy toes. She’s about five-foot-two in bare feet. Ray has a good eight or nine inches on her in motorcycle boots.

“I kissed you when I showed earlier.”

“A peck. A peck on the cheek. Sisterly. I think you owe me at least one real kiss, after all.”

“Uh-huh? How do you figure?”

“You practically left me standing at the altar, bastard.”

“I think that’s an exaggeration of what was our relationship at the time.”

“Not to me. I had it all planned out. Down to the dress, the cake, even the flowers on the table. Black-eyed Susans mixed with baby’s breath.”

“Impressive. You were, what? All of eighteen?”

“So?”

“So? So, you were better off waiting. You got Ben. Lucky girl. Nice home, nice family. Count your blessings.”

“Yeah, got an automatic dishwasher, microwave oven and everything. All the modern conveniences.” She huffs. “One lousy kiss is all I’m asking. What are ya, scared?”

“Should I be?”

“Yer damn right,” she says with a snarl. “Now be a good boy and pucker up.” She half-shuts her eyes, steps her feet on top of his boots and presses her body into his. Ray bends his head to meet hers and they kiss, heavy and full. Beth tries to slip him the tongue and he peels her away by the shoulders. She shoots him a dirty grin. “Mm, sweet. Wasn’t so hard now, was it? The kiss, I mean. Unlike something else

I might mention.” She laughs and eyeballs his crotch. “Which *is* hard, yeah? Nice to know you haven’t changed, Ray.”

“And your high beams are drilling holes through your summer frock, so let’s consider us even. And done.”

“I’m wet, too, if it matters.” The words are spoken like a challenge. She pulls provocatively at her lower lip and gazes at him through slit eyes.

“I didn’t come here tonight to try and cause trouble.”

He drains his beer, keeping his free arm extended, Beth attached and somewhat constrained at the outermost end.

“Ha! Don’t make me laugh. You don’t need to try to cause trouble, Ray. It follows you around like a trained dog. You don’t even need to whistle and it’s there.” She slaps and pushes his hand off her shoulder and stumbles backward. She moves flat-footed, her arms floppy. “You mean to say you never noticed? C’mon! You walk into a department store and things fall off the shelves and smash on the floor for no obvious reason. Crash, bang! You enter a bar, fights break out. Wham, bam! Blood and black eyes and broken bones everywhere. You walk down a sidewalk, young girls suffer moist panties and broken hearts. Babies cry. Mothers weep. Oh my God!” She runs her hands up the back of her neck, into her scalp. “You shake your hair out on a main street of Weyburn and you cause a freaking typhoon in China.” She scratches the top of her forehead and smirks. “I mean ... what was that all about, huh? That grand entrance? Like something out of the movies. Marlon Brando in *The Wild One* or whatever.” She puts on a meek voice. “What are you rebelling against, son?” Then a different voice, harsher, snarkier. “I don’t know, mister, what have you got?” She smacks her lips. “Isn’t that it? The way it goes. The hokey dialogue.”

“I don’t know Beth.” He adds his empty bottle alongside others on the coffee table. “That movie was a lifetime ago.”

“Yeah? Tell me about it. Ben plays it, like, three or four times a year, faithfully. He owns his very own copy. Not sure why. Says it serves as a reminder. I ask, a reminder of what, honey? Raising hell and causing all kinds of trouble? That was never you. He just throws his hands in the air and says he isn’t sure. Perfect. Well, Ben, *thankyouverymuch*. And since he’s got nothing more to say on the subject, we settle on the couch, drink beer, eat buttered popcorn and watch the film. Again.” She tugs at a strand of straight brown hair and tucks it behind an ear. “I was trying to make a point. What was I saying?” She snaps her fingers rapidly at Ray.

“I don’t know Beth. You’re drunk. Something about an entrance.”

“Yeah, what was with that, huh? You showing up out of the blue a week ago, after ... what? Seven years? Seven god-damn years. Like in the fairy tales. And in you come, slung pretty-as-you-please on the seat of a classic, souped-up, cherry-red Triumph motorcycle. Wowie-zowie!”

She uses a hand to mimic gunning the engine. She duplicates the sound with a hoarse: *vroom, vroom*.

“You’re getting loud, Beth. The kids.”

“Oh, yeah, the kids.” She pulls a guilty face and places a fingertip to her lips, then lets out a belly laugh. “Nice try. Just ‘cause you’re embarrassed. The kids are fine, Ray. The kids are all right, yeah?” She semi-sings the words. More a warble. “The Kids are all right. Old song. The Who, remember? Eh? No? Anyway, they’re zonked out dead to the world, don’t concern yourself. And even if they do wake up, so what? Nothin’ to see here, right? Please keep back of the yellow

tape. Fine, fine.” She bites her lower lip. “Let’s get back to you.” She twirls a finger, points the tip at him, and drives it forward. “Straight up Government Road. Like you own the goddamn place. Middle of the afternoon, sun blazing overhead. Everyone else on the road pulls over and parks. They don’t know what to make of it. It’s like a phenomenon. They don’t know what else to do. They don’t know whether to shit or wind their watches. Pedestrians stop in mid-stride. Shoppers lean into windows to catch a glimpse. Each and every one disconnects from their electronic devices to fully appreciate the scene. Holy traffic stopper, Batman! Even birds land and crowd the electric power lines for a peek. What the ...? Who is this guy?” She squeezes the brakes hard and grits her teeth. “Eeeeeee! You screech to a halt in the centre of the intersection. The bike fishtails. You sit there frozen like a park statue. White T-shirt, black denim pants, black leather boots, sunglasses, freaking tattoos on your biceps. The whole bit, wham bam! Almost expect to hear *The Ballad of Easy Rider* playing in the background.” Beth goes all Hollywood dramatic, dropping her jaw and widening her eyes. “That’s when you stripped the elastic band from your hair and gave your thick, curly, raven locks an energetic shake. Yikes! You might’ve been shooting a commercial for Old Spice or Axe or something. Everything suddenly went slo-mo. Everyone gasped in unison. It was fucking unbelievable.”

“You were there? You witnessed it?”

“Yeah, as it so happens, I did. I was working a shift at the diner. Had a clear shot through the picture window of the entire mad scene. Not that it mattered. Even folks who weren’t there claim they were. It was a clear case of mass

hysteria that affected everyone in the town, whether near or far. The vision of that entrance—of *you*—was pasted on people's brains equally. It was like they'd witnessed the figure of Jesus Christ, or the holy Virgin Mary burn itself into the blue brick wall of a Walmart store. Believe me, in that instant, you attained the status of demi-god; an image firmly entrenched in the psyche of the populace, one-part awe, three parts fear."

"Fear? Fear of what?"

"The unknown, sweets, what else? Whether you dropped out of the sky from heaven or crawled out from the depths of hell, didn't matter. 'Course, I knew it was you right away. Who else? Ben, too. He likely crossed himself in the patrol car."

"I think you're making too much of it. I was just trying to get my bearings, pick out familiar landmarks. The place has changed."

"Yeah. In some ways, in others, not so much." She rolls her head and inhales through her nose. "I'm in the mood for a scotch. You want one? Join me? Good stuff! Single malt. Was a gift from someone for something. Christmas, probably. Been sitting there, waiting."

"Sure. A short one, why not?"

Beth skips over to a white modular entertainment unit, squats on the flats of her feet, opens a cupboard door and produces a bottle and two glasses. She pours. The music continues to play. John Anderson singing something about straight tequila nights and a broken heart.

"Ice? Water?"

"Neat is good."

"Neat *is* good." Beth dances the drinks over and they clink glasses.

“People get strange ideas. They see what they want to see, hear what they want to hear, believe what they want to believe. I can’t help that.”

“No need to go all dark and philosophical on me, Ray. Like I give a flying fuck what people think.” She shrugs. “The only real question is: What took you so long to get in touch with us? Ben and me. I mean, what the hell?”

“I wanted to get myself set up. Find a place. Didn’t want you to think you needed to take care of me.”

“Uh-huh. I see.” She runs a tongue tip across her lips. “I hear you’re livin’ with that crazy Indian woman in her run-down trailer in the middle of nowhere.”

Beth can’t help but shake the bee jar to attempt a reaction. Ray refuses to bite. “She’s Cree and she has a name—Tantoo Morningstar.”

“Giving her some sort of official designation doesn’t change the fact she’s crazy. And stinks to high heaven.”

“Maybe not.” Ray considers pursuing the argument and doesn’t. Beth has the ball, let her run with it.

“I’m just sayin’.” Beth crinkles her nose and puckers her lips. “Besides, how’d you manage to shack up with her?”

“We’re not shacked up. We met at the Detour. She was there sellin’ bead bracelets and necklaces and whatnot. We talked.” He bobs his head. “Well, *I* talked. I somehow mentioned I needed a place to stay, she *communicated* ...”—he flutters his fingers in the air—“... she had an extra room she could rent me cheap. That was it.”

“Uh-huh. I see. Right.” Beth knocks back the scotch, runs an index finger around the inside of the glass and sticks the finger in her mouth. “Yum. And I’m supposed to believe that because ...”



“Believe what you want, Beth.”

“She’s gotta be like what: twenty, twenty-five years older than you. You can’t really be banging her, can you? I mean, I’d think the smell, alone ...”

Ray steps forward and holds a flat palm in front of her face: talk to the hand.

“Enough, okay? Before you say something ... what? Inappropriate.”

Beth swats at the hand, like a fly, and Ray retracts it. She mimes zipping her lips shut, turning a lock and throwing away the key. She brushes her hands clean.

“Satisfied?” she says.

“I’m gonna vamoose. You look fine, Beth, really. Thanks for the dinner. It was excellent. We’ll have to do it again sometime.”

He hands her his empty glass. She scrunches her eyes, sucks in her cheeks and squeezes her lips to a point.

“Remember what we used to call this face?”

“Cat’s ass.”

“Uh-huh.” She relaxes. “Cat’s ass. Meow. Just go, Ray. You’re lousy at compliments and even worse at goodbyes.”

“You’re probably right.”

Ray slips his arms into a light denim jacket and hunches out of the house. Beth walks to the living room window, watches him start the Triumph, kick out the driveway, motor up the road and evaporate into the dust around a curve. She raises a middle finger into the air and uses the tip to rub the bridge of her nose.

*Fuck you, Ray, she mumbles. Fuck you and the horse you rode in on.*



## 2.

**B**en scrambles eggs as Beth empties the dishwasher. The kitchen's filled with aromas of fresh brewed coffee and buttered toast. The kids are at the dining room table. Ben junior busy with a colouring book; Casey strapped into a highchair stabbing her oatmeal with a plastic spoon.

"Gonna be another scorcher," Ben says, squinting out the window.

"It's middle of August. What do you expect?"

"I guess. Seems hotter for some reason."

"That's why God invented A/C." Beth smiles and gives Ben's arm a squeeze.

"They say maybe a storm sometime this afternoon."

"I heard. One of those two-minute deluges, *pock-pock-pock*. Wind, thick black roiling clouds, thunder, lightning, then *poof*, gone. Hardly time to open an umbrella never mind quench your thirst or douse the crops. I'm taking the kids to the water park anyway. It'll be part of the soak." She rattles cutlery into a drawer. "Why do you think he's come back, huh? Ray, I'm talking about. I mean, why now?"

“He must’ve read the latest propaganda in the local tourist guides. *Welcome to the opportunity city!*”

“Haha, right.”

Ben shrugs. “Ask me why he left.”

“Are you kidding? A million good solid reasons I can think of off the top of my head. Not the least of which, he could never sit still. Classic case of ants in the pants. Part and parcel with being a Virgo, I’d say. They get bored and frustrated stuck doing the same mundane chores over and over. Always restless, always looking for something, always ... I don’t know ... *expecting* something, though never sure what. Typical Type A personality: single-minded, judgmental and critical of others.”

“I always heard Virgos were healers who had a talent for fixing things.”

“That’s the flip side of the same coin: your typical Jekyll and Hyde situation. The exact same attributes that make one person a saint make another a sinner. It’s all a matter of degree.”

“Hmm.”

“You know Ray went from shit job to shit job ’til no one would hire him anymore, yeah? Kept pissing people off. One thing, whatever it was he was looking for, it sure as hell wasn’t in *Wey-burn*. It was just a matter of time before he took off for greener pastures. What I took to be forever.”

“Greener pastures, right. To go where, really? To do what?”

Beth grunts, stacks plates in the cupboard and suddenly chuckles to herself.

“What? Tell me.” Ben reduces the heat under the eggs.

“I just recalled ...”

“What?”

“There was that business with Suzanne Leask, yeah? Claimed Ray got her preggers. That riled the family. Didn’t her brother lose a few teeth and almost an ear trying to defend her so-called honour?”

“Yeah. Turned out to be more in her head than in her belly.”

“Doesn’t mean Ray didn’t ... you know ...”—Beth jams an index finger in and out of a circle formed by her other hand—“... do the nasty with her. I believe he must’ve had sex with every eligible—and not so eligible—girl in town. And some of their mothers. The most annoying part was, he didn’t have to do a goddamn thing. He had a sort of natural animal magnetism, a certain energy about him that made women just want to drop their laundry and open their legs. Like they had no choice in the matter. Huh.” She wipes a pot dry with a tea towel and bangs it onto a shelf. For someone with a relatively compact frame, she tends to create a huge racket doing the simplest chores. “Hey! What’s the difference between a light bulb and a pregnant woman?” She allows barely a pause. “You can unscrew a light bulb.” She snorts. “Pretty hilarious. Anyway, it was bound to catch up with him sooner or later. Either a baby or a bullet.” She smacks her forehead with the heel of a hand. “*Pow!* Wake up call.” She steps to the sink, hoists a plastic bag of frozen food and presents it to Ben. “I pulled chicken thighs out of the freezer for dinner, okay?”

“Sure. I’ll toss them on the BBQ with corn on the cob.” He gives the eggs a stir. “As I recall—and correct me if I’m

wrong—you were a part of that fallen group, yeah? Dropping laundry, *et cetera, et cetera ...* and pined almost a full two years after he was gone, *boo-hoo, boo-hoo.*”

“Don’t be mean.” She swats Ben with the frozen chicken and he responds accordingly, with a slight flinch and a playful *ouch*. “And look who’s calling the kettle black. As I recall, mister, you weren’t too happy about his leaving and went through your own period of private personal hell.”

“Yeah, I guess that’s true. Over now, though.”

“Uh-huh. Anyway, I never said he couldn’t be somehow charming and sweet, in his own narcissistic way. What do they call it? Boyish innocence. Right. Butter wouldn’t melt in his mouth. When he wanted something, that is, which was often. You know better than anyone. He crashed up your first car, right? Drunk and disorderly. Likely getting a blowjob in the front seat by some girl you were attracted to, or worse, dating, and you let it go. Whatever he did—to you or anyone—no matter how bad or hurtful, you always forgave him.”

“He’s my brother.”

“Sure. And family’s family. Still.”

“And what about you? Seeing him now? Does it bring back fond and precious memories or what?”

“No need to worry yourself, Ben, honey. I got the right brother. I know that. I’m happy. I love our kids. Ray’s here today, gone tomorrow. You’re my rock.” She kisses him on the side of the mouth. “And *why-ever* he’s returned after seven long years, I know I’m not the attraction. But it’s something.”

Ben dishes the eggs onto plates with a wooden spoon. “He’s got a birthday coming up in two weeks. He’ll turn twenty-nine.”

“Closing in on thirty. You think maybe that’s it? I mean, I have a tough time thinking of Ray as nostalgic, but maybe he’s feeling his age, yeah? And maybe wants to touch base with his roots? I don’t know. Stranger things happen, I suppose.”

“Yeah, maybe. Of course, our mother disappeared shortly after she turned twenty-nine. Do you think that’s a coincidence?”

“Huh. Disappeared? I thought she drowned.”

“They say she drowned. They found her shoes, covered by a neatly folded blouse, by the riverbank, but they never found her body. Ray and I used to make up stories about her. About how she was still alive and living somewhere else. We’d even go so far as to imagine her in adventurous situations sometimes: climbing mountains or crossing deserts and confronting some kind of danger or whatever. That sort of thing. Kid stuff. Of course, the exercise lost its shine after a while—*tempus fugit*, and so on—and we believed like everyone else that she was dead. At least, I did.”

“Ray didn’t?”

“He said he did, though every so often—especially after one too many drinks—he’d bring up the subject again and say, hey, do you think mom might be sittin’ on a big boat somewhere on the ocean right this moment, sippin’ a martini and wonderin’ how we’re doin’ and what we’re up to? He’d catch himself almost immediately and say he was joking, but he’d have that faraway look in his eyes that made me wonder.”

“Uh-huh. I’ve seen that look.” She shrugs. “Well, I’m gonna give Ben junior his eggs. I’m sure we’ll know soon enough. I don’t expect Ray to be around for the winter, if you know what I mean.”

“Yeah. I just hope it’s nothing crazy.” Ben shovels scrambled eggs onto toast, adds ketchup for a sandwich, and eats standing. “Or, who knows, maybe he’s come back to stay. Settle down. Maybe he’s had his fill of the outside world. That’d be nice, huh?”

“Ha! Yeah, when pigs fly.” Beth carries eggs and coffee over to the table. She sets the breakfast in front of Ben junior. He digs in. She sips her coffee. “Maybe he’s also running from the law and needs a place to lay low for a spell.” She hears Ben tap the wooden spoon on the stove. “I hate to mention, hon, though it wouldn’t surprise me. Anyway, you probably have to ask if you want to know. He’s never been much for volunteering information.”

“I’ll do that. Meanwhile, you need me to pick up anything in town, or ...?”

“I’ll get groceries. You might want to pick up more beer. We did a job last night.”

“You mean you and Ray did a job. I was on-call.”

“That’s what I said, *we* did a job. And who knows, he might just turn up again tonight, or anytime unannounced for that matter, so we might as well be prepared. Only, you can keep him company this time.” She pats her hands down her sides. “Beer goes right to my hips. Blame my German heritage.”

Beth liked to tell anyone with half an interest, her background was German, Hungarian and Polish, plus any other fool either brave or horny enough to jump the fence, making her one hundred percent pure-bred Canadian stock.

“You look great.”

“You mean for having two kids?”

“I mean anytime. You look terrific.”

“You’re sweet even if you are a liar.”

The pair kiss. Ben says his good-byes to the kids and leaves through the front door. Beth goes to the hall mirror and gives herself a study. She rocks her head and purses her lips. Not too bad, she thinks, all things considered. She twists her body slightly. Butt’s still firm and the breasts are in fine shape. She cups and bounces them, then pinches at her tummy. Maybe I could stand to lose a few pounds of spare tire. An hour or two a day on the treadmill should take care of that, no problem. Watch what I eat, don’t snack. Lay off the beer, sort of. Otherwise, pretty damned okay, I’d say. Definitely worth the whistle, you bet.



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The movie soundtrack (for those keeping score) includes:

*Pink Houses: John Mellencamp*

*Big Yellow Taxi: Joni Mitchell*

*Glory Days: Bruce Springsteen*

*Stuck in the Middle with You: Stealers Wheel*

*Daytripper: The Beatles*

*Something to Talk About: Bonnie Raitt*

*Dry Town: Miranda Lambert*

*Ride of the Valkyries: Richard Wagner*

*The Kids Are All Right: The Who*

*Straight Tequila Night: John Anderson*

*The Ballad of Easy Rider: Roger McGuinn*

*Righteousness: Lucinda Williams*

*Powderfinger: Neil Young*

*It's Five O'clock Somewhere: Jimmy Buffett*

*The Cheapest Key: Kathleen Edwards*

*The Ghosts of Highway 20: Lucinda Williams*

*Psycho Killer: Talking Heads*

*Because the Night: Patti Smith*

*Candy Colored Clown: Roy Orbison*

## About the Author



**Stan Rogal** was born in Vancouver and now lives and writes in Toronto. He is recently retired from the University of Toronto Standardized Patient Program, where he taught and assessed communication skills for students and professionals within the health care system. His literary work has appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies in Canada, the US and Europe, some in translation. He is the author of 24 books: 5 novels, 7 story and 12 poetry collections. He is also a produced playwright.