

March 1st

I haven't done this since I was a little girl. Then, I had a little diary with a lock on it to keep my brothers from reading it. Then, it was all about boys. Thinking about those silly little emotions that little girls have about little boys makes me laugh. Being a teenager was tough enough as it was, probably even more difficult now. All the changes in our bodies and our brains; I could've done without the stress and heartache from the boys in such an already tricky time in my life. Who am I kidding, those were some of the best times of my life. The memories really do stick with you, what, 10, 30, 50 years later. I wouldn't trade all the loves and heartaches, all the ups and downs, all the rides in Larry O'Shea's Corvette, for anything in the world. Those were such simple, peaceful, and fun times. I know that my grandchildren will soon be that age, and I hope that they have the same safe fun that I did. I love them so much.

The doctors told me to start keeping a journal of my day-to-day activities, to see how my mood and my days progress. It seemed like a strange idea, and I laughed at them when they first suggested it. I said, 'What am I? A silly, little teenage girl again?' They replied rather seriously that it was a simple memory practice, and that it would help me notice any changes in my behaviour. They told me to read it back to myself as much as I could, at which point I asked them whether I'd receive extra credit. They laughed. Doctors clearly have more of a sense of humour now than they did back in my day. They told me to discuss it with my friends and family. That seemed strange to me. One doesn't often divulge the inside of their diary to people. I thought that was the point. They did use the word *journal*, however, so that makes a little bit more sense.

One of the doctors was so handsome, too. I asked him if he was married, and he said that he was too busy with work to think about marriage. Such a smart, eager young man. I mentioned that my daughter was around his age, based on how old he looked. She'd have to get through the younger version of me first, however. He laughed again. Such a nice, intelligent young man. Doctor Middlestadt was his name, but he told me to call him Jerome. Top of his field, I bet. And a lovely smile.

So, here I go. Writing about my days. The amazing, glamorous days of a retiree. I woke up at half-five with Gerald and we ate grapefruit halves with cottage cheese. Gerry had black coffee and I had green tea, as I've been told it's better for you. Good luck trying to get my husband of decades to switch his routine. We read the paper, sharing the long sheets as we always have, and did the crossword puzzle together. I love our retired life mornings. They might be my favourite parts of retirement. Gerry still works part-time; he refuses to be put out to pasture. That stubborn guy. There's rarely any rush, and when there is, that means there's something worthwhile to do. I had my doctor's appointment today, while Gerry's is later in the week. That's part of getting old, I suppose. Doctor visits become a fairly regular occurrence. We watched Mary's kids for a few hours in the afternoon and supped with her for a little while.

It was good to see her. It's always a delight to see one's children alongside their own children. Little Ruby and Adam, our only grandchildren, are the most wonderful gifts we have. Mary's had a rough go of things, but we pray for her every night. You can only do so much as a single mother, and I hope that one day everything works out for her. Until then, she knows she has full support from her parents.

They didn't stay for dessert. It's no biggie, we're planning on moving to fruit slices or something healthier anyways. Gerry's appointment is for his ticker, and I told him that we should really save the sweets for special occasions. But, the kids love them and I love seeing the smiles on their little faces.

This was easy! I'm sure I've left the smaller things out and, let's face it, if I had to go over my whole day with every slight detail, my hand would cramp up before I even finished. I guess, for a successful first entry, I can say that I'm glad to be surrounded with loved ones and friends, and feel all of their love.

This should be fun!

March 5th

It's been a couple days since I've written, but a lot of unfortunate things have happened. I felt like writing this down earlier, but simply found myself without time.

Gerry's doctor visit was less than inspiring, even with our healthy eating. The doctor said that he could have another heart attack if he doesn't watch his red meat and alcohol consumption, which is still nothing compared to what it used to be. Gerald is so stubborn. I told him so. I told him that just because we eat healthy in the house, doesn't mean that he can forget those habits when he goes fishing or to the pub with his mates. I can't watch him all the time, and he's a grown man; he needs to care for himself the way his family does. The doctor agreed and said that if he doesn't change his habits, he could risk getting sick, or worse, far earlier than any of us would like. I don't want to lose my love. We've been together for 45 years. 45 years of lovingly fighting like cats and dogs, but 45 years of love and family. He should retire completely, but he has those devil's hands that need to be kept busy, God love him. Just like our youngest, Fran.

Fran and Gerry are two stubborn as bulls, peas in a pod. Workaholics, they are. My youngest, she's so much like her father, except she's never wanted to settle down. It makes me sad that I rarely see or hear from her. But, she was always the brightest one, with the highest hopes and biggest ambitions. I just wish she'd find a nice man and have some children. She's so beautiful and would make a great mother. Maybe a little intense, but her children would be obedient and have great manners.

Now I'm wondering why only one of our three children has children. Poor Will, he's so lost. Whereas Fran's the worker and Mary's the mother, Will just kind of coasts. It wasn't until a couple of years ago that we finally got him out of the house. I was reluctant, but Gerry was determined. 'It's no way for a grown man to live, in his parent's basement smoking and playing games all day.' I told Gerry that maybe one day Will would make the games and work with them, but apparently, it's not that simple, and requires a lot of schooling. He has a good head on his shoulders, though. He's sweet, and has shown signs of a strong work ethic. If only he just applied himself, or met a woman that could light a fire under him. We do see him a lot, which again, Gerry and I have differing opinions on. I love cooking my baby dinner, letting him do his laundry here, and taking care of him. Gerry just badgers him about upgrading his high school diploma, and getting a job that doesn't break his back and pays better than minimum wage. Everyone chooses their own path, I tell him, and if you want to eat meat and he wants to play on the computer, you both have the rights to do what you want, even if it miffs the people around you from time to time.

Evelyn Gardiner passed. That's my second friend since the summertime to pass away. First, Gwyneth. Now, Evelyn. The lake will be a lot less full this spring. Evelyn had been diagnosed with cancer some years back. She was like the older sister that I never had: stern, opinionated, and a big softy underneath it all. Her funeral's next weekend, and I feel her loss already. Who will tell me where I can and can't set my drink on those hot summer days, and slide a coaster beneath my glass as if it just appeared by magic? She was a great friend, and I'm sad to lose another. Gerry's lost several friends to cancer. All those hard men with their endless tobacco smoking and whiskey drinking. We didn't know how bad it was for you when we were young. I tell Mary that she has to stop all the time. The kids, they knew. They had all the warnings, as well as lectures in school. In our case, they might as well have given us cigarettes in boxes of cereal instead of toys as kids. What a different world. It's almost hard to recognize some days. I swear,

one day I woke up and all the things that we grew up with, like red meat and whole dairy, were bad for you! If something's so bad for you, they should just outlaw it like they used to do with alcohol. That would make sure that everyone lived as long as they could.

Other than the upcoming funeral, we'll head to the lake and start setting up the summer home. It should be a lot of work, as usual, but Gerry's always keen. I'm sure he'll make Will help him. I'll offer Will some money for helping his father. He should get a little something for putting up with Gerald for a whole afternoon of heavy lifting and reprimanding.

A little piece of gossip. Julia Cooke has apparently remarried, and is going to be bringing her new husband to the lake. Apparently, he's quite a bit younger, and the other ladies are suspicious of his motives. This should make for some interesting chatter with the others. I don't like to get my nose too deep into the lives of others, but call it a guilty pleasure. As long as Julia's happy, that's all that should matter. She's had a tough go as of late, and if a younger man is the antidote that will make her feel good, then what can you do?

March 6th

Mary had a bit of a fight with Lloyd last night. She spent the day here with the children, having tea and venting to me. It's always the same old with them. You can tell there's still love there. It's buried, but it's there. They were never right for each other and hoped that kids would keep them together, but they were just too different. Now, I love my daughter, as I love all my children, more than anything else in the world. But, I don't feel that she's always in the right. She can be a little immature and near-sighted, sometimes. Lloyd's moving for work and wants to take the girls for the summers, while Mary would get them during the school year. In spite of my loyalty to my daughter, I have to say that Lloyd's a good provider for the girls and still helps Mary out more than he should. He's getting a big-time promotion alongside a generous raise, on top of his already generous salary. His new wife and baby daughter are also very lovely people. Mary's concern is that she wouldn't be entitled to as much alimony during those summer months, which she says she needs to live. It's hard. She fires off like a bottle rocket when I suggest that she re-enters the workforce, but she hasn't worked since her teller job at the bank before Ruby was born, some ten years plus ago. I know she's a great mother and wants to be near her kids constantly, but it's not like we wouldn't help her out. I for one would jump at the chance to spend five days a week with the kids. Their school isn't far from here, and it would be great exercise watching those little critters. My goodness, they are a handful, but the sweetest little things I've ever seen in my life.

I bit my tongue. I didn't want Mary to think that I'd chosen Lloyd's side, but I'll have to work on her a little bit, try to help her see that she can have a life once again. She's still young, even if she doesn't believe it. Young people never believe it. They're always so quick to claim old age, while us oldies do the opposite. I tell you, I feel younger now than I did at her age. Must be the cost of raising kids.

I'd like to chat with Lloyd, but I doubt that I will. Mary might feel like we are planning something against her, behind her back. But, I really should. He's a lovely man. All the reasons that Mary doesn't want to leave the kids for the summer are the reasons she should, in my opinion. She could use the time without them, as hard as it would be to let them go for a couple of months, to really figure out what she wants out of life. She could have a moment to actually think about herself, and herself only. She shouldn't worry... Lloyd's a very patient man and a good father. I'm saying that as the mother of his ex-wife, for heaven's

sake! They'd never work now; they're just two very different people that grew further apart with time. He's moved on, but she's used her children as reasons to stay the same. We can't learn from our mistakes if we don't move away from the spot where we made them. I should tell her that. In time.

March 12th

Evelyn's funeral was an incredibly sad affair. It was also very moving. She has a huge family, and they all came out to support her. She was indeed a hard-nosed woman, one of those old-school ladies that pulled up their socks for the war effort. She was a gorgeous young woman and lived an incredible life. The lake won't be the same without her.

A strange thing happened during the reception.

Gerald was off with the other gentlemen from the lake. They were discussing some plans for the summer, some projects and the usual man-gabbing over beers and finger food. I'd stayed with the wives and we set to planning our own summers. The reception, comfortably held in the church's adjoining school gymnasium, was tastefully decorated in a very restrained way; there was a slide show, enlarged photos, and a few picture books. Blanche, Viv, myself, and the others were going through the picture books and watching the slide show, trying not to tear up. Then, the most bizarre thing possible occurred. I'd completely forgotten how long I'd known Evelyn and the ladies for. Blame it on old age, but I couldn't remember all the pictures that we'd taken. It was kind of fun, digging up these amazing memories that we'd experienced at the lake and on vacations elsewhere. Sure, we weren't all together in each and every picture, but we'd been a tightly knit bunch of gals for longer than I recalled. Stranger still, the ladies started going into detail about the trips; one to Las Vegas for Art and Viv's 40th wedding anniversary, and another one that we'd all taken to Pensacola so the husbands could watch pre-season baseball and bet on the greyhound races.

I had to smile and nod. I listened to them like it was the first time that I'd heard any of this. Gerry came by and laughed at the memory of Morris thinking that he'd won big on a certain dog, only to find out that he'd lost. Gerry seemed to remember every little detail of the trips, and jumped right in with the storytelling. I felt awkward. I smiled, cooed placidly, and listened to stories that seemed to have been told enough times that everyone around us nodded with those golden, nostalgic smiles. It seemed they'd heard it a million times like an oldie pop song. I didn't dare bring this up to Gerry on the ride home, and when we arrived, I quickly wrote down everything that had happened. I feel like calling it what it is. A blip. A slip of the mind. I have so much to think about these days: the lake, Mary and Lloyd, all my children, and Gerry's health. I'm sure my memory will come back in full force! Next time, I'll regale them with my excellent stories.

March 26th

I was about to start this entry by apologizing to the journal for not writing in it for a longer than intended period of time. Then, that thought made me laugh. I'm sure that the journal is no more hurt by not having a pencil pressed against it than it is on the days, or weeks, when it rests completely undisturbed.

Another friend of ours, Helen's husband Clark, has fallen very ill. Helen was beside herself and needed some cheering up. He was in bed, having just returned from the hospital, and I could only peek my head in and wave to him. What a trooper. What an absolute soldier. He was calmer than Helen was, imagine

that. I can't blame her, if anything were to happen to my dear Gerald, I'd be an absolute mess. Helen's poor little hand was shaking the orange pekoe right out of her cup onto the saucer and then the floor.

We talked about the awful reality that all of our friends don't seem long for this world. She had a very despairing attitude. She didn't seem to be at all prepared for Clark's unfortunate illness, but then again, who's ever ready for their husband to have a stroke? The difference is the way she's dealing with it all. She's become very bleak and discouraged. I tried to tell her about Martin Lachance, the old wrecking ball that had a stroke many years ago and is still kicking today. He can't drive anymore, but can do most other things. The medical world has come a long way. Just because someone's gotten sick or fallen perilously ill, doesn't mean that the fat lady's going to have to sing. Research and whatnot have provided doctors with all kinds of ideas about how diseases and things work, how to slow them down, and sometimes even cure them! I'd much rather be my age now compared to any other time!

I hope I helped her feel better. Many of my friends need help these days. I swear, some days I'm either on the phone or making house calls to friends that are losing or have lost their loved ones all day long. It's almost like a post-retirement job!

Speaking of post-retirement jobs, I'm slowly turning Mary onto the possibility of going back to the bank. Her maternity leave has gone on too long. I just think it'd be nice if she could be with other adults, meet some new people and friends, earn a little cash, and be more independent. I'd love to watch the kids, take my mind off all the sadness in my circle, and bring those two little rays of sunlight into my days. Mary said that she'd spoken to Lloyd and apologized for being rash. She said that she wasn't used to being away from the kids for so long. He responded that California wasn't too far away, and should she ever want to come and see the girls, his new place would have a massive guest room that had her name on it anytime she wanted. Isn't that marvelous? I won't take any credit, out loud, but I think things are finally starting to turn for Mary.

Will's helping Gerry this weekend, and I'd be lying if I said that I wasn't more than a little nervous. Gerry's been in a foul mood lately. Chalk it up to him changing some life-long behaviours; I think he's feeling withdrawals and missing his favourite snacks. He's been a grade-A grump since I stopped buying all the sugary products and unhealthy, cheap favourites he's had since childhood. I told him that it may taste the same, but the fillers that they use are full of toxic chemicals and fake nutrients. His favourites like pasta noodles, white bread, peanut butter, and even canned peach slices aren't the same as they used to be. He says that he always feels hungry eating salad and beef barley soup, but I don't care. I've lost enough friends in the past few years. I told him it's either his beer or his bread. I'll work on the cigarettes another time. And the beer at a later time after that.

I've yet to hear from my little Franny. I guess she's been a busy little bee with her job, but would it kill her to at least respond to one of my messages? It's getting to the point where I have to look at a picture to remember what she looks like! I hope she visits soon.

April 4th

Gerry's yet to wake up from his surgery. My bad feeling about Will helping his father out was a half-true premonition, but it's a good thing he was there.

Will said that they were making trips back and forth from the storage unit to the lake house. They rose early in the morning, upon Gerry's insistence, and had already made numerous hauls to the house: the summer furniture, the boat, and the rest of the stuff. Will said that Gerry had clearly been in a very bad

mood, smoking out of the window like a locomotive and cursing the whole trip. It was around lunch time when Gerry suggested that they get some burgers. Some power food to help with the final loads and unboxing. Will, God love him, was unaware of Gerry's condition. They'd parked and eaten on the front steps. Will said that it'd been the first bonding that they'd really done in years. They didn't talk about school, or work, or not having a wife, or anything. They just shot the breeze like they used to while they fished waist-deep in waders trying to hook some trout for supper. They never got any trout, but stayed out there until the blue sky turned orange, enough light so they could see their feet as they came back home. I can still remember the way that Gerry'd pat the little blond bowl cut on Will's head, each with their fishing pole over their shoulder, carrying their tackle boxes, ready to barbeque some hot dogs and corn. How Will used to look up to his dad and how Gerry used to see himself in his only son. That changed around adolescence, sadly.

They were just sitting there, eating and enjoying talking and not-talking, when Gerry dropped his cola and grabbed Will's arm. He was obviously in pain. Will said so, because he'd never seen his father show pain once in his life, even when he'd hammered a nail through his thumb. He slumped over on the steps and fell flat on his chest. Will had done some emergency first-aid training because of his construction job. I didn't even know that. Within a few moments, Will was on the phone hailing an ambulance. Gerry's poor heart had no strength whatsoever. Will said that they had to shock him in the ambulance to even draw a pulse. The old bulldog still had some fight in him, though. Gerry was unconscious but alive when they arrived to the hospital, and he ended up needing triple-bypass surgery. Will stayed until the surgery was over, and then came home and brought me to the hospital.

I stayed as long as I was allowed. The doctors told me that they'd update me on Gerry's condition, but that they didn't see him coming-to for a bit, and that the best thing I could do was go home and get some rest. I've been going back and forth, from here to the hospital, with both Mary and Will taking turns staying with me. Mary doesn't want Adam and Ruby to see their grandfather like this and I don't think she's said anything about it to them. Fran will be coming down shortly to visit her father. That may be just the thing he needs to snap out of the long nap that he's been taking. As the kids got older, he saw more and more of himself in Fran. She was his little bulldog.

Our friends have been infinitely supportive, even with all the things they have going on in their own lives. Gerry's bedside table is full of flowers. It looks like a regular botanical garden. He also has get well cards, all of which I read to him. I also read some books to him, especially those war pilot books he's so fond of. I find them dreadfully boring, but I hope he's having nice little dreams about circling the Nazi zeppelins and U-boats in his P-51 Mustang. Look at me, he'd be proud. Although, that's all I can remember. All those darn books seem to tell the exact same story over and over again.

April 30th

I could not for the life of me remember where I'd put this infernal thing! It turns out that it was on the table beneath a magazine, not that I've had any time to write. The world moves like an airplane. It feels stationary as it's happening, but when you look back, you see how far you are from the last time your feet were on the ground.

Fran's decided to take a leave from work and the whole family was under one roof for a couple of nights, if you can believe it. Of course, Gerald was missing, sadly. Fran's so much like her father; she may have been born as the wrong sex in the wrong decade. I don't know if she ever smiles. Her hair was different than I remember. Was she taller as well? I gave her a big hug and heard all about her marketing job over

in New York. She apologized for not being around much, and promised to be more attentive. She really is sweet beneath all the expensive perfumes and designer clothes. She even mentioned something about trying to have a baby on her own. The idea sounds insane to me. Why would anyone want to have a child on their own by choice? That's what Mary said as her two little hellions were knocking over pictures in the living room while playing some kind of tag or hide-and-go-seek game. Fran said that she didn't want or need a man. Apparently, they have clinics for that type of thing, and she has the financial security to make it happen. It's a crazy time to be alive.

Will wants to go back to school. What happened with Gerry really scared him, but also made him feel empowered. He did something. He didn't bend under pressure, he saved a life, and felt rewarded, I suppose. Now, he wants to be an emergency medical person, working for the ambulances and saving lives. I knew my little man would grow up one day.

Mary decided to go back to work after all, part-time at the bank. Her old friend is now the director there, and aside from learning a few things about the systems, she'll be able to slide back in and see how she likes it. She mentioned that she'll be using after-school services for child tending. She didn't want me to take offense, but said that with Gerry in the hospital, I had enough on my plate. I insisted that watching my grandchildren was exactly what my plate needed, that it felt a little barren at the moment, but she was firm. I pressed a bit, she said that I was getting into the habit of misplacing things and missing appointments. I don't recall any of those instances and was a little offended, though I tried not to let it show too much. I would never misplace a child, that's preposterous. Anyways, I kept those words inside my mouth. Instead, I offered to watch the children a day or two per week. Mary said that Saturday was a day that she couldn't use the school services, so I could babysit the children then. I'm still calling that a win.

Now, for the sad news. My Gerald is still asleep. I'm confident that he'll wake up. That old horse is tough. He's been working since he was seven years old. In fact, this is the first long-term vacation that he's ever had, and that includes vacations where he spends most of the time building or fixing things. He'll end up coming back sharper than a needle and stronger than an ox. I swear, when I was reading him one of his war books, I saw his finger move. I called the orderly, who called the nurse, who called the doctor, but they said that it was unlikely. I know what I saw. I saw him respond to the heroes of the story pulling one over on the invading German forces. I swear, I saw it.

Murray Blackwater also had a heart attack and is recuperating beside Gerry. I don't know if they talk, but Murray's doing great! He has the colour back in his face and is cracking jokes with that bullwhip wit of his. I can picture Gerry waking up and doing the same thing. He'd probably ask for a bratwurst or a schnitzel first, with all these World War II books I've been reading him. If he's allowed, I'd even let him wash it down with a glass of lager.

I'd be lying if I said that I wasn't a little bit jealous of Murray's wife, Celine. She comes in and has lunch with Murray. They sit and watch TV or do the crosswords. She peels him an orange and they share it. I want that. I wish that I could have moments like that with Gerry. I guess that's how my other friends may have felt when Gerry was awake and he and I bonded over those silly little things. How I miss those silly little things.

May 18th

I misplaced this thing again. It's almost becoming a monthly ritual. Losing, finding, losing, and then finding again. I'm not losing my mind, the cover just blends into the counters and whatever else it's sitting near. It's like a lizard that changes its colour to blend into the background.

Now, I can perhaps agree that I've been a little on the forgetful side. Perhaps. Dr. Middlestadt informed me that I've missed a couple of routine check-ups. I have to take the blame, I never wrote them down, a practice that he said I should probably start doing. He said that he writes everything down in a planner, and that his mind is so busy that he'd forget his own name if he didn't have a tag on his lab coat. What a nice and lovely young man. I told him that I had a daughter around his age, but he already knew! What a researcher, he really knows how to dig. He was sorry to hear about Gerry and said there's definitely a chance that he could shake the coma. I hadn't thought to use that word before, and it sounded terrifying to hear. It's a kind of shock to the system. I prefer my phrasing: dream world. He's just sleeping, after all.

I'm going to the lake this weekend with Mary and the kids. It should be fun! I love watching the little ones frolic around in the water and put sunscreen on their cute, little button noses. I invited Will, but he's pulling extra shifts to save up for school. What an eager beaver. I'm so happy that he's found his path and intends to follow it.

Other than that, I can't think of much news to write down. Margie Doyle's sick, but she was never a healthy one to begin with. Clover Smith's being put into hospice care, but again, it's been a difficult few years for her. I suppose that each of them really started getting worse when their husbands passed. I wonder if that's somehow related. Can a slightly sick or even fully healthy spouse fall ill once their partner passes on? I'm sure there's no way for even Doctor Middlestadt to test that. Even with all his smarts. Gerry would be especially sad to hear that Margie's getting so bad. They went to high school together, and were in the same graduating class. I suppose it's lucky that he's resting all of his energies, just hibernating like the big bear that he is, waiting to wake up full of milk and vinegar.

May 24th

It turns out that the lake trip was far from what I'd been picturing in my head. Many of the regulars are battling with their own hardships and illnesses. I swear, it must be something in the water. It almost feels like a curse.

It was very sad without Gerry working the barbeque and sitting in the shade drinking bottles of beer. I could picture him everywhere on our little lot doing the things he's always done. It was a lovely outing, but a feeling of intense sadness filled me the whole time. I didn't let my feelings spoil my time with the kids, however. I also got a bit lost when we went for a nature walk. I swear I've done that walk a thousand times, maybe more. Luckily, the kids have a better sense of direction than I do, or the wolves would've found us. It was a little embarrassing. The kids were none the wiser, but Mary's growing increasingly worrisome. I told her not to worry, though I feel a little nerve-wracked from the experience. I must have gotten distracted by something. It was probably the underlying sadness of knowing that Gerry wasn't going to come screaming down the smoky road in his pickup.

Will showed up on the Sunday. That was a real treat. He came with a young lady whom I've never seen. They were giving each other the fluffy eyes, it was adorable. He said that her name was, well, let's call her Jill. He said that they were just friends of friends who'd met and liked each other's company. She was awfully quiet, but polite and kind with the children. She must have come from a big family. She certainly seems like the youngest daughter to a big family, anyways. Maybe Italian or Portuguese. Or, was her hair

red? I can't seem to remember, but I invited both of them to dinner. I can't remember the date. Did I even set a date? Oh, this silly old age brain of mine. I should really start keeping a calendar of events to write things down in. I don't want to figure out those fancy cellphone things that the kids seem to love. They're so absorbed in their screens. I don't think that learning how to operate those contraptions should be the thing that absorbs my attention. Plus, that'll be one more thing that I have to try not to lose!

Geraldine Hawkins looked nice today. She cooked up some delicious fried chicken and brought it over. Her husband Darryl's away on business. I admire those two, such a beautiful couple. She brought over Julia Cook, who I guess has gotten remarried to a young buck. He seemed a lot younger than her, but was very charming. A very handsome and well-groomed young man. He even did the dishes and walked Geraldine back to her place before coming back for his new wife. She said that they'd gone to Europe for their honeymoon. Mary said that he must be at least twenty years her junior, but Julia said that she didn't care. After Walter died, she inherited a lot of money. What did she need it for? All of her friends, me included, couldn't keep up with her, so she needed a younger man to do just that. She said that she knows she's the talk of the lake, but this is the first I've heard of it. I told her that we're not so judgmental, and that everyone just wants her to be happy. After the summer, they'll go to Mexico and then down to South America to hike Macchu Picchu. What adventurous go-getters, living the life of youngsters!

I was sad to return home again. Mary dropped me off, and then had to run the kids home and get them ready for the school week. The house has never felt so lonely. It's so wide and empty without Gerry's thick feet pommeling around the floorboards. I miss grumbling about our diets, I miss the way he would accidentally read the exciting parts of his novels out loud, I miss his loud and exuberant sneezes, and I miss the warmth of his distant body on the bed as I write this, telling me that it's 9:15pm and that we're up past our bedtime. I want to peck him on the cheek like he used to do at 4am every morning when he left for work. Before we retired, that is.

June 17th

I've resorted to taking far more taxis these days. Even with the notes that I've written to remember my appointments, I'm having a hard time getting around on foot. I feel tired more quickly, and I get a strange, unknottling feeling when I think I have a route figured out. It's as though I become absent-minded in the middle of doing something. Like there's gunk in the engine that is my brain.

I had to talk to Mary and tell her that I can't watch the children anymore. I wanted to say it before she did. I want to, but I just can't. I took them to the mall the other day and lost Adam for almost three hours. I was so scared and I didn't even realise that he hadn't been with me and Ruby for quite some time. I guess he'd crawled into a display bed at the big store and had himself a fine midday nap. When I finally noticed and asked Ruby where her brother was, she didn't know. I didn't know. We had to get all the mall people and security guardians to help us look. It was embarrassing, and I couldn't be mad at Adam because he'd been under my supervision.

The feeling of losing my train of thought comes and it goes. Some days, I feel as sharp as a tack, but other days I feel as dull as... Today's just not a good day. The handsome doctor told me to keep writing things down and then reading them back to myself. He mentioned something about seeing how descriptive I'm being. I won't lie, as much as I've always been an avid reader, I don't have the concentration to do it these days. He wants to see me more often, and gave me a sheet with dates to write down on my calendar. He told me that I have to call Mary and Will to organize my appointments, so that they can make sure I

come. I don't want to burden them; they're going through a lot of things with work and school and children and girlfriends. Eileen or Erin, I think. She's nice, but quiet. Of Greek descent, perhaps.

I saw Gerry while I was at the hospital, and cried at him. *Why won't you get up?* I basically asked him. All the people who were in the room with him previously have gone. I think they left on their feet. I sure hope so, it'd be sad if they hadn't. I want Gerry to stop dreaming. I'm past feeling lonely, and I just want him to do these damned crossword puzzles with me. They must be making them harder, because they're sure not getting any easier. I used to breeze through them like the wind, but I haven't finished one for a while.

I think all the stress is making my head feel worse. Today has been, these past few days have been... stressful. I need to relax. I want to go to the lake and sit in the sun. The weather is beautiful, but I'm scared that if I leave the house, I won't be able to find my way back home. Isn't that ridiculous? Well, yes, it is. I'm still here and kicking. A lot of people can't say the same. I'm lucky.

I'm also getting very tired. Even now, I can't remember what I wanted to say. Oh, I think Fran will come soon. Isn't that special? I can't remember if I last saw her at the end of the summer or during the summer. Maybe it was Christmas. Either way, I wonder what she'll look like.

Goodnight.

June 3rd

I happened upon re-reading what I'd written the other day, and I can certainly see the difference that a little fatigue makes. A little sleepiness and stress give me a not-so-lovely time when I'm trying to concentrate. I feel a little refreshed today.

In the spirit of practicing my old thinking box... today, I had tea and a grapefruit for breakfast. I'm currently waiting for the kettle to whistle again for an afternoon tea, and I'm making a tuna sandwich on brown bread. I would have liked a side salad, but forgot to pick up produce on my last trip to the market. I'll make a list right now, in fact.

-Eggs

-Butter

-Lettuce

-Carrots

Well, that's just silly. Why would I write the list in here? I might not find this journal for however long, or have nothing important to say, or get flustered at the supermarket looking through all the pages.

June 3rd

I didn't realize that I'd started this day already. The phone was ringing off the hook. Esther McCloud passed away this morning. The phone was Blanche letting me know, and then the rest of the troupe called to see if I'd heard. Another sad day. Esther was another one of the good ones. I remember her being a nurse before she retired, and then a candy stripper. Or, maybe that was Blanche. No, that was Esther. A petite, lovely woman. She was caring and bubbly.

June 3rd

Be damned. I've been interrupted so many times in this frustrating journal entry. Mary stopped over with the kids on her way home from work. The kids were all hyper from whatever the people watching them at the school had given them. Some treats or something. I couldn't really enjoy their company, having just heard the news about Ethel. On top of that, Mary said that she'd checked the mailbox and found a big stack of bills dated from a month back. The mail was always Gerald's forte. He always checked the box for the pension cheques and whatnot. I guess that it was a part of his routine just as much as not checking it has always been part of mine. It was too late in the day to call the bank to make the payments for the gas and electricity, but Mary said that we could go to the bank in the morning and take care of things in person.

Mary mentioned some other things as well, something about me needing to give her or Will power of attorney over myself and Gerry. I'm afraid to say that I was a little less than lovely to my dear eldest daughter. I just got confused and didn't fully understand what was happening. I didn't want to talk about her father and his condition with the kids present. She agreed. She said that she wanted to talk to Fran and bring Will in on it, as it was a family decision at the end of the day. I'm a little foggy on what we were talking about, but I remember getting a tad bit angry about what she was saying. I regret that. Why would I ever get angry with a loving and caring daughter doing what she feels is right? It's how she was raised, to do what she feels is right. I should call her and tell her that.

The kids also discovered that much of the fridge's contents had grown moldy and gone bad. I suppose that I may prepare too large of dishes now that Gerry isn't around to pack a lunch and eat the leftovers. I feel like I'm eating less as well. There's a tuna sandwich on the counter, and I only took a couple of bites out of it. What a bizarre dish to serve myself for breakfast. Why didn't I have a piece of fruit or something? My tea's also ice cold. What a shame to waste a good cup of tea.

Mary said that she'd get Will to clean out the fridge for me. She seemed to think that it was worse than it was. I suppose that she pointed out that all the milk had gone bad, the cheese was green, and all of the dinners in the plastics had caterpillar fuzz on them. I don't eat a huge variety of things, most of it I still buy out of habit for when Gerry wakes up. Imagine the red he'd have on his face if I didn't have the fixings for a lovely lasagne or beef dip when he came home starving from the hospital. I'd feel like a total nincompoop. I wouldn't want to let the hungry man down. He's such a beast when he's famished.

I should re-heat the tea.

There's already a moldy teacup full of what looks like lemon zinger inside the microwave.

June 5th

I spoke to Franny on the phone today. She said that she's already pregnant. That's quite big news, and I'm not sure why she never told me before. Mary says that she had in fact told me, but I think I'd remember something as significant as having another grandbaby. I smiled and simply agreed with Mary as though that were the case. Franny acted strange when I asked her about the father of the child. I didn't get a straight answer beyond Fran saying that I'd already been told that there was no father. How on earth does that happen? I smiled and agreed again.

Mary took me to the bank and they tried to show me how to do my banking from home on the computer. Talk about teaching an old dog new tricks. In one ear and right quick out of the other. I couldn't follow, these technologies are too advanced. I told them that I didn't even have an e-mail account. Everyone I want to speak with has a telephone, or I see them at the lake or the market. My social circle is nowhere near big enough to force me into learning yet another method of communication. I don't need to do everything quickly. I like taking my time, Gerry taught me that. There's no need to rush anything, just sit back and enjoy. I never quite liked fishing though, that moved much too slowly, even for me. Gerry's must be a very intelligent man, to have so many things on his mind. I wonder what he's thinking, right now, in his dream world. I hope he's having lovely thoughts about the way we used to do stuff. Things like dinner. That was probably my favourite part of the day. I remember we used to have dinner and sometimes do other things. I don't remember the exact events, but I remember him being there. And the kids. He was always there. Him and our children. I love my family. Mary took me to the bank and did my banking for me, but said that I should learn how to use the internet to pay bills online. I told her that it was a lost cause because I'm too darned old to be learning new dog tricks.

Will came by with his new squeeze and took two big garbage bags of expired food from the fridge and cupboards. I've never seen them so bare. I made a list of what they threw away. He asked me if I really needed all of that stuff. He said that I looked skinny. Now, what mother doesn't love to hear that? I said of course, because when his father comes home we'll have big dinner, so I'm saving myself for that. I need to have turkey and ham and I love roast beef. He said that Mary had told him about the power of attorney thing, and that they didn't know if Dad was coming home. I snapped a bit, and apologized after. Of course, their father's coming home. He always comes home after a long day of work, and of course, he'll come home after a long day of dreaming. Don't be foolish. That's when I snapped, and then apologized to him and the girl.

At the bank, Mary talked about putting her name on my bank account. I don't know why she'd want that. Besides paying my bills, I don't want the kids to know what their inheritance might look like one day. I'm sure she can check it out somehow, but it's private. I might have snapped at her at the bank, but I don't know how else to talk to her. She and Will are talking to me like a bloody child. Lovely dears that they are, they shouldn't speak to their mother like an imbecile. I had half a mind to tell her that then and there. I caught my cool, however. I remembered that everyone was so nice and lovely. They tried to show me how to do the bank stuff on our home computer, but I told them I didn't even know if I had internet. Mary was showing me how to pay the bills, so I guess that I'll have to go in and do it.

June 30th

The lights went out and I found this journal again while looking for candles. What an on again, off again relationship it is that we have. I called Mary and she said that I must have forgotten to bring the hydro bill to the bank with me. I told her hydro was short for water, so that didn't make any sense. She asked me how much it was, and then said that it was very expensive. She said that I should remember to shut all the lights off and make sure that the oven is off, too. I told her that I'm not a damned fool, though the element was burning red when I looked at it, so maybe she's not wrong. I sure hope that her kids don't turn into such bossy people. No, I don't mean that. Their mother has almost raised them by herself. No, their father is very much in the picture.

She's a good lady and has lovely children.

I don't want to burn the house down by accident, of course. There are so many memories in frames, and on the walls and tables. I don't know what I'd do if I lost my photo album and all the keepsakes strewn around the house. I'm actually so used to looking at them, sometimes I lose track of what I have.

I'm finding my current situation quite hilarious. I even laughed out loud. I'm sitting here writing by candlelight, just like my grandmother used to do. Her family was a bunch of poor farmers; they didn't have electricity. They didn't have much medicine either... or much of anything. What a band of survivors, living and working by the hours of the sun. We're such a comfortable lot. That's what my mother always said. We should be thankful for our comfort, because we don't have to toil in the soil like our ancestors; working to live and living only to work. The young ones will never have to go through the same things as our grandmothers, our mothers, or even ourselves.

It seems like the candlelight's really bringing out the philosopher in me!

I should eat. I'm not hungry. I must have had a big lunch. I find it difficult to remember to eat these days. I have a meeting with the doctors coming up. I can't see the calendar from here, but they should be able to help me figure out a schedule with all this forgetfulness I'm having. Old age... it's true what they say, you start to get rusty. I feel okay physically, but I will say that I'm having a hard time concentrating and that things are slipping my mind at a much quicker rate. I'll have to bring that up with the doctors when I see them.

Lucky it's summer, or I'd catch a nasty cold. I hope that the lights come back on soon.

July 7th

Let me see. I had something interesting to write, but I can't quite put my finger on it.

The 4th of July was spent at the lake, as usual. There were far less of my friends around than before. That was sad. So many people have passed in the last couple of years that I've lost count of the people that had given this earth up. I almost hate being one of the younger ones there. They always call me the young one, or something about how young I am compared to them. I can't quite remember. One or two of them said it this weekend, and it sounded familiar.

Everyone asked me how Gerry was doing. I told them that he was doing fine, just resting. Mary and Will were a little shocked, and said that we still needed to talk about their father. I said that we were talking about him, and that he was resting. That's that. Mary's kids are with Lloyd in California, so she's been working more. She looks healthy. Will brought a girl around. I can't remember her name, but she seemed lovely. I asked her if she was from Mexico, but she said Cuba. Imagine that! She said that we'd met before, but I said that I'd never met anyone from Cuba, and that life must be hard there. Our family has an ancestry of working hard on the farm. They made almost no money and had to work to live. She said that Cuba wasn't like that, but yes, life was much more difficult there than it is here. I said that the fruit was probably mighty delicious, and she said that it was. Good for Will.

They told me that Fran's pregnant. Can you believe that? My littlest child, lovely little Franny, is pregnant in the big apple. I sure hope that she brings the baby down some time after it's born. I bet it will be a lovely child.

The doctors told me that I'm getting sick. I asked if I was getting sick the same way as Gerry, and they said that my illness was different. I don't want to write it down because I don't want to read it, but they said that it has to do with my memory. I suppose that it's not just getting old that makes your memory

stop working as well as it used to. They told me not to be scared and I wasn't. I don't think that I'll forget things like they say I will. But, the doctor, a nice man, wonderful to see more of us making it to the big time, said that this little beeper would remind me about eating. He said that I looked skinny, and I thanked him. He insisted that it wasn't a compliment, and that he wouldn't want me to waste away. I told him that I had a daughter his age and that they might really hit it off. Mary reminded me that Fran lived out in New York and was expecting a child, but a mother can dream. I told him if I were several decades younger, he'd have to watch out. He laughed. What a lovely smile and beautiful teeth. He also mentioned something about a power of attorney. I don't know why everyone's bringing up all this legal talk, but we'll talk about it more when the time is right.

Upon leaving, we visited Gerry's room. I almost forgot. Can you imagine? We cleaned up a lot of dead flower petals and I held his hand. It felt smaller than I remember. He still has his big, wideset knuckles, but the skin around them felt rubbery. He looked like he'd lost weight, too. They never told me that about old age. I guess he's been sleeping for a while.

It made me sad to look at him. Not only because of what Mary was saying, but because I couldn't feel the memories play behind my closed eyes like a film projector, like they should. I felt a strong connection and deep love when I held his hand, when I sobbed and kissed his head. But, a lot of the times that we shared seemed faded, like a memory trying to have its own memory. Mary kept insisting that the coma would never lift and that we should talk about moving on. Moving on from her father. My husband. The thought seemed so cold, and I told her that. She said that it'd been months already. It could be years, and I still wouldn't want anything to happen to him. He might wake up cold and hungry, and has to know that he has a safe, warm place with lots of his favourite dishes waiting for him.

We both broke down. We were crying in front of Gerry. He would've told us to smarten up, or said something funny if he'd woken up at that moment. I'm sure of it. I really wish he'd wake up so we could make new memories to replace the ones that are slipping away.

July 22nd

This wretched beeper is annoying me. It rings and rings, and I'm not even hungry.

I know that I started this entry off poorly, but I'm in a bad mood today. Mary and Will took me to a lawyer's office and said that I had to sign a piece of paper that lets them control my finances. They talked to me like a child again. I hate that. I can't remember the lawyer's name, but she seemed like she was trying to be nice. How nice can you be when two of the people that you raised from diapers are trying to take your liberty away from you? I can't stay mad at them, though. I've been getting worked up so quickly lately. They mean the best. They must, or they wouldn't push so hard. I know that I raised children who mean well and would never try to hurt their father or myself.

I signed on the condition that they never pull the plug on Gerald. One of my friends, I can't remember her name right now, but she had to do it to her husband, and it was the most awful thing to hear about. Maybe it's necessary sometimes, but I don't think I'm strong enough. Anyways, I don't want to think about that anymore.

The plus side of what the lawyer and the kids cooked up is that I won't forget to pay any more bills. They had some other ideas about having all my meals and groceries delivered to me, and using a special bus if and when I want to get around. It would be safer and save me money, they said. I don't think I have the stomach for traveling these days. Everything looks so different. My surroundings are familiar, but I get

this ghost-like feeling... even when I walk around the block; places I've been a million times before. I'm like a wobbling wheel rolling down the sidewalk without much control. I don't think that this feeling is normal. Unnatural is the closest word I can think of, and it took me a while to come up with it while biting on this pencil's eraser. The city, even my own neighbourhood, somehow feel unnatural, even though it's been my home for as long as I can remember. What a curious thing to say. As long as I can remember. Who knows how long that's been, at this point. How depressing.

August 18th

I had to remind myself what the purpose of this book was. I guess I've been a bad student for the last while, neglecting my journal. Woe is me and my journal.

It looks like I was feeling down the last time I wrote. I can say that I'm still feeling down. My memory isn't what it used to be, and I'm ready to admit that. My old sharpness is only here in little bits, which makes me sad. I spoke to my grandchildren on the phone recently, and Mary had to remind me of their names. I've gone to some meetings for people having the same issues, but I can't remember a single name. One day, I forgot what address to tell the bus driver. It was embarrassing. I remember that!

Everything's slipping out of my hands. I don't know what to do. Everything feels dark. I feel alone. I feel lost without Gerry. I'm half glad that he doesn't have to see me like this, but I want to be with him again before he falls away from me completely. I have to struggle to picture his laugh. I can see it in some of these pictures, but then I turn my head away, and I see nothing. I feel it, but I can't see it. I know it's there, but I can't find it.

My mind's like a dark room. I have a flashlight, but the battery's very weak. Sometimes, the battery sits correctly and I can see very real things for short periods of time. The rest is made up of patches of soft light and cruel darkness.

Men have been coming in and out of the house. They've been putting my things in boxes, sometimes with Mary, sometimes with Will. I often forget why these men come into my house, especially after I nap, and I call the cops. They came once, and Will had to leave work to straighten things out. He got awfully hot and cursed his sister Fran for some reason. He said that she picked a bad time to be pregnant. What a way to find out!

When I go to see Gerry, I don't want to leave him. I want to have a bed beside him. I don't want to blink, because I'm scared that I'll forget him the moment my eyes close. What's happening? What if I don't even realise that I'm forgetting things soon? What happens when this gets worse? What do we have, if not our memories? They're our most private and privileged possessions. They're better hidden than a shoebox tucked away in the attic. They're the paintbrushes that make our portraits. Mine are fading so fast. My picture is hollow inside of its frame. The colours have run and made a mess on the floor.

They say that I have to leave this house. I don't want to. It's our family home. Gerry and I bought this house so many years ago. I can't remember what year. I'm having the most trouble with dates. Dates and numbers.

That damnable beeping is going off again. I should just throw the stupid thing away, I'm not even hungry.

I don't want to be a burden on any of my children. I don't want to be angry, and have them be resentful because of my anger.

September

It's hard to say how long I've been in this hospital home for. There are a lot of nurses and doctors and people that make us eat, even when we're not the least bit hungry. There are lots of nice people here, too. Who knows what their names are, but they seem nice. Some of the people are all-season grumps, but a few bad apples don't spoil the punch.

A nurse found this book. The really nice one. I can't remember her name, but she's lovely. She found it and said that it was my journal. I read it. It's nice. It's also very sad.

I was at a funeral and the man in the casket was a very handsome man. I looked at him, and he looked like a very lovely, soft, sweet-natured man. I guess I must not have recognized him, because he looked so different from the pictures. My poor Gerry. I guess he was never going to wake up. He must've been so tired from a life of working and providing for his family. God bless him. I'm sure he's awake and building things with the clouds. I miss him when I think about him. I wish that I thought about him more, but it hurts, every time. I cry for his loss, and I cry because I only really remember him when I see photos. Some days I look at pictures and can't even recognize him. I start crying and crying, and it only makes sense after a while. But each time, I feel that something's lost. Something's lost and can't be gotten back.

Fran was there. Her belly was as big as Buddha's. She looked like a tomato. I don't know who her husband was, but he seemed like a nice doctor.

Mary's kids are so old. Why do kids grow up so fast? I didn't recognize them. She and Lloyd looked lovely together. There's so much love, even after all these years.

Will said that he was getting married. I'd never met the woman. I can't remember her name, but she looked South American or possibly Middle Eastern. She was quiet and nice.

They're calling us for exercise, but I'll try to remember to write in this book more often.

Christmas Day

I really enjoy this book.

The lady who wrote it was certainly a lovely lady.

She had a very nice husband who she really seemed to love. She had a whole big family that she loved, and lived a wonderful life. I wish that I knew her. But, you never get to meet the authors, I guess.

It really is a lovely book; other people should read it. It's so hard to find books with relatable main characters, especially for us older folk.

Today, I'm spending the day with some very nice people.

There's a woman with two noisy kids, but they seem very affectionate and are showing me all these things they made at their school.

There's a man with his fiancée. They both seem nice. They said that they're both in school to be paramedics!

There's another lady with a little baby girl. Everyone said that the baby girl and I have the same name, Elizabeth. Don't we both have beautiful, lovely names?

They all miss a man named Gerry, and another one called Gerald. They showed me pictures of him with a beautiful woman. Old and young. They said that the couple had gone through a lot and that they loved them both. They said that their lives wouldn't have been the same with other parents. How nice is it that these kids love their parents so much? I bet their parents love them more than anything in the whole world. What a magical day. I hope these people live long, healthy lives and that their parents do, too.

When I look at the pictures of the man, my heart feels like breaking and tears fall from my eyes. He looks like a lovely, lovely man. If I were younger, I would like to ask him for a date.

Now, they're telling me that we have to go back to the home. An adventure, how lovely.