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TIMELESS

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TIMELESS

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TIMELESS

Diane Roberts Stoler

Dedicated to:

Maureen Schleicher

June 28, 1948 - May 8, 1990

Chapter 1

“Dr. Cauldwell, sorry to interrupt,” said Caroline poking her head around the Dean’s oak door. “I know you didn’t want to be disturbed while you’re writing the convocation speech. However, your husband’s on the phone and needs to speak with you.”

“Thank you, Caroline.”

As Laura was about to pick up the phone receiver, she glanced at the photo on her desk of herself and her husband, a strikingly handsome man with distinct Brahmin Yankee features. He had an angular face, straight narrow nose, thin lips and a perfect athletic physique. His hair was slightly darker than Laura’s, more of a sandy color, and was always impeccably cut.

Studying the picture, she said in a soft whisper, “Everyone says we are the perfect couple...Dr. Arthur B. Cauldwell. No one dares call you Art. You surely have come a long way in the past twenty years...Chief of Neurology at the medical school; international fame; and recognition in your field of neurophysiology. I guess you were definitely the most proper and safe person for me to marry...reserved, accommodating and highly intellectual. When we first met, you were so quiet and reserved, yet outwardly romantic.”

Then remembering Arthur was on hold, Laura sighed, and with no further thought, picked up the receiver. “Yes, Arthur, I understand. No, I can’t talk now; have to be at the convocation. Thanks for letting me know you’ll be home late. Bye.”

Laura gazed down at her wedding ring and began turning it. “Why is it I’m always so abrupt with Arthur. He used to be so caring...now he’s so busy making a name for himself, that he has little time for me or our

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children. He's rarely home...he's either at the university or a conference. I can't remember a time when he joined me at a school play or helped with the children's academics. I feel like a single parent. Perhaps this is good...he never interferes with how I raise our children. We surely have no conflicts in that area. In fact, we have no conflicts in our marriage. It is, as some say, the 'perfect' marriage. What is it? Why do I need to push him away?

"Can't go there now. I have a speech to give. Where are my notes?"

Attempting to write her speech again, a bird chirped near by...calling to its mate.

The sound of the bird became louder, as a warm summer breeze rustled through the grassy meadow high in the Nashoba Valley where Laura stood gazing out at the patchwork of oaks, paper birches, and sugar maples against the contrasting texture of wolf pines. In the distance she could see her home nestled on a gentle slope in Harvard, Massachusetts. Enjoying the timelessness of the moment, Laura's thoughts were abruptly ended by the sound of her great-grandfather's voice.

"Ready to go home?" asked the old man in his clipped Yankee accent. Laura turned and squinted at the towering shadow of a man standing near her. "Just another moment," beseeched the seven-year-old child. "It is so pretty from here."

Looking at the valley, Amos said, "It sure is." Then he pointed to the tallest tree in the forest near the homestead.

"Young-un, look yonder at the old wolf pine."

"I see it."

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“Did you know how that came to be?”

“No.”

“Well, this forest was once all farmland.” As he spoke, he waved his enormous arms in broad gestures around his body. “Then, the forest started at the edge. The first trees were the wolf pines. Their wood is good for nothing, so no one ever cuts ‘em down. They start, as this one did, a mere twig. Then a pine weevil-”

“What’s that?”

“It’s a little critter that enters into its bark, causing it to form another twig. This goes on and on as the tree grows, causing more and more twigs and limbs to grow, making it easy to climb all the way to the top.”

She looked up at him and smiled. “I love climbing trees, especially that one.”

Amos’s eyes twinkled as a gentle smile spread across his aged face.

“I know you do, Daisy.”

For several moments the pair stood looking out at the valley. Then Amos reached out his strong calloused hand and gently took Laura’s small hand in his.

“Time to go home. I still have chores to do before supper.”

Together, hand-in-hand, they crossed the meadow down to the paved road that led to the family homestead.

At the end of a long gravel driveway, Laura caught sight of the two-story New England farmhouse with its white cedar clapboards, fieldstone center chimney, steep pitched red cedar roof and black

wooden shutters trimming the small, hand-blown windows. In a grassy area beside the house stood an old majestic hickory. Historians recorded it as the oldest tree in the valley. Across from the house stood a large barn.

Laura ran down the driveway, kicking up a fine cloud of dust.

“Look grandpa, see the dust!”

Amos smiled warmly. “I see, child. I see.”

Amos noticed an empty spot where the old Ford pickup was usually parked near the barn. He looked around the open area and called out.

“Luke? Tom?”

The farm yard was silent, except for the clucking of the chickens. Amos called out again as Laura walked over to the house and pushed open the screen door. It creaked as she entered the familiar kitchen with its floor of wide oak boards.

“Hello, is anyone home?”

Laura heard no response. Instead she was greeted with the mixed scent of new-blossomed honeysuckle and the aroma from the morning breakfast still lingered in the air. Laura looked around and saw the sun’s waning rays gently streaming through the kitchen window flooding the room with a crimson hue. She walked over to the open window and watched as the dazzling, fire-red sun lazily disappeared over the meadow below.

“Anyone home?”

Suddenly, a tail-wagging, young, muscular dog bounded excitedly into the room.

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“Rusty! Where have you been?” Bending down, Laura hugged the massive dog, who in turn licked her face. She ran her fingers lovingly through his thick, reddish, shaggy coat and rubbed his neck vigorously.

“Is anyone home?” she called again.

Her voice echoed in the silence. She heard only the sound of the curtain against the open window. Bewildered, she went to the screen door and called out, “Grandpa...Grandpa!”

“Yes, young-un.”

“Where is everyone? Grandma is not in the house.”

“I guess they all went to town to get some feed and groceries. I’m sure they’ll be back soon. Your grandma always has supper on time.”

“Grandpa...can Rusty and I go out to the woods? I want to see the sunset from the old pine.”

“Fine with me, but be back as soon as it sets. You know how your grandma gets when you’re late.”

“I promise.” She turned to Rusty.

“Come on, boy, let’s go!”

The two rushed out the screen door. It slammed shut with such force the sound reverberated through the kitchen. Together they ran over the rolling meadow, through the apple and peach orchard, and into the dense woods encompassing the thirty-six-acre farm. Once in the woods, they followed the fern-lined, moss-covered path leading to her special tree, the old wolf pine that was the tallest tree in the forest.

Rusty lay down next to the wolf pine as Laura nimbly ascended the familiar tree. At its uppermost limbs, she found a comfortable spot and

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looked out over the surrounding area and the vast, rolling mountain range. Tonight the sky was exceptionally clear. Before her was Mount Wachusett with its smooth bald top, scarred by deep-cut ski trails through its tall, slender pines. In contrast was Mount Monadnock in Southern New Hampshire, some fifty miles away, with its steep rocky cliffs. The small child watched motionless as the crimson light faded to a dim orange glow beyond the horizon.

In the twilight, Laura's eyes were diverted to the south and Cape Cod. Tears welled as she spoke in a choked whisper, "I miss you, Mommy. I miss you too, Daddy. I wish we could play on the sandy beach again. We used to have so much fun. Then you went to Heaven." As she spoke, rapid images of the auto accident flooded her mind.

Laura quickly dismissed those thoughts and continued speaking to her dead parents. "Mommy, since you left, Grandma doesn't love me anymore. She's always screaming at me. Grandpa never says anything. Only Great-grandfather Amos and Rusty love me. I miss you so much."

She wiped the tears from her face. "I wish you were here. You used to holler at Grandma when she made me fetch those eggs. Grandma makes me go get them, even on really hot days. I hate those smelly chickens. They stink!

"Amos is kind to me and tells me a lot of special things. I love looking into his deep blue eyes. I'd better go now. It's getting dark and Grandma hates when I'm late for supper, but you know that. Mommy, when I sit so close to Heaven, do you hear me? I sure hope so."

As darkness enfolded her, the child climbed down the tree. At its base, Rusty lay patiently waiting for her.

"Rusty, I wish you could come up the tree with me. It is so pretty up there. I was talking to Mommy. Did I ever tell you how Mommy and Daddy died? Come on, boy. We gotta go home now, before it gets dark. I don't want Grandma to start yelling. I'll tell you about it on the way.

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“It happened two years ago, when I was five years old. It was my birthday. We were driving to the Summer House on the Cape to have my party there. Rusty, I still sometimes wake up at night crying.

“I remember it like yesterday. It was a warm summer evening and the car windows were down. The wind was blowing against my face and through my hair. Mommy and Daddy were talking in the front seat. They told me not to keep my head out the window. Suddenly, a car was coming down the road at us. I remember their faces. They scared me...a man, a woman and a little girl, like me. Then glass was breaking everywhere.

“The sound was awful. I heard Mommy screaming and loud crashing noises. The sounds hurt my ears. When I close my eyes at night, I can still see those faces and their big eyes staring at me.

“I don’t remember anything after that. Amos told me that Mommy, Daddy and the three people in the other car went to Heaven. He said I was saved because my door opened and I was thrown out.

“Grandpa Amos is very special to me. So are you,” said the child as she hugged the attentive dog. He licked her face in response. Hugging Rusty, Laura noticed a patch of wild daisies.

“Rusty, look at the pretty daisies. Amos calls me Daisy lots of times cause he says I’m as pretty as a flower. Did I ever tell you how Amos built the kitchen table? I remember watching his large arms swing that big ax when he cut down the huge oak tree that stood by the house.

“Did you know that he built our house and everything in it? That’s right. You know the big fireplace. He built that...”

Laura’s train of thought was immediately broken when she heard Caroline’s familiar voice calling her name. Catapulted through time

and space, Laura suddenly became aware of her secretary standing in the open doorway of her university office. Caroline was an attractive woman in her fifties, her statuesque figure always attired in a Brooks Brothers suit.

“Caroline, what did you say?”

“Dr. Cauldwell, are you aware of the time?” asked Caroline in her precise southern accent. “You asked me to let you know when it was six o’clock. Are you all right?”

Seeing Caroline’s concerned expression, Laura warmly responded, “I’m fine.”

“But do you realize that it is 6:15? The convocation starts at seven.”

Laura quickly put on her glasses and glanced at her desk clock.

“Where are my cap and gown?”

“I hung the robe in your closet earlier, so it wouldn’t wrinkle. The cap is on the closet floor.”

“Thank you, Caroline. I don’t know what I would do without you.”

“My pleasure. Will there be anything else, Dr. Cauldwell?”

“No. Thank you for letting me know about the time.”

Laura watched as Caroline closed the old oak door behind her.

“I must’ve been what Grandma would call...‘drift’n again’...Can’t now...need to get focused, I have a speech to give.”

Laura looked frantically on her desk, and then found her speech for the convocation ceremony. While gathering the necessary papers,

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Laura's thoughts returned to her drift'n and her childhood: "I could never understand why Grandma would get so upset. I can still hear her snarly voice, 'Child, you been drift'n again, off in your own world. I just don't know what's wrong with you.'

"It never bothered me or Amos. In fact, on many occasions, I recall Amos intervening on my behalf. I can picture his eyebrows furrowing as he sternly looked at Grandma and commanded, 'Woman, leave the child alone. She's not botherin' anyone.' Then he'd look at me with such a kind expression and with a soothing voice, and say, 'It's all right, Daisy, you never mind her. Nothing's wrong with you.'

"To me, I never saw it as a problem, except when I have to be on time, like today." Absorbed in her thoughts, Laura suddenly noticed the clock again. "It's 6:30," she said in exasperation. "I'll be late for the Graduate School Convocation! Just once I would love to be late, but how could I? The **Dean** of Social Sciences is *never* late." Removing her glasses, she rushed to freshen up for the ceremony.

Looking at her reflection in the office mirror, Laura precisely touched up her makeup. There, before her, was a strikingly beautiful woman with flawless skin, high forehead and cheek bones, a sharp angular jaw, clear blue eyes and flaxen hair.

"No one would think the granddaughter of a chicken farmer would have graduated from Harvard and become Dean at the University of Chicago!"

Looking back at the clock, Laura quickly, yet meticulously, put on her robe and hood, combed her hair and applied her lipstick. Pleased with her image in the mirror, she picked up the papers and program on her desk and left for Rockefeller Memorial Chapel. As usual, she was on time.

Chapter 5

Laura left Doug's outer office feeling infuriated and muttering to herself.

"That sure was a waste of time!"

Wondering how much time had actually elapsed since she entered Doug's office, Laura glanced at her watch. "Five hours!" she exclaimed aloud. Lowering her voice, she said, "This is all ridiculous. I flew from Chicago to Boston for this!! I can't believe I've agreed to meeting with Dr...what's her name. Five hours! I can't believe it. Oh, what the hell's another hour," thought Laura with resignation. "I know there's nothing wrong with me."

Laura looked at the piece of paper Doug gave her. Dr. Smith's office was on the third floor. Frustrated and exhausted, Laura walked down the hall to the bank of elevators and pushed the up button.

Dr. Smith's office was much more sparse than Doug's had been. Laura was greeted by a receptionist, who told her to fill out the required paperwork, as she had done in Doug's office.

While filling out the forms, Laura noticed the diplomas that lined the waiting room walls. Laura wished she had the time to look up the credentials of the woman she was meeting. "But what's one visit? Also, Doug would not have recommended Dr. Smith if she were not well qualified." Laura was about to read over some of the diplomas when the receptionist buzzed the inner office and within seconds, the office door opened.

Seeing Dr. Smith, Laura eyes widened and a shiver ran through her entire body. Before her, she saw herself, yet not. Laura could clearly see the physical difference between them. Dr. Smith's appearance was

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in direct contrast to her own fair-haired, fine featured Yankee looks: a woman short in stature, with broad facial features, wide lips and short, curly, salt and pepper hair, whose brown-black eyes seemed to pierce into every fiber of Laura's being.

However, the feeling was an emotional sameness - a timelessness - an endless connectedness she had long forgotten. It was clearly felt as if she were a part of Dr. Smith.

Upon their meeting, Laura realized that Dr. Smith had a similar reaction, by the astonished look on her face and the audible gasp. For several seconds neither spoke; Laura could see Dr. Smith struggle to regain her composure.

Dr. Smith worked moisture back into her mouth as she peered at Laura. "This is odd. I've never met this woman before, yet I feel a bonding, a kinship I've never known with any other patient. Hmm, I wonder what kind of countertransference this is?"

Regaining her composure, Dr. Smith broke the silence and introduced herself. "I'm...Dr. Smith...you must be Dr. Cauldwell. Please come **in**," she said in a soft, soothing voice.

Hearing Dr. Smith's speech pattern and the obvious mispronunciation of her last name, Laura pondered about Dr. Smith's accent. "It sounds like a New Yorker with a foreign accent," thought Laura. "I still can't believe I'm seeing a shrink. Oh well," she sighed in exasperation. "What's another hour? I've wasted the rest of the day already."

Laura entered Dr. Smith's office, which was in the older part of the hospital. On one side of the room two large windows overlooked the Charles River. The remaining walls were filled with books. Journals were scattered throughout, and the desk was covered with papers. Amid this disarray, in one area of the room was a very orderly arrangement of furniture with four comfortable looking chairs, a Carolina rocker, and

an analyst's couch and chair. Laura noticed an absence of family photos. This was a direct contrast to Doug's inner office where his family was displayed everywhere.

Dr. Smith sat in the rocking chair and gestured with a wave of her arm to the remaining chairs, "Please...make yourself comfortable." Sitting back, Dr. Smith observed Laura looking around, then choosing the overstuffed chair directly across from her. She noticed that Laura sat rigidly at the edge of her seat staring intensely at her instead of sitting back comfortably in the chair.

Dr. Smith was about to speak, when Laura said, "Well, I'm **sure** Doug has told **you** everything about me."

"Not really...why don't you tell me about yourself and why you're here."

Laura's back arched as she moved closer to the edge of her chair. In a firm tone, she said, "Dr. Smith, I think this session is a waste of time. There is nothing wrong with me."

"Then why are you here?" said Dr. Smith calmly.

"I'm here because my husband, a neurologist, was concerned that my occasional episodes of daydreaming and drifting might be seizures or executive burnout. It doesn't bother me or interfere with my life and I totally disagree with him. I never felt anything was wrong with me. However, I do value his opinion and thought it wise to check it out. After five long hours with Doug, he confirmed my belief that I do not have any neurological problem. In fact, he believed I had no signs of burnout, but he wasn't absolutely sure. He said he wasn't an expert on the subject of childhood trauma, but that was your expertise. I do respect Doug and his recommendation to see you. So, here I am. I don't think I'm burned out, and I feel I've coped with my childhood. Personally, I think coming here is entirely a waste of time! I'm fine!

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However, if it's essential that I tell you my entire life story, then, so be it."

In a comforting voice, Dr. Smith said, "Dr. Cauldwell, I can appreciate how you feel. You didn't expect to be sitting in my office when you made your appointment with Dr. Thomas. It's clear from his referral that he believed I could possibly help determine if your symptoms are from childhood trauma or executive burnout. Would you allow me the opportunity, as you did with him, to evaluate whether you have a problem or not?"

That's fine with me. I wouldn't be here if I didn't want a definitive answer. I just hope this evaluation can be done in one session. As you said, I didn't plan on being here. I have plans for the weekend and have return tickets to Chicago on Sunday."

"I believe I can evaluate your needs if you fill me in on your life."

"Okay. Where would you like me to start?"

Dr. Smith picked up a pen and pad of paper, then said, "Please tell me about yourself."

"I was born in Harvard, Mass. Do you know where that is?"

"Yes, isn't it near Concord?"

"That's right. My father's parents were prominent Bostonians. My father was Chester Atwell II. He never used his formal name with my mother or his friends. They called him Chet. He went to Phillips Andover Academy and later to Harvard. He was the maverick in the family. As soon as it was possible, he followed his dream of having his own farm. He founded a dairy farm in Harvard and, after several years, modernized dairy farming. His methods are still in use today."

"You sound like you're very proud of your father."

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“Yes, I am. To go on with my life, it was in Harvard that my father met my mother.

“My mother had finished high school and was going to a local college at the time they met. It was love at first sight, I’ve been told. As the story goes, my father’s parents, the Atwells, were furious when my father announced his engagement to my mother, a chicken farmer’s daughter. They even threatened to disown my father, but he was able to charm his parents and persuade them to accept my mother graciously into the family.

“My mother, Anne Adams Atwell, was the daughter of Nellie Tyler and Thomas Adams. I was told she belonged to the Daughters of the American Revolution. What I recall of her was that she was prim, statuesque and stunning to look at. People always raved about my mother’s radiant inner beauty. I can still see her flashing eyes and how they seemed to have an inner glow whenever she looked at me.”

“You said, ‘what you recalled.’ Is she still alive?”

“No. My parents died in an auto accident when I was five.”

“Do you know how it happened?”

“Yes.”

“Would you please tell me about it?”

Reluctantly, Laura, with halting speech said, “It was my fifth birthday. My parents and I were going to celebrate my birthday at the Summer House.”

“What is that?” questioned Dr. Smith.

“Oh that’s what my family called our summer home on Cape Cod. It’s on a point in West Falmouth. My father bought it for my mother as

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an anniversary present. He wanted it to be their home away from home, since she did give up her house on the dairy farm to move in with my grandparents.”

Dr. Smith looked up from her writing to say, “Please continue about your trip to the Cape.”

“We were driving down to the Cape when there was a head-on collision. My parents, who were in the front seat, were killed instantly. I was sitting in the back seat and I was thrown clear from the car when the rear door flew open. I suffered a mild concussion and only minor injuries to my face and legs.”

Feeling she was about to cry, Laura paused and looked out the window at the boats on the Charles River.

“Dr. Cauldwell...Dr. Cauldwell?”

“Yes. Were you asking me a question?”

“How did you feel about losing your parents at such a young age?”

With her composure regained, Laura said in an emphatic tone, “I felt awful. I loved my parents very much. I remember how my father’s sandy blond hair always looked wind-blown. In contrast, my mother’s long tresses were always pulled back tightly, except when we would run on the beach and then they would flow freely. My fondest memories are of the Summer House, of running and splashing through the waves with my parents there. I always felt I was the apple of their eye.”

Laura’s voice became hoarse as she felt a tightening in her throat. She struggled to contain her emotions as she recalled these images of her family and her feelings of loss.

“For years I had nightmares about the accident. It seems almost every night, from the time of the accident until late in my teens, I would wake up in the middle of the night drenched in sweat and screaming. Often I would have recurring images of the distorted gaping mouths and bulging wide eyes of the man and woman in the other car just before the collision.

“One thing is very strange. In my nightmares, I never see the child who was in the other car.”

“Would you please explain what you mean? I don’t understand,” said Dr. Smith.

Laura took in a deep breath, then paused. Dr. Smith could see Laura’s body stiffen even more as she spoke in a halted manner.

“Just before the crash, I saw a little girl in the car. She seemed to be the same age I was at that time. What’s strange is I don’t see her in my nightmares. My Great-grandfather Amos said she died in the accident. I never thought about it before now, but the little girl is never in my nightmares, only the adult faces and their screams.”

“Dr. Cauldwell, at any time during those years, did you see a therapist?”

“Are you kidding? I was raised a farm girl. Our kind of folk never saw shrinks. As for my father’s parents, it would’ve been a disgrace.”

“Was there anyone who comforted you after your parent’s death?”

“My great-grandfather, Amos.”

“Did you tell him about your nightmares?”

“Yes. I always felt he was there for me. I could tell him anything. We used to spend hours together talking.”

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“Did your daydreaming, or drifting as you call it, start after your parents’ death?”

“No, I remember drift’n, that was my grandmother’s term, ever since I can remember.”

“Which grandmother?”

“My mother’s mother. I know I used to drift long before my parents’ death. In fact, I vividly recall one time, my mother telling my grandmother to stop scolding about my drift’n since it wasn’t bothering anyone else. I truly don’t think their accident has anything to do with my daydreaming or drift’n, if that’s what you’re implying.”

“Yes, I was questioning that. Thank you for clarifying the matter for me. Are you aware of anything that causes or triggers your drifting or daydreaming, such as being upset or tired?”

“I never thought much about my drift’n or what causes it. It’s a part of me. It just happens. It’s unpredictable. So far it’s never seemed to affect my life. As for my daydreams, well...they’re a pleasant escape. They usually are about special times on the farm with Amos. I’m very aware of my daydreaming. It’s not a problem to me, nor has it interfered with my life. My daydreaming hasn’t hurt anyone. I know when I’m doing it. Some people drink or smoke to relax. I daydream. So what?”

“Is drift’n, as you call it, similar to your daydreams?”

“No,” said Laura.

Intrigued by Laura’s one word answer, she decided to explore this topic further.

“Would you please elaborate more about their differences?”

Hesitantly Laura said, “In daydreaming, I’m me, thinking about the past. In drifting, the present me does not exist; instead, I feel I’m actually there at whatever age it is.”

“Very interesting. And you say this doesn’t bother you?”

“That’s right!” said Laura.

“Laura, are there any other situations where you feel more or less detached from your present environment?”

Laura thought intently about the question and its answer. As she did, she recalled an incident in first grade when she revealed that life was endless and how all things were interconnected. Her teacher’s reaction upon hearing this was quick and sharp, “Laura, where did you get such thoughts?” From that day on Laura never again revealed her thoughts with any teacher.

Laura recalled how her classmates would start laughing at her and call her “Loony Head” when she described her ability to feel the energy from rocks or hear the music in the wind. But it was her grandmother’s constant rebuke whenever she would bring up any aspect of this topic, such as how people and plants have different colors around them, that sealed Laura’s lips forever.

Laura learned she could form an emotional wall that protected her from feeling the pain of their criticism. Eventually, Laura was thought of as bright, quiet and polite. She was not about to open up after all these years and tell this complete stranger her thoughts and feelings.

Noticing Laura staring into space, Dr. Smith wasn’t sure if Laura was having one of her daydreaming or drifting episodes or if Laura was avoiding answering her question. Dr. Smith decided to ask. “Laura, were you just drifting or daydreaming?”

“Neither. Why?”

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“Are you aware that you’ve been staring in space for the past few minutes? I wasn’t sure if you were thinking or something else. I was curious.”

“I was just intently thinking about your question. I can’t think of any other situations where I feel more or less detached from my surroundings.”

“Please continue.”

“Talking to my great-grandfather, Amos, made me feel better. Gradually the nightmares diminished and life on the farm and at school was fun. Oh, I didn’t tell you about the farm.”

“You mentioned the dairy farm,” said Dr. Smith. “Is there a different farm?”

“Yes. After I was born my father sold the dairy farm, and we moved in with my mother’s parents and my great-grandfather, Amos, on my grandparents’ chicken farm. It is located in Fruitlands. I was never told the reason for the move.” Laura’s voice cracked, “All I remember is that we were all a happy family until my parents died.”

“Where is Fruitlands and would you please elaborate more about your life on the farm when your parents were alive?”

“Sure, I can see how it may relate to childhood trauma, but I don’t know what this has to do with executive burnout.”

“It does, please continue,” said Dr. Smith.

“All right. The farm is located in the center of Fruitlands, a section of Harvard high in the Nashoba Valley. It originally was the home of the Utopia Society, then later it was called Fruitlands from Amos Bronson Alcott’s experimental transcendental Utopia Society. After

that a Shaker Colony resided there. The view from there is breathtaking.”

“That’s very interesting. I vaguely recall reading about the Utopia Society. I wasn’t aware there was a Shaker Colony here in Massachusetts. Please continue.”

“What I recall about my childhood is warm summer days, picking flowers, mealtime, doing chores and bedtime. One thing, I always felt loved and special. I remember one day when Daddy took me out in the field and let me ride the tractor. He put his arms around me and held me tight. It was loads of fun. Mom and I made a necklace out of the flowers we picked and she put it on my head. Even my grandmother cuddled me and gave me baths, but that quickly stopped after my parents died. Great-grandfather Amos was a wise, caring and loving person. Often we took long walks together. He was a craftsman and clearly an innovator.”

“How so?”

“He designed and constructed the farm house and built all the furniture in it.”

“That is impressive. Please continue.”

“My Grandma Nellie taught me how to cook and Grandpa Tom showed me how to pick the best eggs for selling. Of all the chores on the farm, I hated collecting eggs from the chicken coop, especially on hot summer days. You can’t imagine how it stank. It was Luke who taught me how to milk the cows. I clearly remember one day when he was trying to teach me, and the milk squirted all over the barn. Boy was that funny. Both he and I were dripping with milk.

Dr. Smith interrupted, “That is funny, but who’s Luke?”

TIMELESS

“He was a hired hand. He had his own quarters near the barn. My grandfather hired him as a young teen. I remember my grandpa saying that Luke was an able worker who could do about anything you needed.

“After everyone in my family died, I told the executor of the estate, Mr. Lodge, that Luke could live out his life on the farm since he had no other home. In fact, from Mr. Phillips’, the executor, last report, Luke is still there in Harvard. However, the farm is no longer a chicken farm. We increased the apple orchard to where the farm is now self-supporting as a supplier of apples for local cider mills and wine makers.” Feeling more comfortable, Laura leaned back into the overstuffed chair and for the next half hour continued describing her childhood.

An absorbing spiritual and suspenseful novel that keeps you spellbound.

TIMELESS

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