This is not entirely accurate, though the main (hard to hear) points are direct from Judy. She was finishing breakfast dishes in the kitchen alone with me when she began recalling this, the details of which hit me hard enough to spark a little creative writing. I rearranged the details, and tried to imagine how they bubbled up into coffee-conversation.

Notes are always welcome, particularly on any way to tighten up the introduction.

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The sun was just right this afternoon, Judy thought to herself as she finished up the dishes from a late lunch. The window above the sink looked out onto a modest suburban property. Judy had to squint out over the patio to see her husband of forty-three years, Neil, watering the plants. It was a warm afternoon, the kind you could dress almost any way and still be comfortable.

Glendale was lovely this time of year, it had been raining just last night, and Neil was watering the garden more out of habit than necessity.

The sun almost sparkled across the patio stones, as a gentle breeze rustled a tree nearby and scattered the light. Far below the dance of leaves, on the road, a younger man was walking his dog. Judy recognized him to be a physician that had moved in down the road. Neil was a doctor, too. Though he was long retired, now. This new neighbour was quite a dashing man, smiling as widely as his golden retriever, with blonde hair to match. He was beginning to bald, and was beginning to put on a little weight. Things that came with settling into a new subdivision with a young wife and two daughters in middle school.

Amazing, Judy thought to herself, how markers of age could still bely youth, once you belonged to a more senior generation. Neil and Judy had been living in this neighbourhood since before the young doctor's children were even born, perhaps before the doctor himself was out of diapers.

The young man rounded the corner and was just out of sight as Judy finished up her chore, and turned to dry her hands on the towel hanging from her fridge handle.

A thunderous, mechanical roar rumbled through the window, pulling her attention back outdoors, and her heart into her throat. Judy turned in time to see the hose fall to the lawn, forgotten. Neil was running with the vigor of a much younger man, his pace expedited by urgency, need, or fear. Without seeing his face, Judy couldn’t tell.

Her throat tight with fear, Judy rushed for the door bare foot. Her panic caused her to miss the latch on the screen door on the first try, compounding her anxiety as she chased her husband towards a mounting roar. She recognized the noise as the engine of a powerful car as she came outside. The rolling thunder stopped with a crack, and she ran across the lawn toward the corner Neil had already rounded.

As she reached it, and turned toward the noise, logic left her. There were pieces of a man scattered across the neighbours lawn, and in a panicked instant she recognized them to be her husband, until Neil rushed at her, all in one piece. She didn’t hear him the first two times he spoke.

"Do not go down there," Neil barked at Judy, and forcibly turned her around on this third time repeating his warning, uncertain if his words had made it through to her. He wrapped her in his arms and helped her take the first five steps back to the house, before running back down toward the accident.

Judy wanted to go back to him. Her instincts told her to pull Neil away from this danger, to escape with him. She knew that he would not, though. Helping people was second nature to him, and if there was anything to be done, Neil would do it.

Time blurred as Judy made it back to the kitchen alone. She didn’t remember crossing the lawn, opening the door, or entering her house. She didn’t remember turning the tap back on, preparing to do dishes that were already done. Her mind raced and stood still at once as sirens blared and lights flashed through the neighbourhood before her. Standing before the sink, looking out the window, her strained mind built up, and up, and up. Like the mounting roar of an engine, a cacophony of fear and worry built in her as she looked out the window, time passing slow and fast.

Awareness came back as a lead brick in her stomach. There, pulling up to the corner, was the young man's family, in a red minivan. The lights of emergency vehicles spilled across the intersection it was approaching. Were they going to meet their young doctor? Pick him and their family dog up on the way to soccer practise? Or was he gone too long, and they'd heard the sirens, and left to see if he was okay? Judy couldn’t fathom the reason, but there they were.

When they rounded the corner towards the scene, Judy had to follow. She heard the screams before she'd made it to the bend, the young wife wailed and rallied against neighbours keeping her back while she shrieked her husband's name. Neil was already shuffling the two girls towards Judy.

Both were in tears in response to their mother's anguish, and when they looked around they saw only the dark, despondent looks of their new neighbours. Judy knew she had to be strong for them. For the third time in what felt like just an instant, she was in her kitchen. This time she had two sweet, innocent children with her. Her heart was breaking even as she tried to smile and console them in her arms. In between sobs, an unending chorus of "I want my daddy, I want my daddy, I want my daddy!" echoed through Judy's small home.

It's been three years, now, since the accident. Details about it are an afterthought. The dead man in the Mercedes, who stroked out and put the accelerator to the floor. The dog who was dragged and killed with its friend. The somber medics and rigid police who took the girls from her kitchen. They all fade to gray around the traumas of that day.

The pieces of a man.

The darkness in her husband's face.

The screams of a young family.

For Judy, these things stay stark. And when her mind wanders, alone in the kitchen finishing the dishes, they happen again.