

The background of the cover is a monochromatic blue-toned photograph. It depicts a serene night scene of a lake, possibly a fjord or a large bay, with distant mountains visible on the horizon. The water reflects the light from the moon and some distant lights. In the foreground, the dark silhouettes of evergreen trees frame the left and right sides of the image. A large, bright full moon is positioned in the upper center of the sky, partially obscured by wispy clouds. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

Half Moon, Full Heart

a novel

Gene
Cartwright

Half Moon, Full Heart

And They danced...

Their first time alone, really alone.—

“And they danced. Bathed in the soft glow of a half moon, they danced. David Joe held Jessie Marie as close as he knew how—as close as he dared, and they danced. He held her so close he felt their hearts beating in unison like a lovers’ duet, and they danced. They danced to every song that followed; until the battery in the small transistor radio grew weak, and the melodic sounds of *The Platters* faded. And even after the radio fell silent, and the night grew old, they danced.”

Also by Gene Cartwright

I Never Played Catch With My Father

Coming:

A Family Gathering

The Widowmaker

Quietkill

Half Moon, Full Heart

a novel by

Gene Cartwright

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Dedication

To my late parents, Elmer and Marie Cartwright.

To say fully what they meant to me, and what they taught me and my seven siblings, would require writing another book for that sole purpose. For the moment, let this suffice: My mother taught me to read when I was barely four. My father taught me what to do with what I learned. Both taught us all right from wrong.

There have been, and will be, no parents more loving; more giving; more forgiving; more faithful, nor more devoted to God, each other , their community, and their progeny. I love them, and will miss them the rest of my days. It was and is my honor to be their son.

A Poem

for Bae, my mother.

My Mother's Voice

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She spoke to me in a calming, melodic voice,
though I yet longed for first breath.
Even then, my heart beat to the rhythm of her soul;
It marched to the cadence of her pure spirit;
It flourished in the still comfort of her angelic being.
And I *heard* my mother's voice.

She spoke to me in a quiet and sure voice,
though I had yet to touch her sweet face.
Even then, my heart beat to the rhythm of her soul;
Her blood flowed to the reaches of my own eternity;
Her breath filled me with life everlasting.
And I *heard* my mother's voice.

She spoke to me with a timeless, eternal truth,
though I had scarcely seen first light.
Even then, my heart beat to the rhythm of her pulse;
It soared with the lift of her tireless wings;
It rejoiced in the glow of her guiding light.
And I *heard* my mother's voice.

Know this.

I am the fruit of shared love, brought forth by
unseen, yet unfailing hands that shaped the universe.
I am a solemn song of ceaseless prayer, voiced without end;
an answer bestowed long before the Amen, granting my own
Genesis and even my *Revelation*.

She spoke to me in a thousand tender ways,
though I answered with only needs and wants.
Even then, she gave beyond her own possessions,
with the eternal love and vision of an angel,
without want for merit or mention.
And I *heard* my mother's voice.

And still she speaks, in a voice that fills my being,
though her face now eludes my sight and touch.
Even now, my heart beats to the rhythm of her soul;
It marches to the cadence of her heart song.
And I still hear my mother's voice.
Yes, in deepest dark or brightest light,
I still hear my mother's voice.

And when I am no more, and not even my deepest
footprints remain for young eyes to see,
Even then, hearts will beat to a rhythm they did not compose.
They will march to a cadence not their own.
And they will hear their mother's voice.
Yes, in deepest dark or brightest light,
even they will hear their mother's voice.

—Gene Cartwright

Begin.

David Joe and Jessie Marie live on..

Once upon a time, it was 1955. Eisenhower ('Ike') was President; a stamp cost three cents; gas was twenty-three; Popsicles came two to a package; Elvis was twenty, and against all odds, young David Joe Fallon, Jr. and Jessie Marie Taylor were in love. The End.

And the story may well have ended there, were it not for what happened to those two. It has been said, few younger than twenty or so could possibly know true love.

That may be true for most, but not for Jessie Marie and David Joe, both of whom lived in Rosedale—a small, north-central Texas town—back in the 1950s.

First taken with each other at age nine, these love-struck youngsters would grow to profess a love so deep, in their hearts and minds it transcended life itself.

And despite Cyrus Ecclesiastes Taylor's success in keeping his daughter and David Joe apart, there was never any doubt these two lived and breathed each other. Not much else mattered to them.

Taylor's actions, born of his intense hatred for David Joe's father, only steeled the young lovers' vows to love and cherish each other forever.

Theirs was a love cloaked with an aura of destiny; imbued with an air of inevitability. Most everyone in Rosedale knew that to be fact. What they sacrificed and suffered, to nurture their uncommon love, accounts for their indelible place in the hearts of all who know their story.

And there could only have been one Jessie Marie and David Joe. Townfolk, who were alive then, still speak of them in mythical tones. No true love story can rightly be told without the mention of their names, and the storybook lives they shared.

David Joe and Jessie Marie live on. And nearly fifty years later, the world beyond their part of Texas may never have known of, and been inspired by them, except for events half a country and nearly half a century away, in southern California.

One

Rachel

Monday Morning, September 11, 2000

Real love dies hard, if at all. It struggles against reason; ignores all logic; resists, with every fibre of its being, the dark and painful descent to its demise.

Rachel Marin had always believed this to be infallible truth. It was now her reality. She had greeted the new millennium, still clawing her way up from the basement of her life. Nine months later, jagged steps remained.

Sporting faded jeans, a white, Boston University sweat shirt—her Alma Mater—and white ankle socks, Rachel sat alone on the barren, white-carpeted, living room floor.

With delicate fingers interlaced around knees drawn to her chest, she leaned lightly against the wall behind her. She stared blankly at the Italian-marble fireplace across the room. However, her gaze took her far beyond it—back into her past, and yet forward toward an uncertain future.

Tear tracks lined her unmade face. Her hair, finally auburn again, not blonde as David had always insisted, sought its own contrary course.

Rachel glanced toward the partially open front door; past two Coach suitcases; a clothes bag; a computer bag; two camera bags—one still, one video—and two, nearly identical, tan briefcases. All were lined neatly, side by side.

Everything had been packed, just so. The Apple G4 laptop was in its reinforced bag, as were rewritable CDs, DVDs, zip disks, USB cable. A smaller canvas bag held a high-resolution digital camera; a Palm, and assorted web devices, including a satellite internet uplink.

A third briefcase, this one black and timeworn, held copies of manuscripts and publishers' rejection letters. Rachel kept every one. And there were dozens. "Fuel for my inner fire," she told herself. She knew that writers who dream of being published often struggle to persevere in the face of rejection and self-doubt.

The Sony Hi-8 video camera was secure in its case, along with extra tapes and battery packs. The still camera—a Canon EOS Rebel she purchased on her birthday in '95—had standard and telephoto lenses.

Rachel packed away 48 rolls of color Kodak film—half 200, half 400 speed; 6 rolls of Ilford black and white film; 4 packages of lens paper, and a large can of compressed air.

There was the large, weathered, tan leather case containing almost two hundred still photographs; a sheaf of torn movie tickets; a bundle of old love letters.

And there was more. Dozens of amusement park ticket stubs; numerous luggage tags from memorable trips; a ream of faded notes scribbled on coffee-stained restaurant napkins; scores of Christmas, birthday and even business cards. This was Rachel's life in bits and pieces. Few things were more valuable.

Packing 'her life' away had not been easy. In doing so, Rachel fought past an onslaught of persistent memories she thought she had banished.

There were memories of losing her father; her life with David; long-denied loneliness she often felt being an only child. When the packing was done, she knew it would be a long while before she reopened the old case.

The two large suitcases held only clothing she really needed, plus a few pieces she simply could not live without. All other clothing, accumulated over many years, was donated to the Purple Heart organization in Altadena.

Finally, a vintage, pea-green, US Army Surplus duffel bag was crammed with rolled jeans, folded T-shirts and causal items requiring little or no special care.

Rachel's quaint, three bedroom, white clapboard and brick, South Pasadena house was on Mission Street, only blocks from Fair Oaks Boulevard. It had been her home for nearly ten years. Selling it was traumatic. Leaving it was beyond difficult.

Except for the luggage and the memories, the place was now empty. She once shared the home, on rare occasion, with her husband, David, a Paramount Pictures executive—the man with whom she had expected to spend the rest of her life.

Their larger, more glitzy, Pacific Palisades home never really suited her simple, country-girl tastes. David was gone now, as were the reams of paper maché dreams Rachel once embraced.

She sat stone still, drew several deep breaths, then started to stand. The time had come. The hour; the moment; the second ordained for her departure.

The knowing was unmistakable. A nearly audible voice. A force that nearly yanked her from her place. She rose, lifted a large wicker basket brimming with fresh rose petals, and made her way to the farthestmost room.

Outside, a brilliant southern California sun. Inside, a shower of red rose petals floated down onto a sea of arctic-white carpet.

Rachel's eyes misted, as she drifted from room to room. She moved slowly, sowing fragrant symbols she prayed would yield a harvest of love for newlywed owners of her home. This was once her home, once a sanctuary for boundless dreams and fanciful imaginings. But no more.

For months, Rachel had walked a knife's edge between suicide and rebirth. Her Faustian choice rested between the near certainty of death, and the desperate quest for new life. And she was alone, as alone as she had ever been in her 38 years.

Rachel had not arrived easily at her decision to leave California. The inner struggle leading to the decision had been epic and exhausting. Yet, she knew answers lay far beyond the Golden State's borders. But, where?

Two

The Journey to Here

The White House offer was irresistible.

She was born Rachel L. Loftin, on September 3, 1962, in Rosedale, Texas. The ‘L,’ for Lawrence. It was a tribute to her late father, by her late mother, Rose Elizabeth. She still wore it proudly.

Her father moved them to Weatherford, Texas from Rosedale when Rachel was barely three. The family lived a typical, North-central Texas, small-town life on a modest ranch just north of their new town.

Even then, Rachel had “the look”—the look of a Texas-bred beauty queen. But Rose Elizabeth refused all entreaties to put her young daughter on exhibit. She declared she was not about to expose her baby to a world designed to take her beyond her years, and far too quickly.

Rachel never felt deprived, not having siblings. Only a little lonely, at times. The fact she was an only child meant not having to compete for anything, especially the love and attention of her parents. Still, she never considered herself spoiled.

There were distinct advantages in being the only brat in the brood: no hand-me-downs; no taking turns; Santa comes only for you; daddy's lap is yours alone, and you get to eat the entire birthday cake.

Rachel graduated Weatherford Senior High School in 1979. Jimmy Carter was President. That year, fifty-two Americans were taken hostage in Iran. That summer, she enrolled at Boston University on an academic scholarship.

Four years later, Rachel had a double degree: English and Journalism. By 1985, a masters in journalism. She felt ready to conquer the world.

In 1985, it was her good fortune that a former journalism professor had been a classmate of White House press secretary, Larry Speakes. The 'perfect job' was offered her at the White House.

Rachel accepted the post: Assistant Deputy Press Secretary. Not bad for a little 'ol country girl. Despite her desire to return to Texas, she moved to Washington, D.C. where she shared a townhouse in Georgetown with a co-worker and Vassar grad. The White House offer was irresistible. After all, no sane journalism grad could justify refusing a chance to work in the center of the world's political universe.

Rachel had no deep political convictions, and was in no way a Reaganite. But this career decision required no deep thought. Even her father, a lifelong Democrat in a state where, before the early eighties, Republicans were nearly as rare as 'blue dogs,' had no doubt this was a once in a lifetime opportunity for his 'sweet little girl.'

As the second Reagan administration drew to a close, Rachel left the White House, accepting a surprise offer from the Washington Post as Assistant National Editor for Political Affairs. She was deeply honored to learn that *Post* owner, Katherine Graham,

spoke personally to Speakes, expressing her interest in having Rachel join the Post before the 1988 Presidential campaign began in earnest.

Later, Rachel spoke at length to the Press Secretary. He thought it best she not wait. She agreed and left the White House in November, 1987.

Despite her efforts, Rachel never learned what it was about her White House work that earned her Kate Graham's attention. Others had little doubt it was the well-known fact her hard work and dedication made both Speakes and his Deputy look as good as they did.

Her three, demanding years at the Post were spent coordinating and managing coverage of national politics, particularly presidential politics. While there, and covering a Democratic fund-raiser in D.C. in 1988, Rachel met David Marin, a wildly successful Hollywood producer-director, and Princeton grad.

David, a dark-haired, soft-spoken charmer with an insatiable taste for things imported, wooed, wined, dined and seduced her. They fell in love. He proposed. She said yes, ignoring her vow to never marry a man shorter than her nearly 5'-10" with three inch heels—hers, not his.

Rachel put returning to Texas in the catacombs of her mind. She moved to southern California, only two weeks after visiting her parents and sharing the nuptial news. Larry and Rose wished her well, but were reluctant to see their only child move to California, of all places.

"Can't you find yourself a good, upstanding Texas boy?" Her father suggested with a wink, but a thinly disguised seriousness Rachel did not miss.

David wanted to get married right away. Rachel chose to wait a few months. She insisted on buying her own place and living there until she got acclimated to California and her new world.

David was not at all thrilled with the notion, but understood Rachel's desires which she expressed with such resolve and unsailable reasoning.

With the help of John Tran, a Coldwell Banker Realtor she met in line at a Ralph's Grocery store, she found a storybook home. It was a modest three bedroom, brick and wood framed beauty in South Pasadena, near Los Angeles.

The lawn was meticulously groomed, and the greenest green. Only well-fertilized, Texas farm fields were greener. There were radiant roses; a eucalyptus and an oak tree; even a white picket fence. It was love at first sight.

Rachel soon purchased her dream car—a blue and white, 1965 Ford Mustang. Her 'Senior Prom' date, John Gilley, had owned one. David suggested a Mercedes or BMW, but her mind was made up. He relented, then went on and on praising the car.

It was a 289 cubic inch, stock, cream puff with less than forty-five thousand original miles. "Ready for the road," he told her, after having a friend examine the car. What made the purchase irresistible was the fact it was actually owned by a 'Little Ol' Lady from Pasadena.'

David was restrained in his reaction and appraisal of her home, and simply gave in to her choice of a car. At his insistence, an E series Mercedes was kept on call for her at a Pasadena Dealership. "It's just backup," he said.

David had a motor court full of pricey imports, and a few classics, including: a 1957 Chevrolet, a Duesenberg, and a gull-wing Mercedes. The latter two were presently on long-term display, at the Petersen Automotive Museum on Wilshire Boulevard in Beverly Hills.

Rachel knew David wanted her to live exclusively in his Pacific Palisades estate. It presented a breathtaking view of the Pacific Ocean. The eye-popping surroundings were majestic.

But Rachel found the ambiance and charm of her dream cottage unsurpassed by even the grandeur of David's estate. More importantly, it was hers. She was a simple girl from Texas with modest tastes and a firm view of what was important. Besides, she needed the solitude and isolation her small home afforded. It was that solitude and isolation she found critical for her passion—writing.

Rachel had long wanted to write, especially fiction. Even in grade school, she found immeasurable joy in writing poetry and short stories. And most journalists, if speaking truthfully, would admit to harboring desires of becoming published authors.

Presently, Rachel saw this moment in her life as her chance to act on those desires. She was erupting with the excitement of being in a new place; of being in love; of starting a new job, this one with The Los Angeles Times.

The 'Times' offer, as originally presented, would have required her to remain in Washington with the Times' Washington bureau. She had absolutely no interest and said so.

A follow-up offer came immediately. The position was nearly identical to the one she had held at the Post. Only, the focus was on California politics, particularly aspects with national, and international implications.

Life was good: The new house; the new job; David's insistence they marry right away. He was wonderful. He encouraged her; he romanced her; he continued wining and dining her.

Still, there were times when Rachel lay wide awake, staring up at the ceiling and thinking it was all too perfect. Everything seemed much too scripted. Spontaneity became a rarity.

And there were the inevitable Hollywood parties. She felt like a fish out of water, despite her past in Washington, hobnobbing with the entertainment and political world's elite.

But this was different. Here, she was not Rachel Loftin, the journalist. She was Rachel Loftin, the fiancée of ‘the’ David Marin. And he was proud to have her on his arms.

Rachel lit up a room like a ten-tier chandelier every time she entered. Women especially noticed her. And their catty reactions did not escape Rachel. In fact, that was the part she relished most.

While David kept trying to convince her to sell her house and move to Palisades, he assured her he understood what the home meant to her. He understood her insistence that it provided a special environment; that it was a nurturing cocoon for her writing. Still, he persisted in trying to have it his way. That was David.

Three

I Married a Whole Wife

Her heart stopped beating.

In June, 1991, they were married. Rachel and David. David and Rachel. They promised each other, before God and the thirty specially invited guests at the Malibu home of a famous producer-director, theirs would be a lasting union.

The newlyweds honeymooned in Monaco and Paris for three weeks, then boarded the Concorde to New York, where David stayed on to begin work on a new film. Rachel Lear-jetted back to California. The Times Managing Editor had been gracious and liberal. She gave Rachel as much time off as she needed.

Although she was eager to begin working, Rachel was more anxious to begin her writing, in earnest. Ideas were churning. Her new life was teeming with joy and promise. Her new surroundings, and the wellspring of inspiration she felt, were more than enough to motivate her to put pen to paper.

That was then. On this mild September morning, those halcyon days seemed an eternity ago. The closing days of a California summer crept by timelessly. A somber, distant Rachel lan-

guished in the spill of warming light. Brilliant rays of a morning sun streamed through framed window panes and fell across spotless carpet. The postcard weather contrasted sharply with the sun-starved mood that enveloped her.

Nearly a year after the most traumatic of her thirty-eight years, Rachel still grieved for the failed dreams of her once promising marriage. Her decision to end it all had not come easily, despite the wisdom of such decision.

She discovered that much too often, what appears as reality is only what one wants to appear. For far too long, she had dismissed unexplained feelings of an emptiness that could not be masked by material possessions or gingerbread facades.

Like most people, Rachel had regrets about many paths not taken, but took solace in the sure-footedness of her rural upbringing. She had always felt life worth living.

Still, only weeks before this September morning, death seemed an easy choice. Rachel had thought about it long and hard. Striving to rebuild her shattered existence would take far more energy and motivation than she presently possessed.

A persistent voice scolded her, insisting it was inconceivable she would allow anyone to rob her of her love of life.

"You were alive and well before David Marin. You'll be alive and well, especially now that he's gone," the voice screamed. Rachel heard the words reverberate in her head.

It all began on May 5th, 1999. Rachel's doctor, Dr. Andre Lombard, confirmed the lump in her right breast was malignant. Her heart stopped beating. She had him repeat himself. He did, more slowly. Then again. A shaken Rachel grilled Lombard mercilessly. She cried; she denied the possibility; she wanted proof; she cried again, and would again—and often.

From the moment she discovered the lump, Rachel waged war with herself against assuming the worst. Part of every waking minute was colored with worry. Watching television became a constant reminder of her fears. There were the bra commercials; the braless models bouncing down runways; nude women in movies; the breast cancer PSAs and more.

Would the mass prove benign or malignant? What would she do if it were malignant? How would she feel about herself? How would she break the news to David? What would he say? How would he react? But it was likely just a harmless cyst, she kept telling herself. No need to worry.

Then came the news she dreaded. She, Rachel L. Loftin-Marin, had breast cancer. For an instant, she stopped breathing. And despite being reassured such diagnosis was no longer an automatic death sentence, Rachel succumbed to feelings of intense hopelessness. She fell prey to a self-pity that overpowered her. It sapped her will; her resilience; her inner strength.

At first, she decided not to tell David, at least not right away. Then, she told him. After all, he was her husband. He loved her. He would support and encourage her.

Rachel waited until they were together at the Palisades estate. She would never forget the day or the moment. The event seared itself forever into her consciousness.

She had searched for the right moment; the right setting; the right expression on his face; the right words to use; the right distance to position herself, relative to him. Should she stand, or sit? Would it be best to hold his hand or embrace him as she gave him the news?

Then it hit her. She was all-consumed with constant worry regarding David's possible reaction. Her every thought was of David. Why? Here she was facing one of the most traumatic moments in her life, and she was more concerned for her husband.

It was June 3rd, exactly three months before her birthday. Rachel and David had just returned from a morning of tennis. They had dinner plans at Spago's with another couple. Rachel would have settled for grilled salmon on the patio, out by the pool, watching a fiery Pacific sunset.

The look. Rachel would never forget the look on David's face. She sought to cushion the news by making certain she was absent a somber face or voice. She wore loose-fitting, ankle-length loungewear that concealed her curves.

Rachel began by making small talk—something about her staying in shape, and his need to follow up on his promise to begin regular prostate exams. "PSA and digital," she said.

David assured her he would, while insisting he wasn't really concerned; he wasn't old enough to worry. Rachel expressed doubt he would act, and threatened to make the appointments for him if he did not. He again insisted, in a convincing voice this time. David was always convincing. He had that way about him. He had style and panache. And he knew it. He traded on it. And why not? It had always worked.

Then she told him. Rachel moved closer to David, kissed him softly, and she told him. Fighting to steady her voice, determined to hold his gaze with dry eyes, she told him.

Rachel told David of her discovery of the lump; the subsequent visit; the resulting diagnosis. She battled to keep smiling, struggled to conceal the emotion in her voice and on her face. As the words fell on his ears, David reacted with understandable shock and disbelief.

Then, the look. David's unretouched, unairbrushed expression was now branded into Rachel's mind forever. No 'cut' or 'take two,' this time. Deep frowns etched his brow. His lips parted. For the longest time, he said nothing. Not a word. It was

as if he were waiting for her to confess to making a joke offered in the worst taste possible. It did not come.

David had Rachel repeat herself. She did. He held his ground, stared with unblinking eyes. Then came a barrage of questions. They came, even as she stood waiting.

Rachel was hoping her husband would move quickly to her. She needed him to capture her in a caring and reassuring embrace. She waited for him to assure her everything would be alright. There was nothing. No embrace. No reassurance.

Instead, David questioned her; interrogated her. At first, about details of the diagnosis. Then questions about what she may have done to bring on the disease. He sounded accusatory. What care had she taken to keep herself healthy? Was she sure? What treatment could she choose that would preserve her breast or breasts? Was it just one breast or both?

That seemed David's major concern: preserving Rachel's appearance. "They can do a lumpectomy, right?" He asked. Rachel made no attempt to answer, especially after the first questions regarding the diagnosis.

So while David stood his ground, Rachel moved to within inches of him. She could feel his warm breath on her face, yet he kept his arms at his side, even as his gaze fell to her breasts.

It was as if David were wondering which was the offending mammary gland. Which of these two, beautifully sculpted, still firm, pink-nippled delights he had come to know and love, had betrayed him?

Rachel could see the unspoken question form on his petrified lips. Her heart raced. Her mind absorbed and weighed the hurtful reality of the moment. And she knew she had experienced a penultimate event in her marriage, and her life. All pretense regarding David's self-centeredness had been stripped away.

Even then, Rachel could have forgiven delay of the reaction she had hoped for. Had she expected too much, too soon? Was it simply that David had not had sufficient time to digest the stunning news?

Rachel thought not. She stared deeply into his eyes, then turned and started from the room. As she walked away, she prayed. She prayed he would say the words that would erase the record forever, and whisk them both back—back to the precise moment she first revealed her briefly held secret.

In the days and weeks that followed, things only grew worse. David withdrew. He was no longer his effusive, fun-loving, gregarious self. He would embrace her only briefly, and not nearly as often. Their fiery sex-life all but disappeared.

David, who had always been eager to help her undress before bed, now hardly looked at her when Rachel disrobed. Gone were the showers together; the playful fondling; the “anytime, anyplace,” unscripted romantic episodes.

Worse, David refused to join Rachel in the ‘husband-wife’ counseling sessions sponsored by her physician and Huntington Hospital. She felt her depression deepen. Her dilemma was not helped by rejections of her book manuscript her agent delivered almost daily.

Finally, she had endured enough. In a bold confrontation Rachel planned and executed flawlessly, she forced the issue David had evaded so masterfully.

It was a Sunday afternoon, following a morning of silent breakfast, and newspapers being held up to obscure her probing eyes. Rachel waited until David was firmly nestled in his favorite chair watching a Lakers vs. Trailblazers preseason basketball game.

She entered the room, completely nude, and planted herself between David and his big screen tv. He nearly popped a vein. He looked away, then back, frowned, but said nothing.

That was perhaps the deepest cut. Rachel moved closer, to within inches of where David sat. So close, he could have touched her with his tongue, had he wanted. And he would have, before.

"So tell me, David. In which part of my anatomy is your love for me embodied? Here?" Rachel pointed and continued, graphically. "My pussy? My tits? This one or this one? Or both? Tell me!" She demanded, cupping a hand underneath each breast.

David responded angrily, and with words that belied all the declarations of love he had ever uttered.

"Do we have to do this just now?"

"We don't have to do this, ever," said Rachel.

"Look, it's not just wives or women who suffer when something like this happens. I married a whole woman. I deserve a whole woman."

Rachel was stunned by David's words. She felt herself seething. She struggled to remain silent and simply let David have his say, but could not.

"Whole woman? Whole woman?" Rachel felt her heart banging against her chest wall. She felt an unfamiliar rage surge within her. "So I'm...I'm only whole because I have breasts? Is that what you're saying? Is it? Damn you, David! Is that all I mean to you? You'd feel differently, if it were you...you with testicular cancer and one or both of your balls had to go."

"C'mon, that's different."

"How? How is that different? "

"It...it just is."

"Would you be a whole man?"

"It's not the same."

"Right."

“Look, Rachel, I don’t mean to sound cruel. I sincerely hope I’m not coming off that way. I have tried. I’ve tried, but I can not do this. I don’t mean to be insensitive or cold, but I have to be honest. This affects the way I feel about you, sexually. I can’t lie about that. I don’t want to feel that way, but I do. Maybe that will change, in time. I know there are reconstruction options later, but you could at least consider a less invasive procedure than a mastectomy. You should consider my feelings as well.”

That was it. That was the most David had said, since first learning of the diagnosis. Rachel said nothing. There was nothing left to say. She had already decided her body was her body. And while she would mourn the loss of her right breast, she valued her life even more.

Dr. Lombard had presented the choices and the odds, as precisely as he could. He answered every question put to him. The choice was hers. Rachel had chosen a mastectomy.

It was the fallout of that decision that exposed the true nature of her nearly ten year relationship with David. She was crushed, rendered speechless. It was as if her very breath, her life force was suddenly drained from her.

Rachel could only stare at her husband through blurred eyes. She was unable to comprehend the fact he was saying these things to her, and in such a cold, thoughtless manner. The one positive thing was, David’s carefully constructed facade was now shattered. He was now more naked than she.

Read more.

See: <http://ifogo.com> | <http://genecartwright.com>

Books ship autographed by author.

