

BLINDFOLD

By Teace Snyder

Eve sat at her desk, lazily twirling a pen with her pinkie. Her classmates played games on their cell phones or texted one another—anything that would help them forget they were in school. The teacher, Ms. Keeton, sat in her chair, occasionally writing something in between glances at her students. Eve yawned as she returned her attention to the front of the room. It was nearing the end of show and tell. A boy stood, passionately explaining ‘why he thought Batman could defeat any other superhero.’ But despite his conviction, Eve soon returned to her pen twirling.

“Plus pretty much nobody else has a utility belt,” the boy exclaimed, holding up a picture of a gaudy-gold-belt. “Like, he could have anything in there—even kryptonite!”

The clock clicked loudly, bringing the children one minute closer to freedom. Eve sighed and reached into her bag for the binder of handouts she’d brought to accompany her presentation. She flipped through the pictures she’d printed out and rehearsed what she’d say in her head. A spitball whizzed past her face and hit the girl beside her. Ms. Keeton scowled at the spitballer and wrote his name on the board so that he’d have to stay in class over recess.

“Anyway, that’s why Batman is the best superhero ever,” the boy said, as he wrapped up and walked back to his desk.

“Thank you, Ben... that was very informative,” Ms. Keeton stated, making a point of smiling for the effort he’d put in. “Eve, we’re ready when you are.”

“Ok,” Eve replied, tucking her binder under her arm and making her way to the front of the room. “I brought in some handouts that detail my references, so you can show people later,” she explained, passing a stack of paper to one of the kids seated in the front row. The stack gradually circulated the class, momentarily bringing the children out of their own worlds. A minute later, one copy returned to Eve which she then handed to Ms. Keeton.

“Thank you,” Ms. Keeton said, placing the handout in front of her and reading the title to herself. Her mouth dropped and she turned her attention to Eve at the front of the room—placing posters and pertinent info up on the blackboard.

“Hello. My name is Eve, and my show and tell presentation is on how the World Trade Center buildings were brought down by controlled demolition.”

“Hey dad,” Eve said, as she met her father, Tim, after school so they could walk home together. He smiled, folded his newspaper, and stood up from his seat.

“Hey munch-kin, how was school?”

“It was ok.”

“Anymore spitballs?”

“He aims for the girl beside me. I just got assigned the wrong seat.”

“Or maybe he has a crush on you.”

“That doesn’t make any sense.”

“Yeah... guys are kinda like that at first.”

“Well I don’t like him.”

“Hate to break it to you, but that might actually make him like you more.”
“What?”
“It’s complicated.”
“No it isn’t. People who like each other see each other, and people who don’t don’t, right?”
“In a perfect world, yes.”
“Didn’t you and mom like each other?”
“I think she just liked that I liked her,” Tim laughed nervously, as he and his daughter wove themselves through the pedestrian traffic. Eve didn’t respond at first.
“How come you always joke when you talk about her?” Eve asked a moment later as they came to an illuminated ‘don’t walk’ hand. Tim’s expression went blank and his mouth quivered trying to find words. Eve looked up at him, waiting for a reply.
“Because... it’s hard for me to talk about her.”
“But it’s easy for you to joke about her?”
“It’s... easier.”
“Why?”
“I don’t know,” Tim said after a silent moment spent staring through space.
“Ok.”
“Man, how long is this light?” Tim exclaimed, changing the subject.
“I think the crosswalk light is broken.”
“Well... should we jaywalk?”
“It’s not jaywalking, the light’s just broken.”
“Glad to hear you’re as enthused about it as I am,” Tim said, holding out his hand for his daughter to take. Eve stared at it a moment before looking back up at him.
“I think I’m too old to hold your hand.”
“You held my hand last month,” Tim laughed, looking down at his little girl.
“I was humouring you.”
“Oh,” Tim stated, making a confused face and turning his attention back to the ‘don’t walk’ hand. “That’s not funny.”

“Frankly, calling this a depression seems like an understatement,” a radio show host exclaimed, as Eve half-listened while doing her homework. “Financial markets are bouncing around like pingpong balls; unemployment is the highest it’s been in decades; terrorist attacks have more than doubled in the past few years alone, and the list goes on!”

“Chocolate milk or regular?!” Tim yelled from the kitchen, as he put the finishing touches on a pan of Hamburger Helper.

“Both, please,” Eve replied. She glanced down at the page of long division she hadn’t bothered to show her work for and closed her binder—deciding to listen to the radio instead.

“I can’t reach my five-star-chef-potential when you listen to apocalypse now!” Tim jested, poking his head out of the kitchen to catch his daughter’s reaction. She didn’t react.

“Is dinner ready?”

“T-minus five minutes until it’s cooled down.”

“Ok.”

Tim moved back into the kitchen and leaned against the wall—folding his arms and shaking his head. He didn't like that his daughter spent so much time listening to people speculate on how the world would fall apart. But what really bothered him was that she didn't laugh at his jokes anymore.

The phone, mounted on the wall, rang and startled Tim. He reached over and pulled the receiver to his ear. "Hello?"

"Hello, Mr. Lumley?"

"Speaking."

"Hi, this is Ms. Keeton, Eve's teacher."

"Oh, ok... what's up?"

"Well... I'm calling because I've received a number of phone calls from parents regarding your daughter's show and tell presentation."

"What? What was her presentation about?" Tim asked, pouring two glasses of milk and taking a Coke out of the fridge. Ms. Keeton paused for a moment, fumbling the words around in her mouth. "Hello?" Tim asked, as he opened the can of Coke and took a long gulp. But as Ms. Keeton finally decided on what to say—informing Tim of what his daughter's show and tell presentation had been—he coughed on the liquid and put the can aside. "I... I'm sorry, she said what?"

Tim sat at the table across from his daughter. He slowly ate his food, occasionally glancing up at Eve—he didn't know what to say, but he knew he had to say something.

"Hey, Eve?"

"Yeah?"

"Do you want to talk about your mother?" he asked solemnly.

"What about her?" she replied, surprised by her father's words, but more so by his tone.

"I miss her too, you know?"

"I know."

"Has that been on your mind lately?" Tim sighed, unsure of how to approach the subject—saying whatever came to mind to try and get his daughter to talk to him. "I mean, I know you've been watching the news a lot... is it because of what happened to her?"

"No."

"Ok," Tim said, taking a bite of his food.

"Dad, are you ok?"

"Yeah, I'm fine," Tim stated, smiling to reassure his daughter. "I'm just worried about you."

"Why?"

"Because it's my job to be."

"Ok."

Tim continued eating, unsatisfied with the answers he'd gotten. He could see that something was bothering Eve and he knew it wasn't anything she was going to volunteer to tell him. He felt terrible for never speaking about her mother's death candidly; for reminiscing with jokes so he wouldn't have to hurt when he spoke about her.

“When I first heard the news that the towers had been attacked, I didn’t believe it,” he explained, forcing himself forward. “I couldn’t even imagine something so terrible. So, I told myself your mother hadn’t gone to work—that she wasn’t in there. And when she didn’t call or come home I told myself she’d just gotten lost and couldn’t find a phone... I still tell myself sometimes... anything so I don’t have to face the truth about what happened that day,” Tim finished, wishing he was strong enough to heal. Eve’s heart broke—she had never seen her father so vulnerable. She didn’t know what to do—he needed someone, but all he had was her.

“I love you dad,” she said, hoping he’d be ok. Tim smiled genuinely, contented with the answer he’d gotten.

“I love you too.”

Eve suspiciously eyed the boy seated next to her as he inserted a torn flake of paper into his mouth. Ms. Keeton stood at the front of the class, writing on the blackboard with her back to the children. The boy slowly reached down into his knapsack, removing a long, wide, straw. Eve didn’t hesitate. She quickly pulled her straw out from under her desk and blew a spitball into his eye before he got a chance to fire.

“Jeremy!” Ms. Keeton shouted, turning around sharply from the ‘shwoomp’ sound of the spitball. “I’ve had enough of this!”

“But I didn’t!”

“No, no excuses! Go to the principal’s office immediately!”

The boy grudgingly rose from his seat, glancing at Eve grinning smugly. The class giggled as he walked with his head hung low—exiting the room and heading down the hall. Ms. Keeton returned to writing on the board and Eve returned to copying down notes. But before she could finish writing a sentence, a knock came from the open door. Eve looked up to see a dark haired man in a grey business suit—holding a briefcase and an envelope.

“May I help you?” Ms. Keeton asked, somewhat unnerved by the man.

“Ms. Keeton I take it?” the man said.

“Sir, school is in session—I’m sorry but we have a no visitor policy.”

“I apologize for the interruption, this will only take a moment,” he stated, stepping into the classroom and looking out over the students—his eyes eventually coming to rest on Eve. He then walked over to her desk as Ms. Keeton hurried to intercept him.

“Excuse me sir, what do you think you’re doing?” she snapped. The children anxiously adjusted themselves in their seats—unsure of what was happening.

“Eve Lumley?” the man asked, ignoring Ms. Keeton.

“Sir!”

“Miss, please,” the man groaned. “I’m here on behalf of Mr. Adams,” he continued. Ms. Keeton’s face went blank. “Eve Lumley?” the man repeated, turning to address Eve once more.

“Why are you interrupting our class?” Eve replied.

“To serve you this summons,” he answered, extending an envelope for her.

“What?” Eve exclaimed, picking up the envelope and glancing at Ms. Keeton.

“It means you’re being sued.”

“I know... but,” Eve stuttered, completely dumbfounded. “I’m ten.”

“Is this a joke?” Tim growled, dropping the summons onto the desk. Mr. Adams, the father of a boy in Eve’s class, adjusted his glasses and cleared his throat. He had sent Eve the letter and he had invited Tim to his office to talk about it.

“It’s not a joke. It’s an appropriate response,” Mr. Adams replied, his tone and demeanour without feeling or compassion. “Your daughter seems to think she can say whatever she wants. Now her class knows there are repercussions for poor choices.”

“You mean like my fist in your face?”

“Sir, I’m a lawyer—I’m used to being threatened. I understand you’re upset. So am I. Now if you’ll please take a seat, we can discuss this.”

“How in the hell can you think you’re justified for picking on a ten year old girl over a show and tell presentation!?” Tim yelled. Mr. Adams clenched his jaw and fell silent a moment—turning his eyes to a picture of his family on his desk.

“I came home late yesterday to find my wife distressed. She said our son ‘didn’t want to be an American.’ So I went upstairs and talked to him. To my dismay, the reason he was so confused was because of malicious propaganda your daughter presented in class,” he explained, clearly accustomed to keeping his cool when fired up. “I then called Ms. Keeton to insist she repeal your daughter’s propaganda, but she refused.”

“I can’t even believe I’m hearing this,” Tim exclaimed, as surprised as he was outraged. “It’s a classroom, not a courtroom!”

“And my son attends that classroom to learn, not suffer.”

“You can’t do this.”

“I’m well aware of what I can and cannot do. If you’d bothered to read the summons you’d see that I’m not suing your daughter, I’m suing you—and that is only under the condition that your daughter doesn’t apologize.”

“So she has to say she’s sorry or you’ll make her sorry?”

“I don’t want to take this to court—there’s nothing to gain from it,” Mr. Adams stated, removing a bottle of Perrier from a cooling drawer in his desk. “All I want is for your daughter to apologize to her class and then keep her mouth shut.”

Tim clenched his fists and took a deep breath, trying to stay calm. He’d been through worse and knew better than to aggravate the situation. But he’d never had anyone come after his daughter, and he’d never imagined it could make him this mad.

“Look... I wasn’t happy to hear about her presentation either. But... it’s not as simple as you think,” Tim explained, sitting down to try and cool off. “Eve’s mother, my wife, died when the towers collapsed.”

“Yes... Ms. Keeton informed me of that,” Mr. Adams said, allowing a smudge of compassion into his tone.

“I don’t think this is about 9/11. I think it’s about her mother.”

“Well...” Mr. Adams muttered, unsure of how to proceed. “I can appreciate that it’s a sensitive issue. But all the same, I can’t overlook your daughter’s choice to present it to her class... My son is very upset.”

“And so is my daughter,” Tim snapped, disgusted by Mr. Adams.

“You haven’t thought this through, Mr. Lumley. Private schools are not interested in extremist views. They have a way of tainting reputations and spoiling opportunities,”

Mr. Adams explained, his tone tense and vindictive. “I understand your daughter attends on scholarship—I suggest for her sake you persuade her to see how sorry she should be.”

“You want an apology? I’m sorry you can’t act like an adult; I’m sorry you’re so petty. But I won’t apologize for my daughter expressing herself and neither will she,” Tim said, crumpling up the subpoena and throwing it in the trash. Mr. Adams watched as Tim exited his office, turning to his daughter who had remained in the waiting room. She gave Mr. Adams a cold glance before following her father.

“Dad?” Eve asked, as Tim pressed the down button, waiting for the elevator. “Am I gonna go to jail?”

“What? No, of course not!” Tim exclaimed, shaking his head at what a ridiculous situation they were in.

“Are you sure? Because I’m supposed to sleep over at Jenny’s on Saturday.”

“Yes, I’m sure. You’re a minor—you can’t be sued, let alone go to jail. That man is just an immature asshole trying to control everything in his son’s life.”

“Oh,” Eve said, relieved by her father’s words. The elevator doors opened and Tim and Eve stepped inside. “I can’t believe boys do things like this when they like someone.”

“What?”

“You said Jeremy might have a crush on me... so that’s probably why he had his dad do this,” Eve explained, watching her father’s confused expression turn to a grin.

“He’s the father of the spitballer!?” Tim laughed, as he looked down at his daughter—nodding as though he should have guessed. “Ha ha... that figures.”

“And you’re suggesting what exactly, more bailouts? More government sponsored corporate bonuses for the people who got us in this mess in the first place?!” the radio show host yelled, as Tim reached over and grabbed a couple sugar cubes.

“Ugh... I’ve barely been awake long enough to realize I’m awake. I cannot listen to people argue right now,” Tim complained, stirring his coffee.

“It’s interesting.”

“Interesting is something I don’t hear everyday, everywhere, all the time,” Tim groaned, reaching to turn off the radio only to have his daughter pull it out of his grasp. “Aren’t there any cartoons on or something?”

“I don’t like cartoons—they’re for kids.”

“This coming from the girl eating Trix for breakfast?”

“I still like sugar,” Eve laughed, her father’s eyes lighting up at the sight of her smile.

“Hey, you better watch how you express your opinion, you might just get sued,” Tim joked, sharing a laugh with his daughter for the first time in a long time. “Now hurry up and finish your breakfast or we’re gonna be late.”

Eve took the last few bites of her cereal and then emptied the leftover milk in the sink. Tim fastened his tie at the table, glancing at the newspaper headlines—bad news on top of bad news. He tied his laces and pulled on his jacket, grabbing Eve’s lunchbox out of the fridge.

“As if the reality of the situation isn’t bad enough, there are fanatics who fabricate lies for the sake of attention!” the radio show host continued as Tim grumbled to himself

about his daughter's taste in entertainment. He reached for the dial to turn it off as Eve came barrelling down the stairs ready for school. But as his fingers touched the knob he heard something that froze him in his place. "Take, for example, a truly disturbing story a friend of mine shared with me last night. That of a ten year old girl who gave a presentation to her **elementary school class** that 9/11 was planned by the American government."

Tim walked slowly beside his daughter. His mind was distracted with worry and doubt. He couldn't believe things had gotten so out of hand; that people were acting like such children. But mostly he feared that the issue wasn't as simple as he'd made it out to be. If Eve's presentation wasn't a cry for attention; if it wasn't about her mother, then Tim was ashamed of his daughter. He felt like a bad father. And as depression sunk in he realized that he had no idea what to do.

"I was reading about the memorial in Hiroshima," Eve exclaimed, looking intently at her father, staring at the ground as they walked. "Apparently, every year kids from all over Japan are taken there to remember what happened. You can still see some of the silhouettes of where people died—shadows burned into the ground from the blast," Eve continued, saying whatever came to mind to try and get her father to talk to her.

"Interesting," Tim mumbled.

"I wish I could go on a field trip to Japan... It looks like it'd be a fun place to visit."

"Yeah."

"Have you ever been there?"

"No."

"We should go someday."

"Maybe."

"I know you don't like sushi. But they have McDonald's so you'll be ok," she joked, as they came to the stairs of her school.

"I'll see you after school," Tim said, handing Eve her lunchbox.

"Dad?"

"Yeah?"

"Have a good day at work," she stated. Tim forced a smile and watched her walk up the stairs and into school. He sighed and reached into his pocket—removing his cell phone. He checked his incoming call list and scrolled down to the office number of Mr. Adams. He pressed dial and waited as the phone rang.

"Hello, Mr. Adam's office, Tiffany speaking," his secretary said.

"Hi... this is Mr. Lumley, may I have a word with him?"

"Hold, please."

Tim took a seat on a nearby bench and slouched forward—waiting to be connected.

"Mr. Lumley, am I to take it you've come to your senses?"

"Yes... I'm calling on behalf of my daughter to apologize for what she said in class... and for the pain it's caused your son."

"u w" Mr. Adams exclaimed.

"What do you want?"

“A public apology—to put this issue to rest once and for all.”

“You want her to apologize to the class?”

“No.”

“Then, what?”

“A friend of mine is a radio show host. And when I told him about what your daughter did, he decided to mention it on his program,” Mr. Adams explained, referring to the broadcast Tim had happened to hear earlier that morning. “I think that reassuring his listeners of your daughter’s remorse would be a good idea... after all, we wouldn’t want her to cause any more harm than she already has.”

Tim swallowed the mess of feeling kicking in his throat and exhaled—thinking over Mr. Adam’s demand.

“Fine... let him know to expect my call.”

“Good morning America, not to be confused with Good Morning America, and welcome to the Saturday morning edition of Politicked,” the radio show host exclaimed. Tim sat quietly beside the radio—a phone in his hand as he waited to be put on the air. Eve was upstairs sleeping—her door closed so she wouldn’t have to hear what her father was going to say. “Now today, I want to start with something I brought up yesterday—something that I’ve actually received quite a few calls and e-mails about. And that is of course, the case of the young girl who presented lies about the American government to her classroom.”

Tim placed the receiver down on the table and rubbed his eyes with both hands. He hadn’t slept—he couldn’t sleep.

“I don’t understand why people feel the need to condemn this country... America has its problems; and, yes, we have made mistakes. But that does not define us as a people. It does not characterize our intentions or paint a picture of the world we want. It only divides us more... I know times are hard. I know hope is fading. But even our heroes can’t save us without us... The response I received about this girl’s decision to abandon hope in her country was... typical. Some callers angrily insisted that she should be punished—stripped of her citizenship and deported. Some took pity on her and said that she’s confused. And some even agreed with her—so hurt by their country that they think no better of it than they do of its enemies... Now, we all know about the fanatic conspiracy theorists—lingering around ground zero, wearing American flags as blindfolds and holding signs that say ‘9/11 was an inside job’. But when that kind of person goes after our children; when they push radical beliefs on innocent minds for the sake of... God knows what... then they’ve crossed the line. This country deserves better than people like that. It deserves better than those who spit on everything we’ve accomplished. And I for one think it deserves an apology.”

Tim felt sick—a woman’s voice came onto the line, informing him that he’d be on air in just a moment.

“Now, we have a caller—the father of the girl who we’ve been debating. He wants to apologize. Let’s hope he makes it good ... Hello?”

“Hello?” Tim replied, hearing the radio show host over the phone.

“Welcome to Politicked, how are you this morning?”

“I’m... fine,” Tim sighed, uninterested in chatting about himself or his daughter’s wellbeing. “I just wanted to call in and say how sorry I am... and how sorry my daughter is for the things she said,” he continued. But as he took another breath, double-thinking what to say, the receiver was pulled out of his hand. Eve slammed it down—hanging up on the radio show host and glaring at her father.

“What are you doing?!” she yelled. Tim stuttered a moment—unable to avoid discussing the issue with his daughter any longer.

“What am I doing? What are you doing?!” he yelled back. Eve didn’t respond—her father hadn’t yelled at her for years. “How could you say those things, Eve? How could you be so stupid?”

“I’m not stupid.”

“I know... you’re a genius—you don’t like cartoons, you don’t go trick or treating, you don’t even laugh at my jokes. I get it: you’re not a kid anymore.”

“Then why do you treat me like one?”

“Because acting like an adult doesn’t make you one! It was a stupid thing to give that presentation to your class! What did you think was going to happen?”

“I don’t know.”

“God dammit, Eve! This isn’t some bullshit segment on CNN, it’s real life! You can’t just go around pissing people off! There are consequences!”

“I know.”

“Then what made you think you could get away with this?!”

“Freedom of speech.”

“Freedom of speech? That doesn’t change the fact that there are things people just don’t want to hear—there are things you just don’t say!”

“But it’s the truth,” Eve whimpered. “I can show you my references.”

“I saw your damn references—a bunch of internet videos and half wits crying for attention!”

“That’s not true.”

“Yes, it is!” Tim screamed, feeling all the pain he’d bottled up shoot to the surface. “You’re still young, so maybe you don’t realize that people lie all the time—they do and say whatever they have to to get someone to listen to them.”

“You don’t listen to me... you just tell me I’m wrong.”

“Is that why you did this? To get my attention?”

“No.”

“Then, why? Is it because of your mother?” Tim asked, choking up as he mentioned his wife. Eve looked at the floor—silent and sorrowful. “I miss her too... but if this is just some scheme to get me to talk about her, then I don’t know what you want me to say.”

“It’s not about her... I don’t even remember her.”

“Bullshit, you used to talk about her all the time.”

“Yeah, because I thought that’s what you wanted to hear—I thought it made you happy.”

“It doesn’t... I just want... why didn’t you just talk to me?”

“You don’t listen,” Eve repeated.

“Well, I’m listening now.”

“Did you watch the videos I referenced?”

“What?” Tim gasped. “No... I didn’t watch them. And I didn’t watch any of the ones about Big Foot or aliens either!”

“This isn’t funny... and you’re still not listening,” Eve said, running upstairs.

“Eve!” Tim shouted, expecting her to turn around. She disappeared into her room and slammed the door. “We’re not done talking about this!” Tim shouted, following her up the stairs. “Hiding in your room won’t solve anything!” Eve emerged a moment later with a backpack on. She glared at her father and walked past him. “So, what? Now you’re running away?”

“I’m sleeping over at Jenny’s tonight! You’ve known about it for days! Now are you going to give me a ride, or do I have to take the bus?!”

“Fine... get in the car.”

Tim returned home after dropping his daughter off at her friend’s house. They hadn’t spoken for the entire car ride. He’d angrily listened to his choice of music rather than the news. And Eve had angrily listened to her headphones rather than his choice of radio station. But, on the drive back, Tim turned off the radio and sat silently in the car—trying to grasp his daughter’s argument. He didn’t understand.

He took a seat on the couch, and pulled open an old photo album of his daughter; of his wife. He delicately turned the pages, his face sorrowful when he would usually smile. He missed his wife and the life they’d had together. Snapshots of Eve as a baby, and of him as a young man. But the memories didn’t feel the same anymore—his daughter was growing up and he wasn’t keeping pace.

He flipped channels—nothing to do without Eve around on a Saturday. He opened a beer and slouched in his seat, breathing deeply. She’d told him he didn’t listen to her. And, as he thought about it, he realized she was right. But that didn’t justify what she’d done—it didn’t excuse how she’d behaved. He caught eye of his laptop, idling across the room.

“I don’t listen... God dammit, why couldn’t it be cartoons?” Tim grumbled to himself—standing up and walking over to the computer. He opened the Word document detailing Eve’s references and sifted through the various conspiracy videos—taking it seriously for her sake. He then opened a browser and typed one in. Ears ready, he pressed play.

The next morning Tim sat in his car outside of Jenny’s house, waiting for Eve to come out. He hadn’t slept again. After a few minutes, his daughter exited her friend’s home and grumpily approached the car—abandoning the smile she had departed the house with.

“Hey munch kin,” Tim exclaimed, hoping to make amends. Eve didn’t reply. “How was Jenny’s?”

“Fine.”

“What did you two do?”

“Stuff.”

“Stuff, huh?” Tim sighed. “Did you use a bong or a pipe?” he continued, attempting a joke. Eve glared at him and reached forward to turn the radio on. Tim turned off the car.

“Lets go,” Eve snapped, frowning and crossing her arms.

“Not yet.”

“Why?”

“Because I want to talk to you.”

“Well I don’t want to talk to you,” she stated, looking out the window—keeping her eyes hidden from her father’s sight.

“I’m sorry I yelled.”

“That’s not what you should be sorry about.”

“I know,” Tim stated. “I’m sorry I apologized for you... you’re a young woman now, and you can make your own decisions.” Eve didn’t respond. “Hey, Eve?”

“What?!”

“I watched one of those videos yesterday... from your presentation,” he explained, a tear swelling in his eye. “I’m sorry I didn’t listen.”

Eve turned to look at her father. Tim forced a smile, hoping that she’d forgive him. Eve smiled back and reached over to hold her father’s hand—he needed someone, and he had her.