Excerpts from Short Story: “Waiting on the Wind”
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 Snow fell like confectionary sugar over the small town of Waterbury, Connecticut. Hints of laughter wafted from the local schoolyard. A tiny blonde headed girl reached for her older brother’s hand as they walked to the line of waiting school buses. Christmas lights lined lamp posts and pine wreathes swayed softly in the afternoon breeze.
 Across the way in Marcus Memorial park, the grass was nestled beneath a blanket of white diamonds. The sun was slipping slowly behind the great oak, spreading a kaleidoscope of orange and gold.
 Dennis McGruber blinked; a speckle of light pranced a little too strong on his fragile hazel eyes. Upon re-opening his lids, he brushed the newly fallen flakes from his wrinkled brow with his good arm. He adjusted himself slightly on the cold wooden park bench as a dog raced across the pavement at his feet. His barks shattered the stillness of the scene.
 A woman followed far behind, accompanying the echoes of the mutt’s howls with her shrill voice. “Max! Get back here! Damn dog!” She turned to Dennis, sweat racing down from under her woven beanie. “Have you seen a dog race by here?” she asked between a heavy gasp for air.
 Dennis looked at the woman and shot his eyes towards Emery Street. His dry lips parted and he attempted to rattle his rusty voice box.
 “oh, oh, oh, over th, th, there” he finally spat out. He gave a faint smile of accomplishment to the woman whose back was now towards him. ‘Must have taken off when I was just trying to help’ Dennis thought clear and sharp, a pang of anger rushed in and out of his chest like a gust of wind. He grunted and refocused his attention on the passing traffic on the other side of the wrought iron fence. Horns blared and obscenities echoed against the brakes of the evening traffic.
 Dennis gave a shudder, his feeble hand shook in his wool mittens. “Where, where, are Milly? You here?” His speech was mottled, his head shook with frustration. “Not right, not right!”
 By now, a young boy was gazing on at the old man’s puzzling behavior; his brown head lost itself in the woven quilts of his jacket hood.
 “Why, hel, hello, hello” Dennis leaned down to meet the eyes of the child. “You talk funny” the boy said, laughing through a gap toothed smile. He turned towards the arched bridge and shuffled his feet towards a woman Dennis concluded must be his mother.
 ‘Don’t I know it’ he thought perfectly. He looked down at his wrist and looked at the thin minute hand resting five minutes before 5pm. Just then, he lifted his eyes to see his wife dressed in robin’s egg blue walking towards him through a cluster of young trees. She wore her winter hat, just like Dennis had always remembered her wearing during the first snowfalls of their courtship back in 1951. Almost exactly sixty years had passed. She walked slowly up to his side as he motioned for her to join him.
 “I thought you, you late, may, may be.” Dennis stuttered through a wide smile. She returned with a soft look of understanding in her gentle blue eyes.

 “I’m never late and you know it, D.” She chuckled and sat down swiftly by his side. He could feel the warmth of just her presence. “So tell me all about your day, dear. How’s that hand of yours holding up?” She nodded towards his trembling right limb.
 “As, as, as always, always” he repeated. “Missing yours.” A tear crept to the sides of his eyes. He kept the stroke stricken hand by his side instead of reaching for hers. He knew moving it or keeping I still would just leave it cold and painful either way.
 “Well I’m right here.” She whispered. She reached over and ruffled what little gray hair he had left. Just at the same time, Dennis felt a short breath of an evening chill creep along his scalp. “Talk to me, D. What’s the matter? You know I don’t have much time.” She met his eyes, and he couldn’t help but feel a lump rise in his throat. He swallowed it back.
 “This life, Mill.” He thought. Then he continued through open lips. “It’s sp, spin, spinning too, too, fast for, for, for, for this old, old m, m, man. I can’t, can’t, do it alone any, anymore.” Dennis cupped his hands together to regain warmth and nestled them in his snow-covered lap.
 Milly leaned forward and out her face next to his, ever so careful as not to touch his ear or cheek. “That’s the beauty of this crazy world. We never think we can get through it. We don’t give ourselves enough credit.”
            Dennis was trying his best to keep up. “Oh, Milly, I hope you never had to do it alone. I mean, I hope I was always what you needed.” He thought loud enough, she heard him through his eyes.
 “I did for twenty years.” She said. Dennis’ heart leapt up into his throat. “But let me finish” she reassured him. “I grew up thinking I would find something, someone. I grew up always with one foot on the ground, afraid that what I had was the best I would ever have. And that scared me. Time and time again, a rug was pulled out from under me, and with only one foot on the ground, you can imagine how hard it was to stand back up. I want to quit too, honey. But if I had, I would never have gained my second leg to sturdy me” her eyes twinkles, collected and bright.
 Dennis sniffled, “and what was that?”
            “What was what?” she asked, genuinely confused.
            “What was your second leg?”
            “Oh, D. It was you!” she readjusted her jacket and kissed her husband on the cheek, right on top of a freshly fallen snowflake. “I’m always here and you’re never alone.” She promised as she stood to her feet. She tucked a stray brown curl under her beanie and looked into Dennis’ wide eyes. “Just look up to the sky and you’ll always see me. If you need me, I’ll be there.”
 Dennis spoke now, his mind and voice finally both equally clear. “I love you, Milly.”
 She winked back at the lonely man on the park bench. “Love you too, D. Same time tomorrow.” And just like that, she vanished behind the same patch of young spruce at which she appeared.

            Dennis stood, now seeing the moonlight rock against the bare branches. He licked his lips, tasting the salt of a previously fallen tear. His knees ached, but lifted him without a single crack. His eyes focused on the freshly laid trail of snow leading right up to this empty house. Step by step, he made his way back, keeping one eye on the shale-striped sky.