**A Glossary of Homicide**

Janet Albaugh

I had lunch with my ex-husband for five hours, after 31 years of silence. He’d sent an effusive letter engorged with loving memories. He wanted to be in contact and talk about them. He is engaged to wife #3, I was #1 and he thinks being in love again has opened his heart to his past loving feelings.

Our table, on a lovely restaurant patio, was draped with a sheaf of extra-long, peach-colored French tulips tied in a green satin ribbon. I’m shocked that he looks so good. Justice is only a concept.

I listen to his tales of the past 30 years. He tells me the punchline of every funny thing he’s said, the women he’s fucked, the affair he had with his first cousin, Sharon. Of course I remember her, I nod. The men he’s fucked in business, his triumphs big and small. I listen to stories about his mother, father, brother. He never asks about me, my family, or even if my parents are still alive.

He was sorry he hadn’t contacted me earlier. His second marriage was so painful, he complained. I guess he doesn’t think ours was. Or the pain was all mine. He didn’t hear me scream because he’s the master screamer. He thinks we were young kids in love, just unable to cope with the bad luck of my near-fatal illness. How glad he is to see me alive. He doesn’t want to understand how toxic he is.

He even thinks we had good sex. “I remember one time...” he says something about seeing a hallucination on the wall above our bed. I remember all the times as the same event, same touch, same place, same sequence.

I watch him cry in public, telling me he knows he was bad, exploded in tantrums, shamed me in front of anyone I cared about, or our doorman or the maître d' at any chic restaurant. He summarizes my torture to himself by saying he was possessive, please forgive him. He’s had a lot of the therapy he wouldn’t do when I begged him to. He’s changed now. He brings flowers.

I listen to how he made $18 million in real estate in the 80’s and then lost it when the tax laws changed. He got stuck with worthless property. He thanks me for validating him. He cries again. I was so smart and pretty and wise and graceful, he says, that if I’d accepted him, he must have been ok. I smile prettily and gracefully and wisely.

I see that I could kill him, right now. I could. With a few sentences of my truth, I could change his past and curse his future, because we are there to absolve his guilt and bless his third marriage. I could say, as I dunk my bread into olive oil, that I married him on the rebound and gave him my virginity, at 23, only because I was tired of it. He got my fidelity until I was 29, and only then did I find out what real sex was. I could poison him with three little words: size does matter. That no matter who has been his partner, he’s only had sex with himself.

I could tell him that living with him was the lethal source of my near death. I could say, with venom that our reunion has been all about him, that he hasn’t changed at all, he’s still an insecure, selfish, narcissist baby hoping possessions will make up for his emptiness. And even if I did, I still would not have sunk to his level. Finally, we stood up. I knew he wanted me to see whatever he was driving. I left the tulips on the table.