

For the most part I think 1979 was not a bad year. And being 9 years old is, generally speaking, not a bad age to be. I was in scouts. I still got along with my mom. So it's not likely that I just imagined it. And there's no reason for me to make it up. Because things were fine.

I think we were at Darren Wilson's house for a potluck, or some kind of party that didn't cost us any money, or require that anyone keep track of me. Darren lived like a block or two from Hadley Hospital, in a neighborhood full of huge Elm trees that made the houses look really small. It wasn't just the trees though. They had the best sidewalks in his neighborhood too. They were really wide, and totally smooth, the old kind of sidewalks. You could skid and fishtail on your bike, or skate, or whatever you wanted.

No one ever checked on us.

We were playing hide and seek, but no base, no tagging, that was bullshit. We were just running in the dark, with crazy trees. "Help me." I slunk off around a corner and up a weird little one-block street, my imagination turning a couple of odd sticks that I carried into bad-ass guns. "I can't see." She said, suddenly across the street from me. An old woman I wouldn't have noticed except that she was trying to walk on one of those great sidewalks, and sort of stumbling, and slipping down off the edge of the curb. "Help me. Please. I can't...see." She repeated. And held her hand up over her eye like so. Like she had a real bad headache. And it seemed like she didn't know where she was.

I was just a little kid.

I didn't tell anybody about it.

My mom called me recently, some twenty years later it is, and said that something strange and bad had happened. She said something had happened with my Grandma Grace.

A man found her one morning in the cab of a truck parked out by the highway. She'd walked barefoot, from her car across the dirt parking lot, in Kansas, in February, to get to the truck, to get help, or go to sleep, or whatever. The man who found her called the police who came and got her out of the truck, into their car, and down to the station, below the courthouse. After a few questions they went back to find her car, and she was afraid so they followed her home.

Apparently she had driven herself over to Hadley Hospital the night before, to the emergency room. No one could quite figure out why so they just sent her home. But she got lost in the Hospital parking lot. She couldn't find her way back to the car.

And that's where I'd seen her, around the corner from Darren's, twenty years earlier, asking for help. I don't know if she was in the wrong time, or if I was. And I don't know why.

My Grandma has glaucoma, which is why she holds her hand over her one eye now, like so. She reads all the time too, even though it gives her terrible headaches. Her friend Erna's son, who's a lawyer, says she ought to sue the hospital.

I think maybe she ought to just let it go.