

STRAWBERRY FIELDS

John Boston

My wife wanted to go, I didn't. As much as I love our Saturday morning family time, I just couldn't imagine spending it in the hot sun, picking strawberries. It was almost half an hour away. It was a nondescript strawberry patch in a giant field of corn. You paid a flat fee of fifteen dollars and got to pick as many strawberries as you could put in a giant bucket. My daughter was seven and thought this strawberry patch was the greatest thing since sliced bread. I guess that made it all worth it.

I parked the car and we all lumbered out and made our way over to the main gate. There were quite a few cars in the gravel parking lot. Picking strawberries was apparently the new in thing to do. Lots of expensive SUVs in the parking lot. Lots of people with money. Lots of people with more money than I will ever have.

I pay the rather salty-looking gentleman at the gate and he hands us a red bucket with a big NORTHVIEW FARMS written on it. Underneath it asked us to return the bucket. Of course, if we return the bucket.....*what the hell do we put the strawberries in?* Maybe he meant to return it when we were done with it on our next trip. I don't really know.

I certainly was no expert on strawberries. I figured if it looked like it was ready to be picked, we picked it. Not exactly rocket science. My wife and daughter weren't just enjoying the moment, *they were relishing it.* We quickly separated. I kept up with them, staying behind, but not too far behind. My daughter looked back and made sure I was within spitting distance. Once she knew I was ok, she quickly went back to madly picking and filling her shiny red bucket. My wife convinced her that we needed to go to an open area, one where there were no other pickers. An area all to ourselves, where we could fill up our bucket and be left alone. So, that's exactly what we did. We distanced ourselves from the rest of the pack. Pretty soon, we had a huge row all to ourselves. My daughter was eating the berries and putting the remains back in the bucket. Sort of eliminating the middleman so to speak. My wife was busy snapping pictures on her phone. These are the moments we cherish forever....or so I'm told.

It was the beginning of September. It should have been hot. Maybe not hot, but at least warm. It couldn't have been more than 65 degrees. It was cloudy and I felt a few sprinkles on my head. I guess that's what caused most of the pickers to head back inside to the snack bar. It was quite a culinary delight, with warm apple cider, real strawberry pies, strawberry milk, you name it. I'd hate to be a diabetic and be in there. I don't really know what it was, the drizzle, the weather, or the fact that we were on the very edge of the property. They had planted corn for hundreds of acres around the strawberry patch. Not fully mature, but pretty close. I turned and realized that we were now one of just a handful of people left in the strawberry patch.

It was right then, that I knew something was wrong. Something was very wrong, like *two straight guys listening to Liberace type wrong*. It made the hair on the back of my neck stand up. I should have known what it was. I had my first one two years ago. If you've had one too, you know full well what I mean. *I was having another panic attack.*

Yup, they really happen. Not just to housewives looking for attention. They can happen to middle-aged insurance salesmen also. I actually thought I was having a heart attack. My co-workers called an ambulance and I was in the hospital fifteen minutes later. An hour or so later, a doctor came in who barely spoke English. He said my EKG and stress tests showed that my heart was fine. I had no chemical markers to indicate any heart trouble. He listened to my heart for more than ten minutes. The consensus was unanimous. I was not having a heart attack. Now, keep in mind, I was sitting at my desk and my heart rate at one point was over a hundred and eight beats a minute. It felt as if I had just been injected with some kind of drug. I could barely sit still. The physical part was only part of it, it was the mental condition as well. For several hours before, I just kept thinking to myself that I was going to be fired from the job that I had held for the last twelve years. It was ridiculous. My company had no reason to fire me or lay me off. I had just gotten a six-figure bonus two weeks before. I couldn't think straight or think clearly at all. My mind was just racing back and forth, from one extreme to another. Here I was, about to have another. This time, I was not going to let it get the better of me. I sat down and took a few IBUs. That seemed to take the edge off. I didn't want to say anything in front of my wife or daughter. I didn't want to ruin their day.

I read everything I could on panic attacks. They were rare in men, but certainly not unheard of. There was no confirmed cause. It was determined to be genetic. I would imagine the best way to describe it would be snorting a line of coke and being utterly terrified at the same time. It's like some part of you simply panics and the rest of your body follows suit. There was no rhyme or reason to any of it. They would strike hard, then simply disappear a few hours later. Those few hours were absolute hell. They are no joke and not to be taken lightly. I sat down on a bench and waved at my wife and daughter. I had a can of snuff in my pocket. I know I should quit. I know I should, but I never do. I can hide it from almost anyone. I chew the no spit kind, called snus. It's pretty much the same thing as a lozenge. My wife has no idea. I chew at work, in the car, pretty much anywhere. I popped one and sat back. It did help. I could feel my heart slow down some once the nicotine hit the receptors in my brain. Just sit down and this will pass. In the last two years, there have been other, much smaller attacks. I was able to just wait them out. You can't stop them, but you can control them. You can stop them from becoming full-blown and dangerous if you plan.

It's your mental state during the attacks that is most troubling. You really cannot think clearly or logically. You notice strange, seemingly trivial things you have never noticed before, like the kind of rims on the car next to you, or how no one nowadays has any grasp of the fundamentals of the English language whatsoever. This time, I was noticing how strange and surreal the people in the strawberry patch were. They seemed so shifty and out of place.

I noticed a woman, probably in her late fifties or early sixties, studying the strawberries. Picking them up and touching them, almost caressing them before she put them in her basket. The way she carried it made no sense. It was as if she were holding her baby, not a basket of strawberries.

There was another couple. Older than me, probably childless. They moved and acted like they were about to be caught doing something they weren't supposed to. What was all the secrecy for?

These people shouldn't be here. They aren't here to pick strawberries. I don't know what their real intentions are. They are hidden behind shifty eyes and broken smiles. Behind cheap clothes and perfume. Behind dark eyes and restless souls.

Someone behind me is talking very loudly on his cell phone. A rather "loquacious" type of individual. The kind of person who has an exaggerated sense of self-worth. Our eyes meet for a second and he turns his back to me.....and the rest of the world. How dare we interrupt his conversation. How dare we.

My wife and daughter walk over to me. The bucket is almost half full. I look at my watch. We've only been at it for less than 20 minutes. My daughter wants to try apple cider. It was practically calling to her in the field. I tell them to go ahead and to leave the bucket with me. My wife asks me if I'm alright. I give her a look. She ought to know better. She just smiles and takes my daughter away to the warm apple cider with an absurdly high sugar content. So, it's just me again. Sitting on this bench, watching all the hapless, deluded souls in this strawberry patch.

Monikers.....dribblers.....fallen angels. I'm looking at all of these people with a wariness I have not had before. They are all players on a stage, waiting for their lines. Without their lines, there is no point to them even existing. What am I then? Am I just a narrator or am I the playwright?

The same strange couple passes by me and gives me a look of heathen despair. I know not why their world has suddenly turned dark and gray. I suspect they do not know either.

I read once that humor is the best medicine. That is true of panic attacks as well. I can feel my heart beginning to race again. I can feel my body wanting to rebel against me. I don't know why it hates me. I try and take care of it. I don't drink. I'm not overweight. My only vice is the chew.

The strange woman with her basket of strawberries makes her way past me. She almost seems to be exaggerating her movements. Each step is graceful. Each motion leads into another. She almost seems to be dancing right in front of me.

I walk around. Not really going anywhere. Just making circles. I desperately want this trip to be over. I want to be back in my nice warm car, with my nice warm family, away from all this madness. Away from all these cavaliers and mind parasites. Away from their aloofness and despair. I am trying desperately to keep it together. I am fighting the urge to simply make a mad dash to my car, hop inside and lock the doors.

I turn and see someone step out of the giant cornfield. I assume he is a worker. Upon further examination, I don't believe this to be the case. He is a new character in our play. I am not certain of his role.

It's his face. His face is most abrupt and disturbing. I look around. I know I have to get out of here at once. I know the love of my family will save me. I just have to get to them.

I know I'm not making any sense at the moment. I know and I don't care. This is what a panic attack is like. It's like you suddenly realize the entire weight of mankind rests upon your shoulders. Billions of lives depend upon you doing the right thing, you just have no idea what that is.

I look down and see the strawberries are now massive, the size of oranges. The plants have grown to gargantuan proportions. Either I've gotten smaller, or they have gotten larger. Either way, I'm really starting to panic. I start walking towards what I believe to be the entrance. There is nobody. The rows and plants seem to go on forever. I can see giant bugs crawling on the leaves, daring me to stick my hand inside.

None of this is right. None of this should be happening. This isn't a panic attack.....this is something else entirely.

I'm scared now. Very, very scared. I'm six years old again and there's something under my bed. That strange man from the cornfield is following me. I give up and start running. I'm sprinting as fast as I can. I don't even know where I'm running to, but I know I have to get there in a hurry. I'm trying to outrun the fear itself. It's as if all of my fears and phobias have manifested themselves into a human form. I pass by the strange, very cold couple. I'm trying to talk, but no words come out. I look behind me and see the strange man coming towards me. He is so tall and thin.

The couple must think I'm daft. They leave me to my darkness. There is no way out of this strawberry patch. It just keeps going and going until it touches the horizon. All sanity has left. It's getting very dark. All of the warmth of this world has vanished and has been replaced by something else entirely. Something so cold and sinister it lacks an appropriate expression in English.

Tumultuous, stormy, upheaval, tempestuous, unruly. That is what the tall man symbolizes.

I realize this is hopeless. There is too much darkness. The tall man will get me too. It's futile.

I stop. I'm only about twenty feet from him. The strange woman carrying the basket is only a few feet away from us. She sees the strange man, but it is too late. I try to scream. I try to scream but this strange force overtakes me. I am paralyzed. I cannot move.

I watch the man take out a knife and plunge it into her. He puts his hand over her mouth and just keeps stabbing her. I try to close my eyes. I try to close my ears as well. The sound of the knife as it punctures her body is the most horrible sound I have ever heard. *This is what dying sounds like.*

It's over in seconds. The man walks over to me and puts the knife in my hand. He looks over and sees a spot of blood on his jacket.

"Bitch got a little blood on me," he said as he wipes it off.

I watch him disappear into the cornfield. He disappears a moment later as if he never existed. As if all of this was just a bad dream. Except, we have a dead woman on the ground next to me.

I don't know how long I stood there with the knife in my hand. It may have been minutes or it may have been hours. I hear a woman scream. I turn around and see some people running away. I'm not sure what is happening now. I feel somebody grab me and throw me to the ground. There are several people on top of me. I still cannot move. One of them takes the bloody knife out of my hand. We came out to pick strawberries. We had our lives destroyed.

The police arrive a short time later and arrest me. The woman was pronounced dead at the scene. My wife and daughter..... are just looking at me. They are both crying. I try to explain to them that it wasn't me. I could never do anything like this. I'm not a killer. I'm an insurance salesman. I'm not a killer.....*I don't even like onions.*

The police are very court and unprofessional with me during my interrogation.

"We just want to know what happened. Can you tell us anything?" asks one of the detectives.

"I told you. It was the man from the cornfield. He did it, not me."

"He just walks out of a cornfield, kills a woman in broad daylight, then disappears back into the cornfield? Does that make any sense? Even for a lunatic, that doesn't make any sense."

"But, that's what happened. Why would I kill this woman? I didn't even know her?"

"Did you even try to stop him? If what you're saying is true, why didn't you stop him?" asks one of the officers.

"I was too scared. I was having a panic attack. I wasn't thinking clearly."

"Yeah.....no shit amigo." said another officer. "You're telling us that you just stood there, while some guy murders this woman and you do nothing? Not a damn thing. You didn't even call 911! You didn't even try to help the woman. You are a worthless piece of shit!" said one of the officers.

"Hold on.....let's have a cop huddle." says one of the officers.

They all huddle up with their arms around one another.

"He might be a worthless piece of shit, but that doesn't make him a killer." says one of the detectives.

"You don't actually believe this him?" asks another officer.

"No one actually saw him kill her. We can't prove he's lying."

"We just can't prove it yet. Look at him! Just worthless. What kind of a man let's nice old woman be murdered right in front of him? The killer does, that's who!"

"Other than the knife, we don't have any evidence. We need more than just the knife." says one of the officers.

"You know, the real tragedy in all this is that his poor daughter is never going to want to pick strawberries again. I almost wish we charge him just for that."

All of the cops nod their heads in agreement. It was as if this nightmare was never going to end. Finally, they took the handcuffs off me and let me go, only to re-arrest me a few hours later.

"Don't go too far shit head! Just cause we can't charge you right now, doesn't mean you're a free man. All we need is just one more piece of evidence and your ass is mine!" snarled one of the cops as I walked by.

I nod my head in agreement. I don't know what else I can do. It is only my fingerprints on the murder weapon. I sit in a jail cell for hours. Nobody even asks me if I am hungry. I wasn't, but it still would have been nice if someone asked. My panic attack has passed.....maybe a better word would be *interrupted*. I knew it was not over. Not by a long shot. I'm sitting in this jail cell. It is just concrete. Everything in here is made out of concrete. There is a table and a chair. They are both made out of concrete. What kind of a depraved mind could think of something like this? Furniture should be made out of wood and love. Not concrete. I'm not an animal. I am a human being. I know what vowels sound like and what ice cream tastes like. Animals don't know these things. They don't even care where they poop.

There is no clock in here. The cops took my watch when I was arrested. I just keep thinking of that horrible man. That evil, sick, twisted little man who caused all of this. He should be in this concrete torture chamber, not me. I didn't hurt anyone. I'm not a killer. I sell insurance for a living. I drive an SUV. I can only hope the cops will believe my story. I'm getting sleepy now. Very sleepy. Maybe when I wake up, I will be back home in my bed, with my lovely wife. I can only imagine what she's going through at the moment. Poor little wifey. All she ever wanted was to be loved. That's all most women want. If you ever meet a woman who doesn't want to be loved, dump her, I don't care how gorgeous she is. She might be gorgeous on the outside, but she is not gorgeous on the inside. My wife is my best friend. Without her, I'd be some lonely single loser waiting for their life to begin.

I'm so tired, I just want to fall asleep. It's dark outside and my cell is so cold. They gave me a blanket. I'm sure it's gross, but I have no choice. I'm starting to shiver. I have to bring my core temperature up. I just want this nightmare to be over. I just wish I had never taken the family to that damn strawberry patch.

I'm not sure how long I was out, but it must have been a while. The jail is serving breakfast. As long as it's not strawberries, I'll eat it. I haven't eaten anything all day. Cops never did ask me if I was hungry. It's like they didn't even care.

I'm just about to eat when this deputy comes in and tells me I have been released. I can't believe it! I asked him if he was joking.

"I don't joke," he says and pushes me out of the cell.

I'm out of that horrible jail about twenty minutes later. My wife is waiting for me. She throws her arms around me. She is sobbing. I'm sobbing too. This whole situation sucks, I mean it really, really sucks. The worst part is, the real killer just walked away.

"I was having a panic attack. I just froze. I watched him kill her right in front of me and I was too scared to stop him."

She doesn't even care at this point. I find out the District Attorney isn't going to charge me, at least not yet. I had to post bail, but they didn't charge me with murder. I can't believe it. I know I shouldn't be too excited. The DA can still file charges any time he wants to.

My wife says she has hired a lawyer. That's good, I'm going to need one. I could use a tailor as well, none of my clothes ever seem to fit. I can just imagine going into that courtroom in front of a bunch of people I don't even know and the first thing they see is me and my clothes that don't fit. I wouldn't stand a chance. I need to find a good tailor. It is literally a matter of life and death.

I was ruined in our town. My face was everywhere. Everyone thought I was guilty. No one could understand how I could just stand right there and not do anything. I was on TV. I broke down and told everybody that I was having a panic attack and that I had no control over my body. Didn't matter. I was convicted by the media. We had to move out of state. We lost our house and our life savings. All because I froze that day. Just a few seconds of my life ruined the rest of the seconds I will have. I screwed up. I knew that if I didn't find the real killer, I was as good as done.

The DA knew getting a conviction was risky. He had just lost his previous two murder trials and it had cost our county a whole bunch of money they didn't have. He must have interviewed over a hundred people who were at that farm that day. There was only one person who says they saw the man I described. Just one out of a hundred. I know they saw him because they described the exact same outfit I had described to the cops. No way could we both describe the same thing unless he was really there. Later that week, another worker on the farm said they might have seen a suspicious-looking person get into a car on the edge of the parking lot. I know had two witnesses on my side.....maybe it was more like one and a half, but it was a start. It wasn't the murder that got me in trouble. I think people could accept that I didn't kill that woman, it was the fact that *I didn't do one goddamn thing to stop him from killing her.*

I tried to explain to the cops that it all happened so fast, I didn't have time to react. It was over in less than twenty seconds.

One of the cops reached over and smacked me. I had never been smacked by a police officer before. It was kind of erotic.

"Jesus, he put the knife in your hand! You knew you were going to be charged, you had to have known that, you're not stupid. So, why didn't you follow him? Why? You want to know why? Cause he never existed, that's why!"

"I had never witnessed a murder before. It was the most horrible thing I have ever seen. I'll do better next time." I said and instantly regretted it.

"Next time! What do you mean next time?"

"If I ever see someone about to get murdered again, I won't screw it up next time."

The cop reached over and smacked me again.

"Could you please stop hitting me?" I ask.

His superior motions for him to stop. He leans over me and gets right up in my face.

"I honestly don't know if you killed her or not. I'm fifty-fifty on this one. I'd like to be sure before I recommend charges to the DA." he said.

I pointed out that none of the arresting officers even bothered to look for the real killer. He could have just walked over to the snack bar and ordered one of those delicious apple ciders. No one would even have known they were selling apple cider to a homicidal maniac.

The cops all leave the interrogation room and come back a few minutes later. I can tell by the looks on their faces that they did not get the news they wanted.

"You're lucky. We just spoke to our DA. He says he needs more evidence. You're free to go. The only thing we can charge you with is elderly abuse. Fucking elderly abuse. Unbelievable. I wouldn't go too far if I were you. There's big knuce around your neck and it's only going to get tighter from here on in."

I know they think I am a killer. I also know I have to find the real killer. I have to find them on my own. I called the owner of the strawberry patch and pleaded my case with him. I told him I wanted to see all of his employees. He said no. I pointed out that if the real killer were found, it would go a long way to making things right with the victim's family.

"Maybe they already did find the killer. The guy who was standing over her dead body with a bloody knife in his hand!" he said and hung up the phone.

This was going nowhere. It had been days since my wife and I had been intimate. I was a hobbled man, but still a man with needs. I was also terrified that the killer would come after my family. I told my wife she should start carrying a gun. I also knew my wife didn't really believe me. I mean she wanted to, but you could tell she just didn't believe I was innocent and that's what ate me up the most inside. She wasn't a bad wife or anything. I just don't think she was prepared to accept the fact that she might have had children with a murderer. They are the worst kind of people. The scum of the earth. The worst of the worst.

My daughter had it bad as well. I didn't know what to say to her, except for the fact that I didn't do any of these terrible things. I feel bad for her. The most innocent always seem to suffer the worst. Being innocent and naïve isn't a crime. I'm glad she isn't aware of how horrible this world could be. It isn't easy to digest at any age, let alone being a child and having to come to grips with it.

I knew my only way out of this was to catch the killer myself. I just had no idea where to start. I waited until the strawberry patch was closed, then walked around the area where the woman was killed. I went into the cornfield. It led down a dirt road. I have no idea where it went, but it would be a great escape route. My stomach was in knots. My wife and I hadn't been intimate since this whole nightmare began and I had no idea how to go about it. I knew I should just let her make the first move, but that may not be for a while.....a very long while.

Maybe I should just accept this and move on. Maybe I should run away and join the circus. I could be a clown.....*or maybe just clean up clown shit all day.* At this point, I didn't care. I was a floating cereal flake in a giant bowl, going nowhere. My life had taken a detour down a road that led to a dead end. That evil man may have just killed me too.

I decided to talk to a shrink. They are called "therapists" nowadays. It has less of a sting than the word shrink, but it's the same thing. I lay on his couch and tell him everything that has happened to me. He just says nothing and continues to take notes.

"Doctor.....I came face to face with evil and froze. Am I less of a man because of it?" I ask.

"No, you just did what anyone would do in that situation. Until each of us has been in the same situation, we would have no right to judge your behavior," he replied.

"I guess, but I didn't do anything. I just froze. Maybe if I had tried to help her, she might have survived. She seemed so happy picking those damn strawberries."

"Well, what's done is done. You can't go back in time and change it."

"Sometimes I wish I were more of a man. My life is defined by my shortcomings, rather than my strengths if you know what I mean."

"You know, I once had sex with my cousin. Does that make me any less of a man?" said the shrink.

"Well, I hardly think screwing your cousin and not saving someone's life are in the same league as one another."

"Really? Well, you haven't met my cousin."

I never did as if his cousin was a boy or girl. I didn't even care. I just wanted to get out of there and back home to the loving arms of my wife. Back where the dark man cannot get to me. Back to some kind of normal, whatever that is.

I got some bad news a few months later. The DA who decided not to prosecute my case lost the election, in part because of my case. Many people wanted to see me charged with something, not just elderly abuse.

He took office in January and exactly one week later, the cops showed up at my door with an arrest warrant. I was going to be charged with the woman's murder.

I hugged my wife and daughter goodbye. I knew it might be the last time I can do that for quite a while. The detectives led me away in handcuffs. I kind of knew this day would come. I held my head up high. I walked out to the car like a man.

The trial came a few months later. I was put on house arrest, so at least I could spend the time with my family. I doubted I would be found innocent.

Each day I spent with my family, I knew I could never see them again. I was just burning down minutes on the clock. The last week before the trial was the worst. I received permission to leave the city to spend more time with my family before the trial. We went to Disneyland together as a family. I broke down and sobbed on the night before my trial began. It was so hard to have to say goodbye to them. My wife and I made passionate love that evening. I fell asleep in her arms. I knew I would never last in prison. I would be the guy that hung himself in his cell. I knew I had to talk to my daughter, but all I did was hold her head and rock her to sleep. I barely slept that night. I put on my suit and headed to court the next morning.

The case was simple, yet at the same time, it wasn't. I was caught standing over the body of a dead woman, with the murder weapon in my hand. That was their case, open and shut. They rested after three days of testimony.

My lawyer countered with the fact that I had never had any trouble with the law before that day. *I've never even gotten a speeding ticket.* I had absolutely no reason whatsoever to kill this woman. None of this made any sense.....at all. Both of the shrinks who interviewed me said I was perfectly fit to stand trial and exhibited none of the symptoms of the characteristics of a psychopath. My savior turned out to be a farm employee, in fact, two farm employees who said that the day before, they had seen the evil man snooping around a barn, right behind the cornfield where he emerged. Best of all, they both reported to the police that he was wearing the same yellow raincoat I had described to them when I was arrested. She then interviewed both detectives who admitted that they never even bothered to investigate this important lead. I could see the looks on the juror's faces. For the first time in months, I began to think I might really win this thing. She then interviewed a farmer who owned a huge field down the street from the strawberry patch. He said that he had caught a homeless man camping on his property only two days before the murder. Sure enough, this guy was wearing the same bright yellow raincoat.

I then decided to take the stand in my own defense. It was risky, but I fully believed that if you are innocent of the crime, you should get up there and defend yourself. I broke down as I told the court how I panicked that day. How I will never forgive myself for not stopping him. How I feel partially responsible for the woman's death, but I absolutely did not kill the woman. Her real murderer got away and is probably out killing some other poor bastard right now as we speak. My attorney sat back down and the prosecutor stepped up to the plate.

He grilled me for over an hour and just kept asking me the same question: If I didn't kill her, why didn't I try to help her? I told him I just froze. That was my crime and that is what I am guilty of. Charge me with that, not her murder, I didn't plunge the knife into her. I knew at the end of our exchange that I had won. He sat back down and looked very defeated.

The case then went to the jury for deliberation.

It wasn't more than fifteen minutes after the jury went into deliberations that my attorney got a phone call. The DA wanted to deal. I plead guilty to first-degree manslaughter. I would be sentenced to ten years, eligible for parole in four. My attorney countered with second-degree manslaughter with a term of 3 to six years. I could be out in as little as 20 months.

As much as I hated to plead guilty to something I didn't do, I also knew how horrible our legal system is. 20 months is a hell of a lot better than serving the rest of my life in prison for a crime I didn't do. I knew I had to act fast. Thankfully in this state, the jurors were forbidden to know about any plea deals going on. I decided to say screw it. I'm not going to spend a day in prison for a crime I didn't do. I know it is risky, even stupid. But I am a man of principle. I told him no deal. I'm walking out of that courtroom a free man. Turns out I made the right decision. The jury returned a verdict an hour later. I have never been so nervous in my life. I squeezed my attorney's hand so hard, I thought I was going to crush it.

"On count one, murder in the first degree: how does the jury find?" asked the judge.

"We the jury find the defendant not guilty of murder in the first degree." said the jury foreman.

I broke down and began to sob. I hugged my attorney for what seemed like an eternity.

I was found guilty of elderly abuse, which is only a misdemeanor. The prosecutor was floored. He had never lost a case before, not once in almost fifteen years. I hugged my wife. I was free to go and free I went. I let my wife go downstairs ahead of me to get the car. There were a lot of reporters outside. I apologized to the husband of the dead woman.

"I'm very sorry for your loss. I'll help you in any way I can." I said.

He just looked at me and smiled. Poor man, he must have been through so much. I think he knew I was innocent as well.

I took the elevator down with my attorney and her boss. At the last minute, a man jumped into the elevator. I was talking to my attorney. It happened so fast I didn't have time to react. He turned around so quickly and slashed at the other lawyer's throat. He grabbed his throat and dropped to the floor in the elevator. He pushed me out of the way and then slashed my attorney's face. She was screaming for him to stop. He then turned and looked right at me. It was him. The same evil man from that day in the cornfield. *Same shitty haircut and glasses. The same sick, twisted grin on his face. He looked like an evil cartoon character.*

"Hey bud, did you miss me?" he asked with his face covered in blood.

I didn't freeze this time. I grabbed the knife out of his hand and shoved him as hard as I could towards the back of the elevator. He managed to hack away part of my fingers. I was shooting blood everywhere. I kicked him as hard as I could, right in his nuts. It only seemed to energize him.

"Got a little fight in you this time," he said.

I kicked him again, this time he collapsed on the floor. I took the knife out of his hands and kicked him in the face. I thought I may have killed him. I tried to help the rest of the people in the elevator. I didn't even realize the door had opened. I turned and saw several people looking at me. I must have looked like something out of a horror movie. I was covered in blood from head to toe. Even worse.....*I was holding the goddamn knife in my hand.*

Sure enough one of the detectives who arrested me was right in front of the elevator. He drew his weapon and shot me three times. That's pretty much it. Now I'm dead. It's not too bad being dead. I don't have to worry about paying my mortgage or getting cancer. No, things are a hell of a lot easier when you're on the other side looking in. The thing that really chaps my ass, is the fact that the killer got away with it! He just pretended to be one of the victims as well. My attorney survived, but she couldn't recall much. She wasn't sure if I was the killer or not. My wife has moved on as well. She's with some new guy now. I guess it's for the best. No one really seems to miss me very much and that's the worst part. I want to be missed. I know my daughter misses me.

I still don't know why this guy decided to target me. I have no idea. I'd love to know what I did to piss him off. Someone told me later, that there never was an evil man at all, that I did all those horrible things myself. I don't know whether I should believe him or not. For the time being, I'm going to just ignore him. I'm going to try and give this whole *being dead thing* a real try. Who knows? I might actually like it!