

FATHERSONFATHER

EVAN JACOBS



Chapter 1

STAT

Jeff Corman heard the flat voice over the loudspeaker say, “Room 14-B, stat.”

Jeff was looking for an information desk. Doctors and nurses were walking around. They were talking to each other. None of them seemed terribly busy for two thirty on a Thursday morning.

“Excuse me,” he asked a woman behind the information desk when he finally found it. “Can you tell me where William Corman is?”

The woman looked at him. Her face was blank.

“I’m his son.”

Jeff began to reach into his pocket. He was going to show her his driver’s license.

“He’s in room 14-B.” The woman took out a name badge for him. She filled it out.

“Didn’t they just call that room number over the loud-speaker?” Jeff was confused.

“Yeah.”

“They said room 14-B, stat. What does *stat* mean?”

“Emergency.” The woman handed Jeff the name badge.

Jeff sighed and took the badge. He put it on and headed to his father’s room. The woman at the desk might have told him which direction to go. But he didn’t hear her.

This is bad way to begin my junior year, he thought.

Tomorrow was the second day of the school year. And what a year it was going to be. He had seven classes. He wanted to run for student government as the junior class representative. And he was president of the Key Club. Its members helped people in the community.

Jeff was going to make the most of this school year. He would show whatever colleges he applied to that he was their man.

Chapter 2

NOT SUPPOSED TO BE LIKE THIS

Jeff's dad, William, had been sleeping a lot lately. He had a routine. He would get up, shower, dress, and then take a nap. After that he would run a few simple errands, watch TV, and then nap again in the afternoon. Then he would make dinner, or they would go out to eat. He went to bed around nine.

Each night Jeff could hear his dad getting up to use the downstairs bathroom in their small two-story house. Jeff and his dad both used to occupy the upstairs bedrooms. Last year his dad had moved downstairs. Walking up and down the stairs had become too difficult for him.

His dad had Parkinson's disease and his shaking was also worse. His movement had slowed as well. Having diabetes plus a heart condition from thirty years of smoking didn't help. The last five years had all been downhill.

His dad had “gone away” a week before school started. Not physically, but mentally.

They had been sitting in the living room. They were talking about Jeff’s schedule for the upcoming semester. Out of nowhere, Mr. Corman stopped talking. He just stared at Jeff, not responding.

“AP Chemistry is gonna suck,” Jeff had repeated.

Nothing.

His dad continued to stare at him. Then he began to nod off.

Jeff thought his blood pressure might be low. He gave his dad some food.

That did the trick.

His dad took a nap shortly thereafter and seemed fine. But Jeff wanted him to see his doctor.

“What is he gonna do for me?” Mr. Corman had asked.

Everything was fine for the rest of the week.

Chapter 3

NEW NOT NORMAL

Just two hours before going to the hospital, Jeff was awake, working on an honors English assignment.

He had always been a night owl. He always felt he was different. He figured it probably had something to do with his parents having him as older adults. His dad was forty-nine and his mom was thirty-nine when he was born. People always thought his parents were his grandparents.

He thought he was average looking: tall, dark brown hair, hazel eyes. He seemed to wear the same clothes as everybody else. Jeff didn't think he stood out in any way. He hoped to change that as president of the Key Club. He wanted to be a leader in the community.

When Jeff got to high school, in addition to an always-busy course load, he had to take care of his father more. This didn't help his night owl tendencies. Jeff found it

was easier to get work done when his dad was resting or asleep.

That night, Jeff had just gotten ready to go to bed.

Then there was a knock on the front door.

Jeff's dad had mentioned he'd seen blood several times when he used the toilet. He didn't talk much about his health. His dad would sometimes mention an ailment. He would tell Jeff if he felt dizzy. But Jeff wasn't in the loop as far as his dad's medications. His dad didn't talk to him about his numerous doctor's appointments.

Jeff went downstairs.

"Were you the one who called 9-1-1, sir?" Jeff heard an unfamiliar voice ask.

"Dad?" Jeff couldn't believe what he was hearing. His first thought was that maybe somebody had tried to break into their house.

"It's okay," his dad said as he led two muscular men into the living room. Jeff stared at their uniforms. He saw the equipment they held and realized they were paramedics.

They started to check Jeff's father out. They checked his pulse. Then his blood pressure. They asked him some questions.

Jeff's dad was calm. He almost seemed relieved.

It finally dawned on Jeff that his father must have felt awful. The earlier loss of blood and fading out of conversations had scared him enough to call 9-1-1 for help.

Jeff wondered why his father hadn't called him.

Before he could think more about it, a stretcher was wheeled into the house.

“We’re gonna lift you up, okay, sir?” one of the EMTs said. “We can’t have you climb on. It’s a safety issue.”

They lifted Jeff’s dad onto the stretcher. He was wearing an oxygen mask now.

They started wheeling him out of the house. Jeff felt like they were taking him away forever. He walked with them. He knew where the hospital was. They’d gone there when his mom was sick, before she passed away.

“I’ll meet you there, Dad.” They looked at each other.

“Okay,” his father said.

Jeff noticed the ambulance. There was also a fire truck. *So many first responders*, he thought.

A few neighbors were watching the scene from their windows. A younger couple stood outside.

In moments, Jeff’s dad was inside the ambulance. The doors closed and it drove off.

“So I just go to the hospital?” he asked one of the firefighters, who was standing on the front lawn.

“Yeah,” he said.

Jeff quickly walked back inside. He was alone. He heard the fire truck start up.

As Jeff got his wallet and keys, he thought, *This isn’t happening. This isn’t happening. Dad handles all his own medical stuff. He’s done it since Mom died. I help around*

the house and run errands, but that's about it. What if he's really going downhill? What then?

Jeff started up his car and headed to the emergency room. He felt sick. And he couldn't shake the feeling that he would be seeing a lot more of the hospital.

Chapter 4

ICU

Jeff sat in room 14-B. He thought he might feel stronger if all this was happening in the middle of the school year. Somehow, he felt being halfway through would make things easier to handle.

It was an hour later. His dad had just asked about being released.

“You’re blood levels are serious,” a nurse said.

The nurse looked at Jeff.

“I can bring your things tomorrow, Dad. You want me to bring your iPad?”

“No.” His dad stared vacantly at Jeff.

After talking for a little longer, the nurse left them alone.

“Why didn’t you ask me for help? I could’ve driven you here.” Jeff hoped he didn’t sound mad.

“I didn’t want to bother you.” His dad looked at him, then he looked away again.

They chatted for a little bit. Jeff didn’t really know what to say. He was trying to be positive.

“They said they’re going to give you some blood transfusions.” Jeff squeezed his dad’s hand. “That will make you feel a lot better. You’re blood levels are bad. It’s probably why you haven’t felt well lately.”

Jeff didn’t want to remind him about how he’d “gone away.”

He could see his dad was tired.

“Why don’t you rest? I’ll come by before zero period in a few hours.”

“Okay.” His father yawned.

Jeff hugged him.

“I love you, Dad.”

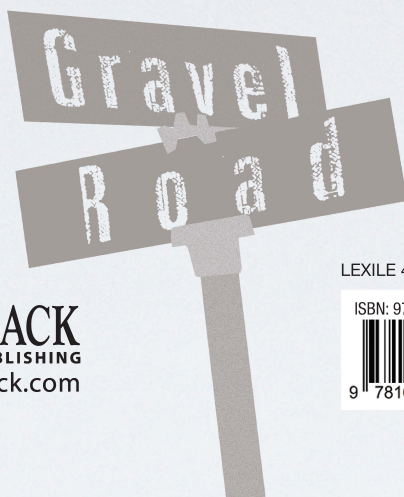
“I love you too.”

When Jeff was far down the hall, he looked at his watch. It was just after four in the morning. If he were lucky, he would get a little sleep before he had to go to school.

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“I always say, no matter how bad you think things are, if everybody in this room put their problems on a table, you’d take yours back.”

I don't think that's true at all. I wouldn't wish this on anyone.



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