



Mother's Day, May 12th 2002, early in the morning and Steve is winding his way down Highway 5 and he is in a melancholy mood and reflecting on all the joy that he and his mother had shared on mother's day. Steve had already set the route in his mind that he was going to travel today but when he saw the exit that was now coming into view, he pulled his motorcycle off to the side of the road and he comes to a stop. Sitting there, he looks up at the exit sign and he knows where this road will lead him.

He looks at the ground and he takes a deep breath. Just sitting here, in the early morning, with the sun just rising and now coming into view in his rear views mirrors he feels the old memories come back. Toss a coin, throw a rock, do something, not even a car for a distraction, just that damn exit sign looming in the distance like a messenger bringing bad news. Do I or don't I? Do I go straight and forget or do I head down that road of heartache again? Steve sits there, with one foot on the ground as he pushes his gloved hands together. How can a stretch of road and a sign evoke such emotion, after all, it is not human, just asphalt and metal.

Steve looks down at the side of the road and the wildflowers growing there and he thinks back to how his mother loved to get flowers from him. Just the simplest little wildflower and she would be all smiles. Steve smiles as he thinks back on this and he realizes that not all the memories were bad. Alright, time to go, burning daylight, the days a-wasting and all that movie jargon Steve thinks to himself as he pulls back on to the road and he increases his speed as he passes the sign and he takes the exit.

Behind him, the sun is rising and he races down the road trying to beat the sun on its rapid ascent, as he turns right at the four-way stop. In the distant and growing ever-closer are the twin radio towers from that Old Portuguese radio station that graces the cover of the Raised on Radio album and before Steve knows what he is doing he pulls into the empty parking lot and stops. He takes off his helmet then he sits it on the mirror and he gets off and stretches. He stands in the parking lot with his hands on his hips and he

starts up the walk, this place has seen better days and times he thinks. I should have bought it when I had the chance he thinks.

He walks around the building, stretching his legs, looking at the towers and letting the sun catch up to him. So many memories associated here also, Steve picks up a rock and tosses it across the parking lot as he continues around the building. This place is like where three rivers come together, the three rivers for me would be, my childhood, Journey and my mom Steve thinks. As a child, he would stand in awe and look at the twin radio towers that would seem to be standing guard over the station, telling his mother that someday, it would be his. Then years later, he would make a stab at buying it and then Journey using it on the album. Steve bends down and picks up a blade of grass and he folds it and he blows through it and he smiles when it makes a whistling sound. Now that is something that I haven't done in a long time he thinks as he drops it back to the ground and he looks at the building.

“Nice to see you again old friend, I doubt if you would remember me. We both have changed. So much has happened to both of us over the years. You and I have weathered a lot but even though we are different, there is one thing about us that remains the same. “

Steve turns at that moment, he walks back to the motorcycle, he gets on it, he reaches for his helmet, and he puts it on.

“We're both still standing aren't we old friend”

Steve smiles as he lowers the visor and then he starts the motorcycle. Glancing one last time he roars out of the parking lot, spraying gravel, as he turns and heads up the road toward Hanford.

It is still very early and a Sunday so there is very little traffic as Steve slows as he enters Hanford proper. A dog runs across the road ahead of him as Steve comes to a stop at the stop sign. Steve looks around at the still sleeping town and he thinks how little it has changed as he continues up the brick lined streets of the main drag. As Steve passes the stores on either side of the road he sees a much younger version of himself riding his bike, walking on the sidewalks, going into the drug store to buy candy and then later into the record store and soon, coming up on his right is the street where he grew up.

Steve makes the slow right hand turn onto 7th Street and he stops across the street from where his boyhood home used to be. Gone now. Gone for years by now. Gone in the name of progress. Hanford needed to expand, and so they decided to tear down the oldest houses first and Steve's boyhood home was a casualty. In his mind's eye, he can still see the little white house,

with the fence and the front yard, lined with rose bushes that his mother was so proud of and even years after of his family moving out of the house his mom would still come back to look at it. Sitting there, Steve still remembers the phone call he got on another sunny Sunday morning from his mother, frantic and near tears. Steve thought that something had happened to his father and he could barely get it out of her what was wrong.

“Mom! Mom! Calm down! Tell me what happened! Dad! Is Dad alright!”

Finally she took a deep breath and said,

“It’s gone. All gone Stephen.”

Steve felt the hair rise up on the back of his neck as he stumbled backwards into a chair.

“Who’s gone Mom?”

“The house! The house where you grew up! They tore it down! Oh Stephen! That house was a part of the family! Now it’s gone.”

Steve closed his eyes, he covered his face with his hand, he finally took a breath and he found himself smiling.

“Mom, I know how much that house meant to you. I love you and I will be out there for dinner, okay?”

“I love you too.”

Thinking back on that long ago conversation he has to smile and he thinks how the littlest things makes us stop and think. Steve turned the motorcycle and looking back over his shoulder at the building he started back up the road and he made a right turn.

At the stop sign, Steve steals a glance at his watch, almost 9:00, as he rides through town he notices the town start to come alive. People coming out of their houses to get the Sunday paper and people leaving to go to church, a few others walking their dogs. Now a motorcycle, even in Hanford is not an unusual thing so few people glance his way and Steve doubts that they would recognize him even if he was not wearing the helmet but Hanford is still a small town and as people now begin to pass him, they wave. The closer Steve gets to the end of town the more the rural aspects begin to take over. Now Steve begins to see the farm workers in their trucks start their day. The dust from the gravel roads leaving smoke trails in the air.

Steve is in no hurry as he enjoys the sunny day and as he allows the memories to come back to him. He plods along, thinking back on a much younger Steve and the town he came from. Thinking how things could have been so different in his life if it had not been for his mother and her encouragement, how he wanted to quit, stop singing and stop trying to pursue his dream. So lost in thought he passes a small diner and then he realizes that he is hungry so he makes u-turn and he goes back and he stops in the parking lot.

At first, Steve does not think they are open but then he sees the sign and he turns off the bike and he takes his helmet off and places it on the mirror. He stands up and he takes his gloves off he runs his fingers through his hair, trying to do something with it. He stuffs his gloves in his pockets as he goes up the sidewalk and he pulls fifty cents out of his pocket and puts it in the newspaper machine and he pulls one out. As Steve walks into the diner, his suspicions were true that he would be the only one in attendance, so choosing a place to sit is not difficult, he picks a booth by the window. He opens the paper as the waitress offers him a menu and Steve looks at her.

“Oh, I just want a cup of coffee and one of those muffins.”

Steve nods in the direction of the muffins that rest on the counter. The waitress disappears for a few minutes and then she returns with a cup of coffee and a muffin on a plate.

“Anything else I get for you?”

“No, I think this will do it for now. Thanks.”

She turns and she begins to walk off then she stops and comes back to the table.

“You’re not from around here, are you?”

She asks as she smiles at him and Steve laughs.

“What gave you that idea?”

Steve asks as he drinks some coffee.

“Because I know all the regulars and you, aren’t one of them mister.”

Steve smiles as he says,

“Well, you are partly right. I was born here.”

“But you don’t live here, do you?”

She tilts her head at him.

“What makes you think that I don’t live here?”

Steve smiles up at her and she gestures to the motorcycle out in the parking lot.

“That is way too rich for a lot of people’s blood out this way.”

“It gets me from point A to point B. “

Steve says as she chews on the end of her pen and then she points it at him as she smiles.

“You know, you look familiar.”

Steve points to his chest.

“I look familiar, really?”

“Yeah, but I just can’t...”

She says just as the bell on the door behind her rings and she turns to see another customer come in. She takes one last look at Steve and then she goes to help the other customer.

Steve sits there, and drinks two cups of coffee and finishes the muffin and reads a good portion of the paper and customers come and go. Steve looks at his watch he reaches into his pocket. He leaves a tip, then grabbing the check, he goes up to the counter, and he hands it to the waitress.

“So how was everything familiar stranger”

She asks as she smiles at him and Steve registers surprise and he laughs.

“It was just fine.”

She hands him his change.

“My name is Karen by the way, nice to meet you.”

“I’m Steve and it’s nice to meet you too.”

At that moment, her eyes widen and she covers her mouth.

“Oh my god, you’re him! I knew I have seen you somewhere before! You’re really him!”

Steve laughs and he leans into the counter.

“No, I used to be him now I am just me!”

Steve leans further over the counter, he takes the pad and pen out of her pocket, he writes something on it, and then he hands it to her.

“Happy Mother’s Day Karen, Steve Perry.”

By the time, she had raised her eyes from the pad Steve was gone and back on the motorcycle and roaring out of the parking lot. Steve was back on the road and just about eight miles ahead was Lemoore. Now there was more traffic on the road and Steve was trying to drive the speed limit but it was only eight short miles to Lemoore and soon Steve was slowly driving down the main street.

Stores were now just starting to open up for the Sunday shoppers and the people were out in force. Steve passed the intersection where his old High School was located and he looked at it as he drove by and he continued on until he almost ran out of Lemoore and at the next to the last intersection he made a left turn. He traveled a small distance until he came to a cul-de-sac and he slowed as he backed the motorcycle up into the driveway of a vacant house. Steve turns off the motorcycle, and he takes the helmet off and he rests it on the mirror.

In the afternoon sunlight, Steve looks across the street at the house. The first house that he had bought for his mother and the current owners have done a good job of keeping it up Steve thinks. The lawn is nicely manicured and the fence with the gate that has been painted recently. His mother’s rose bushes are thriving, as is the big tree in the front yard now green and heavy with leaves.

The house has a few changes, of course, a porch swing and a different coat of paint but it is still the same house. The house is a two story with an attached two-car garage, with the driveway in front of the house. The house numbers in shiny gold script. His mother loved this house but it took some convincing and a lot of wrangling on his part and being sneaky did not hurt either and this causes Steve to laugh.

~~~~~

*Hanford 1977 and Steve was underneath the sink in the kitchen and his dad Marv was standing next to the counter looking down at him.*

*“How’s it coming Steve?”*

*Marv asks as he hears Steve grunt underneath the sink.*

*“I think...that I almost got it! Okay! Okay! Now dad, turn on the water slowly.”*

*Marv reaches over and turns on the faucet just a little as Steve says from underneath the sink,*

*“A little faster.”*

*Marv reaches and turns the faucet on all the way and a few seconds later Marv hears Steve yell and the loud, metallic clang as Steve drops the wrench he was holding. Steve begins to kick his feet as he yells,*

*“Off! Turn it off!”*

*Marv jumps and he quickly reaches over, turns the faucet off then he bends down, and touches Steve on the knee.*

*“Steve, are you alright. Here let me help you out.”*

*Marv grabs Steve by the hand, he pulls him out from underneath the sink, and he tries not to laugh as Steve’s hair is plastered down to his head. His T-shirt, all the way down to his pants, is soaked. Steve wipes his eyes as his dad pulls him to his feet and Marv covers his mouth as he smiles.*

*“What happened?”*

*Marv asked as he hands Steve a towel and Steve wipes his face.*

*“Oh that stupid pipe! That whole elbow needs to be replaced a patch job just wont do it this time. What?”*

*Steve looks at Marv and Marv smiles at him.*

*“You should see yourself!”*

*Marv says as he laughs and Steve towel dries his hair and then he tosses the towel onto the counter and Steve runs his hands through his hair.*

*“Well thanks a heap dad!”*

*Marv puts his hands on Steve's shoulders and he shakes him a little.*

*"I truly do appreciate your help and speaking of messes; if we don't get this mess cleaned up your mother will kill us both!"*

*Marv says as they both look around at the tools, the water, and the assorted items they took out from underneath the sink that litters the floor but before they get chance to begin they hear the door that goes to garage open and they see Mary coming into to the kitchen. Mary, wearing a straw hat and gloves and carrying a basket of roses looks around at the state of the kitchen as she takes her hat off and sets the basket on the counter. She walks around the kitchen with hands on her hips as she looks at Marv and Steve.*

*"What are you two doing to my kitchen?"*

*Marv and Steve look sheepishly at one another but say nothing.*

*"Well don't both of you speak at once!"*

*Steve goes to her, he grabs her by the forearms, he spins her around, and he give her a hug and a kiss.*

*"Mom, mom have I told you today how beautiful you look!"*

*Marv laughs and Mary hits Steve on the arm then she puts her hands on either side of his head and she looks him in the eye.*

*"Stephen it's not going to work this time."*

*Then she kisses him on the forehead.*

*"Darn!" Steve says.*

*"Nice try son."*

*Marv says as he laughs.*

*"Stephen, I think you may have left some t-shirts here. Why don't you go and put on a dry shirt and I will fix us some lunch."*

*As Mary is talking Marv, tries to sneak passed her but she grabs him from behind by the belt and stops him.*

*"While your father cleans up this mess."*

*Marv stops and pulls Mary into a hug and Steve laughs as he starts towards the hall and he glances back at them over his shoulder.*

*“I’ll leave you two kids alone.”*

*Ten minutes later Steve and Marv were sitting around the table in the kitchen as Mary set a sandwich down in front of Steve and a glass of milk as Steve reached for a cookie that was sitting on a plate in the middle of the table.*

*“Stephen! Eat your sandwich first.”*

*“Aw mom!”*

*Mary tousles his hair as she walks by him and sits across from him.*

*“Steve thanks for helping with the plumbing this weekend. Now, what are you doing next weekend?”*

*Marv asks him as he laughs and Steve looks at him.*

*“Well dad I was hoping to meet some women! Why?”*

*“Because the roof needs some work.”*

*Marv winks at Mary.*

*“Gives me something to do while I wait to hear back from that band. Just so long as it isn’t that turkey ranch!” Steve says.*

*“What was the name of that band again?” Marv asks.*

*“Journey.” Steve answers.*

*“Ah right!” Marv snaps his fingers.*

*Steve drinks the rest of his milk and then he leans over to his dad.*

*“Dad, this house is falling apart! Why don’t you and mom move?”*

*Mary makes a face at them.*

*“Stephen this is your home. I love this house and there is nothing that a coat of paint can’t fix!”*

*Steve and Marv look at one another then Steve says as he counts them off his fingers one by one,*

*“Oh yeah mom, a coat of paint, a plumber, a roofer and an electrical contractor!”*

*“Stephen! It is not that bad! I am sure that you will hear from them, that band, Journey. I just know it! “*

*She reaches out and takes Steve by his hands and he leans forward.*

*“Mom, how can you be so sure? I mean, I have been trying for years and I get so close and then...” Steve pauses.*

*“What honey?” Mary asks.*

*“Something bad always seems to happen.”*

*Mary pulls on his hands.*

*“Stephen I know this time will be different. I can feel it. You will be famous! All your dreams will come true. You are so talented and they would be stupid to turn you down! Here! Give me their phone number! I will tell them myself!”*

*Steve looks over at Marv and they laugh.*

*“I can just see this now, this is Steve Perry’s mom, hire him because he is talented and because I said so! Mom, when I do become famous then I will buy a brand new house for you and dad. You two deserve it!”*

*Mary gets up and begins to collect the lunch dishes and she stands behind Steve with her hand on his shoulder.*

*“I don’t want a new house. I love this house just about, as much as I love you and your dad. No, no new house.”*

*She tugs on Steve’s hair then she finishes collecting the rest of the dishes and she goes back into the kitchen.*

*“Dad, can’t you do something, talk mom into moving?”*

*Marv leans closer to Steve.*

*“Steve, your mother is a very stubborn woman. That must be where you get it.”*

*Marv laughs and Steve pretends to be hurt.*

*“Me?”*

*“Yeah you, come on let’s go over to Matt’s and see if we can find an elbow for that sink.”*

*“Matt? Doesn’t he have a sister?” Steve says as he gets up.*

*Marv puts his arm around Steve’s shoulders and he pats him on the chest.*

*“Plumbing now, women later.”*

*“Aw dad.”*

*From that moment on, that seed of thought was planted in Steve’s head and every time he went over there to help work on some project with his stepfather Marv, the thought was growing taller than a sycamore tree in the summer. He never said anything to his mother about it because he would always get the same response from her so he kept it to himself. He knew someday that the time would be right.*

*Now too long after the plumbing incident Steve’s dream came true in the form of Journey, they beckoned and he went and for nine months and 197 cities later, they didn’t call it the Infinity Tour for nothing, in Steve’s mind there was no end in sight. State hoping, criss-crossing across the country, and overseas. That in itself being a new experience, finally seeing places that he had only read about in books. He would send home clippings and souvenirs and various things to his mother so his parents could travel with him in a sense.*

*When Steve finally landed back down to earth, he realized that he needed a place to live so he stayed with his folks until he bought a house and furnished it. Coming back to Hanford seem strange to Steve. He was suddenly known and every time he turned on a radio, he heard himself. He also heard from relatives that his mother was very proud and that she would pull relatives off of the street and make them get in her car and listen to the Journey 8 track she had playing in her car as they circled the block. Steve had to laugh but he was not surprised and it was funny as she was so right about things.*

*Steve had his house and Steve did not realize how close the other members of the band lived, but they lived within about five miles or so of each other. Steve and he even admitted this later, that he went a little wild with his money. A wild shopping spree, buying a certain kind of car he wanted etc. Steve even slipped Marv some money but he gave it back. Steve was home just long enough to unpack some things and then they were gone again.*

*Infinity rolled into Evolution and then they tumbled into Departure and it was 1980. The years, where did they go, Steve wondered. It only seemed like yesterday that he was back in Hanford, kicking around and now years later he was here, in this new place and new time with a new love in his life. He had leaped many hurdles but he had a feeling that bigger ones were yet to come.*

*Mother's Day 1980 and Steve drove to Hanford, dressed in his best stealth disguise, Steve was hoping he could take a chance and take his mother out for brunch and hopefully not be recognized by the populace at large. Yeah right, Steve thought to himself. Mars, Steve thought would be a safe bet for brunch, their reach does not extend that far, not yet anyway. Steve barely set foot in the house and he was grabbed by his mother into a bear hug.*

*"Here's my baby!"*

*She steps back at arms length, looks at him and she reaches up, and takes off his hat.*

*"I least I think this is my baby? Nice hat Stephen!"*

*Steve runs his hands through his hair.*

*"Mom, I am too old to be called a baby and the hat is supposed to be a disguise, sort of."*

*Mary cups Steve's face with her hands as she says,*

*"Oh Stephen, you will always be my baby."*

*Mary kisses him on the forehead as Marv comes into the room, Steve crosses the room, and they hug.*

*"Hey dad, how are you?"*

*"Well, well our son, the famous rock star!" Marv laughs.*

*Steve looks at the floor as he laughs then he puts his finger to his lips.*

*"Sssshhhh Dad, I am off duty today. It is Mother's Day! See I am dressed in my non-rock star civilian clothes!"*

*Steve opens his jacket and they laugh. Mary comes over and tucks a strand of hair behind his ear.*

*“Well you certainly look nice. Have you been eating and getting plenty of rest this time?”*

*“Mom, mom yes to all the questions!”*

*“How is Sherrie?” Marv asks.*

*“She is fine. She is with her mother today and so I wanted to take my first best girl out for brunch! Ready to go?”*

*“Honey, you aren’t going with us?”*

*Mary asks Marv as she slips her arm around his waist.*

*“No, I think this is mother and son quality time together. We will have our time together later.”*

*Marv rubs her arm, he kisses her, and Steve covers his eyes with his hand as he laughs.*

*“Oh brother, parents.” Steve says. Then he takes her by the hand and he wraps it over his arm.*

*“Your carriage awaits!”*

*Steve says as he turns her towards the front door and he turns his head and he winks at Marv, smiles, and Marv winks back knowingly.*

*Steve picked a restaurant that was up the coast a ways, hopefully, enough out of the way, so they would not be bothered. Brunch was perfect and Steve was not approached by anybody, which was a good thing, because he did not want his mother scared by some of the weirdness that seem to follow him around lately. If some of it scared him, he can just imagine what it would do to her.*

*After brunch, they were back in Steve’s car and Steve took a detour that was not familiar to Mary. Mary was enjoying the scenery and the beautiful spring day, holding the flowers that Steve gave her in her lap.*

*“Stephen, where are we going?” Mary asks.*

*“No place really, just taking a different route. You’re not in any hurry are you?”*

*“Oh no, of course not. I love spending time with you.”*

*Mary replies, as she smells the flowers. Steve finally came to a four way stop and he turns and looks at her.*

*“Mom, do me a favor?”*

*“What?” Mary asks.*

*“Close your eyes.” Steve replies.*

*Mary looks at him and laughs and Steve looks in the rearview mirror at the car that had just come up behind him.*

*“Why?”*

*“No, no questions. Close your eyes.”*

*Steve says as he glances in the rearview mirror and the car honks behind him.*

*“Stephen, what are you up to?”*

*The car honks again.*

*“Come on mom, I am not moving from this spot until you do!”*

*The car honks again and Mary looks behind her.*

*“Oh alright!”*

*Mary closes her eyes and Steve proceeds through the intersection.*

*“Now be a good girl and kept them closed. No peeking.”*

*“Yes Mr.Perry. Do you always treat all your dates like this?”*

*Mary asks as she puts her hands over her eyes and Steve laughs.*

*“No! Just family! We are almost there.”*

*Steve drives a little further and he finally comes to a stop.*

*“Now don’t look! Don’t move!”*

*Mary laughs.*

*“I won’t.”*

*Steve gets out of the car, he runs around to the passenger side, he opens the door, and he help her to her feet and he stands with his arms around her.*

*“Okay you can look now!”*

*Steve smiles at her as she moves her hands and she opens her eyes and she blinks as she looks around.*

*“Stephen! On my god! Whose house is this? What did you do?”*

*Steve takes her by the hands as he leads her away from the car and he shuts the door and he takes her up the walkway to the front door. Mary glances over at the ‘Sold Sign’ in the front yard.*

*“Happy Mother’s day!”*

*Steve says as he smiles, he takes the keys out of his pocket, he puts them in her hand, and he hold her hands in his.*

*“I love you mom. All of this is for you and dad, for all the sacrifices you made for me. I do not know how many times you went without something just so I wouldn’t.”*

*Mary puts her hand on Steve’s cheek.*

*“Stephen, you are my baby boy. No sacrifice I, we, ever made was too great. Parents do that for their children.”*

*“I remember the times you barely had two nickels to rub together, but, you always managed to put food on the table or buy me a pair of shoes. Now, all that has ended. Your baby boy has grown up mom and I want to do this. I have done it.” Steve gestures to the house.*

*“Oh sweetheart, you should save your money.”*

*“Mom, don’t worry about that. As long as I am alive, I do not want you to worry about that either. This house is yours and dad’s, free and clear, down to the last blade grass in the yard. I am not around as much as I used to be, I can’t help dad as much as I used to. Eventually he will get too old to do any work on that house, now he won’t have to. This place will still be standing long after all the Perry’s are gone.”*

*Steve smiles at her and he shakes her hands.*

*“Now let’s go see your new house! I cannot stand it any longer! I don’t know how I kept it a secret this long!”*

*Steve says as he takes her by the hand and he leads her up the walk to the porch and he moves her around to where she is standing in front of him with his hands on her shoulders.*

*“Go ahead, unlock the door!”*

*Mary takes the keys and she tries to put them in the lock but instead she fumbles with them and she drops them.*

*“Oh Stephen I am too nervous!”*

*Steve laughs as he bends over to pick them up.*

*“That is alright I got it.”*

*Steve unlocks the door, he opens it wide for her, Mary hesitates a minute and she looks up at him, Steve grins at her, he takes her by the hands, and he pulls her into the entrance.*

*Not only is the house free and clear but it still dusty and a little dirty from the construction of it and the front door opens into a large sunken living room with a fireplace at the far end. Bay windows on either side of the front door and a staircase in front of them and off to the side. Steve lets go of her hands as she puts them over her mouth and she turns in a circle.*

*“Mom, watch out sunken living room alert.”*

*“Hmmm, what? Oh!”*

*Mary finally comes around enough that she steps down as Steve takes her by her hand.*

*“Oh Stephen, this house is grand! I have never seen anything quite like this! This is a mansion! How am I ever going to keep this place clean?”*

*Mary asks as she looks around with her hands on her hips and Steve laughs.*

*“Mom, it is just you and dad. You two are not messy people! If you ever need help that’s what maid services are for.”*

*“A maid service?”*

*“Sure there are a couple in Bakersfield.”*

*“Oh Stephen I am not used to having people wait on me.”*

*“Well maybe it’s time for you to start getting used to it. Come here and picture this with me.”*

*Mary goes to him and he puts his arm around her, he points to a wall in the living room.*

*“Now mom, picture an entertainment center with the television and the stereo in it, right there.”*

*“The stereo? You mean the victorola.”*

*Steve laughs.*

*“Mom, no it isn’t that old! The front yard, just picture your rose bushes! Now you have a lot of room. Come on; let me show you the kitchen!”*

*Steve takes her by the hand and they go into the kitchen.*

*“Oh Stephen this kitchen is wonderful! Look at all these appliances!”*

*Steve dances into the middle of the kitchen and he opens his arms wide.*

*“This kitchen has all the latest and greatest everything! This kitchen is all electric! No more gas stove! Now I do not have to worry about you blowing dad and the house up with that gas stove! There are a lot of cabinets and a big pantry!”*

*“Stephen what is this?”*

*“Oh mom, this is the coolest thing! This is a microwave oven!”*

*Steve hits the button on the door and he opens it.*

*“Microwave oven?”*

*“Yeah! This little thing can cook anything in half the time of that big stove. Well, at least that is what they told me. You could use it during the summer if you don’t want to heat up the kitchen by using the big stove.”*

*Mary looks at him skeptically.*

*“Mom I swear!”*

*“Oh my god!”*

*Steve grabs her by the arms as she puts her hands up to her face.*

*“What! What is it? Are you okay?”*

*“Oh Stephen, all my old furniture will look just terrible in this house! That furniture is so old and...”*

*Mary is interrupted by Steve’s hysterical laughter as he grabs his chest and he falls back against the counter.*

*“What! You know this is very serious! It is not funny! I will need all new furniture. Rugs, lamps, chairs and a big dining table, oh but this place is so huge! All that will cost a fortune, Stephen!”*

*Steve moves away from the counter and he hugs her.*

*“Don’t worry; I will help you get new furniture. Speaking of furniture look at this china cabinet. Now this is big enough to hold all of Grandma’s china and there is even a place for her silver too. Now you can show off all your knick-knacks.”*

*Steve grabs her hand, and he takes her to a door and he opens it.*

*“This goes to the garage. See there are workbenches for dad even a sink and a little freezer out here so he can clean his fish out here. No more yucky messes in the kitchen sink.”*

*Steve closes the door and he points behind him.*

*“There is a laundry room around the corner and another room off of the hall that can be used for dad’s den. This staircase goes upstairs to the bedrooms, come on I will show you.”*

*“How many bedrooms does this place have?”*

*“Three.”*

*“What, Stephen! Three bedrooms!”*

*“Yes. They all have they own bathrooms and there is a small one down here, near the laundry room.”*

*“What I am going to do with three bedrooms?”*

*Steve stops and looks at her with his hand on the railing.*

*“Well, one room is for you and dad, the other two can be guest rooms. You know, when I come to visit.” Steve says.*

*“Maybe they can be used for grandchildren.”*

*Mary says as she winks at him and she climbs the stairs toward him and Steve backs up the stairs.*

*“Mom!”*

*“After you and Sherrie get married of course. She is a wonderful girl and she is so cute. Your dad and I both like her.”*

*Mary says as she backs Steve up the stairs.*

*“Mom, mom you are jumping the gun here! We have been dating only a few months. Yes yes, she is wonderful, she is cute, and she likes you too. Wait! No matter what we are talking about how do you always, manage to turn it around to my martial status, or my lack thereof! It is eerie!”*

*Mary laughs and walks passed him up the stairs.*

*“Because I am your mother, that’s why. Show me the upstairs.”*

*Mary smiles at him and Steve turns and follows her as he shakes his head.*

*Steve takes her on a tour of the upstairs. The bedrooms, the bathrooms and all the closet space. Finally, they end up at the end of the hallway, with Steve standing looking out of the bay window and Mary sitting on the seat cushion.*

*“The view here is wonderful. I feel like I am in the trees. Thank you Stephen, you are the best son that a mother could ever have. “*

*She reaches up and holds Steve by his hand.*

*“Well I try but I don’t think that was always true.”*

*Mary gets up and goes over to the wall and then she turns to Steve.*

*“I know exactly what I want on this wall!”*

*“Uh oh! What?” Steve asks.*

*“Pictures! I have so many cute pictures of you! Sherrie and I can go through them together!”*

*Mary laughs.*

*“Mom! Oh no mom! Those pictures are so embarrassing! I know the ones that you are talking about and if you show those to Sherrie she will run for the hills!”*

*“Oh Stephen you were a cute little boy and you grew into a handsome man!”*

*Mary cups his face with her hands and she kisses him on the cheek.*

*“Aw mom.”*

*“Also we can hang the gold albums from your band here.”*

*Steve laughs as he rocks back and forth.*

*“Now that is a good idea.” Steve says.*

*“How we ever going to move all that stuff! There is so much junk!”*

*“That part is easy. We hire a moving company. They come in and pack it and then they move it and we unpack it. I will help and I bet Sherrie will help to and we know dad will.” Steve says.*

*“Speaking of your father, did he know about this?”*

*“He found out yesterday, because I know that he can’t keep a secret. I almost could not keep this one myself; a few times, I almost let it slipped. So, do you like it?”*

*Steve asks her as he smiles at her and Mary hugs him.*

*“Oh yes Stephen I love it but it will be very hard to leave that old house. They are so many memories there. Good ones and bad ones.”*

*Steve holds her by the hands.*

*“I know mom but you and dad can make new memories here. You and Marv have been married for years now and it is about time you kids got your*

*own house! This house is like an empty canvas, it is blank, waiting for you and dad to add something to it. Just think, a big dining table, the kind you have to put leaves in, Christmases and Thanksgivings, with all the Perry's around it. Now all the relatives can come and visit."*

*"Hmmm, well that may not be such a good thing after all!"*

*Mary and Steve laughs.*

*"Let's go and get Marv and bring him back here and show him this house! Oh, he won't believe it!"*

*Mary grabs Steve by the hand and she pulls him towards the stairs at almost a run.*

*"Okay, mom slow down!"*

*Soon after havoc and chaos reined. Steve spent most of his time, when he was not in the studio or trying to spend time with Sherrie, on the phone making arrangements with a moving company. Mary needed some time to go through many things, deciding what to keep and what to throw away. A lot of stuff had been accumulating over the years.*

*Nobody was happier than Steve when the day finally came to start the big move and all the stuff from the old house was at the new. Steve was carrying a box up the stairs, he almost made it, when the bottom decided to drop out of it and all the contents fell to the floor with a thud. Steve tripped over them as they fell and he caught himself with the railing before he hit the floor. He turned himself around and he sat on the top of the stairs to compose himself, his heart about ready to beat out of his chest, as he reached for some of the books that fell out of the box.*

*Steve recognized most of them, he stacked them up, he sat them aside, and then he came across one that he had never seen before. He turned it over and over, he sat it across his knees, and he opened it.*

*"Caught you! Goofing off!"*

*Steve looked up, he saw Mary coming out of one of the bedrooms, and she stopped and picked up the box and moved it out of the way.*

*"Who taped this box?"*

*Steve raises his hand and looks sheepishly at her.*

*"Guilty."*

*Steve says as he laughs. Mary puts her hand on Steve's head as she walks behind him and sits beside him on the stairs.*

*"Mom what is this?"*

*Steve holds the book up and shows it to her, Mary takes it from him, and she set it across her knees and she rubs her hands back and forth across it.*

*"This is you." Mary says to him.*

*"Me?"*

*Steve says as he points to himself and Mary opens the book.*

*"Yes you."*

*Steve holds the other end as he moves closer to her and he sees on the pages pictures and articles about himself.*

*"This is the Battle of the Bands, when I was a kid! Look at all of this stuff! Where did you get all of these?"*

*"This is your scrape book. Anything that has to do with your music, I have kept. Some of this you sent me from Japan, others have come from relatives and others I've gotten myself."*

*Steve thumbs through the pages and he stops and looks at a certain picture or article. Some have come from newspapers or magazines.*

*"Hmmm, well I will have to start sending you some more stuff next time. Mom, where did you get these pictures?"*

*"I have my sources and I am not telling. This is my favorite picture."*

*Mary points to one that is a live concert shot, Steve is pointing out to the audience, and the audience are on their feet and obviously going crazy.*

*"Look at all of those people and look how happy you make them. I am so proud of you my son, the famous rock singer!"*

*Mary kisses him as Steve thumbs through the pages.*

*"There is something I wanted to ask you about."*

*Mary turns the pages until she comes to the article that she is looking for and then she points to something on the page and Steve leans over and looks and he laughs.*

*“Why does this say you were born in 1953? That isn’t right, I like the picture but is this a typo?”*

*“No mom. They did that on purpose. You see, this business of rock-n-roll is a young man’s game. The record company people changed it to make me seem younger. I am surprised they did not want me to change my name or something else like that.”*

*“Old! Honey, you are only 31. That is not old! Look at the Rolling Stones!”*

*Steve looks at her with a wide-eyed expression and then he laughs.*

*“The Rolling Stones? Mom, how do you know about the Rolling Stones?”*

*“Stephen I will have you know that I am fan of music. All types. I listen to the radio station and I read the magazines. I try to keep up and when I hear your band on the radio, I get so excited, I stop whatever I am doing and I just listen.”*

*“Well I am just amazed by all of this. I mean..”*

*At that moment, Steve was interrupted by the front door opening and Marv and Sherrie coming in carrying pizzas, Steve stood up, ran down the stairs, and took them from Sherrie.*

*“The food is here gang”*

*A few hours later, after consuming massive amounts of pizza and a lot of reminiscing and Mary entertaining Sherrie with stories of Steve, Steve was once again back upstairs hanging a picture on the wall. He hung the picture, he would take a few steps back and put his thumb up, and he would eyeball it. Steve stood there looking at it with his hands on his hips.*

*“Perfect!”*

*Sherrie came up the stairs, she sat a box on the floor and she stood behind him.*

*“Steve that picture is crooked.”*

*Steve looks his shoulder at her.*

*“Hmmm, what? No! What makes you say that? That picture is straight!”*

*Sherrie goes to the picture and she moves the corner of it.*

*“I say that because it is true! Now, now that is straight.”*

*“No Sherrie that is crooked.”*

*Steve reaches out and he moves the corner back again.*

*“Straight!”*

*Then Sherrie moves it back again.*

*“Now it’s straight!”*

*Steve takes a deep breath and he moves it back then he smiles at her.*

*“Straight! If you touch it again you will be in trouble!”*

*Sherrie looks at him and she grins as she slowly reaches out and lightly touches it and Sherrie sticks her tongue out at him. Steve stands there a minute then he grabs her by the arm and he bends over and puts her over his shoulder and he stands up and Sherrie hits him on the back and she kicks her feet.*

*“Steve! Steve! Put me down or I will tell your mother!”*

*Steve laughs at this.*

*“She is downstairs!”*

*Steve says in a singsong voice. Out of the corner of his eye, he sees Marv coming up the stairs and they watch as Marv turns and heads for the bedroom but then he stops and he backs up and he looks at the picture. He takes a small level out of his pocket, he sits it on top and he moves it until the bubble is centered then he puts it back in his pocket.*

*“Don’t hurt yourself son.”*

*Steve laughs.*

*“Oh no dad I won’t!”*

*“Hey wait!”*

*Sherrie yells at him and Marv turns.*

*“You tell him not to hurt himself but you don’t tell him to put me down!”*

*“Well, Steve knows how much weight he can carry.”*

*Marv then turns and he goes down the hall into bedroom but before he goes in, he winks at them and Steve starts to laugh so hard he has to put her down.*

*“Marv!”*

*Sherrie yells after him and she hits Steve on the arm.*

*“That isn’t funny!”*

*“Oh yes it was!”*

*Steve says as they both laugh and Steve hugs her.*

*“I have all those pictures to hang and you can help me”*

*Steve points to pictures lined up against the wall.*

*“What do you want me to do?”*

*“Go and get that level from my dad!”*

*Steve says and they both laugh.*

*In a small amount of time, with everyone’s help, the house was ship shape and arranged to Mary’s liking and time marched on. The years and the albums for Steve rolled on and now 1982 and another Christmas and this time Steve is home for it. Very early Christmas morning and Steve comes down the back staircase into the kitchen and Steve sees Marv in the kitchen making coffee.*

*“Hey dad.”*

*Marv turns and looks at him.*

*“Steve, I thought I was the only one crazy enough to be up at this hour.”*

*“No dad unfortunately not.”*

*Steve says as he sits at the island and Marv brings over two cups and the coffee and he fills both cups.*

*“Mom should still be in the hospital you know that.”*

*Steve says as he sips some coffee.*

*“She was there for two weeks. She wanted to be home for Christmas, she wanted to be home for you. She says she feels better.” Marv says.*

*“You believe that?”*

*Steve looks at him.*

*“Steve, your mother is...”*

*“I know dad, she is stubborn, hard headed and she wraps you around her little finger. She does me too. What do the doctors say? Do they know anything?”*

*Marv shakes his head as he sips his coffee.*

*“No, nothing yet anyway. Where’s Sherrie?”*

*“She is visiting her family.”*

*“How are you two getting along?” Marv asks.*

*Steve moves his coffee cup back and forth across the counter, he hesitates too long before he answers, and Marv tries to catch his eye.*

*“Steve?”*

*“I am gone too much. It’s rough on her.”*

*Steve looks up at him.*

*“Well, take her with you. Can’t you do that?”*

*Marv pours some more coffee.*

*“Sure, I have thought about it. I don’t know if that would be any better, I mean, a two and a half hour concert almost every night, the traveling, the occasional promotional thing...”*

*“At least you two would be sleeping in the same bed, right?”*

*Marv looks at him over the rim of his coffee cup as he takes a drink and Steve looks back at him in stunned silence.*

*“I...you know...you are a very smart man.”*

*Steve wags his finger at him and smiles.*

*“Why do you think your mother married me? It wasn’t just for my good looks and stellar personality you know!”*

*Marv laughs and Steve looks around and he puts his arm over his shoulders and he leans in closer.*

*“Actually I thought it was for that fortune that you have hidden away!”*

*“I must’ve hidden it real good because even I can’t find it!”*

*Steve puts his arm around his dad and he hugs him as he laughs.*

*“Well, there are my two favorite men on my favorite day.”*

*Mary says and they both turn and look at her and Steve immediately gets up off the stool and he runs up the stairs to her and he takes her by the hand and helps her down the stairs.*

*“Mom, what are you doing out of bed?”*

*“Oh I am not tired. Besides its Christmas and you know that I always make pancakes on Christmas.”*

*“Okay, I will tell you what, at least sit down and watch dad and I make utter fools out of ourselves. I will even get your favorite chair.”*

*Steve runs off into the living room, he gets her rocking chair and a blanket, he helps her to sit down, and he covers her with the blanket.*

*“There you go, now you can watch us make a mess!”*

*Mary grabs him by the hand and Steve falls to one knee in front of her.*

*“I just want to spend as much time with you as I can before..”*

*“Before, before what?”*

*Mary doesn't finish, Steve looks at her and that moment he sees something in her eyes, a premonition perhaps, or maybe a secret that she is keeping to herself. In a quick moment, the blink of an eye she changes again back to the woman that Steve has known all his life. She puts her hand on his cheek.*

*“Before you leave again, silly. That is what I meant.”*

*Steve smiles at her.*

*“Well I have a surprise for you! I am here until the first of the year and then Sherrie and I are going to Seattle.”*

*“Until the first of the year! Oh Stephen, then you can go to mass with us tonight?”*

*“Yes and I even brought a suit and tie.”*

*From behind him, Marv drops a spoon and Steve and Mary look at him.*

*“Quick let me get a camera!”*

*“Oh no, no more pictures!”*

*Steve laughs as he throws his hands up in the air and Marv and Mary laugh with him.*

*“Blueberry pancakes sweetheart?” Marv asks.*

*Steve kisses her and he gets up and goes over to Marv.*

*In the years that followed, there were more birthdays and Christmases, some Steve was there for, and others, he missed. Also in those years, more songs, more albums and more tours and life taking sad and strange turns of their own. Journey soared on the wings of musical success while Steve's life plummeted and landed in a ditch and everything important to him, crashed and burned. His long-term relationship, after being on and off again, finally ended. Distractions were plenty as they tried to concentrate on the new album and Steve's attention was divided between the band and his mother, who was terminally ill.*

*Steve was ready to go at a moments notice, he was with her in the hospital on the day she died and after the funeral, they had family and friends at the house. Most of the family there, Steve had a hard time remembering, it had been so long since he had seen some of them. Steve made another circuit of the room, trying to make conversation with people, checking on Marv and as he passed into the kitchen, he suddenly felt the room closing in. This house could be as big as a city block and still, at this moment, that would be too small, Steve needed air.*

*Steve opened the back door and as he stepped out onto the patio he caught a faint whiff of cigarette smoke and looking to his right, he saw Neal, leaning against the wall with one foot propped up.*

*“Hey. I didn’t know that anybody else was out here.” Steve says.*

*“I haven’t been out here long. I needed a smoke. You?”*

*Neal looks at him and Steve puts his hands in his pockets.*

*“Too many people.” Steve says.*

*Neal puts the cigarette out on the bottom of his shoe and he puts the butt in his pocket as he walks over to Steve and he puts his hand on his shoulder.*

*“Steve, I’m sorry. I never know what to say at these things.”*

*“I know. Just you and the rest of the guys being here, that is a big help. I feel like I have been under water for the past year and every time I try to get to the surface, something pulls me back under, today I took my first breath.”*

*Steve walks out to the yard and he stops at a rose brush.*

*“Time. I need time Neal.”*

*Neal walks over to him.*

*“Sure Steve, you know, we are taking a month off.”*

*“No, Neal, I mean a month may not be enough. I think I want to...”*

*Steve never finished because at that moment a cousin was waving at him.*

*“Marv needs you.”*

*“Okay.” Steve says as he turns and Neal walks beside him.*

*“What were you going to say?” Neal asks.*

*“Oh nothing. I’ll tell you later.”*

*That later changed everything forever. Changed all of them. More years and more losses and Steve found himself alone. An orphan. Steve lost Marv, grandparents, and Journey all deaths in one form or another. Steve hung onto the house, wanting to give it up and then again not wanting to, he agonized over it until he thought that he was going to go crazy.*

*Letting it go was going to be hard but holding onto it even harder so he made a decision and after it was all said and done, he felt better. Another book written and closed, another family should have the chance to make memories there.*

*Mother’s Day, May 12, 2002 and Steve is back, sitting across the street, taking up space in a driveway of a vacant house watching the sun makes it slow arch across the sky as the afternoon slowly fades. As Steve sits there, a car turns into the cul-del-sac and parks in the driveway across the street. This must be the owners, he thinks to himself, as he watches a woman get out of the car and then he sees a young, dark headed boy get out of the passenger side. They go to the trunk and the woman hands the boy a bag of groceries.*

*Steve sits there a moment longer then he looks over his shoulder at the saddlebag behind him. He gets off the motorcycle, he opens the saddlebag, he takes out a bouquet of roses, he takes a deep breath, and he starts towards the house.*

*“Excuse me. Excuse me.”*

*Steve says to the woman as he walks over to them and the woman turns and she holds her hand up to her eyes to block the sun as she looks at him.*

*“Yes?”*

*Steve walks up the sidewalk towards them.*

*“You don’t know me, but, Happy Mother’s Day.”*

*Steve hesitates then he holds the flowers out to her.*

*“I was close to somebody who lived in this house once and I know that she would want you to have these and so do I.”*

*The woman looks at him and then she looks at the flowers then she slowly takes them.*

*“Thank you; I don’t know what to say.” The woman says.*

*“Wow!” The boy says.*

*Steve bends down and he looks at the boy.*

*“Wow is right, be good to your mom today, this is her special day.”*

*Steve tousles his hair and then he turns and he goes back to his motorcycle and he gets back on it and he puts his helmet on. Before he starts it, he looks at the mother and her son and just for an instant; he sees himself and his mother and he smiles as he starts the motorcycle, then he roars out of the driveway and down the street.*

*So ends this Mother’s Day, May 12, 2002.*

*Happy Mother’s Day everybody*