

CHAPTER 15

The rising sun startles Gus, who passed out on the couch in his clothes the night before, and suddenly awakens him. His head feels like he got hit with a tire iron, and his brain feels like mush. He sees a glass of water on his coffee table and chugs it, much needily. He is semi-revived. He musters the energy to stand up.

Gus stumbles into his kitchen to check his stove clock to find the time. When he sees 6:22 a.m., he sighs, disappointed that he passed out drunk on his couch again. He is having a tough time trying to piece together the night before. He feels like there is a major piece missing in the puzzle, which is his bourbon-filled evening. Starting to feel nauseous, he quickly makes his way to the sink. Luckily for him, it is a false alarm. Unexpectedly, he sees a glass in the sink, perplexing him. It takes him another twenty seconds, but he finally recalls meeting Pete, walking back together, and their stories.

He smirks and laughs at all the events that transpired the night before, as they all come back to him like a lost dog returning to its owner. Gus is glad that he had a blast, smiling ear to ear. He realizes

that he and Pete had a great evening, and Pete took care of him in his intoxicated state, even putting his glass in the sink. Gus admires the young man's class, whom he thought he would never see again.

Still exhausted and in need of sleep, Gus unwillingly goes into the bathroom to get ready to shower. Since he is up this early, he is going to try to fish early, around 8:30 a.m. Alcohol is still running through his bloodstream, causing the eighty-four-year-old to have poor balance. He finally takes off his clothes from the night before and heads for the shower. As he steps over the tub, Gus slips, falling onto his right shoulder. He screams in agony; the pain feels like he was blind-side tackled by Lawrence Taylor. After years of doing stunts, Gus could tell that his shoulder was still in place. He uses the tub's edge to try to hoist himself up to a standing position. He attempts to fathom the energy he needs but is unable to get up, needing another minute. He sits up straight in the tub, letting the hot water pour down on his body as he tries to catch his breath and summon the strength to get back on his feet.

With the help of a few deep breaths, Gus finds a way to rally, leaning on the tub's edge and lifting himself up. In immense pain, his shoulder is discolored, and he already foresees a nasty bruise incoming. He should see a doctor but does not want to prove the world right. Gus does not like, and never wants, to be seen as a fragile old man. He has more pride than that. He does not want people to see him suffer or struggle with anything: his health, his life, and his future. After shampooing quickly and throwing a slab of body wash onto his back, Gus rinses off for two minutes, grabs his towel, dries off, and steps out of the shower as cautious as an elementary school crossing guard.

Once out of the shower, Gus immediately grabs the Advil bottle on his medicine cabinet's shelf. He takes out four, more than the bottle recommends, and throws them into his mouth. He turns the sink on and leans forward to take a gulp of water to push them down to help alleviate his shoulder pain. He stares at himself in the mirror. He has