



## POST-IT NOTES

Briita Halonen

Without looking, Joyce drops the crowded keychain into the straw basket with a sharp clatter. Her eyes—and fingers—flick through the burgeoning stack of mail in her arms, the DVD for the night tucked under her chin. Normally she'd have gone with one in her stock of romantic comedies (*Sleepless in Seattle*, *Pride & Prejudice*, *When Harry Met Sally*)—the standard unrequited-followed-by-requited-love theme that her daughter, the feminist, idly mocks her for. Tonight, though, she needs something different. She needs *House*, Season 2.

The mail-flicking proceeds to mid-stack. Her fingertips lie still as she digests the addressee of a standard bluish-white business envelope. The plastic film window fogs the definitive grey type-set, but the name is clearly legible.

**Don L. Morris**

It's a dental bill, but nonetheless, it's the first in the stack addressed

to him. Visions of his sedate-looking maroon Honda Accord in the perfectly-landscaped but unfamiliar driveway within Canyon Crest seep into her memory. *Playing golf, he'd said. Hmmmm... I wonder if he'd made par.* The snide comment sneaks into her consciousness, and she exhales softly but not fully.

Shuffling forward, eyes still transfixed on the plastic film window, she deflates, first her legs then her back muscles, into the worn contours of the brown and beige twill-stitched chair. The Domino's coupons, utility bills, Penny Saver, and a stray 30th Anniversary Party invitation spray across the Formica table. With a whoosh, she releases the air that's been holding her upright. Her grey-green eyes with just a hint of crow's feet lift and rest on the cream-colored 70s era refrigerator. The collage assails her: Ricky and his girlfriend, April, at his 21st birthday party; herself, Don, and Stacie at Stacie's UCI graduation last June; the whole family (including Shadow) in front of the Christmas tree at least a decade ago—the camera's location on the mantle capturing them only slightly off-center.

*How will I tell the kids? They shouldn't have to think of their father like that. . . . Maybe I won't have to. . . . We've been through tough times before without having to involve them.*

She stares at the swingset through the sliding-glass doors. The vivid reds and yellows now faded to burnt oranges and white-washed creams. Her index finger and thumb grip the offending envelope, lifting it vertically and dropping the bottom edge to the formica with a pop. She repinches, lifts her forearm and releases again —pop—pop—pop.

Her staring eyes increasingly lose focus in the steady stream of the staccato rhythm.

Until the envelope slips. The upper right corner of the envelope enticingly slices beyond the reach of her forefinger's tender pad. The repinch missed by less than a millimeter. Amidst the sound of papers sliding, like the wind in the aspen leaves on their last vacation, she looks down.

Peeking out with just a whisper is yellow paper, light yellow paper. Her palm brushes the envelopes aside, revealing quite a small slip of paper: one and a quarter inches by one and

three-fifths inches to be exact. A small slip of paper with one big word:

## **DON**

The familiar angularity of his printing—years as an architect cementing his letters into lines and blocks—incites her. *What?!?*

Her palms press into the chestnut-brown faux wood-paneled formica and she hefts herself to standing. She swivels to face the living room, and pastel-yellow confetti sporadically dots the room's furniture: the La-Z-Boy couch, of course he would want that; the flat-screen TV, *couldn't watch the Super Bowl without it*; and that horrible turquoise-inlaid coffee table he'd insisted they buy on their honeymoon in New Mexico, *I never thought I'd feel so attached to it*.

*How did I not notice earlier?*

Her cynical inner voice screams, *Is this how an adult tells his wife he wants a divorce?!*

The calm detached voice merely ruminates: *So Kurt Vonnegut was right—the real tragedies of life do blindside us at 4pm on some idle Tuesday. He just forgot to tell us that they blindside us with Post-it Notes.*

