

## NOTES

THIS SELECTION CONTAINS MATURE SUBJECT MATTER. How far would you go to protect the one you love? This is the rhetorical question Robert Hodgson Van Wagener poses in his extraordinary short story about a man who suddenly finds himself torn between simply protecting his wife and becoming a hometown vigilante. This haunting selection should be performed by a mature male and may be entered in either Prose Interpretation or Dramatic Interpretation. If used in Prose Interpretation, the drama mask icons are simply suggestions for where to turn the pages in the manuscript.

Three days ago my wife was raped. She's in the bedroom right now, lying there like a mannequin, waiting for the light to turn green, or for something that has nothing to do with anything about three days ago. I suppose, in a way, she's waiting for me, too. She doesn't know what she wants of me; but she waits like she might wait for the shriek and bump in a B-grade horror flick. That's one of the reasons she's in on the bed, and I'm out here in this chair looking at the bloody carpet.

It was worse two days ago. The police—they won't leave me alone. Not three days ago, not two days ago, not yesterday. They ignore my wife. Until today, she was at the hospital screaming my name at the nurses. I was here at home whispering her name to the police. The nurses and the police should talk to each other.



Six years ago, my wife and I were driving away to our honeymoon—she touches me and asks what frightens me. We were romantic, then, but still not a unit. “Losing you,” I say. She smiles and voicelessly lips my answer over and over again like a little child. But driving to our honeymoon, I don't know what in the world is frightening. I don't realize that *love* is frightening, that loving her is what in the world to be frightened of. I find it quite strange that she is in our bedroom loving me and I am out here loving her, and we are mostly satisfied being frightened of each other...and being happy with the distance. Perhaps even this will change when the carpet cleaners suck away the stain—

or when the carpet is finally ripped apart and replaced all together, because the stain is too deep and too set.



A unit. A unit is what my wife and I are most of the time. A unit is purchasing tampons for her because you know she's forgotten she's out, and you remember she's going to start tomorrow. Or sometimes it's her forgetting your birthday, and you not saying anything. Instead, you act overly kind, indulgent even, so when she does remember, she feels extra bad. And then you feel bad, because you made her feel bad, just because you felt bad. Later you argue about it, so you can have extra-good make-up sex after you are both through laughing at the stupidity of it all. That's being a unit. But being a unit is no good when your wife gets raped. I suppose when your wife gets raped, you get raped too.



The police just keep looking at me, asking me why I did what I did—why I didn't stop when I should have. I tell them the truth. I say, "Because, we're a unit." They don't get it, so they ask me if there is anything funny about our marriage lately. "Has she been seeing anyone?" they ask. I tell them, "You're all crazy." And in my brain I see my wife all wounded, sprawled out on the floor, wondering what the hell to do next. "Get the hell out of my house," I scream. But, of course, they don't. They tell me they're not going to take me in. "Come down to the station sometime tomorrow," they say. "And stay away from the newspaper."



My wife likes roses and old Barry Manilow albums. I buy her both, though I don't really like either. She buys me cheap cherry chocolates and rubs my feet. As far as I can tell, she likes doing those things. We talk about children and practice making them. She wants a boy first; I want a girl. It makes for good conversation, though neither of us really cares what we get first.

