

Beacon

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November Ellison

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Prologue

*So God created human beings in his own image,
in the image of God he created them; male and fe-
male he created them. Genesis, 1:27*

June 12, 1986

When Marie read the weather forecast in the paper that morning, she knew it would be a perfect day to take care of the children once and for all. It was forecast to be an unseasonably warm day for central Ohio, with temperatures in the low 90's in her area. Her oldest son, James, had been begging for weeks now to go in the pool with all of the stubborn consistency that was typical for a 2-year-old. The baby, Elias, was really too young to say much other than "NO" and crawl around into everything.

Marie hated being a mother. She hated it. She hated the endless demands, being shut in for what seemed like an eternity while her lazy husband went to his cushy day job doing accounting for the biggest bank downtown. When she took the kids out shopping, she was the parent with the two screaming children. It was impossible to do anything; it was impossible to be anything. Richard already made it clear that the kids were all HER responsibility. He was the breadwinner. Whatever that meant.

Fine. So she was expected to watch the two brats. Her whole existence boiled down to bologna and Pop Tarts and boogers and diapers filled with shit.

She was lucky when the shit was IN the diaper. Yesterday one of them had liberated a fresh turd and inserted it right into the new VCR. Now she couldn't even watch Something Wild again. She wanted to be Melanie Griffith, the crazy unstable girl. When she watched that movie, it was a glimpse into her old life when she was the life of the party.

Richard had changed all of that. It was weird. He had liked her enough when she WAS wild and free to fuck her on the first night he met her, the night they had met on campus at a party. Now she was supposed to be this perfect little Stepford Wife – or the small-time Ohio version of it, anyway.

He wasn't even supposed to be a part of her life; for her, he was going to be a one-and-done – and then she had found out she was pregnant. She'd wished so many times that she'd never even told him. She'd wanted an abortion.

But no, she was an idiot. She thought she wanted the drama and the attention. She wanted to make a scene. She wanted to hurt him and shock him for reasons she still couldn't quite identify. Maybe it was because he thought he was so cool with his collar up on his Polo shirt. Maybe it was because he reminded her a little of her dad. Maybe she was really just mad at herself for having a fat ugly day that had inspired her to get drunk enough to fuck a frat boy. She didn't know, and she didn't care.

He had called her afterward. She was the one who hadn't returned the calls. She was getting ready to graduate with her Theater degree and was planning on saying goodbye to this shitty little backwoods state and her shitty parents' house and everything that felt slow and backward and redneck and confining. She was going to go to New York and crash on someone's couch until she was discovered.

Marie's default expectation was to get her way and have other people do all the hard work for her. She'd been the only child of two mathematics professors from Denison, who never seemed to understand how to manage the cosmic irony that they had raised a popular, beautiful cheerleader with a talent for drama.

She *was* beautiful, with long blonde hair and cornflower blue eyes, D cups, and a small firm ass. What she lacked in talent, she more than made up for in ego and determination. She was going to be discovered. She was going to be famous. She was going to get the attention she'd deserved all her life but never quite found. She was going to BE somebody.

And then the fucking straight line had turned into a fucking plus sign. Thanks, e.p.t. Thanks a whole fucking lot.

He had insisted on marrying her, of course he had. Richard was a proper Baptist boy from Heath. Her parents had sided with him, and

the next thing she knew, she was having a full white wedding in the church where she'd been baptized 21 years prior... and had never set foot in again.

For a while, she was happy. She got to pick out dresses. She got to try different hairstyles. She got to direct all aspects of the fairytale spectacle that she knew everyone else knew was a lie. She didn't care. She was in the spotlight.

And there was no such thing as negative publicity, right?

Then her figure began to change. She retained water. She couldn't see her feet when she looked down. All the attention that came with being pregnant; the coddling and touching and friendly inquiries from everyone when she went out to the store – that was nice. But naked... naked she looked like a whale. It was disgusting. She was disgusting. This little THING inside of her squirmed and kicked. In the late stages of the pregnancy, it kicked her so hard sometimes that it made her pee a little. She had to wear pads near the end of it all, for Chrissakes.

Disgusting.

Even when the baby was born, when they brought little James to her to hold that first time, she didn't well up with the joy that all the other mothers had assured her that she would. She didn't want it. She didn't want him. She didn't care that he was made up of parts of her and parts of Richard. She should have just gotten the damn abortion. That had been her first thought.

She didn't even like Richard. She certainly didn't love him. She didn't love his son. The only thing she loved was being the center of whatever drama was in her life. She certainly didn't want to share that stage with anyone else, let alone her own child.

The responsibilities of motherhood held no glory, recognition, or applause. Every day was the same drudgery of feeding, changing, burping, sleeping, and praying for two goddamn minutes to her goddamn self. She played the part she was expected to play – she was a classically trained actress, and this was a role she understood. She knew who Richard wanted her to be, who her parents and in-laws expected her to be, who this whole crappy little town expected her to be. She played the role.

Backstage, however, in her private moments, resentment burned in her chest. It ate away at her heart like acid.

When Richard got her pregnant again 6 months after giving birth to James, she wanted to cry. In fact, she had cried.

But she'd used the tears that flowed and pretended she was weeping with joy and not despair. Even though she didn't want Richard around, the fact that he was never home and always working drove her crazy. He got to go out to dinner with other adults. He got to go shopping. He got to travel. He got to LEAVE THE HOUSE. She hated him with a smile and a kiss and an "I love you," every time he left for the day. She hated him with every casserole, every Sunday service, every sweep of the broom.

She hated that damn rental condo and everything it contained. It stifled her.

When they'd moved into their new little house in March, Richard had strutted like a peacock because he'd been able to afford a three-bedroom home with a pool. A pool. One more thing she was going to have to manage on her own. The house sat off a main highway, on two acres of the yard she was going to figure out how to landscape, with two other neighbors who had big farms on either side. Their yard had no trees, and she felt so exposed out here. Sad little attempts at privacy bushes around the pool were the only thing that could even be considered foliage.

Not that it mattered. She certainly didn't want to come out here in her bathing suit. First of all, her body was so incredibly UGLY after having kids, and even if she could get back in shape and be firm again... the neighbors were old. They were couples in their 50's. They farmed. All their children were gone and had moved away. No one to look at her; no one to want her.

She hated the pool and everything it stood for in Richard's mind. Richard the Yuppie. They were Yuppies that lived between farmers. It was so funny that it made her want to cry. She was 23 and her life was for shit.

A few weekends back, Richard, his dad, and some of the guys from the church had come out to help clean it out and fill it up, adding the chemicals and testing the water. While it wasn't unheard of for the temperatures to get below freezing in Heath in April, it was pretty rare. Richard had decided to take a chance the first weekend that it was warm and sunny and get it ready for summer.

James had been fascinated with the pool the whole time. Richard had sternly warned James to stay away from the pool. Marie herself had been given a long lecture about making sure the boys stayed away from the pool until he could teach them to swim. She'd fought the entire time not to roll her eyes, and had just nodded silently throughout the whole thing. James was barely 2 years old and Elias stayed where you put him, really. How Richard thought they were going to make their way out of the house and into the pool without her noticing was something she couldn't imagine.

He'd been lecturing her a lot lately. He wasn't happy that both boys were always clad in nothing but diapers. She tried to explain that James the nudist was always instantly just taking his clothes off the moment they were on and then liberating his little brother from his clothing when she was in another room. Richard also didn't like the fact that the boys were parked in front of the TV all the time. He didn't like her spanking them. He didn't like a lot about her parenting, actually.

They fought a lot. She always let him win. It was easier that way.

So the pool lecture wasn't anything new. This time, instead of arguing back, she'd just nodded. She'd assured him that the safety of the children was the only thing in this world she really cared about. He'd given her a long look after that statement, something almost dark in that gaze, something she couldn't comprehend.

A seed of a plan began to grow in her mind. Maybe this house would be hers again, after all.

She got herself a second cup of coffee and folded the paper. She peered out the window, watching her neighbors drive off to go somewhere. In the distance, she saw the tractor driving down the dusty dirt path that led to the backcountry of the other neighbor's property. The only sound was the television playing loudly in the next room. Richard had left early for work, as usual, and she'd parked James in front of the television to watch Sesame Street while Elias went down for his morning nap. It was time.

Getting James near the pool had been easy. He'd been mesmerized by the lights in the water since the pool had been cleaned and prepped for summer. By 10 AM, the sun was beating down and the temps had

already reached 80 outside. In her opinion, it was still a little chilly for the pool but that wasn't going to stop her. The spring pollen left a light film of yellow in patches here and there on the surface.

They were both just wearing their diapers, a normal state of being for the two of them. She was naked. Normally, she hated being naked. She hated seeing the stretch marks, the sag of her once-firm belly, the fact that her skin seemed now to fall in weird places. While the children had invaded almost every other aspect of her life, she'd refused to let them see her naked. It was one of her only rules. Shower time was Mommy's time, and she locked them into their room and then locked herself in her bathroom to take a long, hot shower every morning.

But not this morning. They were going swimming. Marie was making a big production out of it. The kids weren't sure what to focus on more; the fact that they were finally going to get to go in the pool or the fact that Mommy was naked.

"We don't want to get the pool dirty with our bathing suits, do we?" she giggled, making a frowny face immediately afterward, "Yuck!"

James was being particularly stubborn this morning about everything. Now that the promise of getting into the pool was actually before him, James didn't want to get in it anymore.

"Mommy, I don't want to," he said hesitantly, "Wanna wait for Daddy."

"Daddy's not the only one who knows how to swim, big boy," she cooed, still holding Elias in the crook of her arm. She snapped her head so that her long hair whipped across the baby's face on its way over her shoulder. "Won't it be a fun surprise for Daddy when he learns you already know how to do it? He'll be so PROUD of you!" She gushed.

"No, Mommy," he answered, looking up at her with big sad eyes. Normally he'd stomp off to do what he wanted to at this point, in any other situation. He was very firmly in his terrible twos and stomping and tantrums were things she could almost always count on.

The water, though, with the sunlight swirling on their faces in random patterns had almost hypnotized him. He seemed stuck somehow, trapped at poolside with his strange naked mother and his little brother. His little forehead was creased, making him look almost exactly like his father did when looking at the credit card statement and trying to work out why something felt wrong.

Marie paused. She considered, very briefly, just grabbing him and forcing him into the pool. But there were the neighbors to consider. One was still unaccounted for. She couldn't have him struggling or calling out – or God forbid, screaming for help. She was going to have to pull out the big guns and guilt him into the pool if enthusiasm wasn't working. She tried to think about what would hurt James the most – and settled on his love for Richard.

“James, Daddy's already really mad about what happened yesterday with the VCR, and he told me how he thinks you're a bad person,” she said sadly, “I know you're not a bad person. I just thought you could do something that would make him proud and love you again.” She stared at him intensely, putting as much unspoken emotion and concern into her gaze that she could. She let some tears form. James burst into tears himself now, sitting down on the pavement, his little head in his hands and his shoulders shaking with each quiet sob of misery.

Everything he did was always wrong.

In her arms, the baby began to squirm. She knew that squirm. He was hungry. Soon, he'd start crying. She was running out of time.

“Come on, James,” she cooed again, “Do it for Daddy. We can all jump in together and I'll hold your hand. That way you'll know I've got you the whole time,” she added.

James wiped his eyes and stood, walking over to Marie and placing his hand on her free arm, already defeated. At the age of two, he couldn't fight the feeling that his life was always going to be an uphill struggle.

Marie's heart began to pound and she felt almost dizzy for a moment. Was she actually going to do this?

Was she finally going to be free? She squeezed James' hand, a light, loving touch.

“One, two, three!” Marie squealed, leaping as far as she could towards the center of the pool, where the water was the deepest at 6.6 feet. Her momentum pulled James with her. She experienced a moment of elation as they went airborne, which immediately evaporated as the splash of the cold water hit them. Knowing there was no time to spare, she let go of Elias immediately. She felt the baby brush feebly at her legs and she lightly kicked it away.

James had a death grip on her hand, so she needed her other hand to pry his hand out of hers. The moment she freed herself from his terrified grip, she used her feet to propel herself quickly towards the side of the pool, away from both children.

With the practiced grace of a swimmer, she pulled herself out of the pool with her arms and pivoted her lower body so she could sit and watch. In the movies or on television, there was always so much flailing and gasping in this situation. Marie found herself oddly disappointed that the children never even broke the surface of the water once. She saw James scoot along the bottom of the pool to the baby, but they must have started breathing water at that point because that was as far as he got. They both just seemed to be stuck where they were at the bottom of the pool. She saw some air bubbles rising up, but that was about it. They didn't even move around that much, really.

She wasn't sure how long to wait before she could be sure it was all over, so she unconsciously started singing Whitney Houston's "How Will I Know?" for a few minutes, looking up and around from time to time.

The boys never had a chance. They hung immobile, under the surface, limbs outstretched like they were waiting for a hug that was never coming.

When nothing more happened, she waited a little longer just to be safe. Out in the distance, she could still hear the tractor going. There wasn't any traffic on their state route; it wasn't one that got a lot of traffic, being more of a feeder to a main highway.

This was her moment. She stood up and stretched.

Showtime.

The lazy summer silence was immediately broken by her abrupt screaming. She screamed as loud as she could and leaped back into the pool. She grabbed both lifeless children, one under each arm and stood up so that her head and shoulders cleared the water.

"HELP!" she screamed into the lazy morning sun and began trudging as fast as she could to the side of the pool where the stairs led out. Their bodies felt strangely heavy, as she pulled them onto the concrete and set them down. It was like the pool didn't want to give them up.

Both sets of eyes were open. She felt like they were staring as she felt in their necks for a pulse.

“NO!!!” she screamed again, putting her head first on the baby’s chest as if to listen for a heartbeat. She knew there wasn’t one. She then moved her head to listen to James’ chest. There was also nothing. She felt a surge of elation but forced it down again quickly. Now was not the time.

She looked around wildly at the neighbors’ houses, just in case, but both were silent and still. She sprinted into the house and tore the receiver from the cradle where it sat on the kitchen wall and dialed the police department on her rotary phone.

*Heath Boys Are County's 4th Child
Drowning Victims of Year*

Columbus Dispatch, June 13, 1986

A 2-year-old Heath boy and his infant brother have become the 4th drowning victims in Licking County this year, authorities said. James Edward Plant and Elias Marsten Plant were pronounced dead on arrival at Licking Memorial Hospital in Newark shortly after 12 p.m. Monday after efforts to revive them had failed, Police Sgt. Bob Williams said.

Police said the boys were at their Heath home when the drowning occurred in a backyard swimming pool. Marie Allen Plant, their mother, told police officers she had been inside the house getting ready to take a shower when she heard splashing sounds.

She said she came out of the house and saw the boys in the pool. She jumped in after them and pulled both out of the water. When unable to revive either boy, she ran into the house and phoned police.

James and Elias were the 4th youngsters to drown in a swimming pool or spa in the county this year, according to Supervising Deputy Coroner Brian Johnson. The county's previous high for child drownings in a year was 7 in 1983.

Marie had never enjoyed a part so much as her new role as a grieving mother. She had never received so much attention and so much sympathy. Conversely, she'd been able to use it as a lever to torture Richard. It was a win-win all the way around, in her book.

In one of her "grief-stricken" outbursts, she'd screamed that it was all his fault; that he had wanted the house with the pool and now their little angels were dead because of it and she hated him.

It was great.

He was so addled with guilt that he'd taken to sleeping on the couch just to get away from her. They hardly talked anymore. She was really hoping to drive him to suicide. Then she could really be free. Of course, divorce and alimony were also options. She was the woman who'd just lost both of her kids and was currently being emotionally abandoned by her husband. She had to imagine she'd win over any jury of her peers.

It had been a month since the kids had died in the pool and the circus of friends, family, and their worship group had subsided. She'd taken to pouring herself a tall glass of vodka and orange juice and sitting out on the patio after the sun had gone down, staring at the pool. Outwardly, it fit the profile of the depressed and manic grieving mother.

Inwardly, she deserved to celebrate a little at how easy it had been to get away with murder.

The first few nights, Richard had come out with her and had tried to say a few comforting words. She'd verbally harassed him back inside the house quickly enough, once again making sure he knew she placed all of the blame on him. She stared purposefully at the pool after those pronouncements, sipping her drink and ignoring his feeble attempts to defend himself or get her to see reason.

By the third night, he didn't come out. In her heart, she knew he wouldn't be coming back out ever again.

She had won.

She'd lost count of the nights and the drinks at this point. She'd watch the pattern of the moonlight on the pool water – the pool that no one would go in as long as they both lived here – and relived the scene in her head. She played it frame-by-frame, with all the precision of an actor dissecting a scene. Had she been panicked enough in her anguished cries? Could she have had a better dialogue with James to talk him into getting in the pool?

Tonight was no different. She sipped on the drink and felt the pleasant burn in her stomach as the vodka hit and radiated upwards. Some nights she didn't even bother with the orange juice. This was one of them. She sighed and looked down at her drink, frowning at it, lost in thought.

She needed a new plan. She wondered if she could somehow kill Richard too instead of driving him to suicide. If it weren't suicide, she'd get the insurance money, what little of it there was. Plus, she'd get to be a widow. She really liked all the attention that came with death.

She looked up towards the pool again and froze, her cup immobile in its upward swing to her lips.

On the other side of the pool, directly across from her, stood a man she had never seen before.

He was slender, with wide shoulders and a narrow waist, and shoulder-length straight dark hair against his startlingly pale white skin. His clothing was dark. He didn't look like he was much taller than she was at 5'6" – he must have been a little under six feet. It looked like he might have a beard too. She couldn't tell.

She felt no fear. She didn't even feel any curiosity. She wondered if she was dreaming for a moment, but the condensation on her glass felt real enough.

The eyes that were fixed on hers were red, the glow of a carnivore's pupils in a camera flash. They studied one another wordlessly, if study were a word to describe what she was doing. Even though he didn't look very tall, he felt imposing. She felt as though she were under observation.

The moon cast bright rays on the surface of the pool, catching her gaze for a moment before it drifted back up to where the stranger stood. She tried to concentrate. Something felt so very wrong.

“Marie,” he spoke, naming her. She realized what was troubling her, other than her inability to feel much outside of passive interest at this man before her.

He cast no shadow. Her heart began to beat faster.

They stared at each other.

In her mind, she felt a low humming. The next thing she knew, she was standing at the side of the pool, still directly facing him. She felt the smooth edge of the pool rim curling underfoot with her toes.

She had no idea how she had gotten there. It didn’t seem like she had moved at all. One moment, it was the vision of the stranger before her, the feel of the smooth wet glass in her hand, the plastic lawn chair tubes digging into her ass. The next moment, a feeling of wetness on the bottom of her left foot, the hot summer night clinging to her bare legs like a whisper, standing before him like an old lover.

Just a pool length away now, she could see him much better. He wore jeans and a sweatshirt, both plain and dark. Instinctually, she felt like he should be sweating like she was. Instead, she felt colder the closer she stood to him like he was leaching away her body heat. The moon illuminated the hair framing his face. She wondered how she could have thought his hair was dark earlier. From where she stood now, he clearly had lighter hair, perhaps blonde or red.

She wondered what he saw when he looked at her.

“You know what I see,” he said with disdain in his voice, the words hanging in the air between them. He opened his right hand, as though he were offering to lead a dance. Beneath her feet, she felt a tingling. She looked down again, watching dark blood ooze out from under her left foot... leading *away* from her and into the pool. She hadn’t even known she was bleeding. She felt no pain.

She looked behind her to the patio where she had sat just moments before. Glints of moonlight on broken glass. Dark patches leading to the water. Had she walked through broken glass? Why would she do that?

Why didn't it hurt?

Marie looked down at her feet again. She was far from the house-lights now, but she could still see well enough. She watched the blood run from below her feet onto the surface of the water, skimming across the surface towards the strange man as though it were somehow being pulled. She watched the stream grow as the blood from the path behind her joined it on the surface of the water.

She had no words to describe what she was seeing.

He laughed and closed his hand again, releasing the tension in his arm. The dark splotch of blood that had been sitting on top of the water rose up and vaporized into a mist that hung like a fog between them. (*in her head now, a distant warning: why would her blood float? Why wouldn't it dissolve in the pool?*) He chuckled low, the sound more of a feeling than something she heard with her ears.

He expanded his chest then, his arms now outstretched a little, as though he were taking a deep breath, closing his eyes. He inhaled her blood (*her BLOOD*) like a long-time smoker taking a long drag off of a cigarette. He looked down and then opened his eyes, the air clear again, fixing her with his red gaze.

“You know who I am,” he stated, quietly. It wasn’t a question. Through a numb mind, she tried to work out the connection. She felt like she should know. She felt like this was a very important thing to get right, a final exam with dire consequences for wrong answers. He smiled then, long incisors visible for the first time.

“No,” she heard herself responding, without any recollection whatsoever to speak. But she was slowly starting to understand her role here. She was prey.

This had to be a dream.

“No,” he answered, although she hadn’t spoken that thought aloud. “Prey is usually innocent. You are not. You know who I am, you know what I am, and you know why I’m here,” he repeated.

“You’re going to kill me,” she said, her own voice sounding so distant that it was alien even to her.

“Yes,” he replied. It was spoken tonelessly, without emotion - and somehow that made it so much worse.

“But why?” Marie asked, this time actively forming the question, this part within her control. She felt so sad for herself momentarily, so misunderstood – but then that part was walled away again. She felt calm again, lulled, looking into his oval face at his red pupils.

A hum in her skull. She blinked and he was beside her, holding her hand. Another fragmented moment. (*he's hypnotizing you, Marie, focus, you have to --*) He squeezed it gently, as though he was assuring her, and she felt safer somehow. Protected. She found herself distracted by how his flesh didn't yield, and it was neither warm nor cold. Like wax before it's completely hardened.

(I'm going to die, I'm going to die, why --)

"Marie. I know what you did. Did you really think you were going to get away with it?" He didn't look at her. She rifled through the vague memories she had of her life and found herself thinking of the Bible. She didn't know why.

(I'm going to meet God.)

"I don't think that's who you're going to be meeting. You're a murderer. Scripture is pretty clear on that," he said firmly.

He turned his head to meet her gaze. Red. His shoulder-length straight hair framed both sides of his face, his beard symmetrical and short.

One lone tear rolled down her face. "I tried to save them," she said monotonously, a line she'd worn out with one too many performances.

Instead of answering her, he shook his head briefly in disgust before he bellowed out a dark and angry, "One, two, three!"

They leaped towards the center of the pool, the momentum pulling her into the center of the pool with him. She felt a moment of fierce joy and pride, a thrill that she couldn't explain until the shock of the cold water shattered the illusion.

She felt raw terror. This was really happening. She was going to die.

She couldn't move. She had no control over her limbs. Despite being a strong swimmer for years, suddenly she couldn't swim. She peered into the water to find him, look at him, to plead, to beg. He met her wordless gaze in the filtered watery moonlight, unsympathetic. She clutched his hand tighter.

She felt his other hand grab her wrist as he wrenched his hand from hers. She felt an immense wave of sorrow and betrayal.

I'm alone. I'm going to die alone.

A hum in her mind. Another blink of missing time. His body was pressed up against hers under the water. His chest was on her back, his

face next to hers, almost as if they were lovers. She felt his voice in her mind. (*had it always been in her mind?*)

“You did this to your children, Marie. Just like this. I can taste your memories. You can lie to everyone else, but I am in your mind. You murdered them. You took them into the water to die. Just like this. Just like this, Marie.”

He felt very strongly that the ones he judged should feel what their victims felt. He believed it was justice, cold and true. He pushed her harder now, overriding physical instinct in her brain. The rage inside of him took over.

She gasped, water filling her lungs. She sputtered and coughed, only taking in more water. She had the certainty well up within her that she was going to drown. She felt him rifling through her memories, judging every one. So many moments where she had selfishly hurt other people played in her head, one after another. She felt heavy. She felt despair. She breathed in more water.

“Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.”

And then pain. Her last moments were all comprised of a searing, unavoidable anguish as he stood before her, his strong hand tilting her head to the side, his mouth at her carotid artery, his teeth rending her flesh. He drank her life, all 23 shallow years of it, leaving her only with final feelings of contempt for how she had wasted it, all of her vanity exposed like a stretch mark in the sun.

He could have suppressed the pain, continued to lull her. But he wanted her to hurt. He wanted her to suffer. James had suffered so much in his last moments.

He looked at her limp body before him and felt nothing. The heat that came with the blood and the rage, disappearing as quickly as it had come.

He called her flesh and her blood one last time though her heart beat no more. Life was never necessary for this part, only heat. He willed the spilled blood floating around them back into her body, willing the flesh to close and knit itself together one last time.

The skin at her neck was smooth, her feet unbloodied.

He pushed from the bottom of the pool towards the wall and lifted himself out effortlessly. He stared down at her lifeless body under the

water. He had judged her. He had avenged the children, the innocents; he had done God's will.

His veins burned with the force of her life, but he felt nothing but cold. He was satisfied and unsatisfied at the same time. He still hungered to kill.

It was never enough.

"Go before me, until I catch up to you," he whispered, almost as if it were a prayer. He walked away, leaving no water and no footprints in his wake, completely dry.

Drowning Death is 5th this Year

*Columbus Dispatch, August 22,
1986*

HEATH, OH - A woman drowned in a backyard pool in Heath just before midnight on Friday.

Police and emergency personnel were called to a home on Beaver Run Road just off 37. According to police, Marie Allen Plant was found unresponsive in the pool by her husband Richard.

The woman was rushed to a hospital where she was pronounced dead. No foul play is suspected.

Police said alcohol may have been a factor in the incident. The case remained under investigation late Friday.