

Nan McCann: DON'T JUDGE A BOOK: short story.

“What?” My sister leaned forward, elbows on knees, a baffled look on her face.

“No.”

Dorothy thumped back hard against the white wicker, fanning her face with the society section of the Dallas Morning News. It was as though she was warding off a near swoon. Well, in truth, she might have been. I'd never uttered that word to her, as far as I can recall. Perhaps, the blistering Texas heat had fried my equanimity, at long last. It was a sunny, late September morning, and just about bearable to be outside, when I made my stand.

“Minerva Eloise Harmon, what do you mean by that?” She squinted at me like I was drinking my iced tea bare-naked on our front porch. Even with the ceiling fans whirring, it was still ninety-four degrees, and I watched a drop of sweat tippy-toe down the V of my linen blouse. It didn't matter. I was invisible.

“I won't sell. Period.”

A waft of wind disturbed the leaves of the pecan tree, causing a steady beat of pecans to plonk onto the gray wooden floor. I tilted forward, hearing a slight crack under the rocker as it crushed a pecan shell. Cradling myself into calm, I rocked to-and-fro, at a snail's pace. Dozens of cicadas vibrated their continuous chirp. And, between the creaking, the cracking, the plopping and the chirruping, my sister's nerves visibly frayed.

Her plump cheeks wobbled under silver-gray curls while her brows pinched together. She wore her uniform of a sleeveless blouse and black capri pants, both stretched to the limit over an ample middle and 42DD bosoms. As a crescent of white belly dragged my eyes downward, I smiled, and she followed my gaze. Doro narrowed hers into slits, now demonstrably annoyed.

I ignored forewarnings, smoothing an invisible wrinkle in my skirt, and stretched time like taffy, before finishing my pronouncement, "... and you know, you weren't to live here, with me, forever."

"Just you listen to yourself, Minny. *You*... She drew the pronoun out into a word of two, maybe three, syllables...never married. I was married to Charley for fifty years, managing our household. You can't."

I took a long breath and leveled my voice. "I can. I oversaw my own house, Doro, small as it was. Plus, Mama and Papa's until they died. Now their house, this house, is mine."

"Well, we'll see about that." She stormed past me, muttering 'Minny the Ninny' under her breath.

I thought back to last year. Same date. When it all began.

On September twenty-fourth, nineteen sixty-one, precisely a year ago, three things happened: I turned seventy; the pieces to the puzzle of my predicament jig sawed into place; and I became invisible.

I had never worried about becoming a year older. It was, as they say, far better than the alternative. My best friend, Lulie, threw a birthday luncheon for me at the Dallas Country Club. As we drove to the club, she said, "My heavens, Minny, I love your hair with those highlights. Fresh style for this new decade of your life? Did Colin the Cassanova shape it? He does such a good job, doesn't he?"

I nodded, thinking of how well he also does other things.

"How is it with Dorothy living with you? I imagine poor old Charley finally had to up and die to escape her. How long's she going to be with you?" Lulie swung her head to the right, to see if I'd heard, and I saw her eyebrows wiggling.

“Just until she finds a suitable place and who knows when that will be. And, oh my word, Lulie, it already feels like years. She’s been trying to get me to sell my house. Highland Park homes bring quite a lot, and she’s fantasizing a move to Lake Dallas on the proceeds.”

“Oh, my Lord. You’re not, are you?”

“You know I’m not. Right here is home for me. I just let her rant.”

“Doro managed to finagle her way into your house right as you got the air though, didn’t she? Clever Doro. You must need a sweater indoors.”

“Air conditioning is wonderful, Lulie. Come see for yourself. No more window units, thank the good Lord. I had to get the windows repainted because as they pulled the units out, the sills were gouged and scratched. Now, they’re fresh-as-a-daisy glossy white. For the moment, they’re stuck, but who cares. It’s Alaska inside.”

“What’s it called? The air everywhere?”

“Central air. You can crank the temp down to seventy-five. It’s like living way up north.”

“Heaven. Coffee, then? Tomorrow, nine-ish?”

I nodded.

We joined our friends in the private dining room of the club. The aroma from the lily and rose centerpiece perfumed us with the requisite excitement of a milestone celebration, and my four life-long pals and I hugged and chattered, like time had no meaning.

Eventually, Dorothy’s voice cut the hilarity like a scythe. “Minny, for heaven’s sake, go take your seat so we can finally sit.” She nodded toward me, shaking her head at my etiquette lapse, adding, “Minny’s being bubble-headed, as usual.”

We eased into the chairs and launched back into the “do-you-remembers” of comforting memories, decades in the making.

“Well, what *I* remember is when George Bartram jilted Minny at the altar... or just as near...two days before, bless her heart. Forty years now, an old maid. Remember that children’s game? A kiss of death to be the Old Maid.” Dorothy laughed smugly as the room hushed.

“It was two months, Doro. Not two days.” I felt no need to say more.

Sarah Lee waggled her forefinger in front of Doro’s face, left and right, like a windshield wiper on high. “Sweet Jesus, help us. You know full well that it was Minny who called the wedding off. George Bartram, the jerk, was a drunk and a gambler who couldn’t keep his... uh...privates... in his trousers. Period.”

Bulldozing ahead, Doro continued, “But, she couldn’t get another man, could she? Not even after all these years. Books, books, books. Mysteries are *still* your silly obsession, aren’t they?”

“Well, yes. Nothing strange about that, is there? Books are magical.”

“Magical? Just like *you* to say that.” Dorothy made a sound like *hmmmpf*.

“Lots of intriguing knowledge in mysteries and thrillers, Doro. All mystery fans are extremely adept at plotting unsolvable murders.”

Needing the last word, Dorothy intruded again. “Then again, just look at you, Minny. *Seventy*. No husband; no children. And nobody notices anyone over seventy, do they? You might as well be invisible.”

Olivia and Mary Sue gasped, wordless. Our group froze, silent and still, aghast at the bite of my sister’s words, until Lulie said, in a tone as spicy as Tabasco, “It’s her birthday and you’re her sister. Shame on you, Dorothy.”

Doro’s eye twitched and she was silent.

I remembered little except the phrase: *I am invisible*.

My plan has taken a year to perfect. Now, I'm seventy-one. And who notices an 'old lady'? I'm undetectable.

Poison was my first thought. From that day, I felt as though I was juggling balls of yarn, one at a time into the air, as one idea after another popped into my brain. I needed a failsafe method. With no chance of... well, an unpleasant, finger-pointing arrest. Murder isn't as straightforward as it appears, at first blush. I went to the Highland Park Library and, sitting in the musty comfort of the reading room, I researched.

As Doro's presence eased into Month Five, my morning routine became intolerably strained. *My* house was morphing into *our* house. Her knick-knacks vied with my collectibles. And her doodads continued to multiply as quickly as my forbearance and patience diminished.

This house, built in 1924, was a two-story Tudor with four bedrooms, and two baths. It had been built by my father, a university English professor, with an eye toward his passion. A wide staircase, flowed upwards to our sizable second floor landing, creating a sitting area-cum-library, with bookshelves filling every corner. Plump armchairs and mahogany tables for glasses of lemonade were sprinkled higgledy-piggledy throughout; and ottomans, for weary feet, dotted the room. Being a family of readers, we could spend hours in this room, never uttering a word between us, feeling the comfort of togetherness as we nested between the bookshelves.

Although our home held some beautiful antiques, the only thing of value in the entire house were rare, exquisitely bound first-editions of books, costing a pretty penny. As a dedicated bibliophile, and for protection of his valuable books, Papa had designed a custom-made, floor-to-ceiling wrought-iron grating. It was crafted by a celebrated master ironsmith with birds of all sorts, sparrows to parrots, intertwined within the bars, extending the full length of the second-floor area. It was a true masterpiece, and happily quite burglar-proof. Shortly after installation,

he'd christened the house, 'Bird Cottage,' even though the birds were fashioned out of iron, and our house was not a cottage.

Tradition keeps me cocooned in the gentle swing of knowing what's next: every day, I balance my current mystery in one hand, unlock the gate and place the key behind Mama's photo on the chest, holding steady as I descend the staircase. Daily, I sprint for my large mug of Kenyan Roast. And, again, daily, I enjoy my coffee in the living room, sitting in my flowered chintz chair, facing the front lawn.

My routine. My happiness.

When I received the panicked phone call from Doro, Charley had already been dead two weeks. I'd been suitably sympathetic, and adequately Southern, bringing over a ham, plus biscuits, potato salad, and a pineapple upside down cake. I'd helped with the funeral and corralled the help of my friends for the wake. Charley had died on a Thursday, and I'd smiled, nodded, listened, and empathized as Doro drowned her sorrow over the weekend, aided and abetted by multiple iced teas laced with vodka.

The day my world became topsy-turvy, I had been in the middle of my morning custom.

"Hello. Bird Cottage. Minny speaking."

"Oh my God, Minny. Charley... he was..."

"He was... what?"

"It's all gone now. I need to stay with you."

At that moment, my routine shattered.

When we turned twenty-one, our parents had gifted us an equal amount of money. They were scrupulously fair, explaining that they wanted to give us opportunities while we were

young. Doro's first crisis happened at twenty-two. She married Charles Narley two years into her college studies. The surprise pregnancy was just a false alarm, but Doro cashed in her inheritance, married Charley, and McMansioned in far north Dallas.

Until he dropped dead.

Papa invested my share, and I followed in Papa's footsteps, becoming a Linguistics professor at SMU, purchasing a small house three blocks from the university. As my parents grew infirm, I took care of them, their bills, and their house until they died. Doing so was a privilege, not a burden, and so, to my astonishment, upon their death, I received Bird Cottage, as well as my money Father had carefully invested. Life was wonderful. Until...

*"I need to stay with you."*

I was six years old when I realized that my sister hated me. I didn't understand why. Yes, it's a harsh word. A confusing word. Not a child's word, except in the throes of a toddler temper tantrum. But it was an accurate word.

The litany of lies gushed from Dorothy well into our teens. Textbook 'she said-she said' situations. Doro had honed sincere outrage; I remained naively bewildered. How does one prove one's innocence without witnesses? As she cried crocodile tears, I was punished and grounded. Was I angry? Of course, I was. Revenge was foremost in my mind for years, until the times of turmoil became too numerous to count and too tedious to refute, after many wasted attempts.

After time, I gained self-confidence and went my own way, letting the deceit and smears slither off my back and out of my mind like a waterfall of nonsense.

It was when I received the James R. Chauncey Award for Teaching Excellence that I realized that I pitied Doro. It was my turning point. My anger fizzled. I knew that few things are worse than pity. I knew who I was. I knew who she was. It was enough.

I took a deep breath and astonished myself by saying, “Doro, you know, as do I, that we’re not suited for the long term. But I can offer a short-term solution until you get on your feet again. We’ll make it work until you’ve found a new place to live. Let’s give it a go for a month. Maybe two.”

That was eight months ago.

Enough, as the savants say, is enough.

Colin Carter worked as head stylist at the upscale Jacques Salon. His British accent and suave compliments swiveled the female heads faster than a whiplash. He was clean-shaven, with brown hair, turning a bit gray at the temples, and an easy smile. We began our affair twenty-seven days before Dorothy moved into my house.

It had all begun by happenstance. On a rainy day, unusual for Texas, I’d popped into La Madeleine to find shelter from the torrents. Everyone else in Highland Park had the same idea. As Colin squelched in, drenched from head to toe, his glance meandered in my direction, finally focusing on the empty seat across my table for two.

I smiled an invitation.

“You’re a savior, Minny. My car wouldn’t start, and I feel like a drowned rat...” Colin rung out his sleeve to demonstrate. A stream of water flowed to the floor.

“Waterlogged, at the very least,”



As water pooled under his feet, I said, “Get your coffee. I’ll get paper napkins for the puddle. Then we can chat.”

That afternoon, I discovered he was more than a hair stylist. He admitted he’d been, once, a bit of a rogue, who’d scraped through adventures of an iffy sort. He’d left London early and had traveled widely, learning about who he was.

I tagged him as a kind-hearted gentleman with a quirky sense of humor. What’s more, he seemed to be an utter fool for challenges which, for me, only added to his magnetism. As he poked fun at himself, I realized he was, in fact, a closet intellectual who experimented with his own capabilities. He’d become a hair stylist on a whim, a dare from his best friend who stated Colin would be rubbish at it. Colin clearly rose to the challenge. He wasn’t perfect. But was, in fact, perfectly intriguing.

The thunderstorm continued for several hours. By the time we left, not a single person remained. The next morning, I watched the sun glow, bright and golden, through his bedroom window.

The saying ‘you can’t teach an old dog new tricks’ simply isn’t true.

Two months before my ‘sword-in-the-sand’ proclamation to Dorothy, Colin had asked for my hand in marriage. With no hesitation, I’d accepted. We’d discovered, over many months, that we were quite suited. I was seventy; he was sixty-five. Both of us, chronologically in the senior slot, but mentally, we were in a young adult frame of mind. Peas in a pod in and out of bed.

The afternoon of Doro’s and my brouhaha, I was on my hands and knees in kneepads and gardening gloves. I’d decided to landscape our rear garden. It was looking unimaginative and non-toxic. I spent three days tilling and planting lovely *Nerium oleander*, *Arbrus precatorius*, and *Gardenia jasminoide*. Fully-grown shrubs cost a fortune, of course.

I was patting the dirt around the oleanders when I saw Doro standing at the back door, mouth squeezed into a tight, lipless line. “I’ve thought it over, Minny, and I’m putting your hissy fit down to the sweltering heat outside. God knows, one could fry an egg on the front sidewalk.”

She walked down the three steps, declaring, “I’m ignoring your little outburst. Let’s have no more of that crazy talk.” Tapping the edge of her glass with her forefinger, she raised her voice as though we were a football field apart. “More iced tea. With lemon, please.”

*Hemlock? Oleander? Arsenic?* So hard to choose.

“So would I, Doro, since you’re already standing. Lemon for me, as well.”

God knows what she would have said, when we heard Lulie’s “yoohooooo” warbling from the side gate.

“I’ve brought some Krispy Kreme’s. Y’all can’t be on a diet today.”

I smiled, winking, “Well, thank you, Lulie. Doro? A donut?”

Dorothy grabbed two glazed, stomped up the steps, and slammed the backdoor.

As Lulie and I munched on apple crullers, we dissected whodunits.

More importantly, we parsed howdunits.

Colin and I selected October fifteenth, dithering for weeks over our honeymoon. A leisurely float down the Dordogne on one of the beautiful barges? London, his hometown, was a must. It became as fun as window shopping, our planning. The glitch, I well knew, was getting Doro to leave Bird Cottage. I was never going to share my house with her while I was sharing my bed with Colin.

Recently, I bought Neogen Ramik Green Rodenticide, storing it under the kitchen sink. With a flash of inspiration, I added tough gardening wire to my purchase. I was determined to have options.

*Death cap mushrooms in a savory quiche? Jimson weed and Kale soup with potatoes and leeks?*

On October first, Dorothy and I were upstairs in our library, cool air swirling around us, Mozart in the background, lemonade at our side. The perfect setting for bad news.

“Doro, I’m getting married.”

“Minny, what in the blazes are you blathering on about? What do you mean *married?*?”

“Well, what *you* mean by that question? You’ve mentioned being married to Charley every week since you and he tied the knot. Half a century’s worth of ‘married.’ The wedding is on October fifteenth.”

Arching her left eyebrow, she pinned me with a sharp look. “I may be gullible, but I’m not that foolish. Who in the world would marry *you?*?”

I smiled, “Colin.”

“Colin who?”

“Colin Carter.”

“Well, Minny, can you try your best to be a bit clearer? Who on earth is Colin Carter?”

She tilted her head and made a garbled sound.

“Our hair stylist.” I grinned. I tried my best to hold my face still, but failed miserably, as I watched sundry chaotic reactions dash across her face.

Bewilderment and confusion flashed through her eyes, until I saw a burst of utter relief.

“Oh, I see. It’s a joke. Haha. Good one, Minny. I’d laugh except you’re just too juvenile for words.”

I responded serenely, “We return from our honeymoon on the fifteenth of November. That’s a month in which to settle yourself. Colin and I will say our vows at the Cox Chapel, and

you can come, if you'd like. It's going to be a small, sedate ceremony. Lulie's my Matron of Honor, by the way."

Dorothy face turned white, then pink, then a flaming red.

"Oh my God," she wailed, "the hairdresser? That pretentious, flirtatious Brit? My God, Minny, have you completely lost whatever mind you ever had? Mama and Papa must be rolling in their graves. Marry in haste, repent at leisure. Dragging the Harmon name through the mud..."

Pots and black kettles came to mind. I snorted. "Enough of the clichés, please."

"What do you expect me to do? Are you throwing me out on the streets? Your only sister? And if you think he... whatshisname... is going to be waiting at the altar, mark my words, he'll wise up. And don't you think for a split second that you can kick me out. I have a right to stay and will be calling my lawyer. You just wait."

Dorothy jettisoned herself upright to her full five-foot-four height, and slammed the gate with as much force as she could muster. It shuddered, clanged, and jangled. I looked toward the chest. The small silver key to the gate, on the keychain with an "H" for Harmon, was still behind Mama's photo.

Did I say that I once let her words slide down my back like a waterfall, not caring, nor reacting? I was wrong.

She'd crossed the line.

I walked the two blocks to Lulie's house, entering with the standard, "Yoohoo, I'm here."

"Doro's not going to leave. Not willingly. She's going to call her lawyer. She's going to sue me. And I'm going to kill her."

"Minny, you don't have it in you, darlin'. You just couldn't murder Doro. She's your own sister, nasty piece of work that she is. It's one thing to think about it and another to do it. You

have too soft a soul and too active a conscience. You'd worry over it like a dog with a bone, for the rest of your life."

"Nonsense. I've never been as fed up as I am now. And I'm done with keep 'calm and carry on.' I've done the research, have the knowledge, and the means. She'll sabotage, by word or deed, any happiness I might have... forever. What else can I do?"

"I just don't know. But I don't think you have it in you to murder in cold blood, Minny."

"I've been thinking for over a year now. People mistake age with ineptitude and inability. I may look like a fatuous, foolish senior citizen. Incompetent and vulnerable. All I can say, Lulie, is... don't judge a book by the cover."

I grinned, "I'm seventy-one. Un-remarkable, in the true sense of the word. Unseen. At any rate, to others. It's a great gift because, while I'm certainly nothing of the sort, it works much better fostering that assumption. At least, for now. My ideas may take several days, and I'd better get started."

"Better have a Plan C, Minny. I don't think poisoning your sister is in your DNA."

"Reading mysteries can be so very helpful, can't they? Misdirection is key."

That night, after my chat, I told Colin about my conversation about sororicide. And he just hugged me tight, murmuring, "Let's think on it. We'll see in the morning."

The next morning, Colin said with a simplicity that stunned me, "Here's a new idea. We're not letting her ruin our joy before our wedding, Minny. Or our future. We'll rent an apartment for two months, free and clear. We'll have movers relocate her possessions during the wedding. We'll turn on her utilities, pay for her Southwestern Bell connection, and even give her our own upstairs phone so she has one, all plugged in, the very second that she arrives. We can

buy another for ourselves when we return. Let's even put some groceries in the refrigerator. She won't be able to grouse about a thing. Bird Cottage, in exchange for her new home, wherever it is. We'll find one somewhere, I'm sure. Lulie can help us. Doro said she'll be at our wedding? You're absolutely certain?"

I nodded. "She'll be in the front pew, as my only family member, if only not to miss a chance to sneer, if you don't show."

"Too bad she'll be disappointed, isn't it? I'll be waiting at the end of the center aisle, Minny. And all will be well." Colin grinned happily. "We'll only tell her about her two-month windfall, and exchange keys on our wedding day. Not until then."

The two weeks flew by. Fittings, flowers, festivities with friends. Fun.

I saw little of Doro during those days. When I did, she'd glower and mutter, "Thrown out by my own sister."

On the fifteenth of October, Lulie said, "You're the most beautiful bride I've ever seen. I'm so happy for you."

"You were right, you know. I couldn't kill Doro in cold blood. I tried several times. I put dried oleander leaves in her morning tea, made a deadly mushroom quiche pie, and concocted some tomato-based kale and Jimson weed soup, chockful of veggies. Chucked it all out. I even spooned rat poison into the meringue of her favorite lemon meringue pie, and practically tackled her as she was serving herself a piece. It fell, meringue down, on the kitchen floor. She was livid. Lulie, I chickened out. I kept seeing her, in my mind's eye, choking and frothing at the mouth as I stood over her, doing nothing. I have no confidence that Colin's and my alternative will work. She's going to be spoiling my life forever."

“Have faith, Minny.” My best friend patted my arm. “I know it’s all going to be fine. Trust me. Now, go be a bride. And have fun on your honeymoon.”

She handed me my bouquet of gardenias and I looked at myself, in powder blue dupioni silk, a matching pill box hat on my head. I floated to the altar with a spring in my step.

One of the highlights of this momentous day, was the look on Doro’s face when we sprung the surprise of her newly rented home on 3620 Milton. As we exited the chapel, I explained what Colin and I had organized. Her mouth opened as wide as a hooked carp as I said, “No need for thanks, Doro. All’s already been done. Everything was moved this morning. And it was our pleasure. Here are your new keys. And I’ll take the one to Bird Cottage, please.”

I wrote Doro from France, England and from Italy. The angel on my right shoulder whispered, that maybe, after the move, she’d adjusted, and all was well. The devil, on the left, said, “When pigs fly.”

Colin and I returned to Bird Cottage to find yellow police tape and grim-faced officers who had a multitude of questions about my poisonous plants, rat poison, and wire. My fingerprints were on the opened box of Rodenticide, the gardening gloves as well as the gardening wire. The pruning shears had oleander sap on the blades. No other fingerprints, and I was the only suspect.

Despite overwhelming evidence of my ability and means of elimination, motive was lacking. Why would a sister, who’d provided free housing for her sibling, decide to commit murder? They found no reason at all.

And opportunity? I had been on my honeymoon for weeks. Overseas. All my stamped letters had been pushed through the mail slot in Doro's new house. Unopened. That fact proved to be a point in favor of my innocence.

As the police conferred, I found that it *was* true. At seventy plus, I seem to have passed through a magic door in which those with wrinkles and wobbles are unnoticed, and seemingly powerless. Invisible.

When the forensics report confirmed, as I knew it would, that Doro had no poisonous substance of any kind in her system, I heard Sgt. Rowlett say to Detective Branch, "See. No way could she have killed her sister. Just look at her. Not the kind, boss. She reminds me of my Nana."

Detective Branch concurred. "One never knows what folks will do. But mark my words, there's always a telling look in a murderer's eyes. This old dear didn't have it."

All I could think was that the man must not read Agatha Christie, nor watch *Dragnet* or *Perry Mason*. Misdirection is critical.

Doro had been discovered upstairs facing the wrought iron gate, arm outstretched. To get inside, the police had to send for specialists. It took the experts three hours to dismantle the wrought iron gate.

How Dorothy got another house key is a mystery, but a copy of my Bird Cottage key was in the pocket of her sweater. Evidently, she had gained access to my house, had gone upstairs, and then slammed the gate shut. As always, it had locked securely.

It was clear that she'd searched on the chest for the little silver gate key always safeguarded behind Mama's photo. That key had disappeared.



Drawers were pulled apart, books were scattered, and framed photos were crushed on the floor. The day we'd departed for London, Colin had turned off the electricity. He said there was no sense in paying for air while on a month-long honeymoon. It would have cost a small fortune.

When we arrived home, it was hot as Hades; the second floor was like a furnace. Windows were cracked, but unbroken. Fixing the sealed-paint on the windows, after the central air installation, had been on my to-do list for weeks. It was a matter of oversight; I just never got around to taking care of that detail in the flurry of wedding plans. And, unfortunately, our upstairs phone was already in Doro's house at 3620 Milton.

Stratford Avenue is a quiet street and, here, most people drive. Nobody is foolish enough to be out and about in our Texas weather. No one heard a thing and Doro died with no one the wiser. Until Lulie came to water.

Starvation, the police said.

After I'd recovered from jetlag, Lulie and I met over chicken salad at the S and S Tea Room. While we dawdled over which dessert to choose, Lulie returned my house keys.

Dropping the spares into my purse, I praised my temporary florist. "Lulie, thanks for offering to water. All of my houseplants are thriving. They look better than ever, thanks to you."

Looking me squarely in the eye, she passed over another key. A small silver key on a keychain with an "H."

Opening her eyes wide, she said softly, "I just can't imagine how this little key got mixed up in my things. I just found it yesterday at the bottom of my gray purse. I think it might be yours, Minny."

I retrieved the gate key.

"I hear it was ruled an accidental death?" Her voice rose in a question.

“It was. I’m having the chocolate icebox pie.”

I watched Lulie’s face. The corners of her mouth turned upwards. “Apple pie with vanilla ice cream for me. Plan C worked. And that, Minny, is what best friends are for.”

