



# THE NOTE

By

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## **The Note**

**I very nearly didn't see the note, as it lay on the wet ground, forlornly. It's bent over corner was dipped in a puddle, which reminded me of a soggy corn chip in salsa. The rain had caused the water to travel up the paper, slowly spreading the written letters that were face-down on the concrete.**

**Sometimes, when I am having one of my darkest moods, I wish I'd stepped over it and kept walking. But, at other times I comfort myself knowing had I done that, I could never have saved Simone Brereton. So, on my better days, it's a close-run race between regret and feeling glad to have been there to help. As it turned out, it cost me the use of my legs. Was it a fair trade? You be the judge.**

**I suppose, the weirdest thing about the whole episode is the the writing on the note was underneath as it lay on the ground. Had it not been raining, and the ink starting to bloom like the petals of a Chrysanthemum, the word HELP would not have bleed through to have been visible. Dry, the wind could have carried it away then, to land wherever, and Simone would have died.**

**The page, at first glance, looked like it had been ripped unceremoniously from a spiral note pad and had the look of having been crumpled up and discarded. The elements had allowed it to open and the rain had stuck it to the pavement.**

**That one pitiful word: HELP, was diagonally written, in big scrawly letters and the P was closest to the corner hanging in the puddle. As it soaked up the water, much as a sponge would, it had helped the ink become visible. It was that phenomena which assisted in being readable from the reverse side as I hurried from my car to get to the front door of my house.**

**So, if it hadn't been for an accumulation of odd coincidences, I wouldn't have stopped mid-stride, made sure I saw the word in backwards writing correctly, and then stooped to pick it up.**

**While I'm speaking about weird coincidences, were it not I had felt the stirrings of an approaching migraine, I wouldn't have left the office early. Then, even if I had found the note later, the rain would have washed the ink away completely. There would have been nothing left to see.**

**From years of headache experiences, I knew the signs well. Within two hours I would be in so much pain I wouldn't be able to see clearly. Going home while I was still able to drive was vital, so I turned off my computer, told Jane I was going, and left. That's the benefit of owning my own business. Isn't life bizarre sometimes though? With what later transpired, the migraine didn't appear at all. And what I find interesting about that is they tell me they are brought on by stress. Well, me looking at numbers on a computer was nowhere near as stressful as what was about to unfold.**

**It's hard to describe my emotions as I stood, with the rain beating down, looking stupidly at the word HELP, trying to make sense of it. I had not taken an overcoat or umbrella to work with me earlier in the day because it was a quite typically warm late spring day when I had left the house that morning.**

**I remembered a practical joke we used to play on passers-by when I was a youth, and quickly looked around for any giggling children who could be watching. In my day, we used to take delight in using Super Glue to cement a gold coin to the pavement, then laugh uproariously as some schmuck would attempt to pick it up. Was this a trick in a similar vein, I wondered?**

**There was no-one else I could see hidden anywhere, which discounted that theory. As you'd expect, for such a wet day, Tippington Close was devoid of anyone, other than myself.**

**My searching eyes returned to the note, then darted straight back up to something my peripheral vision had picked up on. Why was Derek and Simone's bedroom window open, when it's raining?**

**That thought was followed by another: if the note been thrown away to be found, as opposed to being dropped from a pocket, it made sense it had to have come from a window. I looked up and down the street again and realised two things. Firstly, there were no other windows open I could see, and secondly, while it belted down with rain, there was no wind, not even a breeze. Ergo, the note could not have travelled too far, and that took my eyes straight back to the open window.**

**I had a further realisation then. I had noticed, then overlooked, a second thing when I had scanned the street. There was a car, parked somewhat haphazardly against the kerb, outside their home, and it looked very out of place.**

**Mount Lawley, where I live, is a nice area. Not the best suburb in Perth you understand, but far from the worst. Tippington Close, contained precisely thirteen houses, and we all knew each other. One thing I can tell you is: no-one living here owned the old dark blue Ford Falcon sedan, currently sitting outside number seven.**

**I'm sure you've heard the expression, the hackles on the back of your neck? Well mine rose right then, and for good measure I felt goose bumps along my arms inside my shirt. Somehow, and I know this will be hard to understand, but I just knew Simone was in trouble inside. Hot on the heels of that idea, or call it a premonition if you want, I had another thought. If she was in trouble, whoever gave her such grief causing her to throw a plea for help, out of her window, could be watching me.**

**Exaggeratedly, in case I did have an audience, I shook my head, and carried on to my house. I put my key in the slot of the front door, with trembling fingers which didn't want to work and twisted it. Once opened, I walked inside, firmly closing the oak door behind me and felt an immediate sense of relief. I leant against the wall, trying to slow my beating heart, and make sense of the**

**washing machine tumbling action of thoughts racing around in my brain.**

**Am I imagining things? Possibly, I had to concede to myself. The note could be a prank from a kid, and Simone could be out at the shops, having had the window open when the weather had been warm and pleasant earlier in the day. Could it be that simple and I had imagined the rest? Yes, but what about the car? I asked myself. Well, it could belong to a tradesman who was in one of the homes in the street, I supposed. But, in my heart and soul, I knew it was not the case. Don't ask me how, I just knew, OK?**

**So, what to do? First plan? Call the police. Don't be a bloody idiot, my alter ego answered. Seriously, what would I to say? They would think it was Looney Tunes Hour, and even if they thought the note was real there was no way of knowing it had come from my neighbour's window. Meanwhile, if something nasty were going on next door, valuable hours could be lost trying to get help when I was right here now.**

**OK, I know what you are thinking, what am I, The Batman in disguise? An ex highly trained soldier? A retired Cop? Nope, I'm a**

**Chartered Accountant whose wife was away in Darwin visiting her sister, who had just been diagnosed with stage three cancer. So, I'm just a normal guy, who has never been in a fight at school, or rescued a damsel in distress. I don't get to meet very many damsels in Mount Lawley, truth be told.**

**But something was going on next door, I knew it, and I had to go and investigate. Had I not, and something dreadful happened I would never have been able to live with myself. I crossed to the closet in the hallway, stripped off my suit jacket and took out a lightweight waterproof one. I also kicked off my shoes and crammed my feet into my gardening sneakers.**

**The next stop was the kitchen, where above the butcher's-block food preparation area was the knife rack. I slid out a twelve-inch Japanese beauty that was as sharp as my mother-in-law's tongue. Then, holding the knife as if it were a weapon, I got a fit of the giggles.**

**Who am I kidding? I put the knife back. There is no way I was capable of stabbing someone, no matter what the justification was. I'm more likely to cut myself. I was halfway across the room when I**

**had an idea which, I decided, was a fair compromise. I hurried to the five-drawer unit and opened the third one down. Amongst all the clutter I found what I was looking for, my Swiss Army Pocket Knife, and I tucked it into my jacket pocket. Somehow I felt better about myself, though part of me thought it a stupid idea really, but none the less, it also felt somehow right.**

**My Patio glass sliding door opened out to the rear garden in an area which would be obscured from Simone's house, just in case they were watching. I say they, which I now know to be true, but then it was an ethereal 'they.' For all I knew, the worry only existed in my imagination.**

**Between our two houses sat a six-foot fence made of colour bond steel sheets in a bone colour. On either side, were trees, plants and flower beds. Both wives were keen gardeners, so the gardens were full of flowering shrubs. Under normal circumstances going from one property to the other would not be possible without scaling the wall, which wasn't going to happen, as I would be seen and heard clearly, scaling a metal fence.**

**Luckily we had been friends for many years, and we frequently had each other over for barbeques. So, about three years before, when a sudden storm had blown the fence down, it had been replaced via an insurance claim. Derek and I had combined to offer the installer a couple of cartons of beer and he put in a semi concealed gate. When Grace, our daughter got married we held the reception in our garden inside a marquee, and the gate had been propped open to utilise both kitchens, bathrooms and toilets; it had been fantastic.**

**As quietly as possible I opened it, hoping and praying it hadn't become rusty and would screech, and my luck held. I stepped through the opening and stood in their garden, behind a conifer tree. I listened for any sign I had been spotted, and there was nothing but the sound of raindrops hitting me after pin balling through the branches of the tree I hid under.**

**Then, from inside the house, I heard the unmistakable clattering noise of a piece of cutlery being dropped into a stainless-steel sink and I let out a sigh of relief. I had worried about nothing; Simone was home and had just forgotten the window had been left open.**

**Shaking my head with relief I left the cover of the tree and crossed the flower bed on the gravel path and stepped onto the lawn. From there I crossed to the rear door which entered the pantry, to the side of the kitchen.**

**I opened the door, stepped inside calling out as I did: “Hey Simone, it’s only me. You’ve left your bedroom window open and it’s raining you silly Goose.”**

**As I turned into the kitchen, my heart sank as I saw two things: Two men stood there with open mouths staring at me as if they had seen a ghost. The second thing lay on the kitchen bench; a gun. A big horrible looking, hand gun with what looked like a huge opening in the business end. How huge? Well I’ve never seen anything bigger when one of them picked it up and pointed it square at my chest.**

**“Who are you, mate?” The one with the short spiky dyed blonde hair said. He looked mean, even though he wasn’t the one with the pistol. He wore a denim jacket which looked like it hadn’t been washed in years, a black T shirt and faded jeans.**

**The taller one had dark curly hair and part of his right ear was missing, as if it had been bitten off in a fight. The other ear had a massive, thick gold earring hanging from it, he too wore jeans with a T shirt, this time a grubby shade of what was once white. His jacket was made of leather and well worn. But, the thing I notice most about him: his eyes were like looking at two lumps of coal, and by that, I mean dead.**

**“I’m the neighbour, friends with Simone and Derek. Where is Simone?” I asked as I raised my hands. I couldn’t believe how shaky my voice sounded even to me, and I have never been more scared.**

**“See this ‘ere, mate?” The one holding the gun asked.**

**“Imagine if I pulled the trigger, right now. It would make an entry hole in your chest oh, say about half an inch in diameter, but, now ‘ere’s the interesting bit. The exit hole out of you back would be about the size of my fist. So ere’s the thing, mate. When we ask the questions, it does not give you the right to fuckin ask one back. Do you get me?”**

**I nodded frantically, incapable of speech. If I said I could almost, but thank God not quite, pee in my pants would you**

**understand I am not kidding? These men were criminals, clearly, and you didn't need to be Sherlock Holmes to figure out they were dangerous. Worse, I thought they would shoot me and not lose one moment of sleep. I was petrified, pure and simple, and thought I was about to be murdered.**

**“What are we gonna do with him?” Blondie asked his mate.**

**Here it comes, he's going to shoot me, I thought. Then he cocked the hammer back and I heard the double click as it locked into place. I very nearly fainted. And the seconds seemed like hours, everything went in slow motion, and I had the saddest thought about my wife: I'm not going to be able to say goodbye to Mina.**

**“If you want to live, mate, tell me the truth. Is anyone else at home likely to wander over in the next couple of hours looking for you?”**

**I shook my head, still not willing to trust my voice. Then Blondie sealed my death warrant when he said: “He's lying, mate. This job's gone pear shaped. Kill him and the bitch and let's get out of here.”**

**Fortunately, right then I found I could speak, in fact, I found I could whine. “I’m not lying. My wife is in Darwin, her sister just got diagnosed with cancer. I swear I am on my own in the house. I came home early from work, saw Simone’s window left open, and with it raining I popped over to tell her. Please don’t kill me.”**

**The silence dragged on, and on, while Curly thought about it, and blondie fidgeted on first one leg, and then the other. After what felt like an hour, Curley, released the hammer on the pistol, and lowered it.**

**“It’s your lucky day, mate. Let’s take him upstairs, tie him up on the bed with the bitch. The husband will be home before five with the money, then we’re out of here. He’s agreed to pay up, and I’m not leaving without it.”**

**It occurred to me in a flash of blinding inspiration. I knew what they were doing there. Derek was the manager at the Leederville branch of The Bendigo Bank and the men must have broken in, and attacked Simone. Somehow she had thrown the note out of the window, for someone, anyone, to find. Then I guess they phoned Derek and threatened to kill his wife if he did not bring money he**

**stole from the bank home with him. I also realised one more very sad fact. They had not worn masks. I could identify them, and I had no doubt when Derek did hand over the money, the three of us would be shot dead.**

**He beckoned with the gun, and like a lamb to slaughter, hands still held high, and on legs made of jelly, I walked ahead of them to the stairs. How I got to the bedroom door without stumbling, or falling and begging for my life I will never know. I don't want you to think I was anything other than scared out of my wits, I'm not some super brave guy, I'm Joe average.**

**Blondie kicked open the door ahead of me, and finally I saw Simone, staring frantically up from the king-sized bed with rumped up quilt cover, where she lay on her back. She had been trussed like a chicken, and had a strip of sticky tape stuck across her mouth. Alarmingly, I noticed the black eye she had and the blood stains on the side of her face from her damaged nose, which had been smeared by her tears.**

**"Look in the wardrobe, get some stuff to tie him up with."**  
**Curly said to his mate, before adding: "Looks like it's your lucky day**

**too, darlin, we was all set to have a bit of fun with you before hubby brings the dosh home, but your neighbour here thought he would crash the party.”**

**The next thing I felt his hand in my back as he shoved me, violently forwards, so as my knees hit the bed and I toppled over to land across it, with my upper chest on top of Simone’s tummy. He dropped his knee onto my backside, again quite brutally, to hold me still as first my left, then right hands were yanked down my back and I felt something soft, like a dressing gown belt, being wrapped around and around my wrists and tied off.**

**Once my feet were similarly secured with one of Derek’s leather pants belt they manhandled me so I lay alongside her, then from the bedside table, blondie grabbed a roll of black tape and ripped a good-sized chunk off and stuck across my mouth fiercely, crushing my lips over my teeth as he did. Curly sat on the edge of the bed, and tapped my chest, non-too softly with the tip of the gun barrel.**

**“Listen up, Nosey. We only want the fifty K hubby is going to donate to us when he finishes work, which he agrees it’s worth to**

**keep his little lovely here alive. After all, it's not his money, is it? So, here's the deal you two lay here, quiet as little mice, hubby gives us the cash, we bring him up here to join you two, and then we leave. And you all get to play Happy Families again. But if you make a noise, or piss us off, then we shoot you both, and take the money anyway. Are we clear?"**

**I nodded, earnestly, trying with my eyes to convince him I was sincere. They glanced at each other, and left, leaving the door open wide as they did, no doubt so they would hear any attempt on our part to escape.**

**Of course, I struggled to get my hands free of the knotted belt once I heard them walking across the shiny tiled hallway at the bottom of the stairs. Although I could get a few millimetres of play, I wasn't going to get my hands free anytime soon. And worse, the fear, and exertion without being to breathe through my mouth caused my chest to tighten and I felt the early beginnings of an Asthma attack coming on. I had no choice but to calm down, try to relax, and get my breathing back under control.**

**My next idea, unfortunately enjoyed no better success. I turned my head to Simone, and using eye and head gestures, tried to get her to turn on her side with her back to me. But either she didn't understand what I meant, or did but didn't want to risk the two men coming upstairs again to discover us back to back trying to undo each other's ropes.**

**I gave up and worked out how much time we had left on the planet, which sounds all very brave now, but I assure you, I didn't feel it. What I felt was desperation. I knew I had left work around two forty so would have got to my home around three fifteen. I figured it would be near three thirty then, and Derek usually got home just after five. I had no idea if he would leave work early with the cash, or he would need to wait until everyone left before stealing it. But one thing I knew about Derek; he would do anything to save Simone, and he would obtain the money to free her somehow. So, knowing all of that, I realised there could possibly be very little time left before he rushing in with a bag full of cash, and we all got shot dead.**

**Right then, I remembered the Swiss Army knife in my pocket, and with it, a glimmer of hope. But then I wondered how the hell I**

**was going to get it out of my pocket with my hands tied behind my back. I looked down my body at the right-hand jacket pocket where the knife sat positioned in front of my hip. I could feel the weight of it, and when I swizzled my hands out and around to reach the pocket I came up only some four or so inches short.**

**Maybe, I thought, I could lift my hips while leaving my shoulders on the bed, and try to jiggle the damn thing to fall out of my pocket. Thankfully I had not done the zipper up, which was there to protect whatever I put inside it from the rain. Lucky really, because usually I am a stickler for doing it up, but on this occasion, having been distracted by my worry for Simone's welfare, it gaped open.**

**Don't ask me how, but I could work my feet underneath me so I could lift my hips up. Then, using what at any other time might have been quite an obscene motion, thrust them up and down and I swear I could feel the knife jingle around.**

**Out of the corner of my eye I could see Simone staring at me, petrified the sound of the jerky movements would be heard by the two men downstairs, and no doubt had the bed been squeaky I'm**

**sure they would have. Of course, my doing what I was doing would only have appeared worse, because she had no idea I had the means for our escape in my pocket; she probably thought I was going mad.**

**It took forever, but suddenly I could see the end of the handle poking out of the pocket, and thanking my lucky stars, it took only another minute or so, and it dropped on to the bed, between us.**

**The Asthma had got worse, and breathing through my nose only became more and more difficult. I was also sweating profusely, and a headache approached rapidly, though thankfully not the full-blown Migraine which would have made everything else impossible.**

**I cannot describe the feeling of joy that washed over me, when I had wriggled my body upwards and around, and I had the knife in my hand. From that point on, it was simple to open the blade, but then it got hard all over again as I hacksawed back and forth over the cloth to try to cut through it. I admit, there were two or three times I thought it impossible, and almost gave up, especially as my wrists were getting slippery with my blood where I kept missing and cutting myself. But never underestimate the extent a man will go to**

**survive. Even if I'd slashed an artery I think I would have kept cutting.**

**Well, all I can say is, those Swiss Army guys, know their stuff, because eventually my bloodied hands broke free. God, my wrists were a mess, there was blood everywhere, but I didn't feel a thing; adrenalin I suppose. I sat up and bent forward and freed my legs before turning to Simone, who looked at me with what looked like a mixture of fear and hero worship.**

**"Shhh, Simone, we have to keep quiet," I whispered after I ripped the tape from my mouth. I helped her turn away from me, and cut through the rope which bound her. I worried she might have lost the use of her hands because they looked unnaturally blue. Next I freed her feet and noticed she couldn't use her hands well enough to get a grip on the tape covering her lips, so I helped and as gently as possible, eased it off.**

**"What if they come back and find us like this, they will kill us?"**

**She hissed.**

**"They're going to do that anyway Simone, they didn't wear masks and we can identify them, they won't permit it."**

**She clamped one very blue hand over her open mouth to stifle the gasp as she realised what I had said was true.**

**“How are your hands, and can you walk?”**

**I watched her try to rub her hands around her wrists to gain some circulation back, and flex her feet. “I can’t feel my fingers, but I can walk OK, I think. What shall we do?”**

**There was the rub, what could we do? I had no doubt that any attempt to go down stairs would be heard and they would be waiting for us. Then I had an idea. I slipped off the bed and crept around to her side, then helped her stand with one hand holding her hand, the other around her waist. She was trembling worse than me, and believe me, that would have been no mean feat. I gave her a hug for confidence, and she whispered in my ear: “Thank you, thank you so much, George.”**

**These days, when I get all maudlin about my legs, I remember back to those words, whispered so softly, but so heartfelt, and do you know what? It’s not so bad anymore. I put my finger to my lips to remind her to keep quiet, then crossed the room to the window, the one she had left open in the rain and looked down.**

**I summed up the situation in an instant and thought: yes, it can be done. I beckoned for her to come over, and as she hobbled over to me, I had my first doubt. She would be slow, with the loss of circulation to her hands and feet for so long, but it couldn't be helped.**

**I took my car keys out of my pants pocket, and tucked them into the checked shirt pocket she was wearing, located over her right breast. She looked at me questioningly so I bent and whispered directly into her ear:**

**"I'm going to lower you out of the window so you can drop onto the roof of the ground floor dining room below us. I know it's a sloped roof, but from there you can jump into the flower bed, which with all the rain will be soft. Don't stop, run to my car, jump in and get it started, I will be right behind you, oh, and if I'm not, if anything goes wrong, drive like the wind and get help. OK?"**

**"But they will hear the window open. They will be up here in seconds."**

**“I know, that’s why I don’t want you to stop for anything. With you gone, they will know they won’t get the money. Derek will be safe and they will have no reason to hurt me.”**

**She looked at me with a look akin to love, not that there has ever been anything like that between the four of us, we were just good friends. So far as I could see, it was the only plan which had any chance of success, and in no way made me a hero, it was just about survival. “C’mon, let’s do it, we have to get you out of here before Derek gets home.”**

**She nodded, thank goodness. I don’t think my nerves could have taken a full-blown discussion. It made sense to get her out, and she had seen the logic. “So, once I get the window up all the way, quick as you can, climb out and let me hold your wrists to lower you down. One again, don’t stop Simone, not for me or anything, you must get away and get help. Ready?”**

**She shook her hands one last time to get the blood moving, and nodded again. I gripped the upper sash window, and mouthed the words: “ONE, TWO, THREE.”**

**The bloody window banged all the way up, and we both jumped. Good girl that she was, she flew into action, and stuck her left leg through the opening. She grimaced in pain as she gripped the lower sill and swung the other leg through the hole. With a sinking heart, I heard the men running up the stairs.**

**I grabbed her wrists above where the rope marks were in part to help her through, and to stop her falling because her grip was too weak to support her weight. I braced my knees against the wall below the window and hung on for dear life. Then slowly lowered her down, squatting to get her as low as possible.**

**Two things happened at once. I let go of her wrists and the men raced into the bedroom. I did the only thing I could think of to do, I stood up to block their view of Simone's escape.**

**“What the fuck?”**

**It was Curly's voice they were here. I stood still and saw Simone jump from the lower roof into the garden. She landed awkwardly but did not fall, thank God. She turned and looked up at me and I waved her away, frantically, and I had the pleasure of seeing her turn tail and run to my car and get in.**

**I didn't hear the gun shot, but I did sense what felt like a kind of a bee sting in the centre of my back. My body was thrown forward against the glass, and stupidly, I wondered what the hell was happening. I slowly slid down, dazed and confused, until my top half reached the opening and I toppled through, unable to stop myself, into the void. My last waking thought was wonder that the roof was rushing up to meet me, and meet me it did as I swan dived into the tiled surface, made slick with the rain. Mercifully that was when I lost consciousness, so didn't feel the next drop, from the roof into the garden bed below.**

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**When I woke, my wife was there, holding my hand, and I thought: *but you're in Darwin?* Then I realised I was in a hospital bed.**

**It took time, lots and lots of time, but then that was one thing I had plenty of. I'd been in a coma for eleven days, I'd been operated on to remove the bullet from my back, and the blood clot in my brain. My left arm was broken, and apparently, my face was a mess of healing grazes and bruises.**

**I'd been awake for three days before they told me I was unlikely to walk again. Naturally I thought it had been being shot in the back, but no, that hadn't done the damage, it had been the landing in the flower bed, half in it, and half over the brick retaining wall which held in the mulch.**

**Luckily, Simone had not seen my fall from the window. If she had, I'm sure she would have stopped to help, and then would have been caught by Curly, or Michael Hampton is his real name, and Blondie, nee Sampson O'Halloran. She had driven away in the opposite direction, after side swiping my BMW against the driveway gate in the process. She had found help and sent the police, who responded quickly, and in doing so probably saved my life. They called the ambulance, and Brad, the para-medic worked wonders, apparently. He recognised the human back was not designed to be in the shape it was, as I lie unconscious in the rain.**

**Within a day and a half, the two men had been apprehended, and were eventually sentenced to twenty-seven and twenty-three years' jail respectively. The main charges were kidnapping, and attempted murder. I'm sure my testimony, delivered from my**

**wheelchair garnered support from the jury, they didn't stand a chance, and neither should they have.**

**It was a long haul for me, first recovery, then rehabilitation, and mostly, you know, these days it's not too bad. Truth be told I have my dark days, and whether that's self-pity, or a side effect of the pain killers I eat constantly, I can't say. Honestly though, mostly it's OK; I get by.**

**The Bendigo Bank gave me a reward of a twenty-thousand-dollar bank account with them, which was a surprise. My best day was when I was awarded the Prime Minister's medal for bravery, and my whole family along with friends and work clients were there to see it. I was also a nominee for Australian of the Year, probably because of all the publicity the whole thing caused. Thank God I didn't win it, because while I enjoyed the fame for a day when I got my medal, I never truthfully felt worthy of it. I just did what I did, and never thought I was terribly brave, I believe most people would have done the same in my place.**

**You know for me, the worst thing about the whole episode? Mina and I lost our best friends and neighbours. They moved away,**

**not able to face living in their house any more. But that wasn't the worst, because we understood their need to do that. It was, I think, every time they saw me, unable to walk, they felt so awfully guilty. To my mind they never should have felt that way, yet they did, and no amount of reassurance from me could change their minds.**

**These days I still work. After all, a chartered accountant can work from a wheelchair, and almost all my clients waited for my recovery, which I found humbling. My car has had hand controls fitted, so I'm mobile and independent. Personal fitness is very important for a paraplegic, so I took up archery, and of all things: Mina and I bought a Kayak, and we often go for a paddle down the river when the weather is nice.**

**All in all, life is good, and sure beats the alternative.**

**So, you tell me, should I have picked up the note I saw laying in the puddle?**