The Last Valentine

He stood by my bed at midnight, awakening me for a romantic swim in the pool. I jumped and screamed awakening the other occupants of the house who shared our three-bedroom vacation home in Florida. To his disappointment, I couldn't be stirred; I went back to sleep.

When I awoke the next morning, I staggered to the bathroom to find a large box of chocolates surrounded by smaller coconut almond hearts, my favorite. He had already adorned my pillow with a coconut almond heart daily leading up to this celebration of lovers. “To a Beautiful Woman…” was the start of my Valentine's Day card leaned against the mirror. If only our song “Can I Have This Dance” by Anne Murray, we danced to every morning with coffee were playing.

My husband, my lover, my best friend of 42 years lived to be the “King of Romance.” The evenings filled with passion, holding one another and cuddling throughout the night. My heart melted and tears welled in my eyes as I thought-how long do I have?

Just two days earlier, driving home from my writing class, he began flinging his arms and holding his chest, yelling, “What did you put in the car?” I rushed him to the ER, thinking he was having a heart attack!

The doctor asked him, “Why are you here?”

“My wife is poisoning me!”

“Are you?” asked the doctor.

Mortified, I responded, “NO!”

When the doctor told him there were no drugs in his system, my husband said to me, “I guess I owe you an apology.” Then he cried.

Vindicated of drugging him, I replied, “Why would I drug someone I have loved for forty-two years?” The doctor kept him overnight to monitor his heart and to have an EKG in the morning. I slept, sort of, in the recliner next to his bed.

Prior to his breakdown, my husband had been accusing me of putting things in his food, sabotaging his car, and having affairs with his friends. He imagined he smelled something in our bedroom and left the bathroom exhaust going continually. Some kind of white powder was supposedly on our sheets; he would flip the sheets in my face and ask, “Why are you doing this to me?” This was not my husband.

The next day, while my husband was out of the room having various diagnostic tests, I waited alone in his hospital room, hoping for an answer to my husband’s bizarre behavior. Finally, the doctor came in to talk to me. “They found nothing. Your husband is physically, perfectly healthy.”

When I explained his behavior to the doctor, he said, “It sounds like early signs of Alzheimer’s. See your family doctor when you get home.”

My heart stopped; I couldn’t bear to tell him.