

All Fall Down

by Jake Barnes

One of my high school classmates married a local farmer who was a few years her senior. They had four children, all boys. Some years later, her husband died. My old friend Charles told me about Red. I was visiting my mother at the Home that summer. He just up and dropped dead one day, Charles said. Pretty tough on Karen, I opined. Charles looked the other way.

One day I ran into Karen downtown, and we had coffee at the Norseman Café. Karen told me that her husband had always said he didn't want to live if he had a heart attack or stroke. He didn't want to be a vegetable. If she saw him go down, he said, count to a thousand, then call for help.

So that's just what she did. She found him in the barn one morning. He was unconscious. Out like a light. Karen went back to the house, poured herself a cup of coffee, and sat down at the kitchen table. When she finished her second cup, she called for an ambulance.

When I told Charles what she told me, he smiled and nodded. He got what he had coming, he said. Charles said Red was an asshole. Mean as a rattlesnake.

