

# (lost love, and longing)

*by* Jerry Ratch

As has happened many times in my life, I heard his voice in my sleep and I saw him, though only briefly. Over the years I have seen this man I thought was him clearly and known when he was in danger — a car wreck at twenty (I was correct on everything but the color of the car) and he imagined I was the nurse at his bedside; another time he was hurt; as well as when he attempted suicide. But he closed that connection, I suppose, when he decided to stay where he was. Occasionally, though, whispers escape. He probably isn't even aware that it happens.

I don't know why I am telling you now. I am sure it sounds ridiculous. However, it happened tonight, and as you are my only link to him I thought I would check in and ask if you know he is well. I am sorry to do this, truly I am. And I do not ask — as I kept myself from doing before when you so very, very kindly told me he had been ill but was recovering — for details of any kind. I don't even really want to know them. I have moved on from what happened this last time, seek nothing from him. And yet there is, inside of me, the little girl who loved him and believed in him, who still feels that not knowing if he had died, or something of the like, would be the worst possible thing in the world.

So I had to write to you. Have you heard from him since the last time we talked, and is he fine? I truly hope so. And I hope, just as sincerely, that you can forgive me for this horrible lapse in manners. With my sincerest gratitude for your past kindness and understanding, and hopes for your forgiveness now.

Respectfully — you know who I am.

