

FOREWORD

Scott Turow

In my new novel, *Identical*, Tim Brodie, an elderly private investigator, who hopes to unravel the mysteries of a murder that took place nearly three decades before, visits a nursing home so he can interview Lidia Gianis, 87, a woman Tim has known for years, but who is now deeply in the grip of dementia:

“Is he my husband?” Lidia asked Eloise, her attendant, as Tim entered.

“Oh no, honey. He just a friend.” Eloise propped Lidia up in the leatherette recliner. “You all go head and visit. I’m just outside, case you need me.”

Tim sat down in a wooden-armed chair a few feet from Lidia.

“Do I know you?” she asked Tim.

“Tim Brodie, Lidia. We met a million years ago at St. D’s.”

“I don’t know you,” she said. “I had a stroke and my memory is not so good.”

“Yeah, well, my memory isn’t what it once was either. “

In thirty years on the police force, and twenty-five since then as a P.I., Tim had done lots of interviews under daunting circumstances, questioning children and the mentally handicapped, and naturally enough, the desperately bereaved. But this would be a new chapter and Tim had no idea how to start.

On Lidia's bedside table, there were photographs of her two daughters and of her twin sons and a passel of kids.

"Now who are all these folks?" he asked her.

"I don't know. The girl just put them there. But they're all nice people."

Tim picked up one photograph, a group shot of Lidia's grandchildren.

"Now these grandkids of yours, they're a good-looking bunch." Tim meant it. The Gianises were always a handsome family.

Lidia was frowning. "Is that who they are?" she asked.

"Beautiful," Tim said, "All of them."

"Yes, I think they're all nice people. I have a son, did you know that?"

"Two, I believe." He tapped the picture beside her of her identical boys.

"My sons come here all the time. One of them is a big deal, too. Is he an actor?" she asked Tim, referring to Paul who was now running for Mayor. "People just love him. They tell me so all the time. Everyone here knows who he is."

Tim said he knew Paul too, then asked about Cass, hoping for any information about the other twin.

Lidia pondered a second and shook her head. "I had a stroke and my memory's not so good." She raised her hand again to stare at her bracelet, which, by whatever logic was left to her, once more brought her attention to Tim. "Who are you?" she asked. "Do I know you?"

This dialogue, unfortunately, is based more on experience than imagination. My mother, who passed in 2011 at the age of 91, spent her last six years increasingly confused by dementia. The perseveration and repetitions that characterize Lidia's conversation became familiar to me, as did the fact that my mom could have unpredictable flashes of amazing lucidity. Caring for her was always a challenge, even though I had the complete

support of my sister, Vicki, who shared the responsibility with me, and the heroic assistance of two wonderful cousins, Joy and Sy Dordick, who spent time with my mom, and often stood in for me when I was travelling. Nonetheless, when my mom lay dying, I felt compelled to ask her whether she wanted to go on with her life. That was simply not a decision any of us felt we could make for her.

“Are you ready to quit?” I asked my mother.

She shook her head no. I doubt that she understood the full implications of the question, but she got the basic point and Alzheimer’s or not, my sister and I abided by her decision that she was not ready to die. The medical interventions continued, although she was gone days later, notwithstanding.

The complexity of that moment and of entrusting such a profound question to someone whose capacities were so compromised makes for intense family drama. But the legal implications of such situations are in many ways even more difficult to unravel.

That is why this is such a fascinating and important book. It is not the usual ponderous legal treatise. It’s a practical quick-start guide so that you can be a beacon to a family member, a friend, a loved one, or even a co-worker who has been affected by the darkness of dementia.

When it comes to understanding Alzheimer’s disease, every one of us knows someone who has been affected but the disease is so pervasive and frightening that many of us try to block it from our minds. When someone asks us what they should do now that a loved one has been diagnosed, we don’t even know how to begin to find the right answers. This book will be your starting point and a trustworthy guide. It is written by practicing lawyers who are on the front lines fighting to serve clients with Alzheimer’s disease and their families. In this book they share with you their secret wisdom, and the uncommon knowledge that comes from years of multiple client experiences.

You are about to meet some great storytellers and many deeply admirable people. The authors know that no matter how well attorneys fulfill their legal role, when it comes to Alzheimer’s disease, dementia sufferers and their families need help from a team of capable and concerned professionals. Within these pages you will hear from nurses, legal guardians,

advocates for elder-abuse victims, hospice personnel, Alzheimer's Association leaders, technology visionaries, geriatric psychiatrists, police officers specializing in scam prevention, family caregivers, forensic experts, and even prosecutors. Each one has an important story to tell that will provide you with the gift of deeper understanding.

Alzheimer's disease is one of the scourges of our time, and one whose toll on the country will only deepen with the aging of the Baby Boomers and the inevitability of increased life spans. Curing Alzheimer's would probably do more than any single step to reduce health care expenses and, far more important, improve the quality of life of the elderly here and around the world. But until there is a cure, you'll be grateful to have this book at your side.