

That One Event

Category: Motor Vehicle Accidents

written by Elizabeth S. Wolf | March 26, 2026

It was the summer I was hated. Living in North Carolina, where they still called it the War Between the States, my Yankee accent stood out. Pending my schedule I trained as a community organizer by day or went door-to-door canvassing money for social change in the evenings. To pay my rent I worked a rotating schedule as triage receptionist in the Emergency Room. I was the one asking your name, address, and insurance, asking you to spell things for me, telling you to move your car out of the ambulance bay.

They say everyone working in the ER has one event that guts them. One night they brought in the wedding party after a motor vehicle accident. The other driver was under the influence. They cut the bride out of her gown, through the white brocade, through the lacy undergarments, everything drenched in blood. They couldn't save her. The groom was DOA. He still wore his boutonniere. Someone had to talk to the gaily dressed parents, intercepted en route to the reception. Everyone was wrecked.

After the shift ended some people went to the chapel. Many of us ended up gathered in loose clumps in the parking lot. Nobody noticed the sunrise, but it got light all around us. Everyone was sharing tales of love.

Elizabeth S. Wolf

Amesbury, Massachusetts