

# November Echo (Excerpt)

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*Maybe the journey isn't so much about becoming anything. Maybe it's about unbecoming everything that isn't really you, so you can be who you were meant to be in the first place.*

*~ Paulo Coelho ~*





# 1

## Sarah

**H**is penetrating blue eyes mesmerize me.

It sounds cliché—and I suppose it is—but I’ve always had a strong connection with animals that I never could sustain with another human being.

“Sarah, Bubba is in room four, ready for his intake.” The receptionist, Nancy, directs me toward our next patient. I’ve been working at Dr. Koe’s clinic as an intern for six months while I prepare to begin veterinary school in the evenings this fall.

I grab the dry erase clipboard and purple marker, all the while keeping my gaze locked on the Siberian husky. The fur left in his wake already has me sniffing my way toward allergy medication. Everyone else on the staff sees him as an overgrown shedding machine who needs a quiet place to calm down, but I notice something more behind his anxious demeanor.

Hidden pain. Fear.

Animals don’t argue with me. They might occasionally present an attitude, but they’re loyal, sometimes to a fault. It’s no surprise that I identify with them so easily. The squealing coming from room four snaps me from my reverie and back to my job.

“Well, hello there, Bubba.” I keep my eyes focused on the pot-bellied pig before me. His presence is an abnormal occur-

rence in any other veterinarian's office. But it's why I applied to work here. And it's why I'm sinking every penny of my earnings into an education that will allow me to open a practice like this someday.

"It's just me. No need to worry." I rub his belly to comfort him. His pulse runs higher than the usual 100 for a growing pig.

I look toward the only other human in the room, Mrs. Weigman, for the first time. "How has he been doing?" My voice shifts from sing-song to transactional.

"Bubba is the social butterfly on our farm, keeping all the other animals on their toes. Although his insatiable curiosity brings us in today." She ruffles Bubba's ears, a hint of worry escaping through her hands. "He escaped through a gap in his pen and found a garden hose that apparently looked tasty."

I run my fingers over the length of his body to feel for the presence of any foreign objects. It's not my job, but I can't help it. Caring for animals is part of my DNA. I look into Bubba's eyes. "Well, aren't you a little bugger? Momma should have named you Houdini." I make a few notes on the clipboard and place it in the tray beside the examination table. "Dr. Koe will be in shortly."

I slip back into the reception area, my gaze searching for the dog I haven't stopped thinking about since he scampered through the front door. "Where's the husky?" I direct my inquiry to no one in particular as other staff members attend to their duties.

"Walk in. Room two. Name is Shadow. Dr. Koe is behind, so it will be a bit." Nancy pecks away at her keyboard, answering my question while completing the discharge paperwork for another patient.

I tap twice on the door and slip inside. Shadow rises to his feet and pants with apparent joy as he comes over to lick me. It's an instinct for me to process a diagnosis internally as soon as I encounter an animal.

A puppy exhibits signs of labored breathing, unexplained weight loss, and extreme fatigue. Heartworm.

Small skin lesions on a dog's paw. Ringworm.

Cats have their problems too. Runny eyes equate to an upper respiratory infection while loose stool in the litter pan simply means the cat's stressed by something in its environment.

Pet owners share their concerns, and I listen out of respect. But I hear the emotions of each animal in their bark or meow. I see the pain and fear in their eyes. And I feel the anxiety in their elevated heartbeat.

Most worries are unfounded. A bit of medication and tender loving care is all that's needed to set things back on track for most animals. But there's always the exception.

"How are you handsome?" I scratch behind his ears.

"I might be a little old for you, but thanks for noticing." The man in the corner looks up from his cell phone with a chuckle. I'm not amused. "Just kidding." He returns to scrolling through his social media feed. He would be an easy swipe left for me.

I return my attention to the husky. His abdomen shows signs of swelling. His breathing quickens, exposing pale gums. And there's a slight shiver to his legs. I want to be wrong, but I worry about how these symptoms present in a dog. I have no reason to understand what I know is the truth, and my unspoken diagnosis is premature, but someone needs to examine Shadow, and soon.

“I’ll be back.” Conflicted, I leave the enclosed space to escape the owner, but I’m really on a mission to find help for this animal.

I scan left and right before finding Dr. Koe parting ways with another patient and their human. “Katie, you need to see the dog in room two.” The rest of the staff glares at me, as if I’ve uttered an expletive in the presence of children. “Sorry, Dr. Koe. Can you check Shadow out? I think it’s *urgent*.” Katie Koe and I have become close to each other. Even if I’m a subordinate to her, she’s a mentor to me. We’ve had so many heart-to-heart conversations that her first name slips out whenever I get anxious.

She stops what she’s doing, shifts direction, and makes her way directly to room two. It’s nice to have someone trust you like that. The rest of the staff snubs me, as if I’m receiving preferential treatment. And maybe I am, but it’s in the interest of the animals. That must count for something.

I’m hoping and praying that it’s not what I think it is, but I’m already preparing myself for the news. It’s my weakness. I can shun a human owner with no hint of worry, but it’s impossible for me to remain unattached to a sick animal.

I glance at my phone as a distraction, to take my mind off what’s happening behind closed doors. A notification arrives from my mom, like a sign from the universe. There are lots of those—light posts from somewhere beyond—that arrive front and center when we need them most.

Bad news... I won’t be at the farm for our planned visit. Good news... a group of judges have commissioned a piece of my artwork for a show in Pigeon Grove! Join me there?

To me it’s bad news all around for reasons only I understand.



My fingers hover over the keyboard, knowing what I *should* type, but I can't do it. That's when Dr. Koe emerges from the examination room with a sad smile and heavy eyes. I want to be wrong, but I know I'm not.

She places her hand on my forearm. "The ultrasound doesn't look good. Mr. Hughes, Shadow's owner, has agreed to keep him here overnight, so we can monitor him and draw some blood to confirm a diagnosis." Her gaze rises to meet mine. "I haven't told him anything yet, not until we know for sure."

Dr. Koe removes her palm from my arm and slips into another examination room for her next appointment, as if an animal isn't on the brink of a life-altering moment. That's where I'm different, unable to separate the practical aspects of medicine from the emotional connection.

My phone dings again, another message from my mom.

What do you say? Are you coming? It will be amazing, I promise.

My decision is simple, and the universe nudges me with the timely pre-diagnosis for Shadow. I reply to her immediately: *Just got pulled into an emergency and will need to work this weekend. Good luck, though, and congratulations!*

I added an exclamation mark to my text after thinking about it for a while. Despite our family history, or maybe because of it, my mom deserves to enjoy this long-awaited moment.

The rest of the day moves in slow motion. Dr. Koe issues a rush on Shadow's lab results at my request. She knows how important situations like these are to me, even if she warns me about becoming too attached to any patient. I can't help it. During every spare second, I find my way into the examination room where he rests, giving him the love and attention he deserves.

It's not until closing time that we discover a major problem. The sole kennel big enough to hold the husky has a broken latch. Everyone agrees to jimmy rig it, but I raise a ruckus. The thought of animals escaping brings back more unwelcome memories from my past. I can't allow this course of action without first trying to find a better solution. Even with my allergies, I would watch Shadow for the evening, if there was no other way.

"Hold on..." I bring my index finger to my lips. "I have an idea." I dial my best friend's number and wait for her to pick up. "Ruby, it's me."

"Hey, Sarah. Are we still on for our Sunday get-together?" Every weekend we meet up to talk about Ruby's weekly trip to the local animal shelter.

"Sure. Maybe. Listen, we have a bit of a crisis here, and I was wondering if you might help." I swallow and cross my fingers, hoping this works out. "We have a Siberian husky that needs a home for the evening. His name is Shadow. Would you..."

I leave the question lingering without finishing it, assuming she will fill in the blanks. "Sure." Her words come cushioned with a bit of caution, but it's the answer we needed to hear, especially since no one else on the staff will watch over him, and I'm certainly not sending him back home. Not in his present condition and not with the uncaring vibe I get from his owner. He'll be in better hands with Ruby. She's been visiting the animal shelter every week in search of her forever friend. It's a perfect match.

"Are you sure it will be okay with your landlord?" I know she had some run-ins with him about pets in the past, but I assume that's history now.

"It won't be a problem. Just bring him to the back entrance. I can't wait to meet him."

Ruby is covert about bringing the large animal up the stairwell and keeping him quiet while inside her apartment, but that's expected, I suppose. What's important is that he has a safe space to rest tonight until we can come up with a firm diagnosis and treatment plan to move forward.

I spend the evening eating pizza, doting on Shadow, and talking with Ruby. If it weren't for the lingering news and anticipation of what tomorrow might bring, it would be a perfect night in the life of Sarah Perkins.



I ARRIVE AT THE CLINIC before anyone else in the morning. Or so I think. The light in Dr. Koe's office casts a glow into the dark hallway. "Katie?" It's safe to use her first name when I know it's just the two of us.

"I'll be there in a second." Dr. Koe shuffles through the doorway and over to the locked cabinet filled with drugs I never want to see. Whenever those doors swing open, my heartbeat plummets into dangerous zones, much like the pets will experience once they receive the injection.

"What are you doing?" I'm in disbelief. Perhaps it's not the most professional way to voice my thoughts, but I can't help it.

"You were right, about the diagnosis. And the blood tests confirm it." We had come to an agreement on a way to pass unspoken messages between each other. Whenever I use that word—urgent, it implies my suspicions that a life-threatening illness is at play. "Cancer of the spleen. I passed the information on to Mr. Hughes, Shadow's owner. He wants to euthanize, to minimize the pain." She draws the life-ending concoction into the syringe. "When will he be here?"

“Wait, that’s it?” I know my voice is louder than it should be. “Isn’t surgery an option?”

“Sarah, the procedure is expensive, and it’s no guarantee that the patient will survive any longer than a few months afterwards.”

I stand tall and defend my thoughts. “His name is Shadow. And it’s possible he could live healthily for at least another two years. Isn’t that worth the expense?”

“It’s not my choice. You know that.” She puts her hand on my shoulder, an attempt to show her understanding. “I can only provide recommendations, and to be honest, I don’t disagree with the owner’s decision.”

Some people don’t have money to afford the animal care, especially in emergency situations, and that’s a shame. But the swanky clothes, flashy jewelry, and expensive cologne speaks otherwise about Shadow’s owner.

Dr. Koe shifts to move around me, but I slide with her, like a soccer goalie defending my goal. “Would you do this if he was your own pet?” It’s a desperate plea and probably unfair, but I must be a voice for Shadow.

“Sarah, you know better. We might be the professionals, but the clients have rights too. He’s not doing anything illegal, and there’s nothing I can do to force a different choice. If you want to have a successful practice someday, you will need to balance emotional attachment and the logistics of running a business.”

I inhale deeply and focus on the painting of a smiling dog over Dr. Koe’s shoulder. “What if I assume responsibility for Shadow?”

“Sarah—”

“Leave him in my care.” I now stare at Katie with pleading eyes, not allowing them to blink until she agrees with my proposal.

“First off, you don’t have the space. Second, the surgery costs way more than what I’m paying you. Third, you’re allergic to dogs. And last, it’s illegal, Sarah.” She glares at me, unwavering. “If this is what Mr. Hughes wants for his dog, I can’t stop him. There’s no legal recourse for me to deny him that choice.”

“But what if we at least ask Mr. Hughes if he’d be willing to pass ownership of Shadow on to another person... like me.” It’s a last ditch ploy at reason before tipping my actions over into the realm of illogical.

“Sarah, I’m two steps ahead of you. I already did. Mr. Hughes has made his decision, and he’s chosen to keep his reasons to himself, which is his prerogative.” Dr. Koe squints. She measures my lengthening silence after our last remarks.

I glance at my watch, realizing that Ruby is probably on her way to the clinic with Shadow now. What I’m considering is ludicrous, but it also seems like the only sane thing I can do. “I have to go.” I step back from Dr. Koe but keep my eyes locked with hers. She knows.

“Sarah, if you do this...” She shakes her head with disapproval. “You can’t return. You’ll be throwing away your future career. For a single animal.” Dr. Koe narrows her gaze. “Is it really worth it?”

She has no clue about my past and what abandoned animals mean to me. And that’s what Shadow is, a forsaken creature. His fate is being determined by someone who doesn’t care. He needs someone to advocate for him, and I am that voice.

“Thank you.” I whisper the words, afraid that Dr. Koe will break out a pair of handcuffs and restrain me, but she doesn’t. I leave with no interference. Adrenaline flows freely as I devise the perfect plan in my head. But first, I need to stop Ruby from arriving here. While Dr. Koe turned a blind eye to my planned actions, she won’t allow me to remove Shadow from the premises if he shows up here.

Right on cue, a text arrives from my best friend. Her timing is impeccable. Until I see the message and realize that my problems—and hers—have just become more complicated. And I refuse to believe this is a sign from the universe that’s trying to convince me I’m making a terrible choice.



ON MY WAY. SORRY I’M late. Landlord found Shadow with me this morning. It’s against the rules, so he evicted me. Will talk later.

No, we need to speak now. I dial her number. When Ruby picks up, she’s sobbing. It’s something that texts never fully convey, emotion. “Meet me in the parking lot of the coffee shop on 5th Avenue. We’ll figure this out.”

She snuffles and seems to calm herself with my words. “Okay, but how—”

“Don’t worry,” I say. “I’ve got a plan.”

And I do. I text my mom.

Is the extra key still under the milk jug in the barn?

Her reply comes back quickly. *Yes, but why?*

My fingers fly over the keyboard. I need the house as a temporary place for a friend and her dog to stay.

It's a little white lie. Shadow isn't really Ruby's pet, but I could already tell from her time with him last night that she's grown as attached to him as I have. My phone rings and I answer it.

"Hey, Ruby... are you almost there?"

"Ruby? This is Mom, Sarah. What's going on?" There's a suspicious tone in her voice. How do mothers always know?

"I'm just in a predicament at the moment. Can my friend and her dog stay at the house? It'll only be for a little while. Maybe a week." Or that's what I'm hoping for. My plan is fluid right now.

"Sorry, honey. My visit to Pigeon Grove is an... extended one. I'm helping to coordinate the 55-year celebration at Fly Away Home. You know, the bed-and-breakfast I've told you about in town? I rented out our farmhouse as a vacation rental for the next month, so it's not available."

I'm confused by the sequence of events and how everything seems to conspire against me. How can the universe not look out for Shadow and provide him an avenue to a haven of safety?

"Hold on..." My mom pulls the phone away from her ear. Muffled voices converse in the background before she returns to our call. "There's a farm on the outskirts of town here. As luck would have it, the owner is here picking up some herbs from your Aunt Claire. He's more than happy to provide your friend and her dog with a place to stay for as long as they need."

Is this the twisted way that the universe answers my pleas? By setting me on a crash course with the one location that has the power to unearth all the heartache I've buried over the years.

"So, do I get the pleasure of seeing my daughter after all?" I hear the smile in my mom's voice.

“We’ll be there later this afternoon.” I only hope Ruby agrees with my plan. She has nowhere to stay, nor does Shadow, and he’s going to require medical attention soon. For now, I just need to find him a safe place to call home. Ruby too.

Pigeon Grove. I’ve heard about the legendary location, even if I’ve never visited. It’s the renowned birthplace of my mom’s passion for art. Given the town’s namesake and my connection with animals, I can’t help but recall a few interesting facts about pigeons.

First, they can recognize themselves in a mirror.

Second, they can learn the alphabet.

And third, they’re able to predict the weather with their exemplary low-frequency hearing.

Attuned to the universe’s manner of delivering timely messages and the parallel ability for pigeons to do the same, I can’t help but know that a peculiar storm awaits me just over the horizon.





## 2

### Noah

I poke at the scrambled eggs with my fork like a blindfolded child playing a game of pin the tail on the donkey. Except this isn't a game. Life isn't a game. The moment helps me realize a few important facts about my relationship with the four-tined piece of cutlery.

Forks allow things to sneak through or fall away. They provide less control. And they're sharp and pointy, leaving an impression for all to see in hindsight. And lest I forget about the metaphorical references, I've never been one to embrace making an important decision. No more forks. I need a spoon.

The resonating hum of a single-engine airplane grows in intensity before dissipating away once again. It happens every forty-five seconds, a sign that it's a busy day at the airport.

I glance at the waitress running back and forth behind the counter. She has delivered my breakfast amongst a splay of flight planning materials. Aircraft handbook, straightedge, protractor, calculator, sectional maps, and a neatly choreographed spreadsheet of expected en route waypoints. What was her name?

"Rosie, can I get a spoon?"

She locks eyes with me and never blinks, reaches into the silverware bin, extracts a teaspoon-sized utensil, and places it per-

fectly aligned on the napkin beside my plate. That's talent, knowing where everything is and being able to carry out a task with impeccable precision like that.

"It's Rose." The scowl on her face is a thorn to the beauty I presume hides beneath it. She pulls out her pad of paper, makes a few notes, and punctuates them with an audible thump of her pen. Is she charging me for a spoon? She finally looks away and returns a few moments later with a steaming mug of coffee I never ordered.

"I didn't..." Deciding not to dig myself deeper into a hole, I feel like a gopher on a golf course in spring. She must have assumed I wanted a cup of joe to accompany my requested cutlery item. Who else eats their scrambled eggs with a spoon? Someone who steers clear of forks, metaphorical and otherwise, at all costs.

I lodge my heels on the barstool legs and reach down to pet my basset hound. She's always there when I need reassurance. "Good girl, Lois." I can never resist her droopy eyes, especially when it's accompanied by a slight wag from her tail. I grab the saucer from my coffee and deposit a few pieces of egg on it, small bits that escaped through my fork tines and still rest on my plate.

Placing the unusual canine treat at my feet, I rub her ears where she likes it most. "We'll be on our way soon." It's as much a statement to her as it is for me. No matter where I find myself, there seems to be an internal clock ticking whenever I visit some place. After a prescribed amount of time has elapsed, an imaginary alarm goes off, reminding me to leave. Sometimes it's a few hours. Other times it's several days. But it's rarely, if ever, more than a few weeks. Even in this airport diner where I've been sitting for less than thirty minutes, the tick tock sound inside

my head has become deafening, even among the drowning whirl from planes passing overhead.

I return to the handwritten stack of papers organized neatly before me. Most pilots plug their departure and destination into a program and let the powers that be chart the most effective route. I prefer to use a manual approach, along with an E6B calculator, sectional charts, a protractor, and an old-fashioned No. 2 pencil. Leaving fate in the hands of some formulaic algorithm that doesn't account for all the potential variables is never a good idea.

My planned trip to northern Florida is a welcome change. Warmer weather and a fresh set of faces is what I need. Each temporary gig allows me to leave my mark, make some new acquaintances, and earn some money to send back home. I always pay attention to that internal clock, though, never staying too long such that I become attached to anyplace. Or anyone. I've learned that good times never last, and there's no sense in living with the false hope they might.

Predictions show the cloud coverage to be one okta en route. It's pilot lingo for mostly sunny skies, allowing a VFR flight. But the expected winds aloft call for a more rigorous fuel planning procedure. I account for alternate destinations and reserve 100LL in the two wing tanks of my Beechcraft Bonanza should unlikely circumstances require it. Weight and balance calculations have become routine, just Lois and me, ensuring that any passengers and baggage are properly distributed for safe aircraft operation.

I take a sip of the coffee I didn't order and glance out the window, continually taking a pulse on the current conditions. A man glares at me and then at my basset hound. He's intimidat-

ing. Dressed to the nines in black slacks and a white oxford with the top two buttons undone, a pair of clichéd aviator glasses stay tucked in the open collar of his shirt.

I realize what he's thinking. No dogs allowed. I got permission for Lois to be here, though, and it's only for the thirty minutes it takes to plan my flight. He has no reason to poke his nose in my business. He saunters toward me and leans over the counter, resting his elbows on it. "Rose, can I get a coffee to go, dear?"

"Sure thing, honey cakes. Coming right up." Something tells me her improved demeanor has little to do with the fact he remembered her first name.

I'm watching the waitress, trying to figure her out, doing my best to understand where I went wrong while interacting with her. Maybe that ticking clock moment for this place has already passed. Perhaps I should be gone by now.

"Nice dog." The man swivels his head in my direction while directing only his eyes toward Lois, who sits quietly on the floor beside me. His words drip with sarcasm.

"She's not doing anyone harm." I glance at him before returning to the angles and mental math calculations that should receive my full and undivided attention.

"They rarely do. But when they make themselves known, you sure know it. Their bark is deep, resonant, and often unexpected, like a shrieking fire alarm." He grabs the coffee placed on the counter and returns the wink offered by Rose.

My emotions boil over. There's no good reason for him to dish out unwarranted criticism of my canine companion. She has as much right to be here as anyone else. "What's your problem, buddy?" I glower at him, biting my bottom lip and narrowing

my eyes. “She’s allowed to be here, even if she doesn’t conform to your swanky pilot getup and mannerisms.”

He takes a pronounced step back from me and raises his hands in defense. Good. He needs to be put in his place. “Woah, partner. I think you’ve gotten the wrong idea.” He removes the glasses from his shirt and places them on his eyes, shielding me from seeing whatever truth is present in them. “He reminds me of my basset hound.” The pilot motions to Lois with his index finger. “I had to do a double take because they look so much alike. I was only trying to make a bit of friendly conversation, but I see that’s not your style.”

He chuckles under his breath, shakes his head, and struts toward the door leading to the tarmac. “By the way, Rose?” He looks back at the waitress. “We got another one of those forked-tail doctor killers out there today.” The man extends his cup of coffee, pointing it at an aircraft tied down to the anchor points in its parking space. “Be sure to ring that bell for me.” And with that confusing statement, he’s thankfully gone.

The clang of an old sailor’s instrument reverberates through the diner. The hum of conversation goes silent for a few moments before returning to normal. “Excuse me, Rose?” I’m careful to use her proper first name.

“Yeah?” She doesn’t direct her attention toward me, but I’m okay with that so long as she’s not scowling at me.

“What was that about? The bell thing?”

“Pilot superstition.” She wipes down the counter beside me and dumps a pile of dirty plates in the wash bin. “That plane out there,” she points with her hand that holds a dish towel. “It’s bad luck.”

“Which one?” I crane my neck to look out the window. There’s two Piper Warriors, a Cessna 172, and my Beechcraft.

“The Bonanza. It’s unsafe, that V-shaped tail design. At least that’s the belief. In the hands of overconfident and wealthy amateur pilots, usually doctors, there have been an unusual number of incidents that have resulted in casualties.” She pauses and looks at me closely, as if analyzing my personal makeup. “Some think there’s a negative mojo associated with it and worry it’s contagious. So, we ring a bell every time one finds itself here, to shoo away those demons.”

My plane. Bad luck. Negative mojo. Those aren’t the optimal words to hear before my departure. And fork-tailed doctor killer? I’m neither overconfident nor wealthy, but I surely don’t need another reason to dislike forks.



I DOUBLE-CHECK THE terminal area forecast at my destination and file a VFR flight plan after paying for my unfinished breakfast. My eggs aren’t the only thing scrambled this morning. With Lois’ leash wrapped around my wrist, I tuck the planning supplies in my bag and sling it over my shoulder.

Why did the pompous flyboy wannabe have to introduce some artificial layer of doubt in my abilities? I have enough to worry about with my past and future. The present is the one place where I have control, and I’m certain I’ve accounted for everything. I replay every detail in my mind. I have recorded the waypoints along my route in short-term memory, accounting for any potential weather constraints in my preparations. And I have my trusty pal beside me for company. I tug on Lois’ collar, and she dutifully follows me to the exit.

Clear skies and radiant sunshine are a welcome change from the dark recesses inside the diner. Taking a deep breath, I feel a subtle breeze on my cheek and instinctively glance toward the windsock positioned in the middle of the airfield. I'll be departing to the northeast before circling back to the south. It feels appropriate, the shift in direction required to leave this location. It's long overdue. I'm ready to escape and find a new place to sink myself into for a few weeks.

The whine of a jet turbine sounds foreign. Single-engine planes predominantly occupy this small airport. Looking right, I see the Cessna Citation. The door is still open and that man—the inconsiderate one from inside the diner—leads a basset hound into the cabin of the multi-million-dollar aircraft.

Three thoughts arrive at the same time. First, his dog looks eerily like Lois. Second, he's not even a pilot, as I notice movement in the cockpit through the windshield. And last, while we have a common interest in our canine companions, that's where our similarities end.

He's overconfident, wealthy, and in a position to get where he's going in a much more efficient manner than me. Lois and I make our way toward my aging Beechcraft Bonanza. It's not even mine. It was my dad's, for the longest time, before he transferred ownership of it to me.

I stop in my tracks, trying to forget the circumstances around how this plane came into my possession. I don't need that right now. Curse that blasted man for setting up a domino effect of actions that led to this moment. I take a deliberate and deep breath, close my eyes, and feel the sun on my face.

The tug on my wrist is timely. Lois pulls me along like the encouraging influence she has always been for me. I used to enjoy

flying a lot more than I do now. Things happen and perspectives change, though.

No one has ever asked me why I became a pilot, and I suppose that's a good thing, because it's a question that's too complicated to answer. My inclination to avoid forks would be an understandable motivation. There aren't any metaphorical versions in the road to navigate aloft. I have the power to carve a path of my liking through the sky.

But I'm not fooling myself. I know the real reason for my unlikely choice to fly a plane. The decision to leave the safety of solid ground beneath my feet voluntarily has ironic implications. Most pilots embrace the sense of freedom that comes with every takeoff. Instead, each new one haunts me in a way most others couldn't possibly understand.





## About the Author



DAVE CENKER is a romantic fiction author, writing stories infused with a kaleidoscope of emotions that nurture the heart while exploring elements of the human condition. He appreciates the opportunity to connect with readers through a shared emotional chord and the enchanted sentiments of a timeless love story.

Like coffee provides caffeine for the physical body, Dave's stories supply caffeine for the soul.

Visit him online at [www.davecenker.com](http://www.davecenker.com)<sup>1</sup>



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1. [http://www.davecenker.com/](http://www.davecenker.com)

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## Also by Dave Cenker

### **Pigeon Grove Series**

Fly Away Home<sup>1</sup>

Between the Lines<sup>2</sup>

Splendid Chaos<sup>3</sup>

Opening Night<sup>4</sup>

November Echo<sup>5</sup>

### **Standalone**

Second Chance<sup>6</sup>

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1. <http://www.davecenker.com/fly-away-home>

2. <http://www.davecenker.com/between-the-lines>

3. <http://www.davecenker.com/splendid-chaos>

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5. <http://www.davecenker.com/november-echo>

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