



SAVING HENRY

Rusty L Savage

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Fiction

By

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Dedicated with Love to all my siblings, my parents, my wife, my children and to all my extended family. Special thanks to my Dad for his rich stories and to Gayle for her pinpoint comments and edits.

Chapter One

September 1955

The sun beamed down on a warm September afternoon in Prestonville, a somewhat distant suburb of Chicago. The intricacies of Windy City and Chi-Town seemed so far away as to be on another planet and kids felt safe as they walked or rode the bus home on a warm fall day. The school day had just ended and kids were on a countdown to the annual County fair that was only days away.

Danny Long stood on the sidewalk in front of Prestonville's biggest public high school waiting for his twin sister, Denise. Not that he minded. The two of them had been looking out for each other since first grade. They were both so conscientious and rarely apart. Their relationship gave them both confidence and an unusual amount of support. High school had been easier for them because of that. She and Danny were always together, always laughing, talking, joking, happy, and they never seemed to fight or even argue. As much as they were twins, they were also best friends. They were both the kind of kids who enjoyed helping people out, and often did.

Danny was the president of the junior class and a star player of both the basketball and football teams for the past two years. He and Debby Morgan had been going out for almost a year and he was a little troubled by her actions of late. She had seemed distant, as if her mind was on something else the last few times she had been with him. They were not head over heels in love with each other, just a high school boyfriend, girlfriend thing, with vague and unspoken plans of maybe winding up with one another one day. Danny was about to turn sixteen in November. Debby wouldn't be sixteen until December.

His soft blond hair glistened in the bright sunlight, with golden streaks that seemed to be reflected in his dark blue eyes. He was tall, broad shouldered, and athletic, had long fingers and a bright smile. But more than that, he was a terrific kid, and a good student, made straight As in all his subjects. His parents were well loved and well respected in the community. His dad was the County Judge and his mother was a schoolteacher and high school principal. And he had a terrific twin sister who loved him very much. And he loved her just as much. His family was the way every kid wished theirs were, but few were. The twins were the sweet spot in the lives of their parents. Danny wanted to be a lawyer and maybe a judge, some day like his

father. Denise wanted to be a schoolteacher and a high school principle, like her mother, but his dad wanted her to be a lawyer too.

Danny stood in front of the school building, watching cars slowly move around the circular drive picking up kids. School buses lined up in the bus lanes off to the side, kids gathering to board their respective bus. He turned and looked back toward the main entrance at a group of kids milling around on the steps, hoping to spot Denise. His eyes focused on Debby Morgan, from his junior class, as she walked out the door and Tommy Flowers, a senior, hustling out behind her.

Tommy reached for Debby's hand and they walked straight over to Danny and stopped. Debby released Tommy's hand. "I'm sorry, Danny."

"You said you liked me. Is that something you turn on and off?"

"I just can't be with you any more."

Danny felt a tightening in his stomach. "Why are you doing this, Debby? I thought we had something special."

Debby examined her hands, but he saw her eyes widen and a slight smile curled her lips. Debby reached for Tommy's hand, turned, and tossed her long blond hair over her shoulder as they walked away.

Danny watched them walk over to Tommy's light blue '51 Studebaker. Tommy unlocked the car, opened the door and held it for Debby as she slid into the seat. Then Tommy walked around to the driver's side, got in and drove away.

He knew why she did this. He had seen her eyeing Tommy for some time now, and he knew it was coming. Danny wanted to run, throw himself at her feet. Or maybe grab her shoulders and shake her until she begged him to stop. But she walked off with Tommy, their bodies as perfect as two pieces in a puzzle. He was the one who didn't fit. He guessed it started the night they double dated with Tommy and Debby's friend, Judy Davis. Debby had spent most of the night talking to Tommy, ignoring him and Judy. One thing was sure, he'd never take her back.

Denise finally came out the door and walked over to him. "Did you see Debby," she asked.

"Yeah. I saw her, and Tommy."

"Did it make you mad?"

"Only for a moment," he said, and watched as his mom's car came around the circle and stopped right in front of them. Danny

opened the front door and held it for Denise. He stepped back, opened the back door and slid in the seat.

As they drove away, his mom broke the silence in the car. She turned and glanced at him, “So how was your day?”

He grunted, not wanting to upset her. He didn’t want to lie either.

“That’s not an answer,” she said, as she turned on-to the street and headed home.

He pretended not to hear as he stared out the window at the people walking along the sidewalk, the gas stations, and the local shops. The humidity from the open window pushed the air from his lungs. He saw his mom watching him in the mirror. Finally, he said, “Sorry, Mom. The day went fine, except Debby dumped me.”

“What happened?”

“She found someone she liked better.”

“You’ll get over it.”

He let her comment pass and sat shaking his head as the car moved along the streets. When they got to their house, his mom turned the car into the driveway and parked up close to the garage door. Danny, with no homework to do, headed to the backyard, where the basketball goal hung, to shoot baskets.

“Come back in a few minutes and we’ll shoot some baskets,” he called to Denise as she got to the front door.

“Okay,” she yelled back, before going inside.

By the books she brought home, he knew she had homework, and like him, she always did her homework as soon as she got home. She’d finish that first and then change clothes before she came back. He knew her like a book. And she knew him just as well. That could be a good thing or a bad thing about having a twin. They could always get into each other’s mind. It had it’s drawbacks as well. One could never keep a secret from the other. They understood each other so well.

She wasn’t quite the student he was and she had to work a little harder in school, but she still maintained a solid B in all her subjects. Right now, he’d bet she was doing homework and thinking about the upcoming county fair. Denise loved everything about the fair. She loved the weather and the trees in their beautiful fall colors, and the brightly lit lights along the perimeter of the fair grounds at night. She loved the rides and games and exhibits, and the rows of sideshows. She loved the music and noise, and choosing a prize after winning at

one of the game booths, meeting friends, getting together, and sitting afterwards with her mother and father and Danny, talking about all the good times she had, her face all lit up.

Danny looked up as she came out the back door and walked toward him. She was so pretty, with long blond hair, and big blue eyes, just like his. Except his hair was short. She wore shorts and a sleeveless blouse, and her legs were nearly as long as his. She was tall for a girl, and beautiful, but she really didn't care. She loved sports as much as he did. She glanced over her shoulder at him after he threw the ball to her and she sank it from where she stood, and then smiled at him. He threw the ball back to her and she started to dribble. Danny watched her for a second, then hustled backward, his steps matching her forward movement, before he stole the ball in mid-bounce.

They played together for a few minutes, taking turns making baskets, and it struck him again how good she was. In his mind, it was a shame in some ways that she wasn't a boy. She had gone to all the games he played in both basketball and football and rooted passionately for him. Even as she glared at him for successfully blocking her shot, he felt a bond with her. He laughed, dribbled the ball out, then faked to the left before cutting around her. Soon, they settled into the rhythm of their breathing, the bouncing of the ball and the swoosh as it went through the net.

Danny felt a change in the atmosphere, like the pressure rising, bearing down; a change he felt in his stomach. He reached out and put a hand on her shoulder, could tell that the change in atmosphere affected her, too. Maybe it was just their little private atmosphere. Then, very faint, he heard his mom's voice.

"Come in soon. I'm making snacks."

They played for another ten minutes or so, and then went inside. His mother sat at the kitchen table looking over the charity stuff spread out in front of her. His father was still at work and probably wouldn't be home for another hour. As the County Judge, he had no regular schedule.

"Hi, Mom. What's up?" They both said, as they sat down at the table. Snacks were on saucers sitting at their places at the table.

"Hi, kids, did you have fun?" Danny saw how her eyes lit up when she saw them. His mom Carolyn and Darrell Long were crazy about their twins, and always had been. The happiest day in their lives was when they were born. Danny knew they still felt that way. They

had always had a special bond with them. They were good parents, and the kind of friends everyone loved. They cared, they loved, they worked hard at whatever they did, they were there for people who meant something to them, and they were practical in ways that always amazed their friends. Carolyn was unconsciously beautiful for forty-three. She even found time to do volunteer work at the church nursery school, and she was a member of several charity groups and helped with their activities while her twins were in school.

Their parents went to all of their school activities and supported them in all their school functions, or they went shopping together, or talked and played for hours as they sat around the big comfortable home where they lived. Their lives were a warm place, where all four of them felt safe from the kinds of things that happened to other families. Darrell took good care of them. He was a big man, with the fair skin coloring of his Swedish forebears. He had thick blond hair and brilliant blue eyes, which he had bestowed on Danny and Denise as well. In spite of her blond hair, Carolyn's eyes were a soft brown, sometimes almost hazel. Danny and Denise's hair was almost white it was so fair.

Carolyn was twenty-nine when the twins were born. She had long since given up on the dream of having children. They had tried for five years, and had finally made their peace with going through life childless. Then the twins were born. To Carolyn and Darrell it was incredible—even more than that—it was a miracle.

And the twins—Danny and Denise were such great joy to their parents. They did all the things that all kids do—sports, boy scouts and girl scouts, little league and soft ball, and they were bright academically. They were good kids, and did everything they were supposed to do. They did well in school, were loving to their parents, and still there was enough mischief in them to let them know they were normal kids. They were by no means perfect, but they were good kids. They both had blond hair and sharp blue eyes like their father. They had a good sense of humor and fine minds, and they were as close as two peas in a pod.

For the past fifteen years, since they were born, Danny thought there was no one like his twin sister. They were a pair. Always together. She was more intense than Danny, more focused, not quite as compassionate, or as mild as he was, but she was a bright girl with a fine mind and lots of good ideas and good intentions. She always

had a happy face and laughter that rang through the house every time she and Danny were together. Each waited anxiously on the other every time one went any place without the other, and then they sat and talked around snacks and soft drinks or cookies and milk for a long time afterwards. After they were born, Carolyn had left her position as the high school principal, and stayed at home. She said she wanted to enjoy every minute of their growing years. And she had. They were together all the time.

Darrell earned more than a decent living for all of them. He had done well early on when he was a young lawyer, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather before him. They lived in a wonderful old Victorian house in an exclusive part of town. They had everything they wanted, and felt safe from the cold winds of change that sometimes swooped down on the farmers and the people in businesses often adversely affected by trends and fashions. Every family needed good food, good shelter, and a good, loving home environment, and Darrell Long had always provided it for them.

He was a warm, caring man, and he wanted the twins to become lawyers and maybe judges one day. He wanted Danny to go to the best law college. Denise too, he wanted her to be just as smart and well educated as her mother. Denise wanted to be a teacher and school principal, just like her mother, but Darrell dreamed of her being a lawyer. Danny dreamed of being a lawyer too. For the 1950s, these were strong dreams, but Darrell had already set aside a tidy sum for their education, so financially they were both well on their way toward college. He was a man who believed in dreams. He always said there was nothing they couldn't do if they wanted it bad enough, and were willing to work hard enough to bring it about. He had always been a willing worker. Carolyn had always been there to help him, but he was happy to let her stay home while the twins were young.



“Where is everyone?” he called from the front door as he came in after a hard day in court. It was late, almost six-thirty, which was a little later than his usual time. He always tried to get out of the office no later than six, but occasionally he was tied up on something and had to stay longer than he liked. Today was one of those exceptions. He didn't finish court until four-thirty and still had a ton of paperwork

to finish before he could leave. So here it was six-thirty and he was just getting home.

“In here,” Carolyn called out, and Darrell went into the big kitchen to find them sitting around the table, the twins eating snacks, and Carolyn with a bunch of charity material spread out in front of her. He let his eyes feast on each one for a second then went over and stood at the end of the table, looking at them. He loved coming home in the evenings to find his wife with Denise and Danny enjoying their time together. It warmed his heart just to see them. He was forty-five years old and a happy man. He had a wonderful wife, and two terrific children. Twins. Who could possibly want more?

“Hi, Daddy, you’re late,” Denise said without looking up from the paper she had in front of her.

“A little.” He smiled down on her, and then went over and put one arm around her, the other around Danny, and pulled them gently against him as he stood between them for a moment then went to the chair and took a seat at his place at the table. As Denise smiled into her father’s eyes, she leaned over and rubbed her tiny, soft nose playfully against his, she looked like an angel. He pushed her face away gently, and then reached up to kiss his wife, as an affectionate look passed between them.

“How was your day?” Carolyn asked warmly. They had been married twenty-one years, and most of the time, when life’s petty aggravations were not nipping at their heels, they seemed more like newlyweds, more in love than ever. They had married the same year Carolyn graduated from college. Darrell had been practicing law two years by then and already had a thriving practice, taking over from his father, and then he built it up considerably by adding new clients daily. Carolyn was just starting out as a teacher and didn’t get the principal position until four years later. They both wanted a family right away but it didn’t happen right a way. They had almost given up hope and Dr. Farrell had never really figured out why she couldn’t get pregnant. The doctor had examined both Darrell and Carolyn and said there was nothing wrong with either one of them. Then one day she realized she was in a family way. It seemed like a miracle to them. Then, they found out she was carrying twins. It was almost too much to hope, and they readily admitted they were blessed. The twins came two weeks early, though healthy, and gave them all the joy they had hoped and expected.

“We’re winding up the preliminary hearing on the Seth Dotson incident. He’ll go to trial. Should finish tomorrow,” Darrell said, leaning back, stretching his arms, enjoying the warmth from the oven. The smell of cooking dinner was all around them and the warm, cozy kitchen felt good.

“He’s guilty as sin,” Danny said, looking up at his father. “There’s no doubt about it.” He clapped his hands behind his head, scrunched down in his chair, and looked over at his mother. “Dinner smells good, Mom. When do we eat?”

“It appears you’re right, Son, but it’s up to the jury to decide,” Darrell said and shook his head. Danny had already changed his thinking to the evening meal.

“Dinner will be ready in about thirty minutes,” Carolyn said, as she rose and went to the stove.

Darrell gazed at his wife as she walked away, silently admiring her trim figure. Looking around her, he peered toward the oven trying to see what was on the menu.

Denise went over and gave her dad a hug, then hugged her mother before sitting down again at her place at the table. She looked over and smiled at Danny. She was so cute she was hard for anyone to resist, least of all her twin brother, or her proud parents. She wasn’t spoiled and neither was Danny—just well loved, and it showed in the case with which they faced the world and met every challenge. Denise liked everyone, loved to laugh, loved playing games, loved running in the wind with her long, blond hair flying out behind her. She loved everything, but best of all, she loved her twin brother. She looked at Danny adoringly now, taking in his pleasant smile. “Are we going to the fair together this time? Opening day is just two days away.”

“If it doesn’t rain,” he answered, giving her a big smile. He turned and watched as his mother carefully slipped her apron around her middle and tied it in the back. “I have a game tomorrow evening,” he announced to no one in particular.



“Already?” his mother asked, surprised. “That’s the second game this week. Why are they having another one so soon?” They always went to his games, at least Carolyn did. Sometimes, Darrell was unable to make a game if it happened during a court session. Darrell had played football too, and basketball. He loved most sports and never missed watching a game when he could. Carolyn was less sure,