

# Nine: Joe

## \*\*Chapter Nine: Ruthie (Summary)\*\*

Getting better after the accident was a constant struggle for Joe, besieged by pain that lingered from morning until night. The haunting memories of the accident plagued his dreams, transforming them into nightmares of sirens and hospital machinery. Despite medication and alcohol from Aunt Lindy, Joe believed the pain and anger would consume him indefinitely. Family members tried various methods to alleviate his sorrow, but none succeeded; instead, he became resolute in letting his pain dictate his life.

While convalescing in a tiny room in a Halifax rehab center, Joe fixated on blaming Mr. Richardson, the driver he collided with. His mother pleaded for understanding, questioning how the man could be aware of a shadow stepping into the road on a Sunday night. Joe remained resentful, letting his anger fester, particularly during dreary days when the weather matched his mood. Though months passed, he remained trapped in bitterness over his predicament.

Six months in rehab included missed family traditions, pushing Joe further into despair. As spring approached, he attempted to navigate his new reality using a cane and resorted to sneaking drinks to manage his pain. Mae confronted him about his self-indulgent mope, urging him to exercise. She warned that his behavior was hurting their mother and cracked open his self-pity, insisting he needed to learn to be accountable for his actions—including that for Ruthie's death.

Joe lashed out at Mae, but her words struck deep, confronting him with the truth about his misplaced guilt. The tension culminated in a private apology weeks later when Mae helped him to bed after a rough night. This pivotal moment shifted his perspective, prompting him to seek purpose and engage more actively with his family and responsibilities.

As Joe went back to work, memories of the garage invigorated him. He began to form a bond with Cora, a waitress from the local restaurant. Their relationship bloomed amidst Joe's personal turmoil, including escalating drinking habits. Cora's kindness contrasted with Joe's mounting guilt and anger, which eventually spiraled out of control. A drunken night culminated in an unforgivable act of violence against her, leading to a realization of his destructive nature. In despair, he fled, leaving everything behind, marking his descent into chaos and regret.