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#### Sharing Our Hearts and Homes

If you are like me, you have found yourselves seeing more of your family and friends during this holiday season. It is a great time for gathering, eating, gift-giving, eating, sharing stories...and eating! With this as the backdrop, there are wonderful opportunities to reconnect and mull over memories both old and new. I love hearing the stories that tug on my heart and dampen the corners of my eyes. I'd like to share one with you, if I may. For the sake of confidentiality, I have changed the names and some of the details, but, believe me, this story is true.

A dear client of mine, we'll call him Steven, came to me to ask me for my help with his wife, Frances. She was a doctor, and had served the community as an accomplished and successful professional for 45 years. Steven entered my office, distraught and fearful of the future. I could see that his heart was breaking as he was forced to witness his long-time sweetheart falling into the cruel and unforgiving hands of dementia. He wanted to rescue her, but he felt powerless. Fear for her safety, his ability to coax her to get in and out of the car to go to and leave appointments and places, take her medication, even eat meals began to overwhelm him. He could do it no more, yet he was unwilling to give up. His devotion to her was unshakeable.

Steven took the difficult steps needed to put her estate in order, and establish a guardianship. The road has been bumpy and difficult

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and sometimes very painful, but Frances is safe, happy and well-cared for in a beautiful facility where Steven visits her every day. Steven's concerns have shifted from Frances' safety and basic needs to nurturing their relationship and enjoying their moments of connection. In place of the brow creased with worry, I often see a smile now. He shares stories of his own—good stories about his beloved Frances from today and yesteryear and about his own life experiences, both old and new.

Though not a storybook fairytale with its happily-ever-after ending, this story is a testimony of the saving grace that comes with surrounding yourself with the support and help you and your family need. I hope Steven's love and devotion touch you as they have touched me. I hope you will find the strength, as Steven has, to make tough decisions and take the right steps to keep your loved ones safe and well-cared for, whatever those steps may be.

From my home to yours, wishing you and your family happy holidays and a safe, prosperous new year!

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