

still kind of awful sometimes. And the one with Jesus at the well and the Samaritan woman—they were so flirtatious. What kind of water do you have? What kind of water do you want? What are you doing here? You're not supposed to be here. Well, neither are you. The whole idea that Jesus abdicates the role of being a big Jewish patriarch, a man with a wife and a bunch of kids and a father of a nation. No, for him family is going to be not a wife and biological kids but people who try to be merciful and kind and good to one another; a family of kindred feeling.

### RICHARDS

You said that one of the stories you're most interested in is bringing the dead back to life. I had a question about the moral issues you face whenever you want to write about deceased people in your own life. You've said you're a purist—obviously, you don't want to make up lies. If you write about the living, you're able to send them a copy and get their consent before it's sent out and published, and they can say, "Tweak this. I don't want people to know my jean size." But if they're deceased, they can't do that. How do you come to terms with that?

### BROWN

That's a great question. I'll just use a couple anecdotes. In *The Gifts of the Body*, when I started doing the AIDS work, I totally went not as a writer. Partly, I went into that work because I was sick of writing and the writing world. But one of my clients found out I was a writer and he was like, are you going to write about me one day, and I'm like, no, this is not what I do. Not what I do. But he was like, are you going to write about me one day? Are you going to write about me? So in some ways I felt like he was commissioning me, and the book is partly dedicated to him. I really tried to honor all the people there and not be smarmy about any of them, and it was fiction.

I wrote a story called "The Widow" which is in *The Stranger*. It's about a woman who dies of cancer and her husband doesn't know what to do. It's a really sad story. My best pal died many, many years ago and her husband had said to me, "If you ever want to write anything, please do." As I'm writing this thing, I asked him if he wanted to read it, and he was like, "I trust your writing, but if you want me