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Winesburg, Indiana: Frances Parker

Abstract
I have been a doctor in this town for many years now. You won't find me in the phonebook, but if you go past
the sign for Chief Raintree’s Village and the llama farm by the trailer sale lot and then take that winding road,
which can be foggy at night and deceptive, you will come to an abandoned church -- not abandoned anymore,
that is.

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Cover Page Footnote
Note: “This story is exclusively available in the anthology, Winesburg, Indiana, published by Breakaway Books,
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borrowed, or used as dowry.”
I have been a doctor in this town for many years now. You won't find me in the phonebook, but if you go past the sign for Chief Raintree's Village and the llama farm by the trailer sale lot and then take that winding road, which can be foggy at night and deceptive, you will come to an abandoned church—not abandoned anymore, that is. My dogs will be out front but don't let them scare you. My friend Ansel is the pharmacist I use, the one at the drugstore on the square downtown that still has the real chocolate malts. He measures out the pills right in front of you. He's also the one who's been remodeling that big three story house perched on a hill above Ash Street for about ten years now. They had that St. Bernard tied up by the garage for awhile and a truck parked out front that had "Barely Gettin' By" written on the side. You might have seen it. The front yard is a profusion of flowers this summer—lilies, daisies, bergamot—and the siding is half-way up. A nice slate color. But the brick sidewalk in front is still all torn up. It's just a few houses up from the homeless shelter. Sharon, my partner, always says, would you trust a pharmacist who has started over so many times on his house and still can't get it right? And I say, would you trust a doctor who lives in an abandoned church full of unpacked boxes and musical instruments and paintings and who still isn't moved in? Barely gettin' by, Sharon, barely gettin' by. That's my motto. My father was a luthier by trade—he made violins and cellos. He believed that if you shone a red light on an instrument, it would sound different than if you shone a blue light on it, that color and sound were somehow connected. He conducted all sorts of experiments with wood. He was always trying to discover the secret of
Stradivarius, cooking amber in the front yard, mixing vermillion with rosematter, simmering the wood over a fire for months on end. He believed that if he could just discover the secret, he would be a rich man. I used to love the fact that he believed there was a secret—that was the thing I admired most about him—that he never gave up trying to find it. But I don’t really think there is a secret. Red light, blue light, if you tell someone that a violin is a Stradivarius it will sound good to them. My father would spend hours walking around with a violin in his hand, tapping, tapping the wood, then listening, his head cocked to one side. What was he listening for? I always start by leading the patient through what used to be the sanctuary when this was a church, past the one or two old church pews stacked with books and drums and gongs, past what used to be the altar, now with a tapestry of Jesus hanging there, because why not? he was a good man, and into the healing room, where I listen, carefully, until I hear the sound of his heart. I listen for a good long while.

Barbara Bean was born and raised in Clinton, Iowa. She is the author of *Dream House*, a collection of stories. Her fiction has appeared in *The Georgia Review*, *The Colorado Review*, *The North American Review*, and *The Northwest Review*, among other magazines. She teaches creative writing and literature at DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana.