

A Sky So Blue

What a beautiful morning! I can't remember the last time I saw sky so blue! The grass is such a bright green and the flowers are everywhere. Mild weather for this time of year.

What time of year? Oh, yes. Spring. That's when new things grow. Speaking of new things, I wonder where those grandsons of mine are. They should be running around here somewhere. I love those boys so much I could just burst. They are so smart and handsome. Listen to me, I sound like a grandma all right. Ready to spoil them rotten.

Hi, Grandma.

There you are. Where have you been?

At school, of course.

Of course. And how was school?

Fine.

Learn anything?

Not really.

Sounds like a waste of time, then.

Yeah, that's what I think, too. Did you finish sewing my jacket pocket?

Your what?

My jacket pocket. It has that big hole in it, remember? You said you would sew it today.

Okay. Would you bring it to me and I'll get started.

I already put it in your room yesterday. I'll go get it.

Thank you dear.

I swear. The least he could have done is mention that he needed me to sew something for him. I would have gladly done it. My, that boy sure does grow fast. Seems like he's six inches taller than he was yesterday.

Well, will you look at this day? It sure is pretty. Can't remember the last time I saw a sky so blue... I think I'll get some exercise and go for a walk.

Look at all the nice houses. Wonder who lives in all of them? The blue trim around the eaves of that one is gaudy. Yellow daffodils coming out over there. A little chilly out here with that breeze. Good thing I brought my sweater.

Wait. Where am I going? The store? No. Post office? I don't think so. I think I went around the block, but I don't remember for sure. Yes. This street looks familiar. My son lives on this street. But—oh God—which house? Is it the brown one? The small white one? Oh, for Pete's sake. Look at that tire swing in the front yard. I recognize that. That's it. The one with the big yard. What is the matter with me?

There is my grandson in the front yard. He has something in his hand that he wants to show me.

What's this?

The jacket you wanted me to get you so you can fix the pocket, remember?

Right. I'll get right on that. Which pocket is it again?

I'll have to trust him that he has shown me this jacket before. It doesn't look very familiar. He shows me the hole in the pocket, and hands me my sewing kit. I sit down in the chair on the porch and open the sewing kit. Let's see. Needles, thread...that metal thing that goes on my fingertip...it all seems to be here. That's good. Don't want to lose any of it. I close the box and set it on my lap.

It is only a minute before my daughter-in-law calls me in to dinner. Seems like the middle of the afternoon. Don't know why this family eats so early.

Couldn't we wait until dinnertime? I ask.

My daughter-in-law makes a face at me. It is dinnertime, Mom. It is nearly 7:00. Did you get a nap out there on the porch?

No, I just sat down for a minute.

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The rest of the evening passes quickly, and I go to bed early. As I climb the stairs, I remember how much easier it used to be to climb. Back when my husband was alive. We used to climb all the mountains together. Every day an adventure. Now just getting up the stairs is an adventure.

Someone rearranged the room again. It isn't funny, whoever is doing it. I can't find anything! But I won't mention it. I won't let them have a laugh at Grandma's expense. I'm too tired to get mad anyway. Better just go to bed.

###

In my dreams, I am young again. The wind teases my hair, the sun warms my face. I look out on a huge green meadow alive with butterflies and waving grass. In the distance red canyon walls rise up towering and sheer, backed by a sky the color of robins' eggs.

Corrine, I hear him call. What are you doing over there?

He comes toward me from the direction of the creek, his hair shining black against copper skin. He smiles at me and I feel it all the way to my core. I return his smile as he takes me in his arms. He kisses me, and I am home.

I love you, I say.

I love you, too.

Can we stay here forever, do you think?

He looks around. Here? In this canyon?

No. Here in this moment.

He brushes my hair from my face and I search his dark eyes.

Why? he asks.

So we will never grow old, I say. So that we can always live in this perfect moment.

It doesn't work that way, sweetheart. Time won't stand still. He kisses me tenderly. The best we can do is remember this moment, and then go on and live every other moment just as fully as this one.

And what about when all the moments are done?

Then you can choose your favorite, and remember it forever.

###

I awake in the cool dawn, trying to remember what day it is. Finally I decide it doesn't matter and I rise from my bed. Pulling on my robe, I take the stairs slowly. Going down is always harder than going up. I stop by the toilet before venturing out onto the front porch. The sky is still orange and pink where the sun is just coming over the horizon. I watch it as I sit in my

chair. I notice the sewing box on the table next to me. It lies on top of a light blue jacket that looks familiar. I move the sewing box and pick up the jacket. Right away, I notice a big hole in the pocket. I pull the sewing kit onto my lap and take out my needle and thread. I adjust my glasses and hold the needle close to my face so that I have a better chance of seeing where to put the thread through. It takes awhile, but I finally manage it, then bend to my work.

Before long, I finish sewing up the pocket and sit back. Watching the morning, I relax my shoulders. Then I resolve to rest my eyes for a minute or two.

A loud bang wakens me. The screen door slams and two boys, 10 or 12 years old, run down the front steps into the yard and off around the corner. Who the heck were they? And what are they doing here? I look around. Where is Larry? Shouldn't he be home from work by now? I start to get up, but my sewing kit slides off my lap onto the porch with a crash.

Damn it! Why am I so clumsy? I'd better get it cleaned up before Larry gets home. I haven't even started supper yet.

The screen door opens and a tall man comes out onto the porch. He looks a lot like my Larry, but thinner around the eyes. And his skin is lighter. I try to place him.

Good morning, Mama, he says.

Morning, I say, and realize with a jolt that this is my son. All grown up. When did that happen?

Looks like you dropped your sewing kit, Mama. Let me help you clean it up.

Oh, I'm sorry, I say. I'm so clumsy. I try to help collect the thread and things, but he is much faster. He gets down on his knees so easily and picks up the little needles with no trouble at all. I look at my gnarled fingers. When did I get so old?

Once he has picked up the sewing things, he leads me into the house. Breakfast time, he says. I follow him, smelling eggs and bacon. That smells good, I say, although I'm not particularly hungry.

###

I'm not sure what happened to most of the day, but now I'm here in my room again. By the look of the light, it must be afternoon. I don't recognize much about this room, but I feel tired. I think I will lay down for a nap.

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Larry smiles at me from a picnic blanket by the stream.

Come. Sit, he says.

I curl my legs under me and sit in the dappled shade. We share a lunch of cold fried chicken and fruit, and then make love under the gently swaying branches. The wind tickles my belly as we lay side by side, holding hands, staring up into the trembling, sparkling leaves.

We'll always be together, won't we? I say.

You bet, he says.

I raise up on one elbow. Liar.

What do you mean? he says, looking hurt.

We'll have to be apart sometimes, I say, smiling.

He returns my smile. Of course, he says. I thought you meant we'll always be married.

We will be that, won't we?

Always, he says as he reaches up and pulls me to him. Until death do us part.

I pull back from his soft lips. And then what? I ask.

*He looks at me for awhile. Then he says, all serious, And then we'll be together in
eternity.*

What if I die first? I say, sitting up.

*He sighs, but then sits up too. I watch his smooth belly curve and his shoulders rise. Then
I will count the days until I see you again. And what if I die first?*

I look at him. It is hard to imagine such a thing. Then I will be lonely, I say.

And I will wait on the other side for you to come, he says.

###

Sunny mornings.

Snow. Cold. Gray.

Warm breezes.

Days run together. It is harder to walk. Harder to do everything.

Remember, try to remember. What? Remember what?

Clouds, confusion. Who? Where?

What is "remember"?

###

I am lying on my back in a small bed. Above me I see squares of gray with patterns of fuzzy little holes in them. I stare at the hazy patterns since I don't remember how to move my head. My throat feels dry. I try to cough, but I have no strength.

She's awake, I hear someone say. I try to move my eyes toward the movement and a blurry form moves into my vision. It smiles. I try to smile back but I don't remember how.

Hi Mama, it says.

I try to speak. I think I make a sound, but I'm not sure.

How are you feeling today?

I feel warmth by my side. I watch a hand lift up, a bony, skinny, pale hand in theirs. I don't know what it means.

I look back to the figure. It smiles but it looks so sad. I try to smile, too. I am not sad.

The air is filled with dust—gray, then lighter. Then a meadow and a stream. Red canyon walls. I reach toward the wind, the sun.

It's okay, Mama, I hear in a tearful whisper. You can go. There is nothing more left for you to do here. There are other words, too, but I can't hear them. The sky is so blue. I have never seen a sky so blue. The sun so bright. Someone is coming across the green, green meadow.

He calls my name.

Corrine. I have been waiting for you.

I reach for his hand. I am light. I am young. I am joy. I am strong. I feel his hand in mine, see his dark eyes and smooth dark skin. I sigh, and the breath leaves my body like a bird taking flight. I ride its wings. Released. I am home.