

Things I'm Supposed to Remember Not to Forget

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Solstice Designs
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(Dedication: This book is for the healing of my soul)

Things I'm supposed to remember not to forget.

Everyone is saying different things to me...different things to me...
That is all I can remember from the last day of her life. We were there, all of us.
Waiting...

A nurse graced us with her presence, telling us it wouldn't be long now. They asked us if we wanted to pray. We all paraded into the quite, bright white room. There she was, the most perfect woman I had ever known, reduced to a pile of white blankets, looking very small and very sad. I would not cry. I am stronger than everyone thinks.

In a circle we chanted. It wasn't praying. She would have hated this, if she only knew what was happening around her. Chanting scared her.....

What a life she had led...and here it was going to end. In the bright horrible light of this antiseptically perfect room. I looked around at the others, all of their faces ashen. No one knew what to do except stand, very still. Saying those same old prayers we had once said as a family at our regular Family Sundays. She had always thought it was important for my brother and I to understand religion. To take it in, to accept God, but, we were skeptics, my brother and I.

If only she could open her eyes and take us all in, standing there looking at her with fear in our eyes. She would have laughed her ass off. She probably was laughing at us, inside her now quiet brain. She would have said, "Stop looking so sad. I have it easy now!" Or with her usual vanity she would have made us laugh by cracking a joke about how crazy her hair looked.

Her reticent struggle lasted until 1:30 a.m. on July 23, 1997. Now she would be silent forever, except inside my head and inside my heart. She would continue to live in me forever.

The murmuring begins...people saying different things to me, talking at me, not to me. I was there, I even remember what I had been wearing, .but I can't remember what they were saying. People talked passed me, around me. People blurred in and out of my vision, murmuring. I stood there with a strong smile on my face, blocking it all out, trying not to come undone. What I wanted was for someone to say something important, something worth while, something meaningful. But no one did.

Now, I was the one paradoxically mute. I looked at people but did not see them. I stood but could not feel my legs. My brain was overworking the problem, like a mathematical equation, trying to figure out exactly how this could have happened to her.

Do you believe in what you say? Do you believe in what you feel? Random thoughts passed through my brain. It's raining in my head. I felt like lightening had coursed

through it. Anything to block the sound of others weeping. A picture of the weeping angel flooded my thoughts. With one graceful arm out stretched and the other bent to cradle her head. I would not cry, not here, not now, not in this church where all my bad memories lie. I would not let God see me shed tears. I was still mad at him for this pain filled life with so much suffering.

My heart was breaking into a million pieces. I could feel the shards piercing through me and landing in the pit of my stomach. Did you ever notice that shards of glass are the same color as tears, the same color as rain? Don't beg, don't break...I was beginning to have trouble holding my thoughts in order. The murmuring seemed to intensify, people seemed to be closing in, I wanted to run from there, I wanted to scream. But I stood, silently. I held myself so tightly nothing would escape from my lips, not one single word. Not one single tear. I could see the tears raining inside my head, but not one would drip down my cheek.

God is unforgiving; he takes the best for himself and leaves us with ourselves.

My mind was splintering, memories flooded and whirled.

I was small again, laying next to her pretending to nap. She was sleeping soundly with my brother curled in her arms, her back to me. He wasn't sleeping either. So, I poked him and then pulled his hair. My mother woke to him crying. He always got all of her attention. I just wanted her awake so we could go outside and play.

When I blinked I was still standing in that strange room. I felt the room spin. People were everywhere, who were all these people? Did you ever notice that once that day the murmuring ends, people stop coming by. Why do people stop coming? Is it too painful for them to remember or is it too painful for them to see me remember?

People stopped talking about her. I am left alone with the quite of my life.

It was months before the reality of the day sank into me. I still had not cried. I still had not grieved my loss. I passed time. I moved forward, without her. I wrote her letters that she would never read. I painted images she would never see.

She left such a gigantic hole in our family that we never recovered. I refused to step up, I refused to try to fill her shoes, and I refused to be the one to hold things together.

My mother and I were best friends. She was the only person I could ever really count on or trust, the only person that I could confide in. I don't think I ever got a chance to tell her that I was proud of her, proud to be her daughter. Was I supposed to know her completely before I could know me? I lived my 34 years in her shadow, waiting for the day that attention would be turned to me. My life was painful, but that is because I made it that way. It was not because of her.

In her wake she left a family that would never stop thinking about her or missing her. She was the voice, the sense of humor and the love our lives.

My mother left a mark on the world not just on our family. She wasn't just a wife, or daughter or mother, she was an ARTIST. She was an artist and new the meaning of life; she lived everyday like it was her last. She painted dripping water colors of vivid abstracts and visions from her dreams. They were emotional and personal and had touched other people's lives. Her work hung in galleries all over the state. She left a legacy and a lifetime of drawings and paintings. I became the curator of her life's work. I was to become responsible for everything that she was. It was still raining inside my head. It was a long time before I was able to look through all the pieces of art.

It had become therapeutic to catalog all of the paintings, to connect with each one looking for deeper meaning. I would try to imagine what she was thinking or what music had inspired each image. I could see the paint strokes and know that she had touched this paper with her own hands and brushes.

In her large black portfolio I pulled out painting after painting, with hand written notes and photographs for inspiration. I took a digital photograph of each one and recorded titles and notes from her life.

The final piece in the portfolio was a large purple image where flowers danced through brush strokes. It stopped me; as I stared into my own reflection. A reticent smile blurred across my lips. The note in her handwriting simply said, "For my daughter. Time heals all wounds. I will love you always. Mom"

The raining in my head stopped and instead began to stream down my face. One single tear turned in to hundreds and then thousands. These tears flooded my world, but in that moment things became clear, and I could see colors again. The rain and the fog in my head abated and I began to move forward....without her. I soon began to paint images of my own.

I have attached the painting on the next page.



Secrets
Material