

Memories Never Die

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From what the doctors were saying, there was no hope. I listened to them, from behind the closed door of my living room, discussing the statistics of my deteriorating health. Judging and concluding my condition and my very life's blood just like it were the latest fad. I had to endure it, praying for a spark, a hope, a word of encouragement. Alas - it was too late. But that is impossible!

That couldn't be, and as the doctors filed out from their mini-conference, I scanned their faces for any signs; a nod maybe or a wink telling me all this was just a joke, a game they were playing on me. Surely it was a rotten trick, but I forgive them for it in advance.

There was nothing of the type and I slowly absorbed the truth about my approaching demise. But no! I must last a little longer and hold onto this life of mine in order to reminisce on days long gone.

I could see the beach from my rocking chair window and the noises made by the children were glass sharp as they ran, screamed and shouted around like the chips of a kaleidoscope; dressed colorfully in their summer attire. Amongst all that was a beach ball which was being snatched and grabbed as if their existence depended on it.

Slowly I realized that I recognise these children — that the boy is Brent, leading with the beach ball in his hands, running as his sun-bleached, arrowstraight hair glistened away. In the green swimming suit is Connie with her healthy bronze skin and hawk-sharp eyes trying to get the ball for her team, and to one side are Jerry, Nell and . . . and me! In the satiny blue water Kevin is swimming all by himself. The blue sky and blue blue waves seem overwhelmingly immense — with Kevin's head, a blob out there, so far away.

The warm air is velvety against our cheeks and we don't mind the branding sun which looks like it is about to burst with light intensity. No, we don't mind that at all. All we want is to play games while we still can.

The thought that we will not stay together forever as school friends and neighbors is tantalizing our happiness. It is like a drop of ink in a glass of water. You cannot see it, but it is there and so are our thoughts.

The doctors were saying something to me from behind me and I, in my rocking chair, ignored them for I must not waste time. They were insistent and I felt as if I were being invited to drink poison. They wanted to tell me what was happening to me, but I already knew so I stubbornly held onto the handles of my chair with my knuckles that jutted out with age, having barely enough skin to cover them. My expression was a strict setting of what I knew was a face cracked with wrinkles, and my white fire of hair gathered at the top of my head in a bun.

We are running towards the beach house, laughing with all our remaining energy. But that's not the beach house. This is the stage. We are proceeding towards the stage, preparing to receive our certificates, and my hair is a rich, chestnut, care cut. There is no bun; instead there's my graduation cap and I am smiling so wide that my teeth seem so many. I have a twinkle in my eyes and my chin is held high with pride. As I look around me, I see that Diane is doing the same, and Joe and all the rest of us. We are ecstatic that we have achieved. Our expressions are clones of each — very proud.

We are in our school playground, as if by magic transformed there where we are bidding our school farewell. How emotional should we be? Tearful, excessively friendly, or should we keep our feelings solely to ourselves and act as though this is the most natural thing in life, which it is? Should we remind ourselves how many times we told ourselves that we hated this school? All the while we meant that we loved it. Hate it; who were we convincing? Surely not ourselves. We love this school, always have and always will. We love its walls, its corridors, its doors. After all, we spent hours there scrambling into our classes. Every corner and every tile means something to us.

The water receded into low tide. The children packed their beach equipment and reluctantly left before the darkness consumed them. The robin at my window moved with staccato footsteps, bent over every now and then like a fat man with a red shirt, and ate what scanty food it found.

The red of the robin's breast was like fresh blood, and the pain in my chest felt like a sword sliding slenderly beneath my skin, penetrating my heart and staying there. The red of the robin's breast was like the blood held in my heart by the sword. The blood now became the sun, blazing into sunset. A martian sky.

I grabbed my heart and watched as outside it got darker . . . and darker . . . and darker.