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Memories

by Vera Gajic

“Your Dad was such a lovely man, so kind. I was so lucky. I hope you are as lucky as me. How I miss him.”

“Yes I know how much you miss him Mum. It’s been a long time now, nearly ten years,” said Julia, wondering how many times she’d said that in the last few weeks.

“Feels like yesterday and a hundred years ago at the same time. I really thought we would grow old together,” said Mum

“You did grow quite old together.”

“No we didn’t. He was seventy and I was only sixty that isn’t old. I meant really old. Looking after each other, sitting in front of the fire, staying in together, watching the tv. Years to indulge ourselves. But no he went so quickly.”

“It wasn’t that quick Mum, he’d been ill for a while, he didn’t know a thing at the end, best he went when he did,” said Julia looking at her watch, where was her sister Maureen, she had to get back and cook dinner.

Mum was sitting in bed with a cup of tea that Julia had just brought her trying to capture the memories of her husband George, the happy times, the security the love the warmth but each time she grasped it and tried to fold the memory around her it faded away. She knew she was ill but didn’t want to know how bad. Julia kept trying to have the “conversation” with her. How would she like to die. Good God how can anyone ask how they want you to die, the thoughtlessness of it, surely peacefully is the only way thought Mum. Anyway she had no intention of dying anytime soon, she still had so much to remember.

Julia was in the kitchen on the phone to Maureen.

“When are you coming, I need some relief,” her voice cracked, “I can’t keep pretending Dad was a saint and I need to get home.”

When Maureen arrived an hour later Julia dragged her into the kitchen.

“Ok I haven’t got anywhere with Mum about her funeral or that she’s even going to die,” said Julia

“We’re all going to die Julia, I might die tomorrow, who knows,” said Maureen.

“Oh for God sake Maureen, it’s highly unlikely and we know that Mum is going to die in the next few weeks,” the exasperation raising her voice which she tried to reign in, too late, “and as for our saintly Dad – you can put her right on that too,” spat Julia.

“Why would I do that, memory believes before knowing remembers and as she doesn’t know anymore she might never remember. Let her think she was married to a saint, lucky Mum, able to change her husband after he’s dead.”

“You really have been on too many of these yogi peruvian self improvement retreats, you can’t change someone after they’re dead” barked Julia

“You can change anything in someone’s mind anytime. It is all about perception, you should try it Julia, you might find you could like your husband,” smiled Maureen.

“Bloody cheek, how dare you say I don’t like my husband!”

“Well you’re always moaning about him,” said Maureen, her air of superior calm quickly cracking when she talked to her sister.

“Who are you always moaning about? girls why are you arguing?” shouted Mum from her bed, “mustn’t upset your Dad, you’ll know what he’ll do.”

“Oh bugger, now she’s forgotten he’s dead but remembered he was a monster,” said Maureen, “why couldn’t you just leave her to her alternative reality?”

“What do you mean, I didn’t do anything, you’re the one who said I didn’t like my husband,” said Julia.

“Well you don’t do you, or are you kidding yourself too?” said Maureen.