

The Healing Chair

by

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Grace stared at the dancing light of the late-night fire, looking deeply for an answer. The wooden rocking chair creaked under her with a rhythmic sound that blended with the crackle and sparks of the logs.

Her mind sought refuge in thoughts of Harrison and how peaceful he must be now. No more hospital rooms. No more pain. The voice of reason deep within her whispered, “There was nothing you could do.”

She shook her head. “Yes, but what now?”

The fire groaned at her pain, but gave no answer. She gazed into its mysteries and imagined an angel walking right out of the flames and saying, “Come with me. I’ll take you to a place where people are happy all the time. Come along.”

If that had happened, Grace wouldn’t have been afraid. She would have followed the angel into the blaze, the fire somehow transporting her to a place where she could see her precious little Harrison again. They would have a picnic in the sun and sit on the whitest tablecloth ever made. Roses would surround them, stretching their fragile necks towards the brilliant light of day.

Yet she was here and not with him. That was reality. A torrent of tears flowed again as the heat from the fire pressed against her. She wanted to be sick just to rid herself of the blackness.

Her sobbing ceased when a peculiar odor swept across her. Rising from the rocking chair, Grace searched for the scent. It was not the dying fire and not the normal smell of the house.

It was roses. She could smell the roses she had been imagining.

The perfume that filled the air perplexed her. She was alone in the house. Was this smell the sign she so desperately sought? Maybe it was meant to tell her she could bear to be separated from Harrison, that life would go on.

Not knowing what else to do, Grace climbed into bed and pulled the thick blankets over her head to shut out the world. When she finally relaxed enough for dreamy sleep to carry her into a world of forgetfulness, she had a little more peace in her heart and a little less sorrow.

She awoke with a start, memories crashing inside her brain. She hadn't slept long. It was still dark. Forcing herself to go back to sleep was not an option. She slid into her black slippers and wrapped the white quilt from the bed around her.

The rocking chair by the fireplace invited her back even though the fire no longer burned. She stared into its yawning cavity until a quiet trance overcame her. In this trance-like state, Grace watched the kitchen door slide open without a sound. A small hand materialized in the opening, then a child's figure emerged, a boy.

The boy entered the room and tiptoed to her chair. He placed a chubby hand on her knee and gazed at her with a gentle, trusting face. Then he climbed into the familiar place on her lap and nuzzled under the warm quilt.

She began to rock him. In this moment, there was no black and white, no right and wrong, no reason to believe, no reason to doubt. There was only Grace and the pleasure of rocking one small boy.

After suffering so much anguish, she felt her spirit expand to a level of pure love and happiness beyond anything she had ever known. The child sat up and turned to look into her face. The recognition flooded her with a combination of joy and dread.

“Where did you come from?” she whispered.

“I miss you, Mama,” he spoke softly.

As Grace gazed into the child’s eyes, love and hate, peace and fear, joy and misery—all emotions—intertwined. She allowed herself to feel them all, breathing in new life and strength.

“I miss you too, Harrison.”

“It’s all better now,” he said.

In the morning, he was gone, but that night, a woman and a boy sat in a wooden rocking chair and held each other for an eternity.