

Essay/Personal Reflection

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In the quiet corners of a world gradually dimming, Sara's journey through the fog of forgetting began with the smallest of stumbles – a misplaced key, a thought lost mid-sentence, names dancing just beyond reach. It was as if the very geography of her existence, once mapped with the precision of a cartographer's pen, had begun to shift. Familiar paths twisted into unrecognizable mazes, and the landmarks of her memory, those old, trusted signposts, crumbled as the terrain of her mind eroded under the relentless tide of an unseen force.

This thief of time and tether of identity did not plunder with the unapologetic rush of a storm but rather, like a creeping vine, wound its way through the foundations of her being, widening every crack and fissure until the rich mosaic of her past dulled into disconnected fragments. The stories and words that had once flowed from her with the ease of a river's course became tangled and dull, sentences trailing off into the mists that seemed to shroud her very essence.

“Mom, do you remember the summer cabin?” her son, Tony, would ask gently, trying to bridge the gulf that memory's departure had carved between them. Sara would look up, her eyes searching his for a moment, before a faint smile would touch her lips. “The cabin ... Yes, the light on the lake. It was beautiful.”

These moments of connection, though as fleeting as a morning dew, were balm to Tony's heart.

As the empire of her yesterdays, once so resplendent with the riches of remembrance, began to falter and fade, it seemed as if her very subjects – the thoughts, memories, and moments that had pledged allegiance to her soul – defected in silence, leaving behind nothing but the empty halls of her consciousness.

Yet, it was in the fragile light of dawn, in those precious, fleeting moments before the day reclaimed her into its haze, that hope flickered – a hope as delicate and as sharp as the moments of recognition that sometimes broke through the clouds. In these moments, when her eyes would meet Tony's and hold, when she would glimpse her own reflection and know the face that stared back at her, they found a sanctuary. These instances of clarity, brief and bittersweet, became the treasures upon which Tony built his days, knowing that as the sun rose higher, the shadows would return to claim their due.

“Good morning, Mom,” Tony would say, his voice a soft anchor in the gentle light of dawn.

Sara's gaze would linger on him, and then, with clarity shining in her eyes, she'd respond, “Good morning, dear. It's going to be a beautiful day, isn't it?”

“Yes, Mom. It's beautiful because you're here.”

This story, unfolding from the fragments of a life once lived in vivid color, speaks not just to the journey of one soul through the twilight of memory but to the universal struggle against the fading of light within us all. It is a reminder that within the palliative embrace of care, there lies not only the management of pain and the easing of physical burdens but also the profound act of holding space for the person who remains. It underscores the importance of cherishing those moments of connection, however fleeting, and of recognizing the enduring value of the person, even as the faculties that defined them seem to slip away.

In sharing Sara's story, we are reminded of the power of presence, the significance of a shared gaze, the weight of a hand in ours. We are called to bear witness to the beauty and the pain of the human experience, to offer our compassion, our understanding, and our support to those navigating the twilight of their stories. For in the palliative journey, it is not only the physical symptoms that warrant care, but the very essence of the person – their memories, their identities, their connections to the world and to each other – that we seek to honor and uphold.

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