

Miss Miriam

by Monica M. Brinkman

Miriam smiled as I entered through the old, creaky metal front door of her home. She sat still, face marked of deep wrinkles, tense with the pain only another cancer patient would understand.

In that soft, sweet, melodic voice, she greeted me. "Hello Ms. Monica, I've been anticipating your visit all day. I'm so happy to see you could make it,

She motioned me to draw near, pointing to the soft, clean overstuffed chair next to the cold, steel wheelchair she occupied. I sat and held her hand reveling in the stories Miriam shared with me. fascinating stories of her childhood, how she had risen from a poor but loving family, attended college, and eventually earning her BA degree. So intelligent a woman was she and could had been anything she wished in life but she chose the esteemed career of 'teacher'.

She raised a family but was most proud of the students who still called and visited her. I would read letters from those same students...letters oozing of praise, love and gratitude to a woman who not only educated them in subject matter, but in the ways of the world. She was a teacher they could and would not ever forget.

"What's that you have hidden in your bag?" She was still sharp as the proverbial knife and didn't miss a trick, as the saying goes.

I opened the bag revealing three oil paintings, hesitant at first to show her my works of art. I wondered if she would like them or feel they were some amateur attempt in the artistic world.

As I handed her the canvases, one at a time...a rose...a daffodil...a lily, she gasped in pure pleasure and delight. I

could not help notice the drops of tears that slid down the side of her face and onto her pink, plush robe.

"Don't cry Miriam," I pled now worried they may have upset her. This strong, brave woman had never once cried in my presence and I was not sure how to react, until she turned to me saying in that soft, managed voice,

"Sweetie, my Ms. Monica, I love the paintings. They are the most beautiful flowers I have ever seen. My child, you are so talented and I will cherish these for as long the good Lord sees fit to keep me on this earth."

The following week, I arrived at my normal time as I volunteered at Hospice and Ms Miriam and I had a set day and time for my visits. The door was unlocked and when I entered, she was not sitting in her chair awaiting my call. I called out for her...no response. I rushed to her bedroom...the bed empty and I searched the house calling her name.

On the kitchen table lay a note addressed to me. I picked it up reading the words I had dreaded to hear - "Ms. Monica, Mother has passed on and is now in Gods' hands but she wanted us to tell you how dear you were to her and how much she valued your friendship and kindness. She also told us we were to tell you that the oil paintings were the best present she had ever received and we are to keep them hanging in her home for future generations to enjoy as she had.

The note went on a bit more and with each word read, my heart broke as tears poured down my face, knowing I would never see my good friend again. I glanced up and noticed three perfectly framed pictures hanging above the antique table in the corner of the room. My flowers-my gift to her-so beautifully placed in such a prominent area of her home, for all to see.

I will never ever forget my friend and even in her death, she was a teacher. She had taught me one final lesson... to believe

in myself, to have confidence in my abilities and never to allow the fear of rejection overcome my passion of painting.

I still miss her yet feel fortunate to have been part of her life, even if a mere fleeting glimpse.

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