

Skin and Bones

by Susan Davis

She lay there, skin and bones, unable to speak. Little did we know those were our last moments together. How cruel for her, to want to share a lifetime of thoughts and feelings in those waning moments only to be robbed of the chance. My brother and I talked about school, our friends, sports, but she could only nod. A few days later she was gone.

I think of her now, a mother myself, and wonder how she was able to bear it. The thought of leaving us, of not knowing where our lives would lead, to miss being a part of it all. How did I bear it? I don't remember. Perhaps I was too caught up in my own teenage games to see what was right in front of my eyes.

Months later I found a letter she wrote for me. Found it quite by accident. The letter said I was her beautiful girl, her happy go lucky child. Asking me to always stay that way. Begging me not to be angry with God, to trust Him and the plan he had for her and for us. Did I trust God? I tried. I tried to be the good girl, the good daughter, took myself to church every week, sat there alone. Did it do any good? It didn't stop me from trying to dull the pain in other ways.

I can see now what witnessing a lifetime of illness has done to me. I can be distant. I can will myself not to feel things that are too painful. It's not that I don't care. I have a heart. But after years of confusion, suffering, and fear, sometimes it's easier to pretend things aren't happening at all. If I pretend hard enough I can make it all go away or at least I can try.

