

Just Write

Gloucester County Library System

Logan Township Branch

Writers Group

Selections

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TELL ME THE “RUG STORY” AGAIN

Once upon a time there was a lady who desperately needed a new rug for her dining room. The old one had lived through the baby and toddlerhood of three children. It had absorbed many food spills in this capacity. In due time, or overdue, perhaps, a new carpet was purchased and in its rolled up condition it was put in the dining room.

However, that is just where it stayed—and stayed—and stayed. Gr-r-r-r. The lady’s short patience was stretched thinner and thinner. Working around this obstacle in the daily tasks took on a very personal feel. **Why** wouldn’t the man of the house take care of this task? What was the hold up? Why didn’t he see the inconvenience of the bundle of rolled up rug?

After a while, the work of moving furniture and taking up and discarding the old rug, and then replacing it with the fresh new one actually was accomplished. The lady breathed a sigh of not-very-thankful relief.

So, why is this story worth telling at all, let alone, telling “again”? Because, sometime later, when this incident came to mind, the lady saw this trying and thought-consuming incident from a different and more reasonable perspective. The three week period of irritation, even anger, over the undone task and HUGE inconvenience had down-sized. In retrospect, it seemed as though someone had pleated the problem like an accordion so that it occupied very little of its former space. It was a lesson for the learning; big problems may not truly be as enormous as they seem to be while one is in the middle of them. It is helpful to think of this in the midst of trials, at least helpful enough that this particular lady remembers it decades later.

Recently, a friend of the same lady suffered a much bigger inconvenience which also involved floors. The friend’s distress brought the past experience to mind and it was given as a small offering of encouragement. When her trial continued, even worsening, the friend begged, “Tell me the “rug story” again, please.” .

“Happily ever after” would be too strong an ending for our little moral tale, but certainly when problems are weighed with a bit of wisdom and perspective, our daily lives can simply be happier.

The Beagle and the Cat

Soft droopy ears and soulful eyes
The white tan and black statue
Seemed to be alive.
Really but had me mesmerized.

His shelf companion notwithstanding.
With her smirky grin
Left the challenge open
Put your hand here I'll slice it thin.

Her long haired smoky silver coat
Itself an invitation
Which would you chose,
Which would you stroke.

Framed by a doorway
Open to view
Lasting thoughts and memories
Both for me, thank you.



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BLISS (refer to-The Beagle and the Cat)

'Twas upon the entry repeated
Purposely, I say;
That use of the still life display
Was entered to the small image keeper.

Imprinted also to this body's system
The image compared a remembrance
And brought joy, peace and serenity.
There was no artificial flash.

What could this picture be
On the left, the black, tan, and white
Was a disparaging unequal size
Hardly itself a noteworthy prize.

For the ears were brown
As well as the tail
That was not a flag
And the head had no glass.

The sad eyes were brown
Without a crown
No sound emanated that day
Its wooden horn would let none pass.

The depiction framed
By the inner portal was saved
Then processed again within the brain.
There was no bugling bray.

To his right
Quiet though she too be
And although white
A royal Persian is she.

The memory was of a black feline
Pug nosed and long haired also a he.
The beagle on the left
Combined into this keepsake pleasantry.

To view this display
Going to the North Port FL Gallery is the way.
See Cheryl or one
Whom would be pleased by your inquiry.

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“New Beginnings”
By Kate Sherrer

“Maybe I’m supposed to be doing something else with my life. Maybe this isn’t it. Isn’t it supposed to come easier than this?”

“Honey, just relax. You’re not giving yourself enough credit. You are a wonderful teacher to these kids.”

Today is a busy day for Anna Scott. She has a term paper due plus her lesson plans to write up for tomorrow for the substitute teacher. And she has to pick up her sister from the airport in an hour. She ducks out of the bathroom and reaches for her keys that are in the bowl on the table next to the door. “Jeff, I gotta go! I’ll meet you back here tonight for pizza! Remember to turn off the coffee pot! Love you!” yells Anna from the doorway of the apartment to her husband in the kitchen. Anna loves Jeff so much; he is the one constant in the sea of chaos that is her life and the only person who doesn’t disappoint her. He is some years older than Anna, and extends a subtle wisdom that is attractive to a young woman. Anna finds being in a relationship with an older man is wonderful because he can help her make the best decisions early in life. It was Jeff who suggested she go back for her master’s in education so that she might have better opportunities than teaching the second grade in a lower-income public school in Brooklyn. She loved her husband because he loved her and knew how to take care of her, and stability was always something Anna’s life lacked until she met Jeff.

The drive to LaGuardia Airport is a long one because of the major traffic jam that is a constant in New York during the holidays. Anna is glad she took the Jeep Liberty instead of hailing a cab; she figures it would be up to fifty dollars by now. “*I hope Vit’s not mad at me for being a little late to pick her up,*” Anna says to herself. “*A flight at nine in the morning to New York City at Christmas...I should have thought more about that.*” An hour later she pulls into the parking zone and looks for her sister at the United Airways gate. Suddenly she spots a petite woman with pale skin and black hair biting her nails, a lit cigarette in between her index and middle fingers, appearing to be in a trance. “Vittoria! I’m here!” Anna shouts. The woman jolts out of her reverie and swings her head around. Anna hops out of the jeep to help her sister with her luggage. There isn’t much, just a black trestle bag and Vittoria’s oversized handbag.

“Do you know how long I waited?” cries Vittoria.

“Well, sis, it’s nice to see you too,” replies Anna hurriedly. “You look well, gained a little bit of weight. You seem much healthier.”

“I’m fat. Rehab makes you fat, didn’t you know that? Whatever. I don’t know why you couldn’t have just flown me to Vermont in the first place and skipped this whole mess.”

A little upset but not totally surprised at her sister’s reaction to seeing her, Anna sighs. “Vit, dear, I can’t fly you to Vermont because no one will be able to pick you up at the airport there.”

“Aunt Jessa doesn’t drive anymore?” Vittoria seems genuinely taken aback.

“She’s older and it’s snowing up there. It’s also a long drive from the house. And who’s going to watch your children? A three and four-year-old are not going to sit still in car seats for a drive up and back to the airport. It’s better if you ride up with Jeff and me” Anna responds knowingly.

Every year, Anna’s Aunt Jessa invites her and her husband for An Old-Fashioned Christmas at the large and scenic bed & breakfast she owns in Vermont. It is always wonderful: the snow on the slopes, the blue quiet of a cold night, a fireside and hot cocoa, and the company of friends and family gathered in merriment. As Anna remembers, when they were younger she

and Vittoria had both been close with their Aunt Jessa. She was funny and warm and full of life just like their father, Jessa's younger brother, had been. Jessa had become the girls' guardian after their parents and older brother James died in an car crash caused by skidding on black ice when Vittoria was fourteen and Anna twelve. She tried to do everything right by them, but being heartbroken over her brother, sister-in-law and nephew's deaths and, not being a mother herself, some behaviors were overlooked.

Anna recalls that Vittoria started sneaking out at night, going to parties, doing drugs and drinking shortly after her family's deaths. By the age of sixteen she was snorting cocaine and drinking a liter of whiskey everyday. When Aunt Jessa finally caught on, Vittoria was seventeen and onto snorting Percocet. She had gone into Jessa's medicine cabinet and stole the Percocet Jessa took to relieve pain for arthritis, and began to sell the pills to her friends for cash. Fortunately for Vittoria, Jessa found this out before Vittoria was caught by authorities and began looking for rehab facilities in which to quickly deposit Vittoria in the hopes she would quit drugs and start to focus her life in a positive direction. There were cycles when Vittoria would complete a program and come home, only to relapse. Anna herself had withdrawn emotionally after the accident and focused on school and getting good grades but never making many friends. She only watched after Vittoria, as if *she* were the older sister, caring for her, worrying that each night Vittoria snuck out might be the last time she would ever see her. That she would lose her sister too.

"Anna?"

Anna snaps back to present day. She and her sister are sitting in the jeep, parked outside the apartment building. How lucky to find a spot right outside the apartment!

"Yeah?"

"Are you gonna get out of the car?" asked Vittoria.

Anna opens the door and steps out. The two women walk up the three flights of stairs to Anna's and Jeff's apartment. Jeff opens the door for them. "Hey Vittoria, how ya been?" he asked kindly as he embraces his sister-in-law. Vittoria hugs him back but just mumbles something. "I think she's tired from the trip, darling," says Anna. "She's only just completed the 90-day program. I'm so glad the center let her spend the holidays with us. She moves into sober living when we bring her back."

"Do you like living on the ranch Vittoria? What kinds of things do they make you do there?" Jeff asks enthusiastically.

"I like the center in San Antonio. We do all sorts of stuff, like painting and feeding the animals and whatnot. Very therapeutic. It's beautiful guys, really, thanks for paying for me to stay there." Vittoria falls silent.

Anna is touched by these words, as it is rare that her sister is vocally grateful for anything, but remembers she still has lesson plans to write so that she may get a head start on her Christmas vacation and her half-finished term paper to submit by midnight online. "Jeff, can you order out the pizza? Vittoria is probably hungry; she's had a long trip today. I've gotta get started on my work."

* * *

"On our way to Vermont, ladies!" Jeff says cheerfully. Anna is so happy he loves going up there as much as she does and gets along well with Aunt Jessa. Anna thinks Vittoria must be excited too; she hasn't seen her young son and daughter in over three months, and the holiday would be the only time she will get to see them before she starts the sober living program. Anna turns around to see Vittoria asleep in the morning sun that stays constant with their motion. In

spite of the anguish she holds within herself and the chemicals she has abused her body with, her sister is still beautiful. Anna has always admired her sister's looks, knowing that she herself was pretty enough but would never be beautiful. She never understood why someone so beautiful would do anything to devastate their looks. She turns back in her seat.

"Anna?"

She turns again. "Yeah sis?"

"Do you remember the fight we had, the one before you took me to San Antonio, when you learned I spent all what Mom and Dad left me on dope and my house was up for foreclosure?"

Anna grimaces. "Yes, I do. I was very disappointed in you. You told me you felt you could never get clean. The state threatened to take the kids! You're lucky you have Aunt Jessa to take care of them."

"I know," Vittoria says slowly. "It's about them. I mean, I want to do right by them. I have two growing children... I need to stop being careless and using drugs. I know I should have felt this way before, like when I had them I guess. But they have me and I have them. Before, in other treatment centers, we would have therapy and everybody wanted to talk about Mom and Dad but I was never ready to. In San Antonio, after you and I had that fight, I finally felt ready to open up about their death and how it affected me and I guess led me to addiction.

"I guess what I'm trying to say is that if I'm around for my kids I should do my best to be a good mom. Mom and Dad did their best for us until they died, and still they chose Aunt Jessa to take care of us, and she was awesome. Them and James dying was the worst thing that ever happened to me, to us, and I want to be around for my kids. And you. I know you've always felt like the big sister when *I'm* supposed to be your *big sister*. I've been selfish in my grief, and I'm ready to let it go."

Anna blinks back tears. "That's a good move, Vit. I'm happy for you."

After four more hours of steady driving, the trio arrives at Jessa's Bed & Breakfast. It is as picturesque as Anna imagined it would be this time of year: the willow tree dusty with snow, the afternoon sun setting in the west, making gorgeous pinks, purples and blues in the sky and the barn shed with a snow-covered roof decorated with a single white star light. Jessa and the kids run out the front door to greet them. Vittoria runs to meet both her children in embraces and kisses. Anna cherishes this moment before her, this sign that her sister is moving forward with her life. In happiness, the little being inside her gives a kick.

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Meetings Held 2nd & 4th Wednesdays @

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