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## The Rude Awakening

*Marcia Rzab*

My bed was warm and I felt secure, all covered up with my homemade quilts. I opened my eyes and noticed the sun peeking through the curtains. This particular morning seemed different from all the others. I felt so content. I tried to remember what I had dreamed about, but couldn't recall anything. I sat up and stared out the window. Everything looked so different to me. Colors were brighter. The air lighter. I felt as if a heavy burden had been lifted. The strong smell of coffee and the snapping sounds of frying bacon aroused me, and I rose up out of my bed and drifted down the stairs.

Arriving at the kitchen doorway, I stood still for a moment. I began noticing what seemed to be a daily occurrence. My mother was moving about the kitchen preparing breakfast. She was smiling and singing some made-up song. Her actions were quick and precise. She would crack an egg open and carefully place it in the frying pan. A few moments would pass and then she would ever so neatly turn the egg over to the other side.

I watched her move from the stove to the refrigerator to the sink and then back to the stove. She was happy. While watching her move about, I caught a glimpse of my dad. He was sitting at the table sipping coffee and mumbling something to the dog. His face had the morning nubs, and he looked a little tired. He probably spent half the night in the hospital talking to some drug addict. I could never understand why he wanted to be a social worker, taking on other people's problems. He smiled at mother as she bustled all about the kitchen. Every so often he would speak up in his rough but soft voice. He would express to mother how he felt about her, that she was "a beautiful sight in the morning." He also told her just how much he loved her. This made mother blush. She would then drop whatever she was doing and run to give him a big hug, giggling all the while. If it had been any other morning, I would have thought they were acting very silly, but this morning their actions touched me. Usually I was in such a rush or too tired to even notice their presence in the room. I felt a little empty, realizing the things I had missed out on. I had let so much slip by.

"Good morning mom. You sure do look nice today," I said. She did not respond. She placed eggs and bacon on father's plate.

"Dad how are you this morning?" I asked, sitting down next to him.

He patted the dog on the head and slipped her some bacon under the table. I was confused. I couldn't understand why they wouldn't talk to me.

"Mom. Dad. What's up?" I asked, looking at both of them. Neither replied.

Mom brought some warm blueberry muffins to the table and sat down.

"Did Judy say what time she was going to get up?" my father asked, as he reached for a steaming muffin. I was shocked.

"I'm right here," I said grabbing his arm.

Mother looked up at him and calmly shook her head, "no," just as if I wasn't there.

"Mom I am up! I'm right here," I yelled.

They continued talking. I was furious. I walked up to my mom and placed my hand on her shoulder. She didn't make one move. She nor my father could see me, feel me, or hear me. I backed up to the doorway. They continued talking with each other. I watched them laughing and smiling. Something was terribly wrong. I couldn't understand what was taking place. Had I died?

I felt a chill all over my body. I looked about the room. I was in my bedroom in my bed. All my blankets were on the floor. I sat up, trying to piece together everything that had just happened.

Had I been dreaming? No. It was too real.

I looked out my window. It was raining. I was puzzled. I could smell coffee and hear bacon sizzling. I ran downstairs and into the kitchen where Mom was moving about clanging pots and pans, and Dad was sitting at the table. They greeted me, each with a warm smile and a "Good morning." I was not dreaming now, and I realized there was more to life than just existing. I sat down next to my father and began talking.