

Sundays

by Gary Moshimer

Sundays I drive her to the cemetery to visit her husband of fifty years. I've had her for two, and when I tell her I love her as much as he did, she laughs.

I have to hold her elbow and help her over the bumpy grass. Today it's raining and we brought just one umbrella, so we are closer than usual. As we approach his grave I sense her pulling away, trying to make me a stranger, but it's raining too hard.

Usually I leave her to talk to him, and walk into the tall spruce trees and sit and look up until I'm dizzy. The treetops sway even on calm days, and you feel like you're moving.

But she won't put me out to the rain, so we just stand there and she doesn't say a word, when normally I know she chats up a storm, her mouth moving and her hands floating as I back away. Sometimes I hear her laughter as I'm watching the trees, and she sounds like a girl, and I try to imagine the million memories she has with him.

I look at her stone: Wife Alison, Sept. 3, 1934—

"Why don't you say something?" I ask, but a crack of thunder sends us back to the car.

Rain pounds the roof. She is silent. I reach and hold her arthritic hand. The ring I gave her is on the correct finger. His is on her right hand, which has become more swollen, so now his is the ring that won't come off, where mine still can.

"I love you," I say. "We're married."

"Of course," she says.

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By the time we get across town to my plot, the sun is out, and steam rises from my stone. This was arranged years ago, when I thought I would die alone. Alison laughs, thinks it's creepy to visit myself when I'm still alive.

She waits in the car, not looking my way.

“Well, old boy,” I say. I get to one knee and take off my hat.

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The streets fog as we drive to the diner. We take our usual booth in silence.

Alison perks up after her sips of coffee. Her warmed fingertips creep towards mine, which withdraw just enough so she doesn't notice. I want to say to her, “Everyone dies alone,” but Big Sal arrives just then for our order.

“The usual?” She arches her fake eyebrows, pokes Alison, and adds with a wink, “How's the love of your life?”

I excuse myself for the bathroom. I don't want to hear.

