

My Mother Loved To Dance

by Beate Sigriddaughter

I can picture her raking leaves in spring under the flashy forsythia, preparing dark soil for dazzling violets, letting me drop in seeds that slipped from my hands like magic spice.

I can picture her kneel on hardwood spreading wax, then letting me rag-skate through the expanse of living room, corridor, and beyond to polish everything.

I can picture her haul loads of exuberant fruit home from market, boiling cherries in June, sectioning bruised pears for canning in September.

I don't even know why she prized dancing so much.

Here is the rule she lived by: you get one man in life, and if he doesn't want to dance, you're out of luck.

I saw her dance just once with my fiancé at a Country Western bar. She was seventy-two. Her nose was turned up and her eyes sparked triumph. Soon she had trouble breathing. She didn't want to stop. My father grumbled. "But dancing!" he hissed when she finally sat down gasping.

I can picture her breathless, too, at the rim of the Grand Canyon.

One morning she quietly died in her sleep.

Sometimes when I dance, I can feel her laughing in my bones. She was meant for joy.

