

Tomatoes and Onions on the Bed

by Patti Hall

Life was wearing her down; you could see it in the little things, if only you took the time to look close enough. Why else would her bed be unmade and unoccupied in the middle of the night? That, alone, is not necessarily all that odd though. But pay attention, look close. Is that a grocery store veggie bag with 5 Roma tomatoes in it? Is that really a white onion, on her bed, next to the toms? Is that normal?

Then there's the metal first aid box. Huh? One day in her life would tell you why the first aid box is sitting there in the middle of her bed with a roll of medical tape on top of it. You would have seen her rush in the door late yesterday afternoon (after a garden mishap), holding her thumb in the air, with blood running down her arm. She got that all cleaned and patched up, but sometime last night it broke open again and she had to apply new dressings.

The one Band-Aid wasn't enough anyway, especially after she made a fresh pot of coffee, some peanut butter sourdough toast and washed up the dishes. The dishwasher was what did it. Of course, she used a white towel to dry her hands. Then she had to dump hydrogen peroxide on the towel to get the blood out. That was pretty smart; I didn't even know about that trick.

That led to the first aid box on the bed at 3 in the morning, but what about those veggies? Is an onion even a vegetable? The toms and onion were sat there merely for convenience; you can't do dishes in here without moving the cutting board. There are 2 sinks, but one is covered with the cutting board for extra counter space. When you do dishes, you move the cutting board. Guess what was on the cutting board for lack of a better place? Yep, the toms and onion got displaced somewhere around 2:30 this morning, with the cutting board.

Does normal even visit here? You be the judge. Just make sure you look close and ask yourself what shape you would be in if you were sitting where she is. Would you be as worn down by life as she is? Would you have 5 tomatoes and an onion on your bed in the middle of the night?

She doesn't sleep much; not until she reads and writes to exhaustion. Even then, she only passes out for a couple of hours. One of two things wakes her—she told me this herself. Either her dead 3 year-old grandson leans close to her face to plant a gentle kiss on her cheek, or she's saying her final goodbye; kissing his lifeless face in the back of the ambulance.

