

Suzanne

I don't have many memories. Once, I described it to Edward as sleepwalking through life. I do remember a few things—momentary awakenings, I guess.

I remember the soft blue velour of the recliner in the family room and the way the foot rest clicked when I pushed the handle to raise it. I sat in that chair the first time I saw *Anne of the Thousand Days* and fell in love with another time and place.

I remember the look on my father's face when he saw a picture of Mark Jordan and me at a seventh grade dance. What began as a secondary glance became a full, head-on stare as his face hardened in a dawning understanding. Mark's dark-skinned arm lay awkwardly across my back. His white nails, resting casually on my shoulder, glowed from the camera flash. A single pulsing vein and a small twitch in his left eye were all that hinted at my father's carefully contained rage.

And I remember the jade necklace that slipped from beneath the nurse's uniform as she pulled the sheet up over my mother's lifeless body. It was a teardrop cut, set in lacy gold filigree. It swung back and forth; an upside down metronome counting off the first seconds of the life I had dreaded since hearing the diagnosis ten months before.

When I told my best friend that I was taking this trip, she asked if it was to forget. No, I said. It's to remember.

I always thought I would make this trip with Edward. Instead, Blair sat next to me on the terrace, both of us looking down at the fishing village below. Like a scene from a postcard, it was complete with stone breakwaters and bright red skiffs along the harbor. It was easy to see why Dylan Thomas called Mousehole "the most beautiful village in England." The taxi driver who picked us up at the railway station in Penzance explained that we'd been mispronouncing the village name. It would read 'Mowzil' if spelled phonetically. My ten-year-old daughter, however, would insist on pronouncing it "Mouse hole," as she had since the day I decided to come.

We'd come for a three-month respite. It took her smile to restore the confidence I'd lost during our journey from Washington, D.C. to the far southwest of England.

Joy sprang from her voice as she surveyed the view. "Daddy would be proud of us for being so brave."

No one had ever accused me of being brave before, especially Edward. I won't lie and say that, somewhere over the Atlantic, I didn't begin to wonder if my father's assessment was correct. Was I a fool for coming here? Blair's words bolstered my courage, reminding me why we had come. "Yes, he would," I heard myself say, but wondered what he'd really have thought. That was enough to push me out of my seat. I reached for her hand. "Let's unpack and find something to eat. Early to bed for us tonight."

The cottage was decorated with the seaside vacationer in mind, whitewashed walls and knick-knacks throughout. Nothing sophisticated or fancy, it had a homey quality that put us both at ease. Edward had hired a decorator when we moved into the three-story brick house in Great Falls. Her motto, "A house shouldn't look lived in," meant it always looked more like a museum than a home. After years spent in a home designed to appear artful, I appreciated Wisteria Cottage.