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Tangible Things

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Tangible Things

In the beginning all we owned was a deep hole that was bigger than both of us. On a clear morning we watched the small wood box get lowered and dirt from the hole thrown on top where it settled over days and weeks and then we returned with garden gloves and shovels to plant rosemary and lavender.

The first year we went there all the time and lounged on the ground as green grass also grew on top of what used to be the hole. We brought picnics, knelt in the grass, and felt close to Mystery, the name we had printed on a pink hand-painted tile marked with the date of her birth and her death, so close to each other. After bringing a small bag of cement and tools to mix and fix the tile in our amateur way, to lie flat on the earth, this object became the tangible thing we visited.

Then we went less often. No one saw the wild daisies appear, wild lilies push forth from underground bulbs. The rosemary took over. Other deep holes were dug. Seasonal winds blew random seeds from afar to land there, where the ground shifted beneath the weight of grief.

Was it the heavy step of a deer, a gravedigger, or a tractor that caused what we found maybe five years later, when we came to discover the pink tile broken into four or five chunks, lying like puzzle pieces under the blooming lavender? We cried our eyes out and then agreed it was time's way to break things down so we said our hellos and prayers and goodbyes, leaving the broken bits where they lay.

Compelled to keep returning to the site, so lush with its long view of the shallow lagoon and such fresh air, next time we went the tile had not only been restored to wholeness but seamlessly so, with no evidence of cracks. How? We marveled. Who did this? We barely knew anyone here anymore. We had moved away long ago, moved on in so many ways, sadness integrated, part of us, but we were okay because life provided surprising sweetness, too.

Last time, I went by myself. Lavender and rosemary nowhere to be seen, I found the only deeded land we ever owned covered in bright green clover; yellow daisies in bloom, white calla lilies unfolding, white sky overhead, silver lagoon in the distance; the pink tile whole and now framed by a square of rustic wood and hoisted on rebar to stand upright, so I could see it from the road when I parked, stepped out, and made my way past new graves, searching names to learn if the new death could be someone I might have known from way back then, those days when we lived here, so in love and full of joy of life.

Who framed this like this? Who did this? How did any of this happen?

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