

## Down By The Berry Patch

### "Valuables"

**Rita Luks**

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She was so tiny my arms reached all the way around her. She rested her head against my shoulder and her body melted into mine. "There's something wrong," she sobbed. "I'm so confused". Her words went directly to my heart.

She stiffened. "I'm acting like a baby. Al never liked it when I cried."



"You're not acting like a baby. You're scared. It's OK. It's OK," and I felt her go limp against me as I pulled her tighter.

We were getting ready to go to Unionville to celebrate [Mother's](#) birthday when [Susan](#) called and said something was wrong with Grandma. She had gone to play cribbage with her. A special bond existed between the two of them. She knew she couldn't leave until we got there and she thought we should get there fast. She also knew something was wrong. Grandma was so confused.

Not knowing what was wrong with Mother, but knowing she needed to be with someone, we decided to bring her back to our house where either [John](#) or I would be right there to watch her. She was agreeable to the idea. We bundled her into her long down coat and, with one of us on each side, we guided her down the treacherous back steps and into the car. When we got to our house in Okemos, it was difficult to get her out of the car and she couldn't lift her feet to get up the few steps into the house.

I called her doctor in Bay City and he didn't sound particularly concerned. He wasn't alarmed by my description of what was happening with her. He said if I decided I wanted to have her admitted to the hospital, I could bring her to Bay City. I knew I could also take her to a hospital in Lansing but, if I did that, she would be away from her regular doctor, the rest of the family, and her friends. Mother said if she had to go the hospital she wanted to go to Bay City.

By this time she couldn't sit up to get off the bed to go into the bathroom. I decided she definitely needed to be hospitalized but I didn't think I should drive her the 90 miles to get there. I was afraid something terrible was going to happen to her. Mother was silent about making any decision so I called an ambulance service and explained what I wanted to do. About an hour later, we were on our way to Bay City in the ambulance.

That was mother's last trip to my home. She said, "I'm not going to go back there because you'd just put me in an ambulance and take me to the hospital if I did come back."

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Photo Caption: Rachel Liberacki

I had called [Judy](#), so my sister was waiting at the emergency room entrance when we arrived. The process of admitting Mother began. It seemed like we waited forever. She lay on the cart, flooded with the bright lights from overhead, for more than two hours. It was not a priority of the medical staff to admit her to the hospital. They would come in and ask her the same questions over and over. Mother would reply in a low, gravely voice; sometimes picking her answers out of nowhere. This was not normal for our Mother. Then my sister and I would be questioned again. "Tell us why you think your Mother should be admitted to the hospital." It seemed so obvious that if she had lost movement, was confused, and her voice was changed, that something major was wrong.

Finally a nurse came in and said, "Mrs. Liberacki, it appears that your daughters don't want to care for you so we're going to admit you to the hospital." Mother accepted the decision with the same stoic look she'd been wearing since we arrived back at my house, a lifetime ago.

When she got to her room, the same questions were asked again that had been asked in the emergency room; beginning with those detailing her medical history. She couldn't answer them there and she couldn't respond to them in her room. She didn't know the date and wasn't certain where she was. There was a new question added to the list. "Mrs. Liberacki, do you have any valuables with you tonight?"

"Yes. My precious jewels," she quickly replied. Judy and I looked at each other, both trying to imagine what wild answer she was going to come up with now. "My two daughters."

The next day, on her 79<sup>th</sup> birthday, Mother suffered a massive stroke.

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