

2021 MCC Creative Writing Contest
Honorable Mention Creative Non-Fiction Category

-Maya Angelo

It was a warm September day in 2017. The grill was sizzling and spitting with hot oil and flames were shooting high into the air. Ice water and salads were being passed around by the waiter. The aroma of the chicken and steak on the grill fills our nostrils. The whole restaurant is abuzz with noise and laughter from the other patrons. On our side of the grill is my husband Al, myself, and Rose. We brought Rose to Fuji Yama Hibachi for her birthday celebration. Rose looks adorable as always sitting in her wheelchair with her baby blue sweater, her white hair curled exactly right and her cute, crooked smile.

First-time meeting Rose after thirteen months of daily stories. I was so excited for this day. I was spoon feeding her rice from the ladle. Every time I gave her a bite, she smiled. My heart is so happy and bursting with joy. I am delighted that her daughter Sophie allowed me to be a part of this moment for her special birthday. As the chef on the hibachi prepared our meal, he lit the onion tower on fire. It was a red and orange fireball. Rose shrieked and clapped with delight. She smiles and holds my hand. Every now and then the hand squeeze gets a little tighter, and I just stared at her in amazement. The chef asked if anyone was celebrating anything special. That draws my attention back to the moment.

Around the month of July, I decided to leave my job at that nursing home and find something closer to home. I applied at a homecare company, and I was given a patient assignment for Friday night respite care. The plan of care from my manager stated the patient was a 99-year-

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hot, and her cheeks were flushed. I sat there for a half hour before her daughter and sons arrived from out of town. I was just talking to God and praying that this was not happening. I felt like my entire world was collapsing and I did not know what to do. Those next three days of hospice care, I had to help place a catheter, brush her teeth, sponge bathe her lifeless body, dress her, and roll her to prevent pressure sores. I put her small hearing aids into her ears in hopes that she could still hear me. I cared for her like she was still alive, but she could no longer respond or communicate. I did not sleep at all those nights; I was caught between an odd feeling of life and death all mixed in one. I was about to experience a profound loss that would leave my life forever changed.

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black. I scanned the room for a familiar face in the crowd. Beautiful roses of yellow and pink, rabbit I gave her last Easter sat by her family photo display. I about her life and her memories. It was in my moment of grief I decided right then I wanted to work in a hospice. I realized that just one person out of the millions out there changed me. She gave this shy, anxiety ridden mom a new chance at life. She showed me that I do not have to be defined by my disorder and that I am a person worthy of love and giving love. My new purpose in life is to give back to others the way Rose gave back to me. She changed my life with her words and her compassion, and I will forever be grateful. Those thirteen months will always be

