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THE POWER OF LOVE

A cardinal perches outside my window in the dogwood tree. When I'm talking on the telephone with my sister, the bird peers at me. Perhaps it wants to join the conversation.

Some people believe the deceased appear as cardinals to comfort loved ones. If it were possible, Mama would reach from heaven to console my sister and me.

I cared for Mama two years at my home. She was bedridden. It required total nursing: feeding, bathing, diapering, and turning her to prevent bedsores.

At last, she said with her feeble voice, "I wish I could stay with you forever. Won't you come with me?"

I wept and held her hand. "No, Mama. I can't go with you. It's not my time. I have more work to do on earth, but will join you someday."

Tears rolled down Mama's face. I hugged her and she whispered, "I love you." She drew her final breath.

I fell across her bed. My body shook with sobs. I never felt such sorrow. Would I live to see tomorrow?

As April approaches, grief grips me. She passed five-years-ago just before Easter. It's a bitter-sweet time. The earth bursts forth with life at this season.

Robins hop across the verdant grass. Green was Mama's favorite color because she loved to garden. I often wear this color to feel close to her.

I also love to work in the garden. The mourning doves coo on Joe Knob as I plant seeds. The spring peepers resound on my neighbor's pond. The Bradford pear trees bloom like giant

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ice-cream cones. Jonquils pop up like lemon drops and swallowtail butterflies flutter through the purple phlox.

I remember when Mama and I planted the phlox in our front yard. The mountain women called it “thrift.” We got the plant from our neighbor, Miss Myrtle, when we walked to her house to visit. It was the custom to give the company a gift when they left your home. Miss Myrtle grabbed a hoe, dug up clumps of the flowers, and put them into a cardboard box.

When Mama and I got home, we set out the thrift. Each spring when they bloom, I convince myself that Miss Myrtle and Mama still live through their handiwork.

Spring excites me. I feel like a newborn lamb frolicking through the lime-green pasture. This resurrection season fills my heart with joy, but the memory of Mama passing, dampers my spirit.

Hope. I cling to the hope that Mama is my guardian angel. Maybe that cardinal does bring a message from heaven.

The power of love!