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English 1301

13 September 2017

More than a Blanket

I can't help getting emotional when I see my blanket. Even though I haven't used it in a while and it doesn't come to mind very often, when I just happen to see it every now and then, many good and bad memories start to come back. It was late and cold one night and the first thing I thought of, after thinking it was late and cold, was my handmade blanket and how badly I wanted to use it.

My blanket is like no other blanket to me. My blanket is a little bigger than a full-size bed. It's red with small one-inch bears all over it, and the two-inch binding around it is brown and creamy white. The type of red is a little unique because I've always said it looks like a mix between cherry red and pizza sauce red. The top layer of the blanket is a cotton sheet, about as thin as cardboard paper, and it's laid over evenly-stuffed pieces of cotton. Due to wear and tear over the years, random pieces of cotton strands have poked through in a few places.

The little bears on it are about two inches from each other and are lined up horizontally, vertically, and diagonally all the way around. The bears on it resemble the hard, old school teddy bears that were usually found on an older family member's guest room bed. They were the ones that were normally smooth, but that was only because the fur had been flattened over time. The binding of the blanket is a tree bark brown, brindled together with a creamy white that appears when you first start mixing chocolate syrup in milk or when a lot of creamer is poured in coffee.

My favorite part of my blanket is the middle of it where two hand size hearts were sewn in. The hearts weren't part of the original design, but I did get it at a young age so some repairs had to be made over time. The hearts are not perfectly shaped and I would say are closer to a cherry red than a pizza sauce red and the misshapeness of them resemble the cutout hearts that kids make in school to give to their parents on Valentine's Day. One of the hearts has my name, written with black sharpie, in twelve-year-old handwriting, and the other one has "Grandmas Favorite Grandchild."

My blanket was handmade by my Ama (great grandma) and my grandma for me when I was five or six, but my Ama passed away before she could complete it. After she passed away her daughter (my grandma) decided to finish it for me and for that I will forever be grateful. Without that blanket, I wouldn't have anything tangible left of my Ama, only memories. My blanket is not just the only tangible thing I have left of her; however, it's something that represents the way she brought people together. Ama was the backbone of my family and when she passed away, the family gatherings slowly died out. My Apa (her husband) stopped leaving the house, and the family's bond was never the same. It's been over fourteen years since her passing, and my Apa still hasn't left his home, so sometimes when I look at my blanket, I get sad. I remember a time when everything was easy and simple and a time when my family could get together and get along. Although, those aren't the only memories I get.

Most of the time when I look at my blanket, all those memories of Easter picnics, birthdays that turned to block parties, New Year's firework competitions, and Thanksgiving dinners come to mind. I can remember dancing on my Ama's feet at my Apa's birthday party and how her long-curved fingernails felt touching the top of my hands while we danced to Selena's Cumbia songs. Her hands were always so soft and smooth and had an embracing feeling

to them. I used to love that she had the “I soaked my hands in water all day” kind of wrinkles instead the deep overlapping skin kind of wrinkles most elderly people have. They were the kind that almost looked like sand waves made in Egyptian deserts.

My favorite memory of all that always comes to mind though when I see my blanket is from when my mom saw I had written on it in thick black sharpie. She went off on me. “Have you lost your mind?! Who do you think you are?” she said many times, along with a lot of other angry phrases, before calling my grandma. “I just wanted people to know it was mine,” I answered to kind of hide the fact that I did it because I merely wanted to.

When my grandma answered, my mom put the phone on speaker and made me explain what I did to the blanket. Before I could say I was sorry after explaining, she yelled, “That’s her goddam blanket, Stephanie, and if she wants to write all over it she can! That’s why it was made for her, not you!” My mom quickly took the phone off speaker and walked away from me. I remember standing there with the most confused expression when she walked away. I could feel the fire like heat in my face from blushing so hard and the pressure in the back of my throat from not breathing because I was afraid if I did, I would just laugh uncontrollably. After that day, my mom never said anything else to me about my blanket or that incident.

In the end, these good and bad memories are what make my blanket so special and are what hold its significance. Even though I haven’t been able to use my blanket in about four years, it’s still very special to me and it still sparks my attention when I see it. I would love to use my blanket, but over the years, wear and tear has just gotten so bad that I don’t want to risk it getting any worse. When I was younger and something happened to the blanket, my mom would just send it to my grandma and she would fix it. Now that my grandma is older and her health

isn't the best, she can no longer repair it for me and the fear of something happening to my blanket gives me serious anxiety.

So I've come to the conclusion that unless I'm able to find a place I can trust to fix it, I'll be keeping it put up or I'll be taking sewing classes to fix it myself. Who knows, maybe I'll start making my own blankets if I decide to take sewing classes. Then I'll be able to make blankets for my grandbabies that will mean just as much to them as my blanket does to me.