

Caroline Cabe

10th grade

“Note to Self”

Word Count: 1988 words

Note to Self

By. Caroline Cabe

There may have been a soft humming in the distance from the juvenile morning breeze, but Lorraine wouldn't have known since her hearing aids had not been put in yet. She woke up in a large bed tucked inside of a small room with various antique bedside tables and furnished wooden dressers decorated with small finishes of golden leaves and twisting vines. Sheets lay tangled at her feet, leading her to believe that she might have had an unpleasant dream the night before. But the manila spread with images of various types of birds embroidered on it laid very neatly over her. The room was quite strange to her, foreign in fact, but Lorraine was too old to be frightened by odd things. She carefully eased the blankets off of her and groggily scanned the room for her walker. It was parked conveniently beside one of the night stands. She rocked herself a few times to gain momentum before pushing herself out of bed. A few soft cracking noises came from her body as she rose, but she did not feel any pain in her joints like one might think an old lady does. She was actually quite comfortable in her body. She took a few stumbling steps forward before leaning onto the walker. The next step to her routine was to go to the bathroom and ready herself for the day. She took in a small breath before starting her journey to find the bathroom.

She found the bathroom nestled in between two guest bedrooms. Once she had parked her walker and locked the wheels, she took slow strides to the small oval-shaped mirror. She had white curly hair. She had forgotten that about herself. She had forgotten many things about herself. She only remembered her name and her daily routine and the fact that she woke up in an unfamiliar place every day. But that was all she needed to know about herself. After reminding herself of what she looked like, she gingerly retrieved her hairbrush from the sink in front of her

and began to tidy up her hair. She then found a small closet to her right and dressed herself in a modest blouse and some black slacks. Her nightgown lay folded on the counter beside the sink. She finished by finding her hearing aids laying in a case by her hairbrush and switching them on.

The sharp howling of her stomach told Lorraine it was time for breakfast. She made her way through the small hallway that presumably led to the kitchen. On her way through, she noticed the modest display of photos hanging from polished frames on the walls. An odd sense of familiarity brushed her skin as she studied the images. She found one picture especially intriguing. Inside the frame stood a man, roughly in his forties. He wore a pressed tux with a white flower neatly pinned on the collar. Although the photo was black and white, the light seemed to sizzle off of his chestnut hair and blue-green eyes. When she raised her finger to touch the man's face the frame a small piece of paper fell out from behind it and fluttered to the ground. Lorraine grunted as she bent unsteadily to the floor to pick it up. The note was written in small shaky print and appeared to be quite old. It read THIS IS YOUR HUSBAND. Lorraine was quite taken aback but not startled by this information. She curiously stared at the photo once again. The man's face seemed to jump to life in the switching of perspective. His thin lips curled themselves into a bashful smile. His blue-green eyes flashed with excitement as they locked with hers. Was this her husband?

“James?” Her brain clicked on for a few seconds and images sprinted through her head. Suddenly her brain snapped off once again and she slipped the small note back behind the photo, clutched her walker and continued her small trek to the kitchen completely unphased.

The kitchen was large and bright, exactly how she liked it. Cooking was one of her greatest joys, and although she could not remember cooking anything, she remembered every recipe and cooking tip ever given to her. Today seemed like a good day for oatmeal, so she set

out for ingredients. Milk would be in the fridge. Water would be from the sink. Oats would be in the pantry. A bowl could typically be found in a larger cabinet above the stove. But how to heat it? A few more minutes of scanning the room resulted in the finding of a small old-fashioned microwave peeking out from behind the oven. A few minutes of heating will do. She did not like her oatmeal too hot. She found a spoon among various kitchen utensils sitting nicely inside a drawer beside the sink. She pulled the warm bowl out of the microwave, stuck a spoon in it, and steadily made her way to the small table by the kitchen window. She watched the sun illuminate the world behind her house. It was a very nice little backyard. Vines flourished and tickled the bottoms of the bird houses hanging from the canopy.

“Do you think there are any robins nesting this year, James?” The words escaped her lips on pure muscle memory. She was aghast with what she had just said. It was as if her vocal cords had simply taken over with no consultancy from her brain. Just as she furrowed her brows in confusion, a vision flickered in her head. A man sat beside her at the table holding a bowl identical to hers. He gazed out the window with her, innocently soaking in the peace and quiet of the morning. His chestnut hair housed strands of white and a few wrinkles played under his eyes. Nonetheless, he grinned at the world of their backyard with her and answered her in a deep gentle coo.

“I think I saw a blue jay look inside the green house yesterday. I haven’t seen any robins out though. Maybe they come out later in the spring.” His charming voice blew warm air into her chest and she couldn’t help but settle into this memory like a warm bowl of oatmeal. A warm bowl of oatmeal. A bowl of oatmeal. The oatmeal. The oatmeal.

“The oatmeal!” Lorraine’s vision snapped from her head as the bowl of oatmeal went crashing to the ground, splintering into many pieces. Lorraine grumbled angrily to herself at the

realization that because of her foolishness she was now going to have to get down on her bad knees and clean up this mess. She tiredly heaved herself out of her chair and walked to the drawers to find a cloth. Although her vision had gone, she could still feel her husband's sweet eyes wishing to bend over and help her clean up the mess he'd created. He was kind like that.

Once the spilt oatmeal had been taken care of, she thought she might find a sitting room to rest her knees in. She found a small living room holding a white embroidered couch with a matching cushioned chair and an oak coffee table with matching cup holders. The remainder of the room was filled with several small book shelves holding a treasury of different sized books. A paned window opened up the room, giving it a friendly gleam. Lorraine thought it might be nice to choose a book to read while her body settled from her previous task. She started with the shelf closest to the couch. She parked her walker beside the door and found a small footstool to sit on while she read the titles of the many selections until she found one that struck her as interesting. The books had been conveniently categorized by genre, so Lorraine only had to scan quickly through the row before deciding whether or not she was interested. She was in a particular mood for poetry today. So many odd things had happened and she wanted something less direct and more elegant to ease her mind. One particular book struck her interest, mostly due to the bright blue color of its covering. As she pulled it out, the sweet smell of old books danced across her senses and she couldn't help but give a sigh of satisfaction. The title of the book read *Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman*. As she let the pages open and fall in her fingers, the odd sensation of clouded nostalgia set in once again. Familiarity and curiosity wrestled around her as she turned through the books yellowing content. Suddenly a soft *plop* was picked up from her hearing aids. She looked down to see another small piece of paper settling into the carpet. A foolish bit of fear leapt into her throat as a whispered "Oh dear," sighed out from her lips. She

reached a wrinkled arm to the ground and scooped up the piece of paper. She focused it closely to her face until the words THIS IS YOUR FAVORITE BOOK became legible. Presently a terrifying and extremely confusing moment melted into a warm realization that this poem book was her favorite one to read. She let her hands skate and slide across the cover as if she were petting an old dog as it fell asleep. The arthritis in her fingers seemed to dissolve as she searched through the pages with child-like excitement, giggling at love poems and awing at poems about nature. A young smile broke out onto her face and she spoke aloud to herself.

“This is beautiful.”

“I’m glad you like it,” a young man’s voice bounced back to her. Her husband was back at her side, his face devoid of any signs of age. “Open it to page thirty.” A vibrant giggle escaped her lips as she flipped through the pages to find a flickered diamond ring hidden in the pages. She gazed back up at him in complete shock and passion heating up her insides. His eyes danced wildly as he watched her make the discovery. Tears of utter joy leapt from her eyes as she laughed once again. But the memory subsided with each laugh until the only thing that remained was Lorraine, the book, the note, the walker, and the footsteps of silence approaching the room once again.

The rest of the day went fairly quickly. She read a few Charles Dickens books while her knees rested and then made her way to the kitchen to make herself a peanut butter sandwich. She only encountered a handful of pieces of paper hidden throughout the house, all saying things such as THIS IS YOUR FAVORITE KIND OF BREAD, or THIS IS YOUR FAVORITE SONG TO PLAY ON THE PIANO, or YOUR MOTHER MADE THIS QUILT FOR YOU. No more flashback presented themselves, and that was fine with her. She was exhausted.

At about nine thirty she readied herself for bed. She put her nightgown back on and hung up her clothes. She carefully took out each hearing aid and turned it off before placing it in its case. She found her toothbrush sitting in a cup by the sink and quickly brushed her teeth. As she placed the toothbrush back in the cup, a soft rattling noise came from behind it. She picked it up to find a small bottle of pills with one last piece of paper next to it. TAKE ONE OF THESE. She took the note off and shakily popped the cap open. She read the label briefly before tossing one into her mouth. The label read *Lorraine Smith: Alzheimer's Medication #1*. She could not make sense of it and she didn't want to.

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