

I'll Take You Home Again Kathleen

By Ray Fitzgerald

***"I'll take you home again, Kathleen. Across the ocean wild and wide
To where your heart has ever been since first you were my bonnie bride."***

As the gentle words of the song drifted across the room, Captain Sean Calahan seated next to me in the first row, turned and looked at me as tears rolled down his cheek. I knew he felt as much sorrow as I did. I lifted my wrists, free of the handcuffs that the retired head of the 5th precinct had so graciously removed and nodded a gesture of thanks. I knew Captain Calahan longer than I had known my beloved Katie. He was Katie's brother, a gentle giant. The badges and awards pinned to his chest offered evidence of his bravery and meritorious service. He had kept his promise to let me say goodbye to Katie with dignity and respect.

"The roses have all left your cheek. I've watched them fade away and die."

The Irish tenor's voice brought back memories of fifty wonderful years with Katie. Even the last year after the doctor told us the illness was incurable, we had a moment of hope and laughter. Katie had the courage of a lion and the soul of a lamb. We never had children. We both regretted that. Katie was generous to a fault. She was always ready to lend a helping hand to anyone with a problem; but never at the expense of my needs and wants. If there is heaven and a God, then Katie more than earned her passage to eternal happiness.

***"I know you love me, Kathleen, dear. Your heart was ever fond and true.
I always feel when you are near that life holds nothing dear, but you."***

When I was first introduced to Katie those many years ago it was love at first sight for me.

But for Katie it took some convincing and it didn't help that her brother Sean was against her marrying a mere carpenter. But after beating him time and again in arm wrestling and promising I would give Katie the world, he relented. He was best man at our wedding.

Katie had lovely, long black hair and a wonderful smile that would charm the devil himself.

But she could be feisty, but she never spoke ill of anyone. I kept all my promises to Katie save one. She always wanted to go to Ireland to visit the graves of her parents. Somehow we never did make the trip and no matter what happens to me, the guilt of that unfulfilled promise will forever haunt me.

***“The smiles that once you gave to me.
I scarcely ever see them now.
Though many times I see
A dark’ning shadow on your brow.”***

The first few months of her illness we spent hours talking for hours about all our years together. . We laughed about our first apartment, a one-room walkup with a Murphy bed and the tiny stove and equally small refrigerator, certain that they had once belonged to Ken and Barbie. Sometimes Katie talked about her brother. She was so proud of him. But mostly she would place her hand on me and tell me about how much she loved me and how many of little things I did for her made her love me more. We talked about how there never seemed to be much money, but there was always enough for roses on her birthday and or a small bottle of that lilac perfume she loved.

As the disease progressed, it devoured her body, blighting her natural beauty. Even the morphine could no longer dull the pain. She spoke in whispers. She never complained. I sat in the old wicker chair next to the bed for hours and sometimes days on end. I would silently curse God for what he allowed to happen to my Katie. Katie sensed I was angry at something. After fifty years of life together, it was like we were a single soul, each knowing what the other was thinking.

Finally, unable to watch my beloved Katie continue to suffer so terribly, I made a decision to risk my future in Hell. While Katie was asleep, I placed the pillow over her head, held it tightly until she was completely motionless, then got up, took a big gulp of Bushmills Old Irish right out the bottle and then called police.

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