

## The Circle

By Margaret Deadmon

A portrait quietly stands vigil during the long evening. Positioned on the solid wooden box, it looks out over the many people who have come to pay tribute. Neither the portrait nor what lies inside the box are aware of the sighs, the tears, the murmured whispers. Unspoken words hang in the still air, waiting to be given wings, to land on ears that long to hear them.

Children are here as well. The older ones sit patiently waiting for parents to come back and claim them so they may leave this place that has the scent of a flower shop, but not the atmosphere.

A soft mist that seems to surround a group of younger children slips away from the adults. Together, as one, they make their way to the wooden box in the room that appears to shimmer, the light drawing them as surely as if it called their names. Holding hands, their determination leads them deeper into the candlelit alcove. The desire to see what lies inside this gleaming box is so strong, it will not be denied. The only unspoken question that runs thru their minds is who will look first. The question lingers only for a moment. While it would seem that the oldest of these explorers should be the one to have the first look, it is the youngest that makes the first move. She slips around to the side of the box where an empty chair is waiting for its owner to return. With no thought, she pushes it closer to the box. Making no sound, asking no questions, she holds out her hand and waits for someone to take it and help her up. A second passes, no more than two, and she is being lifted. Lifted away from the chair, but towards the box. Looking down into the satiny folds there is a man laying there, eyes closed, arms crossed, a soft smile on his face. A single red rose is in his hand. She reaches for the rose, but in the same instant, she is lowered back down to the floor. Another in the group raises his hands, and the cycle repeats itself 4 times. The girl sits quietly on the floor and watches as each have their turn. They ask no questions, they shed no tears.

She waits until the last person leaves this room before she rises from the floor. The other 4 with her have taken up their places, one in each corner of the room, blending into the darkness that has fallen, while she stands alone in the shadow of the box. The candles have all gone out, the lights are dimming, a cue for all to whisper goodbye and take their leave.

She watches as the sliding doors close, leaving these 5 to their mission inside the room.

Not a breath escapes her, nor any one with her. They come together to stand around the box, placing the portrait on a windowsill beside a lone candlestick. She raises her finger and a soft flame rises from the wick.

Looking into the box, the children hold hands and at last complete the circle. They softly call to the one laying in the box, telling him it is time. Together they will take him home, wrapped in their circle, leaving this place of sadness, lost hopes and dreams.

The children will return when they are called again. To once more enfold one of the chosen and lead them to their destiny...

Tiny hands, strong arms, and the ever present aura of the One who chose them for this, they will wait for the call.

© 2011, Margaret Deadmon