

## Lowell's Drawers

My grandmother, Marnie, had flat feet and silver hair fastened up with combs. All her dresses were home made. Her eyes were sharp, like my mom's, missing nothing, keeping their own counsel. When there was something to say it was well considered, and stated carefully. Her ways were as true and simple as salt. Her humor was dry with just a hint of the scamp.

She had a garden by her clothesline and I remember her and mom standing at the sunny kitchen sink washing leaves of just picked lettuce. They'd roll them up with sugar and pop them in their mouths.

I'd watch from just inside the hallway door where a set of drawers was hung high on the wall. They were referred to as "Lowell's drawers" with a wry twinkle that suggested there was a joke in it, probably having to do with undergarments.

Most of the family tales were told with a smile.

There was the cousin with a wooden leg who was a carver. He'd jab the knife into his thigh and make people gasp.

And the aunt who, as a baby, crawled from her crib only to be found fast asleep in the middle of the road surrounded by a herd of cows all stepping carefully around her.

And Grampa Bill Hart, with the snowy white beard and brilliant blue eyes. Blind by the time Marnie was born, he'd one day held her up in the light.

"He could see me," she'd beam, "just for that split second. But he saw me."

My mother's family saw each other.

I was little. Their world was big and mythological. They'd lived through the history in my books. My grandfather had used horse and buggy to deliver milk. They'd had crank telephones, and tall radios in cabinets where they'd gathered to listen for news of the war.

Somehow Lowell's drawers were a part of those olden days. Smooth oak with velvet linings and curly-Q brackets, they were mysteriously beautiful to me. I don't remember what was in them, but it didn't matter. I just wanted them and asked Marnie if I could have them when I grew up.

She remembered, just like she remembered all those stories. Years later when she moved to elder housing, the drawers came to me.

They hung in my studio always holding only treasures. A blue glass ball blown by my goddaughter, quartz crystals for windows and corners, a little dragon given by a friend. On top sat a small framed photograph of Marnie.

I am now a grandmother myself. The big house with that studio is gone. What remains is a curation of objects that have a use and, more importantly, a memory. Lowell's drawers hang just inside my new front door. I don't have much in them yet. It doesn't matter. It's just them I want, and the tales they tell.