

Mama's Ring

by Laura Padgett



When you look at me, you would never guess my mom had the green eyes and red hair the Scottish-Irish people are famous for. I resemble my Sicilian father with dark hair and brown eyes. When Mama was happy, her eyes sparkled like green gems flirting with sunlight. I loved to watch those eyes twinkle. And you would never guess behind that sparkle lay pain authored by the disease of alcoholism. Her disease became so severe she estranged herself from her three daughters for the last ten years of her life. She never met her only grandson, Gabriel, my boy. It would be a lie to say I did not resent her disease and her choices.

After her death, I received a box containing her belongings. Among those was her wedding ring, which was in need of major repair if it was to be worn again. I wasn't sure it was worth the bother and wondered why God allowed this painful reminder to catch up to me. But for some strange reason, I yearned to see it repaired and to wear it.

When I took the ring to a local jeweler, he promised to do his best but confessed, "Frankly, it is probably too broken to be restored." I agreed to leave it and accepted the fact that because it was his busiest time of the year, he could not get to it for several weeks.

The next month, he called and said the ring was repaired and ready to collect. I arrived at his shop and found him admiring my ring. He called me over to inspect it. I couldn't believe the difference. The gold shimmered and the stone, complete with new tines, sparkled as it flirted with the sunlight coming from a nearby window.

I knew now why the yearning and why God wanted me to have and wear this ring. I had a choice to make. I could choose to hold onto the image of my mother as a tarnished, weak and broken woman who abandoned her girls to alcohol. Or I could remember her sparkle, shine and those amazing eyes. I was reminded that, as humans, we are all broken and yet Jesus sees through that brokenness and counts us as flawless gems. He tells us that only through forgiveness are we healed and free.

The jeweler spoke very softly as he asked, "It is quite a beauty, isn't it?"

"Yes. Yes, she was," I replied, placing the ring on my finger for the first time

and making my choice.

“I’m sorry it took so long to get it to you,” he apologized

“That’s okay. You see, today, March 9th, would have been my mother’s 83rd birthday,” I said. We stood in silence for a moment, then I whispered, “Thank you, Mama. Happy birthday. I love you.”

I wear this ring daily to honor my mother and remember her happy, sparkling, green eyes. It is a reminder to thank God for His grace to us and for His gentle teachings of how to extend grace to others. My will stipulates this ring is to go to my granddaughter, Sophia, when I pass away. It is my prayer that she will choose to focus on the gleam, sparkle and shine in herself and others. And I pray she will never, ever believe that she or others are too broken to be restored.