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## The Embrace

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I never dreamed I would wear it to bed every night. At first, it was simpler to reach for it, hanging on my “nightgown” nail in the closet. How did it get there? Did it follow me home?

The shirt was never a favorite—never an obsession, but every night I depended on it to help me sleep. Also, I could throw it into my laundry bag along with my other cotton clothes. A plaid flannel shirt doesn't need to be coddled; it only needs to be worn.

I have no memory of how it got into my home. The shirt began its life and lived in another state. I would have had to drive across state borders, carry it out of that house, and walk it up one flight of stairs into my apartment. My first memory of it is to see it hanging on that nail in my closet on one of the many nights I grabbed for it. No matter. Startled, I would feel its softness as I slid my arms into its sleeves. I would feel its embrace.

I wore it night after night, month after month, laundry after laundry. The shirt lost its original colors and faded into neutral. It began to look like a dust rag.

"I can't give it up," I said one day at lunch. "It's beginning to shred and once it's gone, I know I won't sleep again."

My quilter friend asked, "Does it have a pocket?"

"Yes."

"Why don't you cut off the pocket and sew it onto something else and wear that to bed?"

Only a quilter would see and understand the importance of a pocket and find a place for it. I would never look at quilts the same way again. But I also knew it was time to say goodbye. I carefully folded the shredded, no-longer plaid flannel shirt and placed it in a drawer.

That night, I prepared for bed. I found one of my frilly silly nightgowns, put it on, walked to the photograph of my mother and father, and said, "Goodbye Dad."

I slept that night.