



Unraveling

Writer/Performer: Liz Longley, www.lizlongley.com, © 2009 Liz Longley

Inspiration Notes: This song was inspired by my grandmother, Ave, who has been living with Alzheimer's for over a decade. My family and I recently visited her at her nursing home to celebrate her 84th birthday and it was full of bittersweet moments. Ave was always an avid collector of things like porcelain dolls, pottery and unique artwork. After eighty-four years of leading a beautiful life, it's hard to accept that the one thing she can't collect is her memories.

Boxes and baskets of all her old things
Porcelain dolls, portrait paintings
She swore they'd be worth something

They're just gathering dust in my attic somewhere
And she's lost in a room where she sits and she stares
Her mind as blank as the walls
Her memory as vacant as the halls

I'm the only daughter of her oldest son
I knew her well before her spirit was gone
Her life is a thread woven into every part of me
And she is unraveling

She looks in my eyes and asks me my name
And every five minutes I tell her the same
She smiles but it's cold and dead
And I'm screaming out loud in my head

I've tried to pull her back
Stories and photographs
Of her children who love her
Sisters and brothers
She can't remember
But how could a heart forget?

I've been tearing through boxes on nights I can't sleep
Searching for memories of who she used to be

Shine Writer/Performer: Jenn Adams, www.jennadams.com, © 2004 White Boxer Music (ASCAP)

Inspiration Notes: As I watched the HBO documentary "A Century of Living", I was struck by two women in particular. The first was a small, delicate African American woman, who, in the late 30's, was working for a man who needed help raising his kids and keeping up with household chores. He was called to war and did not return, and there was no one else to raise his children. She was so proud of those boys and you could feel the love and respect for the life she had been given. She made no excuses or complaints - she got a job in a factory and did what she knew was right and had a family to prove it.

The second had lost five sons in World War II. She spoke with such pride and elegance for the sacrifice, and the dedication and love for her family was evident and shining brightly. She spoke about being content with her life, a life well lived, and a sacrifice worth giving.

I can only imagine what it was like for either of these incredible women. The loss of a child outweighs any other imaginable, but to lose five! And to raise a white man's family as a single black woman in 1940, and do it successfully, was nothing short of a miracle!

I was just supposed to keep your house
Watch over your children
But that was before the war broke out
And you were lost on foreign ground

She had five sons for the country
We only had you
In those faces left to me here
You do all that you can do

They sent a captain pressed and clean
Hat in his hand he began to tell me
Last night
Somewhere near the border

The moon was up when we arrived
Shining on the stones of Arlington
Rows and rows of morning light
We never find your name

So I take comfort in the quiet of the night
When the moon is rising over these city light
Though I cannot see the stars
I can feel you shine

Your oldest boy is a good man
He's never been easy but he made his stand
He's got your eyes
He's got your hands

So I went down to the factory
So many hungry faces to feed
We were poor
Poor as poor can be

Do What I Can Writer/Performer: Amy Petty, www.amypetty.com, © 2008 Amy Petty

Inspiration Notes: I never imagined that I would find myself in the role of 'caregiver', but when my husband's grandparents needed some extra help, that's just what I became. The occasional trip to the grocery store turned into full-time, round-the-clock care for five years. I definitely never imagined that we would become such close friends, or that I would learn so much about myself in the process. It was the most challenging and most rewarding thing I have ever done. This song is dedicated to my buddy, Bonnie Gene Norrod.

She is somebody's mother's mother
I am somebody's daughter's daughter
And it seems like this circle's turning to me

And I'll be somebody's mother's mother
And it sure seems like this circle is turning to me

She's a little girl with ages on her
I'm an old woman with years before her
And it seems like this circle's turning to me

I will do what I can
I will do what I can
I will do what I can
I will do what I can

And so the story goes
And so the story goes

I will do what I can
I will do what I can

I ask her for a memory that I can borrow
She asks what I plan to do with her tomorrow
And it seems like this circle's turning to me

She is not the only one who's feeling younger
I am not the only one who's growing stronger
And it seems like this circle's turning to me

The decades cross right in front of us
And I see myself inept
Cuz she is somebody's daughter's daughter

Be Nice To Old People

Writer/Performer: Jamie Broza, www.goodmoodrecords.com
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Inspiration Notes: This song was originally written to make kids more appreciative of their grandparents, however, it has also found a warm reception with those same grandparents. It helps kids realize that all the things they do, old folks used to do too, and probably better... or so they'll say! I hope this inspires kids to look at their grandparents or older caregivers in a whole new light.

Be nice to old people
They used to be young
They used to tease siblings
To stick out their tongues
To stay up past midnight
To giggle, to yell
Don't believe me? Just ask 'em
They've stories to tell

Though grandpa gets grumpy
And sometimes seems hazy
He prob'ly played baseball
Went sledding, went crazy!
He prob'ly once thought
His own parents were dopey
Was stubborn, and careless
And sloppy and mopey

Be kind to old people 'cause
Once they were little
Round, roly babies
Not creaky and brittle
They used to be kissed
Forty-two times an hour
And hugged, and snuggled
And called "wildflower"

Be nice to old people
They used to get scared
They'd hide in their sheets
From the monsters who dared
To make funny noises
In closets, on stairs
Don't believe me? Just ask 'em
If they got nightmares

Be kind to old people
They sometimes forget
That when they were young
They - liked getting wet!
Water splashed everywhere
Avoid shampoos
Loved to pull sister's hair

And when they were young
They would wish on a star
They'd wish for a horse
For a puppy, a car
They'd wish they were older
But now that they're wise
They wish on the stars
That they find in your eyes

Though grandma gets tired
And sometimes moves slow
She prob'ly ran faster
Than you long ago
She prob'ly dug earthworms
Made her room a mess
Walked into a party
With mud on her dress

And when they were young
They would get into trouble
Not eat their green beans
Turn their crackers to rubble
It's hard to believe but
I tell you it's true
There's very few things
That old folks did not do

Daddy Don't Let Go

Writer: Marcia Pleshek, James Russell, Larry Johnson
Performer: Out Of Ether, www.outofether.com,
© 2008 Out of Ether Music (SESAC)

Inspiration Notes: This song is a tribute to Marcia's father, who is one of the kindest and most courageous persons we have ever known. He inspired and encouraged every one around him, even through radical and invasive surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation to fight cancer. As fathers with daughters themselves, fellow songwriters Johnson and Russell knew this song was very special. They also both had mothers who had cancer. Sadly, Johnson's mother died of a brain tumor before she had the opportunity to hear the song. It is our sincere hope that this song provides you with the inspiration and strength to hold on to hope even when all appears lost.

Pig tails, scraped heels, first day no training wheels
Deep breath, third try, I look up and start to cry

Daddy don't let go
I'm so afraid please hold me close
I can't do this on my own
Please Daddy, don't let go

White dress, gold band, it's time Daddy takes my hand
I smile, he knows, this aisle leads to my new home

Through life's uncertainty, I will always be
Daddy's little girl unconditionally
And as the years go by through this circle we call life
The tears and sacrifice teach taught me
What love truly means

Phone call, 3 am, first flight to Galveston
Bedside, Daddy turns for worse, on my knees
I pray these words

If You Don't Remember

Writer/Performer: Sarah Sample, www.sarahsample.com
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Inspiration Notes: After I graduated college with a degree in music therapy, I had the privilege to work with several elderly populations with diagnoses from Dementia to Parkinson's disease. When my Grandfather was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, I felt moved to write this song. My Grandfather was a father figure as I was growing up, and to know and love someone personally affected by this disease has been a struggle to witness. I wanted the song to capture where I would want my heart to be if my partner was diagnosed with Alzheimer's.

If you don't remember
I'll just remind you
If you tell the story four times
Well don't worry, because it still sounds brand new
Don't worry because it still sounds new

If you don't remember my name
I'll still stay here, just the same
If your mind has been clouded over
Your heart knows truth that just can't be ignored
Yes, your heart knows truth that can't be ignored

When you leave, promise me that we're not through
When you leave, go and save a place for me and you

If you don't remember my face
I'll still stay here with you in this place
I said "yes" to you years ago
I say "yes" today and "yes" tomorrow
I say "yes" today and "yes" tomorrow

Right There

Writer/Performer: Kim Richards, www.myspace.com/sanctuarywithin
© 2004 Kim Richards

Inspiration Notes: This song was inspired by a very genuine, gentle man named Ken who was semi-retired but worked part time polishing floors in the critical care unit at the hospital where I worked. He had the ability to find joy in the smallest of things - like polishing the floors - and his joy was contagious. He greeted every single person that passed by him with a sincere comment that never failed to put a smile on their face. He always made time to visit with patients and his compassion for them was so genuine. He did more healing in that hospital than anyone I know... he healed people's spirits. This song is dedicated to Ken, the Picasso of floor polishers!

He's just going about his business
Making those dull floors shine
No one seems to notice him
Cause no one's got the time
He carries himself so proudly
Stopping every now and then
To admire those floors he's finished
Before he starts again

And what he don't know is he's been touching
People everyday
He's been changing lives with his smiling eyes
As he takes the time to say
A friendly "hi" to each passerby
Well, he's not even aware
That he's touching a life in a single moment,
right there

There's Mrs. G in the corner room
I hear they've put her there to die
Those walls are more unbearable
As time passes by
But as he comes around the corner
He stops and chats a while
It's become a daily ritual

She looks forward to with a smile
Well it only takes one kind gesture to show you care
You can change an entire world in just a moment
Right there, right there

People hurrying past him
Caught up in their world of me
Too blinded by distraction
To take the time to see
How he offers a loving gesture
To his tired and shriveled friend
Who's forgotten what his name is
But he remembers the touch of a hand

Squirrels

Writer/Performer: Colin McGrath, www.colinmcgrath.com, © 2007 Colin McGrath

Inspiration Notes: This song is a story about a man I met when I lived in San Francisco and worked at The Strybing Arboretum. Everyday he would be out in the park feeding the squirrels and calling them to him by name, as though they were his pets. I saw something inspiring in his simple ritual of generosity, and he was getting something out of it too - feeling needed by these little creatures who befriended him. It made me realize that it's important for everyone as they age to feel that their time has meaning, even if it's in something as simple as this.

My day was done
My friend and I left work and we were walking
Home through the park
The magnolias were in bloom, it was spring
The breeze smelled fine
As the sky got dark

We heard a voice calling
From far away
A man's feeding the squirrels
And he's calling them by name

He was yelling, "squirrels, squirrels
Come here squirrels"
And low and behold
They'd come and eat right from his hand
Everybody has got to have a way
Of keeping the time
From slipping away

He's been out there
Everyday since he retired
With a bag of nuts
That he buys from the shop
He comes at dusk
He used to come before
But the cops in the park
They asked him to stop

He said "sometimes I get upset
Cause of those kids that come around here
Making noise, causing trouble
All drunk on beer
But you seem like a nice guy
And she seems alright too"
And as he talked a little squirrel
Began to crawl up on his shoe

I said everybody has got to have a way
Of keeping the time from slipping away

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Carbon Copy

Writer/Performer: Joe Cerisano, www.cerisano.com
© 1996 Outta' the Woods Music

Inspiration Notes: I wrote this song to honor my dad and show my appreciation for the lesson and values he taught me. As I began to write it I realized just how much alike we are and how my son is just like us too. I think it's a common realization that as we mature we begin to see how traits pass on from generation to generation, and more importantly, how we have a responsibility to honor and pass on the lessons and values we learned.

Dirty hands and dirty shoes
He always had the swing-shift blues
Deep in his eyes
Forever grateful for what he got
He never really had a lot
But he never realized

Everyday we'd live with the danger
That he might not come home alive
But a man's got to feed his family
Even if it means workin' at the bottom of a coal mine

Well the older I get
The more I understand
I'm a carbon copy of my old man

Recap tires on his pickup truck
Always breakin' down and full of rust
Somehow we made it through
Now the mines are shut down and my dad's gone
But his memory and what he taught me lives on
And it still rings true

I saw the love that he shared with my mother
How they made it through the good and the bad
How they never gave up on each other
Even with what little they had.

Well now time passes and life goes on
And now I have a son of my own
And my love for him runs forever deep
Cause when I look into his eyes
I see my daddy and me

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