

I sat in my rocking chair, my weathered fingers looping pastel thread through the cloth. Around me, my great-grandchildren played, filling the usually lonely room with the most beautiful music on Earth: youthful laughter. It felt like it had been an eternity since I had been a child, weaving flowers, dolls, and pretty dresses into the tapestry of my life, which back then, had been nothing but a tiny slip of rainbow fabric. “Catch!” Tony, the older one, yelled. He shook back his mane of frizzy black hair, his dark eyes sparkling like constellations in a night sky.

Instead of landing in Lacy’s (his sister’s) arms, it rolled against my slippers, crinkling my half-finished dress.

“Sorry, great-grandma!” Tony said in his awkward Chinese, his voice sheepish.

“No worries,” I mumbled back, wishing with all my heart that I could summon the strength in my wasted legs to kick the ball back. Lacy hurried to pick it up, bounding over the bamboo carpet as gracefully as a deer running from a hunter. A vague memory hobbled into focus, shaking as it leaned on its walking stick. I was ten years old, clutching my older brother’s arm as we waded through long golden grass and into the forest. Suddenly, an elegant doe had raced past us, a streak of honey brown. A minute later, a choir of gunshots had echoed through the tranquil afternoon air.

I blinked back into reality. My hands momentarily let go of my work, sending it nearly slipping onto the floor. The pattern of tiny rosebuds seemed to be moving, and once more I was transported into the past, sitting by the rose bushes with my best friend. We were weaving the cerise-coloured rosebuds into our plaits, grinning as they waved coquettishly in the breeze.

I stared at the dress. I had been making it as a birthday gift for an oblivious Lacy. It reminded me of the dress I had gotten as a pre-teen. I had danced through my humble room with delight, being reprimanded by my mother for “stomping on the paper-thin floors like Taotie himself, you silly, dramatic girl!”

The comforting aroma of xiao long bao drifted through the place languidly, treats that weren't just filled with soup and meat, but memories. I remembered my daughter stepping on a rickety wooden stool that only her tiny feet wouldn't break, a piece of dough clutched in her pink seashell of a fist.

The last threads were woven into place. I stroked my creation tenderly, running the silky fabric through my stiff fingers. I knew carefree Lacy would soon leave loose threads snagged on bramble bushes, but I knew that didn't mean she didn't love it any less than I did. When I would lie on the hospital bed with snapshots of my life fluttering around me like dying butterflies, Lacy and Tony would continue their lives, weaving their own tapestries out of beautiful threads, like I had made Lacy's gift.