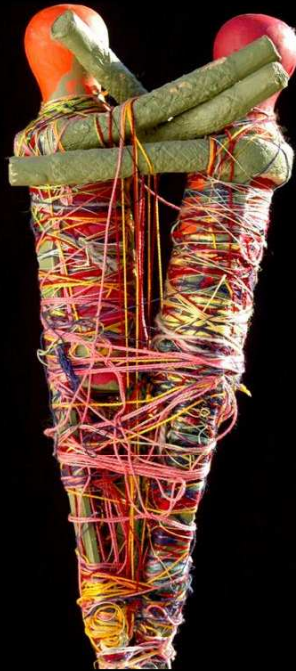


# EnTWINed

Echoes from the Silent world of  
Judith Scott



by Joyce Wallace Scott  
Inspired by her twin

## About EnTWINed

Down Syndrome and deafness, vulnerability and powerlessness — these are the threads binding the fabric of Judith Scott's epic journey from deep institutional darkness to the brilliant spotlight of international acclaim.

*EnTWINed* is a true mythic story, told with both understanding and humor. Joyce Wallace Scott takes us on a moving journey of self discovery as she guides us with stark candor and profound insights through her twin sister's silent world to reveal its far-reaching impact on her own life and the lives of others.

Suddenly torn apart during a loving childhood, the twins are to lead starkly differing lives, two separate journeys each passing through its own emotional wilderness. For Joyce it is a journey punctuated by loss and longing, a journey of relentless searching and sorrow: for Judy, an inner strengthening to endure the silence of interminable emptiness and neglect.

In the bleak landscape of lives unravelling through the early chapters of *EnTWINed*, small points of light appear, gradually coalescing into a galaxy of miracles. As the seemingly disparate strands of the story are subtly drawn together, they start to weave a compelling tapestry of human emotion, through which shines the brilliant light of an extraordinary human being.

Discounted and discarded herself by society, Judith Scott found her inspiration amid objects themselves broken and abandoned. Salvaged and wrapped, they were entwined into mysterious forms of great beauty. Today her art is featured in museums and galleries around the world. EnTWINed is a story of loss, love and transformation.

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# Chapter One

## The Opening

"Let it go well tonight, please let it go well." I repeat the words over and over, as if I am back in Ohio — eyes scrunched shut, praying for Judy to come home. "Please! Make it turn out all right." Inside, I feel an eight-year-old child yearning for her lost sister, her best friend, her twin.

At the lights I try to make a quick turn on yellow off Telegraph Ave., hoping to gain a minute or two of precious time. Instead I encounter a homeless woman with her shopping cart and loosely roped dog crossing slowly in front of me. I pause, taking long, deep breaths, doing my best to remember my meditation training: "Breathing in, I relax my body. Breathing out, I smile." But tonight these words hold no pow. Instead I squeeze the steering wheel hard, and move the gearshift aimlessly while I wait.

My mind races ahead of me — flying towards Windsor House, the board-and-care home where Judy lives. My poor worried little mind is already knocking at the door and repeating its urgent plea that Judy be in good spirits for tonight — this most important of nights. It's an old feeling, this sense of desperation; the familiar anxiety that I must be ever vigilant toward Judy; that something bad might happen if I am not — that all will be lost in a moment's inattention, when things might change and never be right again.

I find a parking place right in front of Windsor House and accept this stroke of luck as a good omen. Reaching into the back, I gather up Judy's long blue dress, her cream-colored shawl, the little make-up bag I had borrowed; plus a couple of magazines for bribery. Pushing the car door shut with my hip, I hurry up the three concrete steps, knock with arms full and join my mind, already there, anxious and waiting on the porch.

Lucy answers the door, rolling her eyes in mock despair. "She's upstairs, and already dressed for bed," Lucy warns, nodding for me to go ahead. I want her to come with me, for I know Judy now loves and trusts her, and most importantly, pays attention to her, but I realize that, for now at least, I'll be on my own dealing with Judy and, problem of problems, trying to persuade her to break her routine.

Judy lives with eleven other adults who also need care and supervision. She is considered one of the easy ones, often handing out and collecting trays at mealtimes, helping to feed Jenny, who opens her mouth whenever Judy sits beside her. Judy cannot resist taking a spoonful herself. I peek into the living room as I pass by, and give a quick wave to Paul, Judy's ever-present friend, then slip away and up the stairs to Judy's room. With each step, I try to compose my face in the hope that she won't notice my sense of urgency.

Although she is unable to hear me, I knock as always, and open Judy's door slowly. She has never liked surprises. She has experienced too many bad ones. It is evening now, her time to relax in bed with her magazines and TV. She sees me with my arms full, sees the anxiety behind my mask and knows that something is up. She frowns. "Why you? Why me? Why now?" Since childhood she has recognized my feelings better than I do myself.

Lucy is right. Judy already has on her blue flowered pajamas, with her pink slippers placed neatly next to the bed. On her head is only a single scarf, a clear indication that she has settled herself in for an early evening and for her down time — and down time it cannot be tonight.

Although Judy has no idea, this is to be her night. Should I have come earlier, I wonder? In preparation for the challenge ahead, I give her my best smile. She gives me her best oh-no-you-don't stare.

I get the evening clothes out of their plastic bag and show Judy the blue dress, hold it up to myself, swishing about to demonstrate how lovely it will look. Then I hold it up to her. She pushes my hand and the dress away and screws up her face in distaste. She makes a point of peering around me to see the TV. I turn and switch it off. She gets up, walks around me, turns it back on, and returns to bed. I remind myself that it does not help to get annoyed.

I sit down next to her, point to the two of us and pretend to be steering the car with my arm around her. She shakes her head; her lips are grim; disappearing into the space where her teeth once were. I stand in front of her making gestures of eating what must clearly be delicious food, such obvious pleasure I am experiencing. I point to the closed door where we need to go. She shakes her head some more, looking away with a dramatic, theatrical toss of her head.

It's not working. Okay..... I do some more thinking, fast thinking. Giving up is not an option. Tonight is a celebration — a double celebration. It will be the first public showing of Judy's sculptures, as well as the launching of a striking new book about her work. It is to be her night; Judy's night. There is no way she can be allowed to miss it.

I get out the make-up kit and a mirror, and begin to apply my lipstick. I smile into the mirror, and then, holding Judy's chin, put some red on those barely visible lips of hers. She looks in the mirror and smiles. Next a little rouge, first on my cheeks, then hers, then some shared glances into the mirror, we smile out loud — we look great. Things are going along pretty well now. The knot in my stomach is starting to soften. I do a little dance around the floor, indicating good times ahead. She smiles some more. We do a high five — now we're on a roll. I reach out my hands to hers and pull her up. We dance about and bump hips sideways. We laugh. It's going to be okay. While she is still standing, I give another quick flash of the dress, then reach to the buttons of her pajama top and begin to help her to pull her arm through. She agrees with the idea and goes on to remove her pajamas, tops and bottoms. I pull the dress over her head and we're halfway there. A little slip to step into, no problem.

The stockings and shoes she is not thrilled about, but she cooperates. I hand her the shawl and help her wrap it around herself and there we are. I am so pleased. I am smiling. I am relieved. I notice she is not smiling much any more.

She is not looking pleased, but maybe I am just anxious. Maybe she's okay. I put the makeup bag back together and gather up our things. It's time to go. She has her large black bag that holds her magazines and other valuables as she heads toward the bathroom. Of course. Last stop before we head out the door. I wait, I pace back and forth in her room and out onto the landing, peering impatiently over the banisters and down into the hall from time to time.

Paul, short, solid and steady, is sitting in his usual chair in the living room, patient as always; motionless, except for an inner smile that at times flits across his face. My close childhood friend Kathi and her husband Jim flew in from Cincinnati earlier in the afternoon and are now sitting next to him, waiting for us. Paul looks different tonight, for he too is dressed for the occasion, has on his best pants and shirt. Kathi helps him with his beautiful green tie bearing ducks in flight. It is a special night for Paul. He will accompany Judy.

Paul keeps his thoughts about tonight to himself. In fact, he has always kept his thoughts to himself. For his first five years at Windsor House, no one knew that Paul could speak. He had never spoken a single word, preserving his own self-imposed silence, until one evening when he asked quietly, almost in a whisper, "Could I please have some more mashed potatoes?" He was given potatoes, lots of them.

Judy clearly sees more to Paul than his quiet manner might suggest. Coming or going she never misses a chance to plant a big kiss on his cheek. Their friendship cemented itself on Judy's first ride with him on the bus from Windsor House several years before. Climbing aboard, she pulled herself up the steps and sat next to Paul, choosing to wedge her ample bottom into the seat beside him, although a sea of empty seats surrounded them.

Upstairs, I continue to wait, looking repeatedly at my watch. In the bedroom, I keep the door open so I can catch sight of her coming from the bathroom. It's getting late and she's been in there for long time. I rearrange her stuffed animals in their basket, fluff up her pillows; look at the family pictures I know so well on her table and bulletin board.

Finally, across the hall, the bathroom door opens and Judy appears. Clad again in her pajamas and bathrobe, which she must have hidden in her bag, and wearing her bright pink slippers, she glides into her room. Turning on the TV as she passes by, she sits down gently, resolutely on the bed next to me. She smiles graciously and gives me a little comforting pat. "Jeopardy" has just begun.

They're waiting downstairs, and they're waiting at the Creative Growth Art Center. They're all waiting. Surely they won't start without her — can't start without her? What can they do? Judy is smiling to herself while she pulls out her magazines and leans back comfortably in her bed with its recently fluffed excess of pillows.

I am desperate, but I know where hope lives — hope lives in Lucy. I fly down the hall and down the stairs to find her pouring juice in the living room. "Lucy, Lucy," I cry, "she's back in her pajamas!" The panic in my voice is barely suppressed. Lucy, ever calm and patient, lays down her tray and moves coolly up the stairs with me. I am panting beside her.

I don't know what she does, I don't know how she does it, but it works. Judy understands that Lucy means business. She knows very well that I am just her sister, her other self. Lucy points to the rolled up dress, already put away in a drawer, pulls it out and starts again. Judy ignores me, but cooperates with Lucy without hesitation. Most likely this is about being twins and who calls the shots, but never mind, we are now back on track — only somewhat later than we had hoped.

Judy balks at taking off her slippers. She takes the black pumps from Lucy's hands and puts them away in her closet with a decisive close of the door. There's elegance — and then there's comfort. She recognizes the importance of both and has made decisions about her own priorities long ago

Now Judy lets me help with her headscarves. Between us we make a combination of two designs and bright colors, interwoven and wrapped — wrapped more simply than her art, but somehow related. As interest in Judy and her art grows so will the size of her sculptures, and even more, the flamboyant exuberance of her scarves and headdresses.

We all — Judy, Paul, Kathi, Jim and I — squeeze together in my Subaru hatchback. Judy is settled comfortably in the front seat next to me, always her place, whoever else might travel with us. The others are stuffed in the back. I pass Judy her banana, a ritual we have developed over the years, a small thank you for tolerating all the inconveniences I bring about. She peels it with careful deliberation, and then plunges in; three bites and it's gone. She passes the empty banana peel back to Kathi and chuckles, one of our little jokes, one that now includes Kathi. Does she remember her? Remember how the three of us stirred our soups of dirt and mulberries, picked violets in Aunt Helen's yard, watched the stars come out while we lay on Kathi's old abandoned couch so long ago?

I am conscious of directing all my conversations first to Judy, who wants always to participate, wants not to be left out. Judy watches our mouths move and nods in agreement with an occasional exclamation, an "Ah- ha" of surprise, mixed with expressions of scorn, of pleasure, of concern. Judy's babbled vocabulary may be short on words but not on feeling, and her meaning is always clear.

Despite Judy's interjections, Kathi and Jim respond directly to me from the back seat. A black cloud has gathered over Judy's face, and she has folded her arms over her chest and glares straight ahead. "Kathi, Kathi," I interrupt. "Judy first, she wants to be part of all we say."

"Oh, sorry, sorry, of course, sorry, Judy," Kathi says, tapping Judy's shoulder to gain her lost attention. Now all our conversations continue through the "Ah-ha" loop, and Judy decides she likes that they're with us, her enthusiastic "Ah ha" and

"Ho, Ho Ba" comments growing ever more animated as we drive through the early evening traffic.

At one point, Kathi, somewhat confused, turns to Judy and asks her, "How long does it take to get to Creative Growth?" Judy replies with a dramatic "Ah-ha!" and a slap on the ceiling. I translate for Judy: "Oh, fifteen minutes at the most," I say in Judy's direction as I rush to make the light. Judy slaps my leg in agreement.

Paul remains silent. He sits hunkered down in his corner of the back seat, staring out the window with his slight, small smile. There's a certain Mad Hatter's Tea Party atmosphere inside the car.

Navigating the streets of Oakland, Judy, from her shotgun position, points out spots of interest and various places that she recognizes. She sees the Burger King on Telegraph Avenue and soon realizes we are headed for Creative Growth. Her spirits clearly lift. As we near the studio, she is careful to point out each turn.

For the past twelve years, Judy has been coming daily to Creative Growth, and in company with other artists with disabilities, has been given free rein to express her innate creative genius, laboring happily to create her unique fiber sculptures. Few people have seen her work, which still remains largely unheard of beyond these walls. The extraordinary story of her life remains untold.

Unknown to Judy, powerful forces are stirring beneath her, the tectonic plates of fate preparing once again to carry her in new and unexpected directions. The bleak prophecies that had attended her birth in Ohio fifty-five years earlier are about to be confounded and laid firmly to rest forever. At this triumphant gallery opening, the world will discover Judy's art, and draw its collective breath in amazement.

Parking at the studio is even worse than usual. I ask Jim to take care of the car so Kathi and I can go in with Judy and Paul. Judy seems pleased to not find herself at the doctor's office — and particularly happy to be at Creative Growth. So after gathering up her black bag, her stack of magazines and reclaiming her banana peel from Kathi, she comes happily in.

Tom DiMaria, the Director of Creative Growth, spots us as we enter and is ready with a welcoming set of high fives for Judy and Paul. Judy looks at him expectantly, and dutifully he hurries off to get her a Diet Pepsi — a daily ritual they have established over the years and must repeat again despite having already done so just this morning.

Many of the staff are here and head towards Judy and Paul, to congratulate Judy, and to let them both know how great they look. Paul beams in his modest way. Judy's face creases with pleasure, particularly at having her turbans appreciated. I beam too. We are all beaming. I am not the one who is being appreciated tonight, and yet I feel as though I too am the one.

Deeper inside than anyone goes, Judy and I inhabit a world where there is no difference between us, a place where we are one being. As in our beginning, a place where her movements and mine are related, so tightly bound are we. In our shared

womb, who could have named the one who moved, not Judy, not me, not even our mother who knew us only as one. The distinction between us remains fluid, and undefined.

Beyond us in the studio, helpers — all of them Creative Growth artists — set out plastic cups and bottles of wine, crackers, and cheese on a large trestle table draped in white. Judy is immediately interested in the crackers and cheese, moving swiftly to get some for herself and Paul. Paul, sitting in a nearby chair doing a bit of anxious rocking, accepts the snacks. The back of the workshop has been partially closed off with curtains, and I imagine it feels strange to both of them to be here, where they come every day, and yet not to be able to have access to their art.

It is not long before Tom draws me aside, eager to describe the scene at Creative Growth earlier in the day. "We wanted Judy to have a preview before this evening's opening," he says. "Naturally we were curious to see how she would react to meeting her pieces again. Most of them, of course, have been in storage for several years since she finished them. I was quite sure she'd recognize them, but not everyone agreed.

"The gallery itself was in darkness, with only the sculptures lit," he continues. "It's a pity we couldn't keep it that way for tonight, as each piece seemed to float alone in space supported on light beams, but it would have been too risky with so many people. The staff was all standing back together in the shadows at this end. When Judy opened the door at the far side, we could see her pause for a moment, slightly hesitant at first."

"Once her eyes had adjusted to the light, however, she came straight in. We could just see the broad grin on her face as she clearly recognized her work. She went to each one in turn and greeted it — a hug here, a kiss there, sometimes a gentle caress. Some seemed only to receive token recognition — just a simple wave of the hand. It was very moving, and made me think of a mother meeting her long lost children.

"But then, when she had finished, she came over to us. She was very expressive, clearly thanking us — that's one sign she knows. We had no doubt at all that she understood that we had brought all her 'children' together and that she wanted to acknowledge this. I don't believe there was a dry eye anywhere." I breathe this in and thank Tom for sharing it — once I've found my voice.

Creative Growth is bright and festive. Outside a line has gathered. These are the admirers of Outsider Art. They have on their coats and sweaters against the cool night air and are patiently chatting together as they wait for the doors to open. They are a Bay Area potpourri of art collectors, professors, aging hippies, Piedmont matrons, Goth girls and young ponytail types.

Inside, Creative Growth's board of directors, together with some distinguished patrons of the arts have already been admitted by the gallery doorman. Everyone wants to meet Judy. Most are middle-aged professionals, all elegantly dressed. They

radiate confidence and enthusiasm and seem pleased with the event as it is unfolding. Perfumes mingle, and bright scarves catch Judy's eye.

In greeting these interested strangers, Judy's responses vary from discounting and ignoring them, to embracing them with eyes full of tears. I wonder, does the person she embraces remind her of someone she has loved or is there a sense of something deeper in that person, a felt connection? I cannot say. She cannot say. Many make gestures of goodwill and admiration; the man in the brown turtleneck silently pantomimes applause, his partner signals with pleasure, a strong thumbs-up.

I too am warmly greeted. Nina, an artist on staff, admires the Thai silk jacket I am wearing. She squeezes my hand and smiles. Strangers come up to meet me, introduce themselves and say how excited and thrilled they are about this evening and more particularly, about Judy's work. I allow myself to breathe in the goodwill of the people surrounding us.

Several journalists and photographers are present. They question me, "What was it like growing up with a twin with Down Syndrome?" "Are you identical?" "Has she always been deaf?" "Did you realize she was an artist when you enrolled her at Creative Growth?"

How remarkable and satisfying that it is now Judy who gives to me status in the world. People who previously may never have bothered with me now cluster around, anxious to hear what I have to say.

My mind is in joyous turmoil. I look at Judy, this small, determined, self-possessed figure sitting amidst all the confusion of people surrounding her, wildly plumed as always, without the language of those around her, yet supremely centered in her solid certainty. Judy knows her worth. She has never allowed herself to feel discounted by the world... or by anyone. Despite decades of institutionalization, her light was miraculously not extinguished and now shines with brilliance. It dazzles us. The recognition she receives in this moment is unnamable for her. Living in a world without names, without sound, this night of recognition is like ... like what to her? It must wrap around her like the embrace of a tropical night, these admiring smiles, these loving eyes. Judy has known hard eyes and soft eyes and understands the difference. I, too, on visits to the institution, have seen some of her jailers' eyes — and looked away in fear. I wonder what her thoughts are now? I know they cannot be the words we use to harangue ourselves or to prop ourselves up. Are they the sense impressions of our early life, hers enduring, magnified and fine-tuned? Are they indelible childhood memories of light and shadow, of subtle colors and the rich earthy life that we shared? Her feelings I know. I feel her feelings. I know she feels mine as well. We are entwined.

This recognition that Judy receives warms me, shines on me. I feel the light that surrounds her reach towards me and take me in. Within me, there is a softening. Closed doors begin to open. Like Judy's sculptures, treasures that have been hidden for decades are now reclaimed. The little girls locked away when company came,

hidden from the world outside, our mother's shame, are history. That was before. Behind these closed doors, Judy and Joyce begin to emerge, to be free.

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Moving through the crowd, I am delighted to see John MacGregor, who is here to celebrate not only the *vernissage* of Judy's first show, but also the publication of his beautiful book, *Metamorphosis; the Fiber Art of Judith Scott*. His careful attention to our story had earlier brought tears to my eyes. Here was someone who was interested in knowing the unfolding of our lives, who cared about Judy and what she had suffered; someone who recognized and celebrated her gifts. In some ways, I felt that we were heard for the first time. As long as Judy was overlooked, I was overlooked. As long as Judy was a secret, I was a secret.

Within Creative Growth is a wall lined with photographs of the artists. Prominent are displays honoring two who have recently died. One was a young woman artist with Down Syndrome who had a sudden heart attack and was gone. Seeing it, my anxiety about Judy's heart condition is reactivated and then quickly suppressed. The other is an artist and writer who was struck by a car on a crosswalk while in her wheelchair. A wave of sadness floods over me as I walk by the wall toward the gallery where Judy's work is displayed.

Already here and waiting to greet us is the family. Judy's family. Our family. My daughters, Judy's nieces, glow with pride. We have traveled a remarkable and complex journey since the first days when most of us lived in a crowded one-bedroom flat, Judy, my two youngest girls, and I, together with my soon-to-be husband. Now with us tonight there is the addition of my baby grandson. He's the one Judy loves most to pat. They have all surrounded her, and seem almost unable to break away from her to look at the exhibition. I squeeze my way in to the circle and join in the hugs and laughter.

Our friends, too, are here, all dressed up, happy and proud to be celebrating Judy and her art. Those friends who do not celebrate Judy have long since been moved to an outer, darker, more distant orbit, and are not here. As in childhood, Judy and I come as a package; you don't get one without the other.

As I watch guests enter the exhibition gallery, I see reflected in their eyes the same shock and stunned surprise that I experience in the presence of these pieces. I recognize their sense of awe as they move into the room, the sense of the unspoken coming to life, being given form. Emotions, experiences, undiluted by words, the repetition of stories told and retold. Instead, one finds the concentration of a life distilled into these mysterious forms with their dense, rich colors. Stories never before spoken or heard are here told, and we cannot help but gasp. Here, deeply moving but unfathomable, we detect the experience of betrayal, the sense of loss and longing; here the feeling of closeness, of oneness, of love. Feelings covered, hidden, compressed into a small tight space and protected; and here, feelings exposed and exploded, a riot of joyous color.

These oranges and reds, perhaps our rich Ohio summer sun, the greens our trees and grasses, the soft bumps reminiscent of the rabbits we loved. Here in one piece it seems she is trying to forget something. I can feel its presence hidden under dozens of layers of covering. She covers as I now cover on my dining table papers I don't want to think about today. So she covers and hides what will not be remembered and will never be known.

Two pieces remain my favorites, the first ones I ever saw. They are figures that look like Native American dolls; like twins facing each other, and I had cried then, understanding them as symbols of the two us together again. Here are another two shapes wrapped so gently together, so tenderly entwined and joined, they may be the two of us in our oneness and our two-ness. In another piece, I see someone caught in a strait jacket and thrown onto her back, not dead, but alive and waiting to burst out of her confinement. Here I see Judy as a butterfly, now free, now large, stretching her wings.

What I hold as words in my memory, she holds in her sense memory and speaks through the feel and movement of her hands. What I hold in words, she holds in color and texture, in vision and touch. As she weaves her memories into these forms, so I more clearly than ever know that I will write and weave her story, our story, with my words.

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As John MacGregor sits signing copies of his book about Judy, a local art critic engages him in conversation about one of the works on display. John stands up, and as they move off together down the gallery to examine the piece in question, Judy wastes not a moment. Seizing the initiative, she steps quickly forward and slides into the empty chair. She immediately takes over the signing, entering into her new role with evident pleasure, and to the obvious delight of the growing crowd of admirers who press around her for her signature.

John MacGregor, gracious as always, accepts his eviction with a rueful smile. Within moments more people gather around the table, everyone now eager for a copy of the book autographed by none other than the artist herself. No simple inscription, no elegant signature for Judy. The signing is only complete when no more space remains to be filled on the title page. Judy does nothing by halves.

Watching her from a distance, seeing her in her flowing blue dress and pink slippers, I am wishing I'd worn different shoes. My left knee aches already. So often she is the wise one. Judy pauses for more juice, crackers and cheese, brought to her by an admirer. She must gum her crackers, letting them dissolve, the only option open to her. The removal of all her teeth at the institution, however, has done little to lessen Judy's delight in food.

The gallery has been wall-to-wall people for at least a couple of hours. Judy is getting tired. I see her small shoulders begin to sag. The circles around her eyes are darker now; she seems more pale and fragile. The long line of people still stands hopefully waiting for her signature in their book. Although she has no words for, "I

want to go home," her decision is clear. She turns away from the line, picks up her magazines and some flyers she has added to her stack. I see that she's found a copy of a *Moosewood Cookbook* from somewhere. She ignores the next hopeful person in line and pulls up her black bag, gives me a quick glance and heads for the door.

The crowd parts to make way for this small, unassuming, iron-willed figure. I hurry after her, promising the rest of the family that I will soon return. Kathi rounds up Paul, who is also happy to head home. I ease Judy's turban up from her forehead — it's slipping a bit. I kiss both cheeks as I open the car door for her. I glow with inward pleasure, certain that whatever her understanding and interpretation of this evening, she has enjoyed her time.

Some admirers follow her to the car, still hoping for her signature, for their own personally signed copy of the book. With Judy and Paul inside and the car door closed, books are thrust in desperation through the open window. Judy, regal to the end, obliges with a final, theatrical flourish before signaling that it is time to drive off.

Now we are quiet, riding home, the streets less crowded, the darkness enveloping us. I pat her leg now and then. She gives me a soft smile and leans back, closing her eyes. I ask Paul if he's doing okay. He nods. Through the warm silence I can feel the car full of contentment and a quiet happiness.

Back home at Windsor House, in her own brightly colored room, Judy puts her things away carefully as always, regardless of how tired she might be. Again she slips on her blue flowered pajamas, puts her magazines under her pillow, along with the newly acquired cookbook. I motion for her to move over a little so we can lie down together; just for a bit. She turns off the lamp, and only a light from the neighbor's porch softens the room's darkness. My arm around her shoulder, she reaches up her hand in the near dark to pat my cheek and push my nose.

Lying embraced together, I think back to the dreamtime of our distant childhood and reflect on the twin journeys along which the fates have brought us — the tangled, lonely paths we've traveled before finding each other again. I begin to realize that my childhood prayers, so earnestly besought, have indeed been answered. Judy and I are living in a nebulous galaxy of miracles extending far beyond anything I had ever dreamed, or could possibly have imagined.

I snuggle in close; this, my favorite time of day. I hope it's hers too.

# Chapter Two

## The Colors of Gone

The sheet is cold — cold all the way to the edge. I stir, instinctively moving myself deeper into the bed seeking the warmth of my sister, my twin. It may be the sound of the leafless branches of the old maple tree beside the house, scraping against the shingles that has wakened me. I open my eyes to the dull gray light of a fall morning filtering through the curtained window. Outside I can just make out the protective silhouette of the giant Blue Spruce that stands guard over our room, the center of our universe, our sanctuary from the greater world beyond.

For more than seven years, Judy and I have slept here entwined together. We sleep always like spoons, small curved spoons, soft twin spoons, keeping each other close and warm. But now I feel cold — very cold. I reach my hand out across the bed to pull her close — reach further — and further still. She is not there beside me.

I slip quickly out of bed, my bare feet hardly touching the floor, and tiptoe to the bathroom, wondering if she is here. The towels from our last night's bath are still lying damp on the floor; and our yellow duck that we pushed back and forth in the tub lies on its side, abandoned. But she is not there. Neither is she in the next room, waking our sleeping brothers. She is not in the kitchen — and there is no sign of Daddy.

No smells of bacon or toast today; no pancakes. I see Mommy standing alone. She is smoking a cigarette, holding her coffee. Her hands are shaking. The kitchen is warm, but she leans huddled against the stove, the kettle hissing away, unnoticed. Steam fogs the windows; even the crack left open for fresh air is shut. The white eyelet curtains hang limp and still. The radio is silent. On the chair by the stove, Jimmy's ragged gray cat does not stir. I touch his warm, untidy fur as he sleeps. It's way too quiet — something's wrong. Where is she?

"Where's Judy?" I ask. "I can't find her anywhere." Her eyes red and distant, Mommy looks away, toward the window and the sound of rain in the backyard. She is speaking to an empty space in the room, and I don't know if she even sees me. "Judy's gone away. Daddy took her early this morning — to a special school. She's going to stay there now. They'll help her learn to talk. That'll be good, won't it?"

I cannot understand her words. What can they mean...? Judy gone ... gone away? That's impossible. I cannot imagine Judy gone. I don't know about gone, don't know about alone. For now I can feel only cold. The feeling of alone, the meaning of gone, will grow and last another thirty-five years. Yet always it is Judy who will be the most alone.

Years later, when time begins to unfreeze her lips, Mom will tell me about that morning; how sweet Judy looked, how she'd chosen for her a bright yellow dress with tiny white flowers — and how her heart was breaking as she tied Judy's bow for one last time. But she doesn't see Judy go, doesn't draw back the curtains and look out of the window to see her climb into the car — at the end, Mommy turns away.

I don't see Judy go either, don't ride with her. But in my mind I can see her, sitting beside Daddy in the car, babbling quietly, happily unaware of where this journey will end. But now the shock of Judy's sudden disappearance begins to tighten into anxiety. I know that Judy must be feeling the same, know she must sense something. She must. Judy always knows when someone is upset — although she never knows the words, she always understands. Daddy would have pulled nervously at his moustache and not said anything. He'd be all the time tapping his fingers on the steering wheel. She would have sensed that something not good was about to happen. Judy would have patted his shoulder as she did mine when I was upset. She would have tried to comfort him.

That night when Daddy returns, I hide in the hall and hear him talking to Mommy. "It was awful, Lil. She was scared and clung to me in the elevator. She was terrified when it started up and had a little accident. You know she hasn't done that for a long time. Then, when the sheriff's deputy took her from me and carried her through the swinging doors, she reached for me and cried. I heard her crying down the hall, all the way — crying. It was terrible, just terrible."

Daddy's voice grows quiet, and there is no reply. I feel ice running through my chest. I know how frightened Judy must be because I am frightened too and aren't we the same? That night, in my sleep, I feel my body reaching for Judy and finding emptiness, and I can sense her reaching for me, I know she is.

The next day — and day after day — Mommy sits in the kitchen while the rest of us dress for school. She is still sitting there when we leave; not even her face has moved. At the Formica table, on her padded chair with the cracked plastic cover, she smokes and sips her coffee, clutching it in both hands as though she's afraid she might lose it. She sips with that funny slurpy noise she makes when she draws her breath in at the same time. After her sip, she sighs. Such a sad sigh.

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Judy has been gone just a little while, but I feel her presence everywhere. In the hallway I run my hand along the crack in the wall. It's always been there but now it feels different, bigger, rougher. Our room is the same as before —magazines all over the floor and old popcorn in the corners. My dolls-of-the-world collection is still up high on the shelf, and I look at it with hatred. Why hadn't I let Judy play with them whenever she wanted? Who cares about them anyway? The plastic zoo animals Daddy got us on one of his trips are mostly in a small bowl. I bet Judy put them there. I pick up the other scattered ones and put them all together. I touch our Joanie dolls and their blankets, tuck them in better, pick up Judy's spools, the ones she got from Aunt Helen, then I go outside. I don't tell the other kids anything, not even Kathi. Nobody will believe Judy is gone, especially not Kathi. Jimmy's cat is on the steps and I pick him up, rubbing his fur backwards, I don't know why, I just keep rubbing until he jumps away. I'm not going to tell him either. Why say something that can't be true.

After lunch, while she piles dishes in the sink, Mommy tells me she will be coming in to our bedroom to get some of Judy's things. "I'll save some of it in a box for her; we can bring it to her later." I don't think so. Somehow I pretty much know that isn't true. Anyway, she could be coming back soon, and, anyway, her little things are all

that is left of her right now, and taking them away will only make her more gone. That school might not work out. What do they know about this so-called special school? I wonder if anybody's ever even seen it? I run ahead of Mommy to our room. "Don't take any of her things! This is all stuff I still play with."

"For heavens sake, Joyce, I know you don't play with those old magazines." She reaches down to grab some.

"Yes, I do. I do." I gather a bunch in my arms. "I like these, and I look at them sometimes at night."

"You do not. You read. I know you. Most of them Judy's already torn anyway." She picks up some blocks near the doorway. "Well, I'll take these blocks of hers."

"No... Please..... Wait! I like those blocks — and don't take our bouncy horse. It's still fun sometimes." The horsy rocked on springs, its seat worn smooth, one spring dragging. I've loved it forever, and Judy learned to ride not so long ago. I sure don't want that being thrown out.

She sighs and turns around and goes out to the kitchen, probably for a cigarette. I take our little dishes, and Judy's blocks and a few magazines, the little plastic animals and the spools, and put them in the bottom of my drawer underneath my T-shirts already there. I know I have to leave some stuff out or Mommy will start searching for all of it.

That night, as on other nights, I pile everything beside me on the bed and feel each one in the dark, think about Judy's hands holding them, realize that I am touching where she'd been touching. I can almost smell her in them. I will hold them now for her and I will wait. The air is cold around me, but the little things feel almost warm.

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One day Mommy and Daddy ask if I want to go with them to see Judy at her new school — it seems a silly question. Of course I do. They know I do. It takes ages to get to Columbus, where they say Judy lives at her special school, and it feels like forever since we saw her. But finally we are on our way, the trunk full of extra clothes and a warm coat for Judy. I am counting cows, and then cars, trying to remember their colors, how many reds, how many blues and making wishes like anything as we go along, wishing that Judy would be somehow okay, wishing that she could come home with us, wishing that once we get there Mommy and Daddy will change their minds. I pick at the plastic on the back seat, feeling for the rough edges with my fingers. I throw little bits out the crack in the window as we go along and catch a piece of the wind with my hand.

The drive feels endless. We go along lots of little roads, through flat cornfields, and past so many farms. I want to pee, but that would take time and I don't want to stop. Mommy and Daddy are up front, not saying much. Mommy passes me back some Oreos but she forgets to smile. I keep asking them how much further and they keep saying, "Not long now" or "You just asked that — now just wait."

I've got my dress on that's like Judy's blue one, the ones with the smocking that Daddy got for us at his work in West Virginia. I am hoping she is wearing hers and everybody will know that we're twins. They should know that. I'm sure hoping her school will be a nice place with lots of toys, and kids who aren't mean, and grown ups

who are nice to her. We stop at a little place for lunch in a small town called Washington Courthouse. We sit right in the corner, with lots of windows. There are pretty plastic flowers on the tables, and we can watch everything going on outside. I can't look at anything for long, though. I only want to see Judy. We all get chicken steaks with gravy and biscuits, but I just poke at my food. I don't feel like eating, but I pretend to. I save Judy my biscuits, and put lots of jelly on them, then wrap them in my napkin. She'll love them.

The special school doesn't say "School" where we drive in. It says "Columbus State Insti.... something." It has a long driveway and lots of big, old buildings with trees around so that no sun can reach inside. Everything looks dark and a little scary. Getting out of the car, it is cold, and there are a few snowflakes coming down. We have all these clothes and a few toys for Judy so it's a big mess trying to get everything out of the trunk and go inside.

Before we get to see Judy, we have to go to a different building with giant hallways where Daddy has to lean through an indoor window to look at a whole lot of papers and sign his name all over the place. It's so hard to wait. I have a magazine we brought for Judy, and I look at it about a hundred times. It has a page with some pictures of bunnies in it. I know she'll love that. They are just like our Uncle Toady's bunnies and everybody knows how much she likes to hold them and pet them.

When we finally go to her school place, it doesn't seem like a school at all. I don't see any blackboards, posters, books — nothing for school, nothing for kids, not even toys or blocks. I can't see how she's going to learn how to talk here. Or learn anything else, either. It seems way too big for little kids, with a giant staircase and huge wide hallways, empty except for a few people sitting along the sides. Some of the people are rocking, some sit still with their heads drooping. It smells like old cigarettes, sweat and damp floor mops

We have to go into a little room with chairs and an old green couch and wait there. A radiator just behind our seat is making loud hissing noises, and the room feels way too hot. There is only one other lady there, and she doesn't talk to us. She's staring at the floor and looking sad. I try to smile at her, but she looks away and doesn't want to notice me. Then a big woman with a red blotch on her face comes in. Wearing a white coat and clutching a bunch of keys, she holds Judy by the hand. Judy looks so little beside her, smaller than I ever remember.

Judy comes to me first, and I give her a big hug and then the magazine. She hugs Mommy and Daddy and starts talking to us in the way she likes to talk without any words. She sits right down on the floor, pulling me down with her. She wants us to look at the magazine together. I find the bunny page for her right away. She does like it a lot — I knew she would. She looks different, though, her hair so short it's like a boy's — and she's got a different dress on, not her blue dress that matches mine.

Mommy has brought Judy some clothes and her hands are trembling as she starts to unwrap them. As she pulls some pants up under Judy's dress to see if they fit, she wipes her eyes on her sleeve. She's not noticing that Judy is trying to tell her something. Judy always has more to say than anyone. We just can't tell what it is. I look at Judy

real close, and say “Hi” in a loud voice. I had decided that would be a good start for talking. She replies “Ho, ho, bah” and pats my face — she’s got the ‘h’ part right.

I really, really have to go to the toilet, so the lady with the red blotch on her face takes me through some doors and hallways and leaves me in a room with a whole lot more doors and toilets. She tells me to come back when I’m finished; and I do try to get back, but I can’t find my way. I have no idea which way we’ve come.

I am in a dark hallway with doors that all seem the same. I look both ways. I don’t know which door to take so I open one door after another, keep opening them and looking in, trying to find the right one. Instead I find rooms full of children, children with no shoes, sometimes with no clothes. Some of them are on chairs and benches, but mostly they are lying on the floor, some with their eyes rolling, their bodies twisted and twitching. They are moaning, and reaching into the air when there is no one there. And there are terrible smells, sweaty smells; bathroom smells where there is no bathroom.

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Outside all is gray; the colors have gone quiet. In the silence float nameless images and words that can never be spoken. I am haunted by what I have seen, and what I know Judy must endure. On the way home, the car spills its silence onto the disappearing road.

In my mind I will return again and again to that time. At night in my dreams, and sometimes even during the day, I am lost in that long hallway, endlessly opening door after door. At other times I am Judy. I am there instead of her; lost. I am the little girl in the institution. Sometimes I am there with her, and then at least we’re together, but always I can smell the smells, feel the heat, taste the loneliness and everywhere, a hot, damp sadness; the air thick with it.

In our family, because we don’t want the bad things or the sad things to have happened, we pretend they didn’t — they happen, but then we ignore them. It’s not a good idea to talk about feeling sad, and if you cry, you only make the people around you feel sad. That’s not a nice thing to do. I know that, and I try hard not to cry, ever. No one cries. No one cries about Judy, and after a little while mostly no one’s talking about her any more — and we never talk about where she is. Maybe it’s better that way, it’s such an awful place. Now I keep her to myself, tucked up in a secret spot where no one can take her away from my remembering.

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Soon after Judy went away — perhaps almost at once — Mommy seems to give up on taking care of us. Sometimes she tries a little to keep doing the things she used to do, but now it seems only pretend. She keeps forgetting everything, forgetting even to buy us milk. Dinners she still tries to put on the table: meatloaf, baked potatoes and Grampa’s canned green beans and pickled beets; baked chicken, potatoes and green beans, hamburgers, potatoes and green beans. Soon she stops that, too. Sometimes she leaves a box of cereal on the table for us in the morning; and for a while she washes our dirty clothes, but then she doesn’t anymore. They just pile up in the bathroom closet ‘til we can’t even close the door.

She is not paying attention to any of us; her eyes are always somewhere far away. I see her reach across the table for a cigarette, roll down the sleeves on Daddy's wool sweater that she wears, and look out through the fogged window. Sometimes she leans against the stove, shaking, with her teeth rattling. All the time she just keeps shaking. I can hear her teeth while I'm reading the cereal box and wondering about the watch that maybe I could order. I ask her what's wrong, but she doesn't say; only that she's cold, that it is freezing in the house — but it isn't.

Then one day, Mommy is gone.— an attack of “nerves” they called it —, but really she had already gone long before she left.

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With Mommy gone, Daddy has to look after us when he's home from work. One day, while we're making supper together, he says, “You get to be the Mommy now.” He wears an apron as I stand on a box beside him at the stove, filled with girlish pride as I stir the tomato soup. I'm going to add some real tomatoes in just a minute.

Every day after I walk back from second grade, I watch the clock in the kitchen, waiting for Daddy to come home from his office in the tall building downtown, the one where the pigeons live and mess up the window sills. When it's almost time, I hide in the forsythia bushes by the corner where the bus stops. Then I jump out and surprise him when he gets off the bus. It's always at about five-thirty. I'm always there, but I surprise him every time. He never catches on.

At night, he lets me read to him, sitting in the big red chair in the corner. “Horton Hatches the Egg” is our favorite, and every night we say together: “I meant what I said and said what I meant, an elephant's faithful one hundred percent,” and I know that I feel the same as Horton does, but about Judy. Then he tucks me into bed. Well, he doesn't tuck me in exactly. He says, “It's time for bed now,” and I say “No!” Then he says, “Hmmm, it looks like someone needs a spanking”, and takes off his slipper and shakes it at me. I shriek and run in circles around and around the hallway while he chases me, until I race into bed and dive all the way down under the covers. Then he comes in saying, “Where's Joyce, where's Joyce? Where did she go?” feeling all the lumps in the covers, tickling the lump that's me. I wish one of the lumps would be Judy.

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After a long time — I don't know how long — Mommy comes home. She stays in her room and sleeps a lot; but at least she's back. I knock on the door, but there is no answer. She might be asleep — but she might be just pretending. But, either way, I can't come in.

When Mommy finally comes out she has changed, and the house changes too. An unnatural sense of order takes over — order and a deep chill. There is an emptiness, a feeling of everything in the house frosted over. We become snowmen; I am a snow girl, living in an igloo wrapped in red bricks that on the outside still looks like home. I keep quiet and listen for the sound of snow. I can feel it falling softly; inside my room, on our dolls, on my covers, and on the place where Judy had slept beside me. Snow falling softly everywhere.

Mommy cares a lot about tidiness now, but even more than that, Mommy cares about bridge. In time, she will become a champion player. I see her frowning in concentration as she fills her mind with classic plays and skillful maneuvers, memorizing the cards and remembering the foibles of each player. She and Daddy replay and discuss endlessly the games from the night before, cards spread out all over the living room floor after he comes home from work.

I want to ask Mommy something. I lean against the red chair, watching them, not saying anything, just waiting. “Shhh...shh,” she says. “Just wait, Joyce, go out and play or something, can’t you see we’re busy now?” I hate bridge.

With the softness gone out of her, there are no more loving hugs against Mommy’s warm, soft tummy, no hugs at all. Instead she now holds everything ordered and tight together with rubber bands; pencils, pieces of paper, egg cartons, the cat food bag. Rubber bands everywhere, but no hugs, no kisses. I start wanting her to put a rubber band around me, wanting to find some way for her to hold me tight and not want to let go.

At night I am restless. I wander silently about the house like a lonely ghost while my brothers are sleeping. Tiptoeing down the hall, I overhear my parents talking in the living room. They have their quiet voices on. The loudest sound is of ice hitting the glass as they drink their highballs. I lean forward, edging closer by inches. On Tuesday, while I was in school, Mommy had gone with her friend Rene to see Judy without us and I long for news of her, imagine that now that they’ve decided to bring Judy home. I hear her say:

“Scotty, I wish you had come with me. It was so strange; this skinny little girl came up and sat with me and Judy on that bench in front of Judy’s building. I don’t know where in the world she came from. Somebody should have been watching her. You know that bench, the old wooden one that looks like a million people have sat there with nothing to do ever. You know the one I mean? Just out of the blue this kid says, ‘Sing me something.’ For a second I tried to bring my voice to make a song, but then all I could think was, if only Judy could ask us that, just once. But, of course, she can’t and never will and besides, you know I can’t sing. No point in embarrassing myself.”

Now she pokes at the ice in her drink — little clinking sounds — I can’t see her but I bet she’s staring through the back window, same as she always does. I never know what she looks at. I peep past the corner as she says, “Remember how I used to sing ‘I’m looking Over a Four-Leafed Clover’ with the girls in the tub? I guess those were the happy days, weren’t they? Judy used to sing in a way, those little sounds she made. You could call that a sort of singing, don’t you think?” Daddy kind of nods and glances sideways at the dishes that he’d piled up at the sink. They like things neat and tidy.

I hear Mommy say;

“Fill up my drink, will you? Aren’t you having yours? I don’t know, I wish you’d been there with me. I didn’t know what to do with that scrawny little thing right up next to us. Wonder what’s wrong with her anyway? I scooted Judy away and took her down the sidewalk. It seemed like she recognized our car, but I

don't know. Maybe she would have gone to the closest car whatever it was — you know how retarded they said she is. We drove her around the grounds and then took her back inside. There wasn't much to do. I hate that drive back, especially without you. Thank goodness Rene was with me."

She paused, then added: "Oh, I remember what else we did, we sat on the grass for a while and I started looking for four-leaf clovers like we used to do. You know, just to pass the time. She wouldn't know a four-leaf clover from a stick of gum, so pretty soon I thought, 'What's the point?' She seemed to like the feel of the grass, though, and her fingers sorted through the leaves looking for something just like we used to do. Who knows what somebody like her would remember, would be looking for?"

But then they switch their talk to bridge. My eyes heavy, I creep back to bed, barely able to hear the far-away murmur of their voices.

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Everything has changed since Judy left. Now I eat at the table with my big brothers. The little table that my oldest brother Wally made for me and Judy in eighth grade has gone down the street to the Olivers and their little kids. All of us sit at the big table. Jimmy picks at his food and complains about the seeds in his tomatoes. Wally and Dick talk about cars and football games, and I feel a fog roll into my brain. I want to eat and get back outside. They do too. Besides, lots of the time nobody says anything at all. Mostly we just eat and go out the back door as quick as we can. Our house has sheep pastures behind it and woods nearby, with a little creek and a pond. With so many places to explore, none of us want to be home much—except to eat something at supper time. That's about it.

One day, during dinner, I hear Mommy and Daddy talk about Judy coming back home and having a vacation with us. I know what a vacation means. A vacation is a holiday, but what will it mean for Judy to be home? I imagine her return, especially just before I fall asleep, when I remember what it used to be like. How easy and good it will be for us to all be together again, then Mommy and Daddy will realize it was a mistake to send Judy away. She was fine at home. She won't be any trouble. Everything will be possible again. She can play with my dolls, our dishes, the marble game, anything she wants. I've saved everything for her. She could look at magazines and tear them if she wants to. That would be okay. No one cares about that.

I can leave for school at the very last minute and run up the cinder path and be home for lunch with Judy and Jimmy and Mommy. After school, I'll run and I'll get home almost while the bell is still ringing. I can run really fast. Judy and I will play out in the yard. I'll take care of her and she can play with me and Kathi. We'll push her in the tire swing. I will help all the time and it won't be so hard for Mommy anymore. Mommy's back will be okay now. I can carry Judy if she needs carrying. Wally and Dicky can carry her — even Jimmy. They can all help. If it's raining, we'll go together to Aunt Helen's to get a cookie and Judy can play with her empty spools and yarn, just like always.

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Spring comes, and with it a kitten that holds in her small body some of the tenderness I lost when Judy disappeared that morning. I lie on our bed with my new kitten and feel her soft, soft, baby soft fur and think how Judy will love this precious blue-eyed fur ball. I name her Smokey. When Judy comes, we can pull a string with a ball and Smokey will chase it. Judy will laugh.

I can show Judy the cicadas coming out of their shells at night and catch lightning bugs for her to hold. I'll remind her how to make a gentle cup with her hands for catching them. She still might squash one, but she wouldn't mean to. It wouldn't matter.

I live for the day that my sister and my kitty will meet. Somehow the moment of their connection and the sharing of our love three ways will bring into kitty's body my sister's love and the love between kitty and me will pass into Judy's. Soft, lighter even than sunlight. I live for that day.

And Judy does come home — for a vacation Mommy says — and meets Smokey; and for a little while the summer feels almost the same as the summer before she left. Heat and greenness; with cicadas humming all through the day and into the long hot nights. We play games she can and cannot play. On the breezeway, she can still wrap her legs around her neck and do tricks none of the rest of us can do. The kids come over to see her and see how she still does her tricks. We eat Wheaties (“Breakfast of Champions”) at the kitchen table. Legs swinging, patting each other's arms. Plastic sticking to the backs of our legs in the rising Ohio sun. Just for now we are happy.

With my heart still singing from Judy's return and our life back again, they knock at the screen door, five of them, skinny and somber, small with dusty shorts and scraped knees. Not a word. Judy is still eating her Wheaties while I open the screen door and stare at their sad, serious faces. No words. They turn and I follow, down the cement stairs, across the stone walkway, past the garbage cans on the corner to our side-yard.

There on the ground, stretched out dead, lies Smokey. While we slept, holding each other unaware, his body grew stiff and cold, all his softness disappearing into the night air. I look and look; I stop breathing. I turn and run through the house — back up the stairs, across my long attic room until I fall onto our bed.

Only you appear, only you come to the bed to hold me as I sob. Only you rock me; rock me with your small body reaching around mine. Only you know how to comfort me, you who know everything there is to know about loss, everything there is to know about sorrow.

The summer is over. The visit is over. Our kitty is dead. And Judy is gone, again gone. Gone — and this time, not coming back.