

**Tribute To My Mother Evelyn Edith O’Kane (*nee* Reed)**

**To Be Read On The Occasion Of Her Funeral**

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“Beauty is the Promise of Happiness” – so wrote a 19<sup>th</sup> Century novelist.

On the last evening I spent with mum, I looked into her eyes and I told her that their special grey-blue was like the sea in Cornwall, where, I’m glad to say, I often walked with her.

Then I tried to help her look beautiful. It was the last thing we did together. I combed her hair and smoothed her nails. But my contribution was slight because whatever afflicted my mother, her special beauty always shone through.

That evening, taking a break from the bedside, I walked to the sea by the hospital. It was growing dark, but the high sea wall was covered in wild flowers. There on the shoreline you cross a tiny train-track then find a stone jetty that gradually steps down into the sea.

I thought of the way mum had always led me to beauty, how when I wandered far from beauty she had always led me back. I learned that just to be near her would be beautiful and might show me the way.

There on the jetty I saw that even in this terrible moment of mum’s inevitable passing she had led me to wild flowers, the tiny train-track and the darkening sea. I saw that the steps descending into the waves could help me picture and understand what mum’s dying might be.

Mum spent part of her childhood in Cornwall, a beautiful place that imprinted itself not only in her eyes but in her manner, *in her very view of life*. So the idea that “Beauty is the Promise of Happiness” describes how mum insisted on maintaining the *possibility* of happiness that makes life beautiful.

Mum refused, strongly, stubbornly, to accept any conflict, impasse or tragedy as insurmountable. Whenever she could, she would work on a problem until it had gone away. If one of her children was in despair or confusion she would spend days if necessary on the phone, amassing numerous scraps of paper jotted with phone-numbers, addresses and figures, to find a solution where it seemed there was none.

Even when there was *really* bad news, as when we learned my father was dying, she did all she could to refute, divert or disbelieve that darkness.

When a problem has gone away, it leaves us with normal life again, then ordinary things seem welcome and beautiful. When a stumbling block is removed we are given a way to proceed. Finding or returning to our way is a release, light, graceful and child-like. I will always remember my mother like that.

I loved to walk with her on those cliff-paths by the sea where she seemed at home and at her best. The paths went on forever, turning and dipping, always opening onto new views. Sometimes they led us into difficulties, but we would overcome them together, feel proud, and press-on to discover new beauties.

Now, I believe that, in leaving us too, mum has found the most beautiful way, slipping from us gradually, painlessly, like steps descending into softly swirling waves.

In the future, whenever any of us think of mum I know she will go on showing us the way and sharing her promise of happiness.

**END**