

## Remembering Katie

By Rachel Ophoff,

The colors of her lifetime run through the weaving of my Indian blanket. Days of sunshine flow through threads of gold; nights of stargazing course along indigo strands. Softened by years of use, the wool wraps me in memories spun by the blazing hues of autumn; as kind to the soul as the gentle colors of spring.

Katie's first picnic was on a beautiful September day like today, when I laid the blanket next to the river. In December we cut Christmas trees and sipped hot chocolate; in April we caught the first warm rays of spring sunshine. The clouds became animals as we lay on our backs, wrapping us forever in the cherished moments of her childhood.

Summer was always the best. Katie loved to fish, and the high mountain lakes were our playground. On our blanket we cast out our lines, and talked of everything, and laughed. The passing years failed to fade the woven colors, or the joy we shared as we watched the sun rise and the stars fall.



On this crisp autumn morning, I grabbed the Indian blanket from the back of my car to wrap an accident victim on the road. When the paramedics arrived, they lifted him onto a gurney, still wrapped in the blanket; then sped off to the hospital, leaving me frozen in time.

I haven't been back to the Emergency Room since I went to identify Katie's body six months ago. Now I stand between yesterday and today, wondering how badly I want my blanket back.

Of course I go. Today is not horror; today is only sorrow, tinged with a residue of fear. The nurse on duty is the one who cleaned her up before I saw her. She sees me, and with instant recognition, hugs me while we cry. She asks me how I'm doing; I shrug my shoulders, and we hug again. I thank her for caring that day, and she tells me that she is a mom, too.

This afternoon, I will wash my blanket. The gold will still blaze with the warmth of the sun, but I'll sew a silver thread among the indigo, tracing the path of a falling star. I'll go again down to the river, and wrap myself in memories as vivid as the blazing hues of autumn, and as kind to the soul as the gentle colors of spring. I'll bury my face in the softness of wool that's been washed many times over the years, and remember Katie.

Copyright Rachel Ophoff, 2000, All rights reserved