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Somewhere Over the Rainbow

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Ever since I was a little girl when my mother would read me stories each night before I went to bed, I wanted to believe the world was a magical place. I never outgrew the deep longing to feel like I was like a character in a book specially chosen to be unlike anyone else in a world filled with endless possibilities. I would go to the movies and wonder why I couldn't be like those people who went out and did great things, against all odds, they'd save the world after a remarkable adventure.

But the reality is, I'm just another schmoe, with ups and downs. I don't have a secret world only I have access to that's filled with talking beasts and dancing trees. But that's ok because I'm not going to be disappointed when those things don't happen. Those things are for fairy stories, not real life.

The thing that makes me sad is that magic isn't real. I want the trees to come to life and dance around me or for my cats to talk to me, but those are the notions of a child, not an adult. I have to put those thoughts away and simply enjoy being entertained by movies and books by the fantasy of "what if" and not expect anything more. I'm the daughter of two scientists after all.



©2001 Robin A.F. Olson. My Mother was the first female research scientist hired by Pfizer back in the 1940s. She was part of the team that developed terramycin. She was a genius by any measure. Here we are so many years later by a hidden waterfall in upstate CT.

Eight years ago tonight my mother died. I wasn't planning on writing about it again, as I have so many other years, but something happened that I wanted to share with all of you. I believe that perhaps I was wrong about magic. It IS real and I have proof.

My mother and I had a tough relationship but we were also very close. We both had the same wicked sense of humor, always had a camera on our hip, were ready to find a new, strange place to visit or take in any cat who needed us. I asked my mother if after she died she would come back to me or send me a sign and she immediately said **no**. She said "when you die, you die. That's it. Don't go looking for me. I'm going to be dead."

The odd thing was that every year since she died, on the anniversary of her passing, something would happen that truly seemed like a message. One year I received mail addressed to her. It was a coupon from CVS. She was a mad coupon-freak and CVS was the last place she went before she died. I hadn't gotten mail from them before. It just had to mean something... was it a message from beyond the grave or \$2.00 off my next prescription?



©2006 Robin A.F. Olson. My Mother on our last trip to one of our favorite places- *Bulls Bridge*. ^[1]

I was driving along Highway I-84. It was early evening and I was on my way to meet my friend Marcia at the movie theater. We had planned to see the movie *The Hundred-Foot Journey* ^[2], but I hadn't been feeling well. I almost cancelled at the last minute, but it was too late so I just sucked it up and made my way to the theater.

It had been a lovely day. Cool, dry, sunny. The clouds were puffy and brushed in amber by the setting sun. I looked at the time. It was almost 7pm. I thought to myself that was about the time she died those many years ago, though I wasn't with her when it happened so I can't be positive of the exact time. No one was with her. No one even knew she was so sick from congestive heart failure that her life was so fragile.

I felt the familiar tug of missing her and I thought to myself how I wished she'd send me a sign and almost right after that, my scientist DNA said that could not happen and not to be silly. I exited off the highway, trying to get my mind off my mother by thinking about something else. As my car passed between two rows of tall trees I saw it out of the corner of my eye...**a rainbow.**



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. Last night.

I did a double-take because I hadn't SEEN a rainbow in YEARS. It wasn't raining. It was lovely weather save for a few clouds. It didn't make sense. As a lump grew in my throat and my eyes began to fill with tears, the colors in the rainbow became more vivid and part of a second rainbow formed. I flashed back to that silly YouTube sensation video where the guy is crying about the *"Double Rainbow!"* ^[3] I did what my mother taught me. I thought about something funny to cover up how I really felt, because my heart felt like it was going to explode from renewed grief.

Seeing that rainbow felt like a kiss from my mother. She was waving at me saying "Hey, I was wrong. Of course I'll come back to you and I miss you, too! I'm still here, Robin. I'm still here."



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. Right over the movie theater.

As I reached the parking lot at the theater I fought back the tears. I lost sight of the rainbow and thought it had faded away, but when I looked up the rainbow was still there. It looked as if the rainbow's end was at the movie theater—a big colorful ribbon pointing to where I was headed.

Maybe it was all just a coincidence, but this time I'm telling my genetics to shut up and believe that there really is magic all around us. We just have to open our hearts to see it.

2016: Last night my sister-in-law Anne came over. The plan was to go to dinner and celebrate my mother's life since it was the 10th anniversary of her passing. My nephew, Ryan, was to join us but after we waited 20 minutes or so it was clear he was late. Turns out Ryan was at the restaurant due to a miscommunication on my part and was waiting for us there. So Sam grabbed his car keys, we hopped into his car and off we went to meet Ryan.

A quick thunderstorm had just passed overhead and the sky was clear. As we pulled out of the driveway I wondered aloud if we'd see a rainbow. Sure enough, a few moments later I saw the delicate ribbons of color in the sky. As Sam drove on I could get a better look as we reached an area where there weren't so many trees blocking the view. **There before me was a vivid, full double rainbow.**



©2016 Robin A.F. Olson. Another message from my Mother.

I took photo after photo while Sam continued to drive. When we got to the restaurant it was clear the rainbow had been pointing the way. **I'd forgotten until that moment that I'd seen a rainbow, let alone a double rainbow, on the same day two years before. If we'd left on time we wouldn't have seen it. Because we were late, we had perfect timing.**

Anne said it was meant to be that we would see the double rainbow...that things happen for a reason. I think she's right. This time I'm not going to brush it off as a coincidence.

I love you, too, Mother.

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