

Saying Goodbye

Harold knew it was going to be hard saying goodbye. Sometimes just the thought of it brought a tear to his eyes. After all he was the third generation here and moving was such a major step. Even Harold's wife Helen was second generation and they had often spoken of growing old together and maybe getting a small cottage in that retirement community next to the large mountain.

"How is the packing coming, honey?" Helen asked as she poked her head into the small workshop.

"It's... it's... it's just not." Harold admitted.

"What's the matter?" Helen asked while knowing full well what the matter really was. She knew how hard it was going to be for Harold to leave so much behind. It was hard for her too.

"I keep trying to figure out what to take and what to leave and... and I know I can't take it all. It's just that I know I'm going to miss it all so much. I mean, don't get me wrong. I know we decided to go, and part of me is real excited, but it doesn't make it any less hard."

"I know. I know. I'm having trouble too. I just keep telling myself that we're going to be making new memories and acquiring new keepsakes when we get there. After all, both of our families came from there originally."

"I realize that. I know people have lived there a long time but sometimes it's just hard to believe this is all real. You know I think about taking the kids to the park, and visiting the great mountains here, and all the camping trips we've had near the canyon and it's just tough realizing that once we move we won't ever be doing any of those things again."

"Awww, honey. There'll be places to take them to and lots of things to see there. It really is all pretty civilized you know?" Helen tried to reassure him, but didn't feel that she had been very convincing.

Harold chuckling, "Yeah I know. I'm being silly. Just give me a while to figure out what I want to take from here."

"Sure. Dinner is ready in an hour." Helen said while retreating so that Harold could come to terms with what he had to do.

Harold looked around and finally decided to take a couple of tools that had belonged to his dad and a couple that had belonged to his grandfather. Just something to remind him how long his family had been living and working here. Maybe someday he would pass those tools on to his kids. Maybe someday his kids might even come back here. He supposed there was always hope.

After he put the tools in his bag he took another long look around. He couldn't help but straighten up a few things. He just couldn't leave things out of order. Then he turned off the light, stepped through the door and locked it behind him. He wondered if he or his sons might ever see the inside of this workshop again.

When Harold entered the house his wife looked up from the pot she was stirring. "OK?" she asked.

"Yeah. OK," he lied. "Where are the kids?"

"Their stuff is all packed and their rooms are pretty well stripped down, so they are going to spend the night at the Henderson's. We're picking them up in the morning on our way."

"I suppose that's best." Harold was thankful that if he cried as they were leaving the house in the morning that at least his kids wouldn't see it.

“Come on and sit down. I made some of that stew you like. We can have just a nice dinner for two tonight.”

“Sure.” Harold said as he slid into his regular place at the table. His father had made this table. It wouldn’t be going with them he thought then he tried to look elsewhere before it got to be too much for him.

“There you go.” Helen dished him up a good sized helping of stew.

“Thanks, hon.”

Helen dished up another helping for herself then sat down. “It really is going to be OK you know,” she said.

“Yeah, I know,” Harold mumbled as he pushed the stew around with his fork.

“It’s a great job and right up your alley. You’ve done such a great job in water reclamation here I know you are going to do well at the work they have planned for you when we get there.” Helen was trying to be cheerful, but she too was struggling with her feelings about leaving their home forever.

“I’m sure the job is going to be great, hon. I just keep thinking of all the things we’ve done here as a family and now our kids won’t have any of this. Heck, by the time their in their twenties they may almost forget what this place is like.” Harold fought to hold back the tears he felt welling up in his eyes.

“I don’t think they will forget it all. It’s been wonderful, and all the history we’ve had here and the family. Yeah, it’s going to take a lot of adjustment, but we can do it and they can do it.” Helen was trying to convince herself even more than she was trying to convince Harold that this was true. She failed on both counts.

“Yeah, they probably won’t forget everything. It’s just that it’s not going to be like we are just moving across country or just moving to a foreign country. We’re moving to another planet. There won’t be any coming back for visits.” Saying this made it even more real to Harold as the words stuck in his throat.

“Harold, I love you, and you know this is all going to work out. People have done this before you know.”

“Yeah, I know we’re not the first ones to do this. It’s just that we know it’s not something to be done lightly since it’s so expensive that we could never afford to return.”

“Yes, and I think we’ve been very fortunate that the company is paying for this move and even allowing us to ship a little extra stuff with us. It must be costing them a fortune,” Helen observed.

“I saw the costs, and it is. I hope I’m really worth what they are investing in all of this.” For just a moment Harold entertained the thought that they might decide that he really wasn’t worth the expense and call off the transfer.

“Well, you are in my book.”

Harold and Helen talked for hours about all the things they remembered about growing up. They talked about old friends, going through the school system in the same small town and both of them graduating with honors. They remembered some of the outrageous dust storms that used to ravage the city before it had grown so large. They remembered how they used to sit together while they were going out and watch one of those beautiful salmon colored sunsets. Finally they decided they were ready to call it a night, their last night in this house.

“Do you have the tickets we have to present to get through the security gates?” Helen asked as she was thinking about all the last minute things that still had to be done.

“Yes there over by the table in the other room.”

“Would you mind getting them, honey, I want to put them with our carry-on so we don’t forget them in the morning.” Helen knew that the coming morning was going to be hard enough without having to deal with finding the tickets at the last minute. She knew that she was barely hanging on, and one more thing might just push her over the edge.

“Sure.” Harold appreciated how much Helen had done to get them organized and ready to move. He walked into the room and picked up the tickets, but when he did so he accidentally knocked a vacation brochure off of the table. He stooped to pick it up and it reminded him of all the great vacations they had taken there. He put down the Olympus Mons brochure and fingered the tickets for Earth as he headed for bed.