

# G the Gem



November 12, 2017



## *All Things New*

by Amy Nicholson

Heather and I met in fourth grade. A mutual friend introduced us one day. After that, we were inseparable. She was fun, funny, easy to talk to, and very smart. She was always at the top of the class, and I trailed behind her. It was a running joke in school: Heather and Amy this... Heather and Amy that...

Heather was an artist. Doodles, drawings, mostly animals. I still have pictures and birthday cards she made me. Even in class, she'd be curled around her paper, straight black hair falling over her face, brushing the paper as she arched her left hand around and sketched dogs and the comic book cat, Garfield, in grade school; dragonflies and ladybugs in college.

Even though we went to different high schools, our friendship extended through the teen years. Heather was there the night DJ picked me up for our first date. Years later, she was in our wedding. I was in hers. In fact, her wedding was the last time I saw her. Nine years ago.

I remember thinking at her wedding how different we were, how

we'd changed, grown apart. She had always had style and liked nice things. Her wedding surprised me a little. The bride and groom made their entrance to the reception hall in an elevator. As the doors opened, fog poured out and the theme to 2001: A Space Odyssey played. I could tell she and her new husband had a good laugh over it, and the private jokes continued, extending to her friends as the evening wore on. I was not privy to the jokes. Something had happened to my friend while we were off living our own lives.

For a while, we kept in touch through email. At some point, I said something. She misunderstood me and got offended. We didn't talk after that. I meant to write to her for a couple years, but I never seemed to get around to it.

One day, my daughter Sarah and I were preparing to go to a doll's tea. It was an excuse to get very dressed up. I took out the two-piece bridesmaid dress I had worn at Heather's wedding. I considered wearing it to the tea. I asked Sarah if she wanted us to get very dressed up. She wasn't interested.

But I continued to contemplate the dress. Despite what we women say about justifying the cost of a bridesmaid's dress, saying we will wear it again, it's not that fancy, do we ever actually do it? Why keep the dress and have it taking up closet space if I wasn't going to wear it? I had gotten a library book on interesting knitting projects and seen a purse I wanted to make. I did think twice before shredding the dress, but I decided that it was only an article of clothing, one that had spent the last nine years in my closet. I love taking things I can't use any longer and transforming them into beautiful things that I can use. That night, resolved that I would never wear the skirt part of the dress again, I cut it into a single long strip of fabric and knit a purse.

I kept the top part of the dress intact. It was a lovely purple with vines embroidered on it. I would wear it with a black skirt and bring along my coordinating hand-knit purse on my date night with DJ the following Saturday. We were going to the theater. The outfit came together as planned. We had a lovely evening, but memories of Heather still lingered.

The following Monday, a friend called me to say Heather had posted on Facebook that she would be out of touch for a while because she had had a house fire on Saturday... the same day I had attended the play with the purse made from the dress from her wedding. I was stunned.

### Solution

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Right away, I sent her a note. I told her I was sorry to hear about the fire, and that I still considered her a friend. I added my phone number and dropped it in the mail. That Friday she called me. In twenty minutes, we tried to catch up on nine years, starting with the fire. She had lost some of her artwork. Some of her older stuff. I offered my sympathy. Empathy actually, as our family had had a house-fire fourteen years prior. About the artwork, she said that's OK.

That's not who she is anymore anyway.

That's something interesting about a house fire. It instantly purges your life of so many things. While sifting through the rubble, you find that there are things that you actually won't miss because, as Heather said, they are not who you are anymore. I lost a lot of my teaching books in our fire, but that was all right because I knew I didn't want to go back to teaching in a traditional classroom again.

I found that Heather and I had more in common than not. Except for the stuffiness of a head cold, she sounded the same as always. I told her I had meant to write to her for a couple years and felt dumb because it took a house fire to finally prompt me to actually follow-through and write to her. She said she was guilty of the same. I exhaled a nine-year sigh of relief, and we were back to where we were, only now we were new all over again. ✧

