

# Grandma's Pillow



Cynthia K. Schilling

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*Emmy Miller has worked hard to create a good life for herself and her daughter, Joy. A painful tragedy still has the power to shake her courage and independent spirit. Grandma Rosie's arrival brings laughter and comfort. Their comfortable routine is suddenly invaded by Ken Kavanaugh. It's quickly apparent he's tortured by a secret tragedy of his own. Capture the emotions as Emmy and Ken discover love and the enchanting mystery behind Grandma's Pillow.*

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# **GRANDMA'S PILLOW**

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ISBN: 978-1-63490-505-3

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Published by Cynthia K. Schilling, Champaign, IL.

Printed on acid-free paper.

Cynthia K. Schilling, Champaign, IL 61821  
2015

First Edition

## PROLOGUE

Present

*Joy Miller was babysitting her new granddaughter, Kimberly, alone for the first time. Bending her head towards the small new life, puffs of the baby's soft breath brushed her nose, and the scent reminded her of a fresh picked white orchid.*

The old rocking chair creaked. The baby slept peacefully swaddled in her arms. She was absorbed by the soft perfection of this new young soul now part of her, enchanted by her gentle features, focusing on her small cheeks the color of fresh blossomed pink roses. She gently outlined each small finger with her own, enamored by the tiny, unique creases formed on every knuckle, and brushed the curly blonde wisp of hair away from her delicate forehead.

This child was a new birth, a legacy, an assurance life would continue. She was overwhelmed by a depth of love even deeper than she remembered when she held her own child for the first time. She whispered to Kimberly her lullaby.

*Close your eyes sweet baby girl,  
the world awaits your task.  
Beyond life's simple dreams for now,  
high above, yet in your grasp.*

*Your outstretched arms won't reach them yet,  
the years will bring you near.  
Soon your own sweet lullaby,  
will be told to those loved dear.*

*For now your world is simple,  
there is no need to rush.  
Your sweet love given without a word,  
is felt within the hush.*

The lullaby always offered a reminder to experience all the glorious adventures life had to offer. She prayed Kimberly would live her own dreams.

Most importantly, she wanted to pass on lessons of life that her own Grandma Rosie had taught her. Leaning carefully forward, she slowly pulled the worn white pillow that supported her back and set it on the opposite side of her lap so the pillow was in her granddaughter's view.

She glanced at the baby and back at the pillow. "Grandma's pillow," she whispered softly. She remembered her grandma's wide assortment of colorful ruffled pillows and the creative stories each of them held. A tear rolled down her cheek. She leaned her head against the rocking chair. Memories flooded in of Grandma Rosie and the unique way she used pillows to teach some of life's greatest lessons.

# CHAPTER 1

*Live your life in a forest and  
you will find your way through.*

June 1963

*"I still can't believe she's ours. She's more perfect every day,"* the proud father, Sean Miller, remarked to his wife, Emmy. "Is that even possible, honey?" He scooted closer to her on the couch. They had brought their newborn daughter, Joy, home from the hospital a few days ago. Weighing six pounds and seven ounces, she was the spitting image of him. Her soft, thick brown curls echoed his; each strand sprawled across her head reaching one ear to the other.

The early summer heat coupled with the thickness of his hair sent beads of sweat running down the sides of his face. He didn't stir to wipe for fear he might miss the opening of her soft blue eyes, a reach of her tiny hand for him to place his oversized finger, or a glimpse of her anticipated smile. It was obvious over the past few days he was in love with two women: his wife, Emmy, and now his precious Joy.

"You two going to stare at her again all day or are you going to have some lunch? I've called out twice. Now hand me that precious jewel and go eat your sandwiches before I feed them over to little Fairway," Grandma Rosie threatened.

Grandma Rosie recently came to live in Cherry Grove with her daughter Emmy, and son-in-law, Sean. Her husband, Charles, had passed away and running a

farm, though small, on her own had become too much to handle. After much deliberation and despite her deep personal attachment to her Midwest home, she broke up housekeeping.

During the winter months she'd visit her sister Lelia in Arizona. It was always quite a journey for Grandma Rosie when she boarded the train to travel out west. The trip would take two full days before she arrived at her destination.

Grandma Rosie never minded the trip nor did she ever complain. She appeared to have found solace in what was now reality, and expressed gratitude to Sean, Emmy, and Lelia for providing their homes to live out her years. Little did she know how important that decision and her presence would be for her special granddaughter, Joy.

Fairway, a two-year old white toy poodle, ran into the room making his way between his mother-in-law's two planted feet, almost knocking her over.

"Oh no you don't little felly. You get on back to the kitchen, your food's waiting for you in your bowl." Rosie stopped him in his path, picked him up as his four small legs continued their running motion in midair, turned him around and headed him in the opposite direction.

"Go on now you two. I need some alone time to get to know my new granddaughter," Rosie firmly stated.

Sean stared at Rosie as if she had sentenced them to a year of child separation. Reluctantly, he took Joy, swaddled in Emmy's arms, and handed over their precious new bundle. No parents had ever felt prouder or more protective.

"Now look you two, you're not leaving the country. You're just going in the next room to nourish your bodies for goodness sakes, now get, both of you."



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"Thanks, Mom," Emmy chuckled. "I don't know how we would've gotten through these past few days without you."

He gently held Emmy's arm, helped her up and together slowly walked into the kitchen. He knew Emmy remained tired after her many hours of labor delivering Joy. Thank goodness the few days spent at the hospital helped her regain some strength for the tireless activities now centered on their newborn daughter.

Unfortunately for him, summer was his busiest time at work with long hours in the outdoor summer heat. He was grateful his mother-in-law could be here to help. She had a hidden knack for taking care of adults and children in ways inconspicuous to most. But in this case it was obvious; Rosie was over the moon in love with Joy and he knew she would cherish the months ahead with her only grandchild.

Later that evening Rosie finished up the dinner dishes, a task she never minded. She often teased it gave her time to reflect on what she had, and in rare cases hadn't, accomplished that day.

Emmy had fallen asleep upstairs early, catching up on her needed overdue rest. He was at peace in his oversized, red, easy chair in the living room while holding little Joy, humming a sweet lullaby. Her small eyes were shut and tiny hands fell open on top of her pink, crocheted blanket while she lay asleep and secure in his arms.

He could barely soak in the sight of this precious gift and questioned if this new chapter in his life was truly real. How could anything this perfect be his? Out of all his successes in life, this child would forever outshine each one.

"My precious little princess," he whispered into the silence.

A sudden crack of thunder vibrated throughout the house. He anticipated raindrops would follow. He hadn't watched the daily weather forecast, something he normally kept track of due to the nature of his job. The week's special homecoming made everything else, including the weather, insignificant.

A flash of lightning and another crack of thunder startled him in his sunken chair. He glanced down at Joy who was sound asleep in his warm arms despite the weather's rage.

An overwhelming sense of concern encompassed him; he lowered his head to his daughter's chest to confirm her heartbeat. Holding her tight made him feel secure, as Joy must feel wrapped inside his arms. Her abounding and innocent love would forever keep him warm. He hoped and prayed he could provide as much—and more—for her in the many years ahead.

The phone rang in the adjoining dining room. Rosie's hurried footsteps upon the wooden hallway floor indicated she'd answer within seconds. She always ran a tight ship whenever she visited.

"Hello, Miller residence."

He continued to stare at his daughter and smiled when she scrunched her face while she dreamt.

"Just a minute, Chris, I'll get him."

Unfortunately, Chris' call meant something had probably happened at the club. Maybe a circuit had been hit or one of the links was flooding again, a problem he often took care of after a significant amount of rain. A new drainage system had been on the ground's request list for the past three years. Flooding would continue to be a problem until a new system was

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in place, but the club members saw it otherwise, and supported the construction of a new snack bar instead. "I'd rather golf than eat," he often said under his breath, frustrated at the many endless meetings.

He reluctantly yet carefully stood up with Joy swaddled in his strong arms as Rosie came around the corner.

"Sorry, Sean, it doesn't sound good," Rosie remarked.

He guardedly handed the bundle over to her, and scratched his head while he strolled to the phone bench to sit down and talk with Chris. He was tired from the past few weeks. The thought of going to work tonight was the last thing he wanted to do. Yet, he knew they depended on him, sometimes too much.

"I'll be there as soon as I can. Thanks, Chris."

He sensed what his mother-in-law's thoughts would be before he set the phone down and stood up. They were quickly confirmed when he walked around the corner. Another loud crash of thunder reverberated.

"Now, Sean, you're not thinking of going out in this storm? Wait a few minutes 'til it has passed. It's getting dark, dearie, and it's too far of a drive this time of night. Use your head, jus' listen to that wind blowing," Rosie preached.

She was right. The wind was unusually strong. It was for that reason he had to confront the problem at the club. It was his responsibility, just like Joy.

"I have to go, Rosie. One of the old oaks near the clubhouse has fallen and brought a power line down with it. An electrical work crew is on their way, but all the circuits are out. Chris hasn't been able to get the power back on.

"We can't go without power long out there; too many items in the kitchen will go bad. Besides, if this rain doesn't let up, I'll have to go check on the grounds anyway. It shouldn't take long. Preventive medicine is the best medicine, right? Isn't that what you always say?"

Gritting her teeth, she showed half a smile. She hated when he quoted her. Rosie always seemed to have a saying about everything, and he enjoyed giving back her own digs when he could.

He loved his mother-in-law dearly. Her final decision to sell the farm after working the land for forty years alongside her husband made his heart ache. After Charles passed almost a year ago, he agreed with Emmy, Rosie continuing to work the farm was simply out of the question. Selfishly, his thoughts were at ease knowing what a tremendous help she'd be with Joy in the coming months ahead.

"Are you comfortable taking care of Joy until I get back?"

"You don't even have to ask, Sean. You know I am." Rosie didn't hesitate for a moment before she responded. "Don't you worry a dickens about us, we'll be right here when you get back. Right little Joy Lou?"

Rosie glanced down and smiled one of the biggest smiles only a grandmother could give. She commented earlier having a granddaughter was like raising Emmy all over again. Although she agreed Joy looked like Sean, she concluded the baby most definitely had her daughter's smile.

"Thanks, Rosie. I'll peek in on Emmy before I leave in case she's awake and let her know I'm leaving. If not, she'll never know I was ever gone. I'm glad she fell asleep early tonight."

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Fairway sat at his feet, tail wagging faster than a ragtime beating metronome.

"Okay, I suppose you can come too, but you have to promise to be good, or you'll have to stay in the car."

He gave Rosie one last glance. She held his daughter close, smiling down at her. Rosie's eyes had seen such hard times and yet continued to convey love and approval without a single word being uttered. Three generations were living within his household now—Rosie was the alpha—Joy the omega. There was a quiet moment when she caught his stare and smiled.

"I'll be back as quick as I can," he whispered. He bent down and gently kissed his daughter one more time on her soft forehead.

"Goodnight my little princess, sleep well. Look for me in your dreams. I love you."

His yellow Firebird sped down the street followed by a loud rustle of wind that swept high above the trees.

The swiftly moving windshield wipers barely cleared the pounding raindrops. He cautiously made his way down the winding road that led to the Cherry Grove Country Club.

He'd worked there since high school doing various fix-it jobs. His six-foot-two build had always been an asset when anything out of reach needed quick repair.

After years of hard work and dedication, he was now the superintendent. It was essential he get there quickly to prevent further damage to the club, or, heaven forbid, the course. The raindrops pounded the pavement while he began his descent down Mammoth Hill, as the locals called it, and final curve before reaching the club.

“Are you doing all right, Fairway? We’re almost there boy.”

It didn’t take much to get Fairway excited. He especially loved car rides and sat in the front seat eagerly looking out the window. He often wondered what Fairway thought as they quickly passed wooded trees and farmhouses. His tail wagged, excitedly attentive.

Off in the distance above the hidden tree line, flashing red and yellow lights reflected off the darkened sky. He hoped seeing trucks from the electric company meant they had already completed the repair on the downed wires. If they had, it would truly be a miracle.

*Did I just call that a miracle? No, my miracle is safe and asleep. Her lullabies await me at home.*

He quickly turned his attention back to the road. His vision froze on a large, brown image, silhouetted against the hammering rain. The figure posed motionless in his path. He swerved to avoid the frozen obstacle.

A resounding clap of thunder detonated above him drowning out his piercing gasp for breath. Before he could brake, the car crashed through the darkened guard rail, his arms and hands instinctively flying up to guard his face. A massive streak of yellow descended from the road down the side of the endless hill. He searched to regain direction and control. His arms were knotted and numb; his body twisted, wedged between the seat and wheel as the car continued to dive. Stabbing pains brushed both cheeks, the catastrophic roar of glass shattered around him. Fighting the darkness of subconsciousness, he mentally searched for a calm vision. He uttered words he prayed wouldn’t be his last.

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"Em-my."

He was trapped. The fight would soon be over.

*Please, not now, not yet.*

"Joy...."

A black tire bounced freely ahead as the severed Firebird continued to roll down the rock lined hill, finally crashing into the cement embankment below. Black smoke encircled a deafening silence. A resounding clap of thunder turned reality and life from moments ago into sudden and complete darkness.

Time held its breath in tribute.

High above the rubble, the image stood on the sodden road quiet and serene, deciduous antlers lowered as if bowed. Its frightened body shivered within its large frame. Without consequence, the four-point prince disappeared slowly into the nearby woods. Virile, unhurt, unharmed.

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