

Sing It Again, Mommy

by

Mike Downs

The baby girl arrived with round chubby cheeks and twinkling brown eyes.

Sometimes she cried. Sometimes she cooed. And every once in a while she gave a little baby giggle that made her parents giggle too.

Each evening, the man and woman took their baby girl to her room. Then the man would take two of her stuffed animals and make them dance across her crib. The little girl's brown eyes sparkled as they followed the dancing figures.

When their daughter began to sigh and snuggle deep, the woman would shush the room. Then, humming soft as the twilight, she would sing a special song.

Hush, my daughter, the night is here,
Hushabye daughter I love so dear.
Dream sweet dreams, the day is through,
Sleep, while the Lord watches over you.

When she finished, the baby always gurgled, "Ga. Ga."
And the man would say, "She wants you to sing it again."
So the woman would.

Baby toys gave way to dolls and bikes and dress-up clothes. At dance recitals, the parents beamed. At school plays, they chuckled. They bundled up at campouts and cheered at games.

And each night after prayers, the girl would say, "Please do a puppet show Daddy. Please."

So the man would choose a cast of stuffed animals for the show. Then he told wondrous stories of castles and kings and magical things as the girl giggled and laughed and cheered.

When the moonbeams finally stretched too long, the woman would shush the room and start to sing.

Hush, my daughter, the night is here,
Hushabye daughter I love so dear.
Dream sweet dreams, the day is through,
Sleep, while the Lord watches over you.

As the last word spilled into darkness, the precious girl would let her eyelids droop. But she always gathered a sleepy breath and murmured through the covers, "Please sing it again, Mommy."

And the woman would.

The days never stopped passing, so the girl grew. She replaced her dress-up clothes with a prom gown. Her bike with a car. She had classes and schoolwork and activities. And a boyfriend.

She worried she was too fat or too thin. She had too many friends, or not enough.

At night, when her parents came to her room, she would roll away from them saying, "Good night, Mom and Dad. I'm tired tonight."

But the man still took a stuffed creature or two and made up magical stories in the corner of her room. The girl always pretended not to watch. Except her deep brown eyes could be seen peeking out from beneath the covers.

When the show finished, the parents would leave. But just outside the door, the woman would sing her song.

Hush, my daughter, the night is here,
Hushabye daughter I love so dear.
Dream sweet dreams, the day is through,
Sleep, while the Lord watches over you.

And ever so faintly, as the last note faded with the evening light, they could hear the girl whispering.

"Sing it again, Mommy. Please sing it again."

And the woman would.

The day came when the girl's room sat empty. She traveled and worked and lived on her own. Sometimes she wrote or called. Sometimes she didn't.

When the nights got too lonely, the man and woman went into her room. There, the man would march a cast of stuffed animals across her empty bed and tell a story of a castle or king or

magical thing.

As his voice grew quiet, the woman would shush the room. Then she would sing her long-ago song until the words filled the air like evening mist.

But only once.

One day, the girl returned. But not alone. She had a little baby of her own. A baby girl with curly almond hair and twinkling gray eyes. Sometimes the baby cried. Sometimes the baby cooed. But all the time, the girl and her parents loved the baby with all their hearts.

At night, the girl sat quietly as her father took the stuffed animals and made them dance and whirl across the crib. The baby girl would giggle and wiggle and follow every move.

When the baby finally began to yawn, the woman would shush the room and sing into the gathering night.

Hush, my baby, the night is here,
Hushabye baby I love so dear.
Dream sweet dreams, the day is through,
Sleep, while the Lord watches over you.

As the last notes drifted away, the baby would gurgle, "Ga. Ga."

And the girl would say, "She wants you to sing it again, Mother."

And the woman would.

The girl and her daughter grew strong in the happy home. Dance recitals, camp outs and school plays filled the days.

It seemed just as before. Except her parents left gray hairs on the carpet. Their walking sticks leaned against the wall. And when the butterflies fluttered in springtime, the man and woman watched from their seats, while their daughter and granddaughter raced about the yard.

But always they went to the youngest one's room at night for a puppet show and a song.

One night, as the girl sat in the corner and the youngest one lay in bed, the man began his puppet show. But his gnarled hands betrayed him. Try as he might, he couldn't make the animals dance.

Seeing this, the woman shushed the room. But as she began to sing, her voice betrayed her. And hard as she tried, her voice would only crack, but not sing.

So the girl and the youngest daughter took the man and woman to bed. Tenderly, they tucked them in.

But before they shut the door, the girl brought in a cast of stuffed animals. She set them on the bed where her parents lay. Then she made up a wondrous story of castles and kings and magical things. The man and woman followed the puppets back and forth with sparkling eyes.

As the story drew to a close, the youngest one shushed the room.

Then, with a voice light as the kiss of falling snow, she sang her own special song.

Hush, my Grandpa, the night is here,
Hushabye Grandma I love so dear.
Dream sweet dreams and snuggle tight,
Oh dream, of families and children tonight.
Hush, you both, the day is through,
Sleep while the Lord watches over you.

And as the last note worked its way into silence, the man and woman both whispered...

"Sing it again, please. Sing it again."

And the youngest one did.