

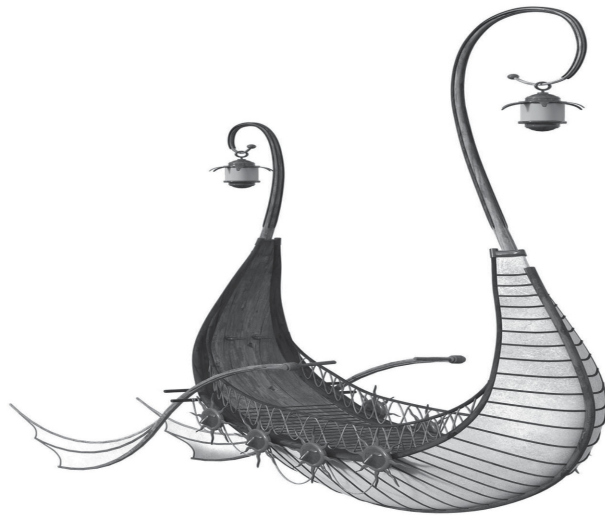
Remember The Gift



Fawn Moran

Remember the Gift

Fawn Moran



Sojourn Publishing

Santa Rosa, CA

Copyright 2025 Fawn Moran

All rights reserved.

*No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means,
including electronic, photocopy, and recording,
without the prior written permission of the publisher.
The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.*

*To obtain permission in writing, please send your request to:
fawnmoran77@gmail.com*

ISBN-13: 978-1511402897

*Book & Cover Layout by Fawn Moran
fawnmoran.com*

*Front Cover image courtesy of
Anne-marie Ridderhof, artist/designer
on pixabay.com*

Printed by KDP



For Sam

Other Books by Fawn Moran

The Mystical Traveler Series

Sourced in Silence

In The Mystery:
Contemplative Living in a Chaotic World

Only This

One Sacred Moment

Living Prayer

Ever Deeper:
Nothing Less Will Do

Deeper Still



Contents

The Last Days of Elena Perez	1
The Uncommon Adventures of Max Stillman	15
A Novellette	
Man in The Black Hat	47
Sophie	49
Matsu, Mushroom Keeper	63
The Long Sit	70
Nakamura's Private Zendo	80



The Last Days of Elena Perez

Elena looked at the photo again. *Tomás, the love of my life*. Dead now thirty years. She put the time-battered photo back in its box and closed her eyes. A ritual she performed every night before bed. Dreams of Tomás crashing into the cottonwood engulfed her all too often. She ran to him, but his body had been crushed by the steering wheel. There was nothing she could do.

She woke early and tried to shake memories of Tomás, the dreams, the guilt. She had to get ready. She picked out her dress the day before—a burgundy velour with tapered buttoned sleeves, a hand-me-down from her sister half a lifetime ago. Tomorrow she was leaving her ancestral home for Coyote Court, where she would spend the rest of her life, light years from the solitary life she'd been living. She was done with the house, Tomás, the dreams, this life.

The taxi arrived at nine. “Hola!” the cabbie yelled from the curb.

Elena opened the door and gestured to her luggage. “Gracias,” she said. The cabbie grabbed her bags and opened the passenger door. Nothing else passed between them for the entire ride.

The cabbie left her luggage in front of the entrance to Coyote Court. Elena rang the bell. A petite woman, smartly dressed, opened the door.

“You must be Elena. My name’s Lucille. The house manager.”

“Yes.” Elena picked up the lightest piece of luggage, hoping someone else would handle the rest.

“Carlos will take care of your luggage.”

“Thank you,” Elena said.

They entered the living room.

“Isabel, this is Elena. Isabel’s been here for what? Two months now? You’ll be sharing the west wing.”

“Buenos días,” Elena said stiffly.

“Good morning,” Isabel replied.

Each resident had two rooms and a full bath to herself. Dining was restaurant-style. At least that’s how they described it in the brochure. Designed in traditional Santa Fe style, her suite included an electric kiva fireplace.

Elena wondered how long she would last. Being able-bodied, that is. Coyote Court had a good reputation for taking care of the well-to-do, their health a central feature of their daily existence.

“Let me know if you need anything. Lunch is at noon. There’s a card game at two, if you’d like to join, and movies in the evening. Forays to galleries and celebrations for the holidays. We even have a book club.”

Can’t wait.

Lucille brightened. “Only three weeks ‘til Christmas. Have to decorate the tree today. Would you like to join us?”

Do I have to?

Elena took the lift to her suite on the second floor. She spilled the contents of her purse on the bed, forever forgetting whether she had packed her pills. Afterward she hung her clothes in the walk-in closet in slow motion, gasping for air.

The knock on the door meant company.

Ana opened the door. "I'm your Care Coordinator. Can I help you with anything?"

"Unpacking was...a challenge, but I'm alright."

"We want you to rest. Carlos can help with difficult tasks. Just ring us if you need anything."

"Gracias."

"Nos vemos más tarde." Ana left, clipboard in hand, all too aware of the whispers. *A ghost, she thought. There's always ghosts.*

Lunch. That meant sharing a table. Elena managed the walk to the chair lift and took it to the first floor. She chose a table in the far corner of the dining room.

"Hola." Isabel forced a smile and sat in the chair across from Elena. "You know we're the only guests. The last two died. One person moved out.

"Mind if I ask how you're doing?"

"I've got congestive heart failure," Elena offered.

"Me, too. But not that kind."

Elena ordered. Isabel followed suit.

"The love of my life died half a lifetime ago," Isabel said. "I've been alone ever since."

"So sorry. Mine died, too."

"It put me on my knees. I've been there ever since."

"Why did you come to Coyote Court?"

"Lung problem. Getting an oxygen concentrator tomorrow. Inhalers don't help anymore."

“Death is always with us.”

“Si,” Isabel said.

The next morning Elena dressed, stopping every so often to catch her breath. She tried to make her bed, but lost her footing. She slid to the floor, clinging to the covers.

I can't breathe. Her cell was too far from the bed. The emergency cord was closer.

Maybe this is it – the moment of my death.

Elena inched her way to the emergency cord, reached up and pulled it as hard as she could. Minutes later Ana rushed into the room.

“Que esta mal?” Ana quickly took in the scene and opened one of Elena’s pill bottles. “Here. Take this. I’ll get some water.”

She helped Elena to get back to bed, propped her up on pillows and waited for the pill to do its work.

“This has happened before. Many times,” Elena said.

Ana took Elena’s blood pressure. “The pill’s working. How do you feel?”

“Better. Are you a nurse, Ana?”

“No. My mother was the curandera in our village in Mexico. I learned a great deal from her. Then I got certified as a Care Coordinator.”

“I see.”

“I’ll check back in an hour. Here’s your cell. Call if you need anything.”

Whispers. Awake, asleep. Always whispers. Elena opened her eyes.