

Guideposts

MORE THAN COINCIDENCE

His Mysterious Ways

December 2003

Sandy Olmsted, Orland Park, Illinois

I stepped onto the patio. It was early spring, only a few months after my 17-year-old daughter, Erin, died, killed by a drunken driver. Erin loved sunning herself out here, curling up in a deck chair with a book. Now the chair was empty. There was no book on the end table. But I never wanted to forget what it was like to look out and see her there.

I turned to go back into the house and caught sight of a splash of color. A single purple flower had pushed up among the rocks around the patio, where nothing had ever grown before. Purple had always been Erin's favorite color.

That summer the flower grew tall and bloomed, and the next summer a whole patch sprouted. I never did anything to care for those buds, but somehow they still thrived. Every year I looked forward to sitting outside on the patio with "Erin's flowers," as I decided to call them. It was my way of feeling close to my daughter again.

The fifth summer, the flowers did not appear. I kept scanning the rocks around the patio, and I looked all over the yard. I couldn't see any sign of them, not even a sprout. November and the anniversary of Erin's death came around.

One day I stood at the window, watching cold rain lash the patio. God, I prayed, don't let me forget what it feels like to be close to my daughter. Then a spot of purple caught my eye. I grabbed my raincoat and rushed out on the patio.

Erin's flowers! How could they be growing now, with winter on the way? It snowed later that week, and four more times that winter, yet the purple flowers survived, staying healthy and bright. I don't know much about flowers, but these intrigued me. I took a picture and showed it to Erin's grandmother. She'd know what they were.

"Do these look familiar?" I asked. She stared at the picture for a minute, then looked up at me.

"Sandy," she said, her eyes filling with tears, "Those are forget-me-nots."

I knew at once, a loving God would never let a mother forget.

"His Mysterious Ways" is reprinted with permission from *Guideposts* magazine.

Copyright © 2003 by Guideposts, Carmel, New York 10512. All rights reserved