

*The best story writers approach their craft like a weaver turning a messy pile of loose threads into a neat, well constructed and beautiful piece of cloth.*

—Christine Cote, from the foreword to *Beyond Sunflowers and Starry Nights*

I know about messy loose threads because I'd like to weave the ones I have into something beautiful, something complete, something whole; something with purpose, neat and well constructed. This way, maybe I could reconfigure the past so it's tidy and makes more sense.

My mind wanders as I see an image of my old sewing machine. A gift from my mother at the time I was becoming independent, it led me through to becoming a young adult. I like to imagine it holds the thread connecting us—my mother and me—a spiritual umbilical cord that has always been there and continues to be, even after her death. It helps me survive. She always spun words in a way to form a safety net: “We all make mistakes,” she'd say. “Keep creativity in your back pocket for the rainy days.” These words keep me with her. She gave me a tool: the sewing machine.

My sewing projects span my adult life and act like bookmarks. I can go to those pages and revisit elements of my story, pull together loose threads somehow, see things in a new light.

There were cafe curtains, dinosaur costumes, a simple hem, and pillow covers. There were also wads of homeless thread

remaining in the corners of my machine's case, the result of ripping out mistakes. Threads with no home, they were likely to be swept up with the dust bunnies and forgotten if I was not paying attention. But I kept those mistakes. I must have known the loose threads held value.

The cafe curtains were sewn for the family's beach house and gave me a sense of home when apartment living—and my whole life at that point—felt isolated and temporary.

Dinosaur costumes brought playfulness and connection during long days with young children, which at times felt endless.

A simple hem was often sewn in anticipation of a special event: a baptism or wedding, a romantic night out, a new job. These events staved off depression and marked new beginnings with celebration.

Finally, the pillow covers. The carefully chosen fabric let me provide a cheery nest for myself and the ones I love. Even with moods fluctuating, the pillows retained their bright disposition.

Like little islands of refuge emerging within the span of life's rough waters, these placeholders have offered comfort and balance. And my mother's words have been woven into the way I take care of myself and approach life.

I am reminded that, while I may not be the best story writer—and that's okay!—our journeys can be messy and beautiful at the same time . . . loose threads and all.

It's that very part of life that makes me and others our most human. ❖

# Loose Threads

by Cici Grove

