

# Cocoon

**Gabriella Brand**

**A**T ELEVEN, THE BOY WAS sullen, pummeled by the split, Daddy leaving, everything cleaved in two.

At times, slouching over his dinner plate, he wouldn't even look up. I'd try to ask about his science project, his soccer practice. He would spit out a one-syllable response before clearing his dish with a clatter and heading out to whack a ball against the garage door.

Sometimes, not knowing what else to do, I'd suggest a ride, and he'd get in the back seat, carrying his anger with him like an ax. But as soon as we drove a short while, huddled in our little blue Volkswagen, our eyes focused straight ahead, we could each relax. And a kind of peace would settle in around us like a blanket, and the rhythmic thrum of the engine would cradle us.

And words would come. So many words.

Not sharp, splintery, metallic words, but soft, rounded, cottony words.

Words about missing things. About Christmas as it used to be. About our old tabby cat buried in the yard. What did her bones look like now? How, at night, the house was too quiet.

Sometimes we'd just ride aimlessly, into the countryside, never sure where we'd end up.

Even our silences were different as we drove. We'd pass the farm stand with the corn maze, the stubby pasture with the lone horse, blanketed for winter. And we'd both know that we had just driven by these things and seen them, and kind of loved them, and there was no need to say anything.

We'd keep driving, and with each mile, the landscape would offer up something new, something different—a house with a turret, a bathtub lying in a field.

So many scenes skimming before our eyes, the road like a magician—now you see it, now you don't.

Everything left behind as we traveled forward, even our own pain. \*

