

## Reading *Goodnight, Moon*

Mike Brock

"Tell me a story, Daddy."

Memories get clouded over the years, sometimes confused in their retelling, and we're not sure if they are memories of the retelling or memories of the actual events. So I checked it out this past weekend with my daughter, Jennifer, now twenty-six and visiting from her home in Nashville.

"What stories did I read to you when you were young?" I asked her, and she replied, "My favorites were the stories in your head, the stories of when you were growing up and all the crazy things you did with your brothers. I'd always ask you to tell me a story, even if you told me the same one a hundred times before."

"And when I read you a story, what were your favorites?"

"*Goodnight, Moon* and *Close Your Eyes*. And at Christmas time, Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. You always said that Christmas wasn't Christmas without the story of Ebenezer Scrooge and Tiny Tim."

I remember reading *Goodnight, Moon* the clearest of all. I remember noticing how on each page the position of the moon changes slightly, as does the location of the mouse and the hands on the clock. I remember the simplicity of the story, the repetition of the words, and the uncomplicated pictures, so easy on a child's eyes.

But mostly I remember Jennifer, seated on my lap, my arm snuggled around her, her head resting on my shoulder, long dark hair brushing against my face, the warmth of the moment . . . I remember thinking that this is so much bigger than any learning that might be taking place—bigger than hearing the sound of the words, or understanding the importance of books, or learning how to read. I didn't understand it then, but now I know that it is all about the moment, all about being present, all about the bonding and love and affirmation that occur when one soul gives of the self to another. I didn't know it then, but now I know that those moments are the essence of parenting.

And knowing that now, I so wish I had done more of it.

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