

THE
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On Rainy Days She Sang of Pennies from Heaven

*And a soul would run by a living being, touch them softly on the
shoulder or cheek, and continue on its way to heaven.*

—Alice Sebold

Mother's death was not unexpected, yet it came as a shock, a late night phone call, I was alone in the kitchen. I hung up, turned to the sink, and grabbed its cool metal edge. Through tears, I saw a frog clinging to a yellow tray like an ornament of green velvet so soft I reached out to touch, but the tiny frog leaped to the floor and sat beside my feet. Listen, I'm three stories up, there were no trees or large plants in sight. And I'm looking down at a tree frog, small as my thumb, hop closer to my feet. What are you doing here? I asked. The frog neither blinked nor moved. Mama had loved all green living things. She'd opened our old farmhouse walls with wide windows, then planted flowering shrubs so close, branches tapped on glass panes. I never knew if she recognized hothouse plants I carried in to the nursing home. I held the plants high for her to see, set them on the windowsill. Within an hour of her death, I spoke to a frog locked in alone with me. I said, I want to keep you. Yet, it was easy to catch the tiny frog. I unlocked the door, carried it out to cool cement. The air was soft, scented, the stars hung close as they always do in Florida. I gently tried to shake you loose. Yet you clung to my hand, silent, dark as a lost penny.