

Misty

by Roland Foster

He awoke quickly and smoothly, as he usually did after sleeping soundly through the night. With eyes open to welcome the beginning daylight, he prayed silently, as he often did, *Thank you, Lord, for the night's rest and the new day.* He turned his head toward his wife, still sleeping beside him. *And thank you, as always, for the awesome blessing of this amazing woman you gave me.* ... As often happened, he ran out of words — but anyway words were inadequate to express his gratitude for her, and for the gifts God had given them through the years. He felt the familiar tightness in his throat, the sting of tears starting in his eyes. *Silly old man,* he chided himself yet again, *can't even be thankful without getting all teary-eyed.*

Straightening his head, he looked at the ceiling fan turning slowly above their bed, and let his mind wander where it would. For no particular reason, or maybe because of the tears, he thought of "their" song, which had seemed to mean something so special when they were learning to love each other. It was Errol Garner's "Misty," which they had sung softly together on more than one occasion. "Look at me," they sang as they gazed into each other's tear-shined eyes, not feeling helpless, as the song said, but truly almost hearing those thousand violins. He smiled, thinking of how earnest they had been, how certain that their love for each other was right up there with Romeo and Juliet, Antony and Cleopatra, Hero and Leander — you name the lovers. That was total silliness, of course, but it bonded them together until ... well, until their love changed and grew and became the real thing.

Love. *The ancient Greeks had a better handle on it,* he thought, *than we poor boobs who have to get by with English.* He knew the Greek words: *Eros*, for physical attraction and sexual intimacy; *philia*, for close friendship; *agape* for the self-giving, unconditional love that was called charity in their old King James Bible. He even knew *storge*, the word for family love. What words the modern-day Greeks use for love, he hadn't a clue.

He turned his face toward his wife again. He had never thought that she resembled her mother, but now, sleeping there, she did. *Mama,* he said mentally to his mother-in-law, *I'm glad you came to live with us for a few years. You were special.* Then he naturally thought of his wife's father, and her brother and sister, and his own parents and his four siblings, and how they had loved each other — not perfectly, but well. *Good old storge,* he thought. And his own two children, birthed by their mother who still slept beside him; two amazing, astonishing gifts from God. *Way beyond storge. Blessed!* he thought. *So blessed.*

He let his mind drift from one memory to another, lingering over some that were poignant; acknowledging but not dwelling long on some that were painful. *How have you loved us, Lord? Let me count the ways.* But he knew he could not count that high. His eyes filled again with tears, joyful tears, overflowing and running down the sides of his face. His vision of the gradually increasing daylight was blurred, as if seen through fog.

Misty, he thought, smiling. *I still get misty.*