

The Quilt

Woman was told to visit a new land across the ocean. She was told that this land was very cold, so her family fashioned her a coat from pieces of their own clothing. When she arrives, the land is indeed very cold, and she finds she must turn her coat into a quilt to keep warm at night in her small wooden house.

Years pass, and Woman becomes Mother. She tears a piece from her quilt to swaddle the new child. As the child grows he becomes both Man and Son. Come summer, Mother uses a piece of the quilt to wipe sweat from his brow as he plants seeds beneath a fiery sun. When he is hurt, Mother uses another piece to soak his blood. In the years spent nurturing Son, Mother has a second child: Daughter. She uses some of the quilt to swaddle her as she did for Son.

Daughter is still very young when she must have a child herself. After she births, part of the quilt is torn away to clean the child, who is named Granddaughter. Mother, Daughter, Son, and Granddaughter share the quilt for warmth until Son dies. He is burned with a piece of the quilt on his pyre. Now it is just Mother, young Daughter, and Granddaughter.

One winter, Mother decides it is time for her to return home across the ocean, but she is forbidden to leave. Heartbroken, she decides to sneak away beneath the blanket of night. She spends the daylight cutting squares from the quilt to wrap food for their journey. In the night, she and Daughter and Granddaughter hide under the quilt and escape into the icy wood.

Shivering amongst the snow and ice, they use some of the quilt to light a fire. Mother gives another piece to her Daughter to use as a shawl. The Daughter gives some of her piece to Granddaughter as a cap. With what is left, Mother wraps around her as a scarf.

The three of them reach a river drowned in moonlight. They pray to the gods for safe passage, knowing there is no way home without crossing the river. The gods accept their prayers and slow the current, allowing them to cross. As they wade into the white water, though, pieces of the quilt are swept away downstream.

They walk for many days, walking through a powerful storm that floods and shakes the earth. Once the storm passes, the days are sunny, and they finally reach the uninhabited coast. Mother stares out in sadness to see that the storm has lowered the coast and risen the ocean, creating a wall of water far above her head. She realizes that there is no way for them to continue home.

Though sad, Mother decides to build them a house on the coast, for it is the closest she can be to her homeland. The three of them live there for many years and the weather continues to warm, allowing them all to shed their pieces of the quilt. Together, they decide to use what remains of the quilt to craft a pair of curtains, hoping to keep out the blazing sun and make their new house feel joyful.

The three of them age, content in their new home. Granddaughter grows into a woman and later has her own daughter to raise.

Mother becomes Great-Grandmother.



Daughter becomes Grandmother.

Granddaughter becomes Mother.

And the new child becomes Daughter.

When Daughter is but six years old,
Great-Grandmother dies. Mother and
Grandmother rip a piece of cloth from
the quilt curtains to burn with Great-
Grandmother on her pyre.

Daughter, confused, asks her Mother why she would do such a thing. Mother says to ask Grandmother. Daughter then asks Grandmother. Grandmother explains that is it simply what Great-Grandmother did when Son died, though she does not know the reason why.

Daughter is surprised. She did not know Great-Grandmother had once birthed a Son.

She then asks Grandmother why the curtains are special. Grandmother explains that they were not always curtains.

"It was once your swaddling cloth, as well as mine and that of Son and Mother. It wiped Son's brow and soaked his blood. It cleaned Mother when she was born. It carried food when we had to find our new home. It kept us warm in the cold winters. And many years ago, before I was born, it was once a coat for Great-Grandmother."

A coat! Daughter was fascinated. She decided at that moment that she would create the coat once more.

When Mother and Grandmother must travel far to collect more wood to repair their home, Daughter decides to walk the long trek through the forest to see if she can find more pieces of the quilt. When she reaches the river, she asks the gods to lower it for her. They oblige and lower the river for Daughter to ford. With the water lowered, she sees a piece of cloth in the mud. She picks it up and places it in her pocket.

She continues on and finds Son's grave. Poking out from the overgrown grass is a burned piece of cloth. She places it in her pocket.

Daughter continues to walk the woods until she reaches the old house of her Great-Grandmother, now in pieces and long deserted. She searches the house and the land that surrounds it and finds yet more pieces in of cloth, trapped beneath the floor and in the tall grass. She places them all in her pocket.

Daughter continues to search the land before beginning her journey back home. The whole trek she searches the earth for pieces of cloth, hoping to find something she may have missed.

She returns home before Mother and Grandmother know she has left and removes the quilt curtains, now faded by the sun. She tries all night to stitch together the pieces of cloth, hoping to recreate Great-Grandmother's coat. She realizes, however, that it is too difficult, as some pieces are lost forever. When Mother and Grandmother return, they— [text lost]

