

## In Hushed Tones

By Mark Edgemon

I hear the Wedding March as I stand in the church foyer preparing to marry her. I have loved once in my lifetime with great depth of soul more stronger than the love I feel for Susan my soon to be bride and yet, she is the woman I have chosen to share the rest of my life.

Susan is a person who has no outstanding traits save one, she wants me. I had wondered if I would ever have someone in the real world who wanted me for their lifelong companion. Susan did, much to my amazement and that was enough for me to make a commitment to her for the rest of my life.

I did not want to grow old alone in this natural world, so I am to do what I have dreaded for most of my life, forsake my one true love for this physical woman, who wanted to share my time and space.

But my truest love is the woman from my dreams, a woman who I had shared a hundred lifetimes with in the twenty years we've been together. Miranda came into my life when I was around six years old, while I was watching a Saturday children's program early one morning. She was a girl about 16 years of age in a fairy costume and for the first time, I was in love. Later that day, I imagined her tenderly caressing me and telling me I was her boy. In my imagination, I was her age and we were dating. There was no one else in the world when she was in my mind. I was faithful to her, so that I would not dream of anyone else but her. Somehow, I think she knew.

We had many children throughout our lives, at different times and various scenarios, but we always wound up alone together, just the two of us. We were children at play at times and other times we dated as teens. I would conquer corporations, created and built businesses and she, always the dutiful mate, stood beside me, proud of me for the man I was. We never had a quarrel or a trial that I could not solve in less than 20 minutes and we never doubted our love for one other.

Oh, I love her! It would be safe to say, my love for her was more real than any romance in the natural world, maybe stronger. I knew her very soul and she knew me. No matter what scenes we played in my thoughts and imagination, we were devoted to one another.

The wedding music is now invading my thoughts and I only have moments to do, what literally tears my heart asunder to think of...I must let her go. I could take the easy way out and not think of her again, but I am unsure in the netherworld of one's dreams if she would be waiting for me endlessly. So, I take a deep breath with tears welling up in my eyes and I call her name.

She appeared to me once again, entering as always into my conscience reality, now seeing my tormented fears.

“What is wrong, Byron? Is something troubling you?” she said to me as she reached for my hand to comfort me. I pulled my arm back, not wanting to connect with her this time as I always have. I had never pulled away from her before and she began to appear frightened, a reaction I had always labored to protect her from and now, I could not.

The Wedding March played for the third time, which was the cue for the best man and brides maid to walk down the aisle. Seconds later, it would be my turn.

“Miranda, I met someone else and I...” I said fighting back the tears, “I...I don’t want to be alone” and that was all I could say. She understood for she always understood, but she was devastated as if her beating heart was wrenched from her chest.

“Do you love me...more than her?” she asked already knowing the answer before I spoke.

“I am one with you Miranda, I...don’t know how...” was all I could say as my cue to walk down the aisle was played on the pipe organ in the church auditorium. “I love you with all my heart! I’m dying inside!” I shouted to her as I turned and opened the door to the foyer and began walking toward the front of the church, tears streaming down my face. The congregation and witnesses must have thought I was touched by the moment, but I had torn my own heart out as if I had murdered my own soul mate. I did not know how I was going to get through the ceremony or how I would live with myself after betraying my only one true love.

The wedding was a blur; I don’t know how I got through it. I kissed the bride, my now wife in the real world and yet, in my soul, I felt as an adulterer.

I had never told anyone about Miranda and I knew Susan would not understand.

Thirty minutes later we were getting into my car, now decorated as newlyweds cars are often adorned and preparing to go back to my place to pack for our honeymoon.

I cannot say that I love Susan. I would rather say that I was contented and maybe that was enough, I don’t know.

As I began to pull out of the church parking lot, Susan grabbed my hand and so I let her. I felt numb and very sad. I glanced into the rear view mirror for a moment and I believed I saw Miranda in the crowd waving to us mouthing the words “I love you, have a good life, I’ll miss you.”

I cried.

The End