

Missing Pieces of Me

By Helen J. Dixon

More and more I miss her. The vibrant woman who had a smile that reached past her eyes, which showed the happy inner spirit. There was a love that simply flowed from her as smoothly melted chocolate. Her every movement was sensuous, appearing deliberate, made manifest simply because of its naturalness. The beauty she exuded wasn't traditional, but it was definitely a presence when she entered a room. She never dazzled, only fascinated, piqued the imagination, at least caused one to stop and wonder.

Not that she realized her power. Were you to ask her, she'd shrug and state, "no one notices me really. I'm sort of transparent." That's the way she was—self-effacing in public, privately realizing she had something important to say, but was waiting for the proper moment to do so. And in reality, she's never found the suitable forum or person in which to divulge her innermost feelings.

Here's the trouble—she's disappeared now, gone without ever revealing those aspects of herself she believed so intriguing. And I miss her. When I see her now, I see a shadow of the passionate, feminine individual. She stares back at me, through vacant, empty eyes. The smile sometimes comes, but it never goes deeper than her face. Her lips stretched over her teeth--a familiar motion, but merely a gesture. She hides behind that fake grin, so no one can discover the pain it conceals. There are times, when I look closely, I discern the ache of loneliness underneath. She believes she has a finely tuned mask, inscrutable, mysterious. Actually, it's very successful; this facade since few of her acquaintances even deems it interesting to peer through the surface. And that makes it more solitary. I try to encourage her to break free from the shackles binding her spirit. Allow herself to soar and see the wonder. But she only smiles that sad smile at me and softly says, "What beauty? And what's the point of pretending to live anymore when the truth is the only person I've ever fooled is myself. Don't you see, dear friend, I'm already dead? Just waiting for the body to catch up to the soul. " It's desperation that's speaking for her now, and I'm searching just as desperately to find a way to save her.

But, what do you say to that? How can you make someone consider the fact their life is truly a gift? When their very existence brings them anguish, guilt and shame, how to help them break free? What device can you invent to bring the soul back to life? And do it before she becomes unwilling for the body to wait any longer and discovers a way to join the two together in oblivion? How do you save someone so entirely bent on self-destruction? There's hope, I tell myself, because each day I see her, I can try to convince her of alternate theories to her conclusions. I can cajole, beg, plead with her to open her eyes and see her as I do. To open her heart and feel again. Make her recognize it's not death, which has frozen her soul, but fear and torment. Fear of the unknown and torment from the past. Show her that the unknown isn't always filled with trepidation, but has new vistas to explore; and that her past, if she can reconcile herself, needn't bedevil her, but can help her in her exploration of the unknown expanse before her. Every once in a while, a glimpse of the smile I love flashes, and I tell her, "There it is! Remember, it's not

gone, just hidden deep. Let some more warmth in, and you'll see more often. And one day, it'll be there for real."

She shakes her head at me, laughs a little, but doesn't argue. Not aloud, at least. I know she's humoring me right now, but that's fine. So long as I can distract her from self-destruction, I am content for the moment. Dread is pervasive, however. I need to keep my focus so not to fall into her trap. And her greatest device is her logical reasoning. I notice people suicidal people become very rational as they plan their exit and she's becoming a master. She has convinced herself, her presence on this earth is a mistake and a burden to those around her. She now only has to convince us that this is so. She will then be free to make her curtain call from this stage with no regrets of leaving anyone who needed her behind. This is more difficult than she thought it would be, which is why she remains with us. So while her flawed philosophy is her most powerful weapon, it's also my potent ally. It's like the story of Sodom and Gomorrah—finding one person who convinces her they need her, will prevent her from destroying herself. One person who shows understanding and compassion keeps her around.

My other comrade is her fear of adding guilt to those she loves and would leave behind. Self-reproach that she carries is too heavy a burden. "I never want anyone to feel the oppressiveness of 'what ifs'", she often says to me. So I'll use it. I'll use anything to keep her in my sphere so I can get her to see her worth. Any ruse which gives me more time. Because that's MY greatest weapon. Every day she's here, is another opportunity and I will not fail. Without her, I'M lost. I am her soul and I'm still alive. I shout from the icy depths—depths her life's situation has placed me for her emotional survival—that I'm awake. I scream with agonizing shrieks and I know she hears me, wants to believe. I bang, shake, and make as much noise as possible so she feels the quakes inside and understands. I have to reach her! I really do miss her.