

Where Love Abides

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Sorrow

Hello, my name is Sorrow. When I was just a little girl my parents ran away from home. The first night they were gone I got terribly frightened and started to cry. I wandered all over the house looking for comfort. Finally, I ended up in the kitchen peering into the refrigerator. The food looked delicious and I began to eat with a vengeance. My fear went away as long as my mouth was full.

Illusion

I got lonely after a few days as an orphan. One night I noticed a romantic novel on the nightstand by my mother's bed, and I sat down to read it. It made me cry, and suddenly I knew what was to happen to me. Someone was going to come to my aid—to rescue me. That night I dreamed about who it might be.

Unfortunately, no one came to rescue me right away, so I wandered out of the house and down the street. I kept walking until I arrived at a strange town. Just inside the city gates I met a man. He said his name was Illusion. He was handsome and said he was here to rescue me. "Great," I thought. "Just the person I've been looking for."

Unfortunately, Illusion lied to me. He was really just a mischievous man who used me to satisfy his carnal desires. I was afraid and ashamed. Eventually I ran away.

Lost

I had no idea where I was going, so I just wandered down the road. I was afraid, but I kept walking. I felt as if I were looking for something, but I didn't know what.

The terrain was beautiful as I passed through the countryside. At night the stars were so bright that I sometimes wondered who had made them. I decided that God had made the world and then died in childbirth.

Eventually, I found myself in a little town by the sea. I was very thirsty, so I made my way to the first building I saw and asked for a drink. Someone gave me a glass of whiskey. It satisfied my thirst for awhile, but then I got thirsty again. After awhile I couldn't get enough.

Eventually the whiskey made me drunk, and I fell into a ditch. I passed out, and when

I woke up I was in a lot of pain. Suddenly I realized that I had broken my leg and couldn't get up, so I just lay there for a long time crying about my sad fate. "What was to become of me?" I thought.

The Way

After awhile, a man appeared. He was an angel. His name was Peace. I was mesmerized by his appearance. He asked me where I was going. I said "I don't know. Right now I am stuck here in this ditch." He asked me if I was lost. I said "I guess." Finally he pointed the way to heaven and told me that I should be headed in that direction. "Why?" I asked. "That is where happiness is," he said. "Why is happiness in that direction?" I asked. "Because that is where God is," he replied. "Well, why can't I find happiness here?" I asked. "You can," he said, "but not like the happiness you will find from being with God." "Oh," I replied.

After that, the angel stood there for awhile with his hand outstretched—pointing the way. Finally, I said "My leg is broken, and I cannot walk." "Let me help you he said." Then he lifted me in his arms and carried me down the road.

On My Own

After a few days my leg began to heal and the angel put me down. "I have to go now," he said. I was very sad, but I didn't argue with him. He went down another path and I just stood there with tears streaming down my face waving goodbye.

The Awakening

I had been traveling for only a short time by myself when God appeared. I don't know how I knew he was God. I just knew it.

God looked like a man, but he told me that he often appeared as a woman as well. He also said that I should learn to recognize him in whatever form he appeared. "How will I recognize you?" I asked. "You will see the love I have for you written upon my face," he replied, "even when I bring bad news." "Where will you be if I need you?" I asked. "I am in your heart and soul." he said.

I stood transfixed and then asked whether or not I was on the right path. "Yes," he said. Then I asked "Did you send the angel to point the way?" "Yes" he answered. "Why?" I asked. "Because I love you," he said. Then he disappeared up the road and beckoned me to follow. I trudged along trying to catch up. I was still limping from my broken leg, but nonetheless I felt hopeful and anxious about getting on with my journey.

The Garden

After a few days I came upon a beautiful garden. It was full of colorful flowers and a sparkling brook. There were a lot of children playing in the garden. They were happy and bubbling all over with excitement. I held back for awhile until one of the children came over to say hello. "Would you like to play with us?" she asked. "Oh yes," I exclaimed.

I really had a good time playing with the other children. They were all orphans, like me, but they didn't care. They had found this beautiful garden and were content to frolic in the sun.

One day I was sitting under a beautiful apple tree in the middle of the garden when I noticed the mouth of a cave embedded in the side of a towering mountain. I asked one of the other children what was in the cave. "I don't know," he said. "Do you want to explore it?" I asked. "No," he said, "I am having too much fun."

I sat and pondered over the meaning of the cave and wondered where it went. Somehow I was drawn to the cave. I wanted to know what lay beyond its opening. Then, almost as if a light had turned on in my head, I knew I could not stay in the garden any longer—that I had to go into the cave and continue my journey.

Cleaning House

The next day, I told the other children I was moving on. One of them asked me if I had cleaned my house and prepared it for its next occupant. "Do I have to do that?" I said. "Oh yes," he replied. It's mandatory. Didn't your parents teach you how to clean house?" "No," I replied. "They left home when I was very young." Besides, I don't think my cottage is dirty. It was clean when I left it this morning." "Well you had better make sure," my friend declared. "You can't leave unless you have cleaned your house."

So, I went to my cottage and looked inside. At first everything seemed in order. Then, upon closer inspection I could see a lot of dust and cobwebs. I even found some garbage that I had forgotten to take out, and over in the corner were all the books I had borrowed and forgotten to return.

I earnestly started scrubbing the cabin from top to bottom, but no matter how hard I worked the cottage only got a little bit cleaner. "Wow," I said to myself one day. "This is an endless chore. I think I need help." So I asked all of my neighbors to help, but they were all busy cleaning their own cottages. One of them suggested I ask God to help me. "That's a great idea," I said. So I prayed for God to give me some help. Nothing happened for awhile, but later that day God (in female form this time) appeared with a magic broom. "Use this," she said. "It will help you sweep away the dirt in half the time." I thanked her and went back to work. Before I knew it the cottage was clean enough for me to move on.

The Brook

The next morning I sat down by a brook near the entrance to the cave. I bent over to wash my face and I caught my reflection in the sparkling water. I was horrified. “How could anyone be this ugly?” I thought. Suddenly God appeared and stood looking over my shoulder. “What are you looking at?” he asked. “Just my ugly reflection,” I said. Suddenly God peered over my shoulder and shrugged his shoulders. It looks beautiful to me he said. “Really?” I said, as I took another look. I gasped as I saw a beautiful face peering back at me from the sparkling brook. I cried at seeing how my reflection had changed. I looked around to smile at God, but he had disappeared into the entrance of the cave, his feet barely touching the ground. I followed along as quickly as I could.

Freeing the Prisoners

The path in the cave was narrow and seemed to go on forever. At one point I entered a corridor lined on either side with prison cells. I looked into one of the cells and saw a young girl huddled over in the corner. She looked just like me, only she was very angry and had a scowl on her face. I called to her, but she just stared back at me with a hollow look in her eyes. As I stood there looking at this young girl, I felt great compassion for her. Then, something prompted me to put my hand in my pocket. To my surprise I found a golden key. I put the key in the lock and turned it. In the quiet of the cave, I could hear the lock click open. The girl in the cell heard it too, and I could see the surprise in her eyes. I wondered if she would come out.

I continued down the corridor unlocking other cell doors and letting all the inmates out. They all kind of looked like me, but they weren't me. “Who are they?” I wondered. “And why did I feel this strange kinship?”

The corridor of prison cells ended, and I was back in the tunnel. All of the inmates who had come out of their cells walked with me for awhile; but then they all began to fade away. I cried a little when the first girl I had freed slowly disappeared.

A Breakthrough

Eventually the path in the cave broke through to the other side of the mountain. As I stood there on the threshold, I could see a beautiful valley before me. After a moment's hesitation, I walked toward the valley marveling at how beautiful it was. There were cornfields and villages scattered everywhere. The sun was shining and the sky was so blue. My pulse raced as I followed the path before me.

Passion

I had been traveling alone for a long time when I came upon another traveler. He was a handsome young man about my age with a beautiful smile and engaging eyes. He said his name was Passion.

We walked together for awhile, discovering that we enjoyed each other's company. That night we built a huge fire and cooked a meal together. When it grew cold we huddled together under a weeping willow tree until the morning.

After a few days we came upon a village. Passion decided he liked this town and he asked me to stay with him there. I was thrilled. So we got married and settled into a lovely little cottage on the outskirts of town.

After the excitement of marrying Passion subsided, I set about to do something with my time. I decided to write a children's story. It was fun and very fulfilling. Everyone loved it, and I felt glad to be alive.

Passion was very content with our marriage, but I grew restless about getting back on the path. I still wanted to find that special happiness the angel had talked about.

Of course, it was very painful to think about leaving my husband, so I begged him to come with me. "I am content to stay here," he said. "I have gone as deeply into the valley as I care to go." I cried bitter tears at this announcement and continued to beg Passion to go with me. However, it was to no avail. He was not drawn back to the path.

I decided I could not live without Passion so I went back to my writing. This time I decided to paint pictures to illustrate my books; but the pictures were dead. They had no life.

Eventually I took to wandering over to the path that had taken Passion and me to this town. Then I found where it picked up on the other side of the village. I stood transfixed and watched it disappear into the valley. I wondered how much further it was to the place where God lived.

I started praying to God at this point. "I want to find you," I cried, "but Passion will not come with me." For a long time I got no reply. Then finally the angel came to me and held me in his arms. He had no answers for me, but he was sympathetic to my plight. "It's all right," he said. "You're going to be all right. Not everyone goes all the way."

After the angel left, I wept for a long time. Then I went to Passion to tell him I was leaving the next morning. He kissed me lightly on the cheek and we lay in each others arms until dawn. The next morning he gave me a small leather pouch with a beautiful pearl inside. "This is to help you remember me," he said. I clutched the little pouch to my breast and hugged him goodbye. Then I was off on my journey once again.

With Child

I had been traveling for a few weeks when I got sick. I stopped at the house of a country doctor and asked for help. He told me I was going to have twins. I was shocked. I

wondered if I should go back to Passion. I prayed to God about it and he told me to continue on.

I enjoyed the idea of having twins. When it came time to give birth I was all alone, but the angel arrived just in time to scoop the babies up and wrap them in the soft blanket I had been saving for the occasion. The angel and I named my little girl Comfort and my son Expectation.

When I was strong enough I continued on my way, carrying Comfort and Expectation in my arms. I was happy for a long time, but it was harder to take care of my babies than I had thought it would be. I also noticed that they were not growing. I asked the angel about this and he said that they were not growing because I was carrying them too much. "Oh," I said. So I put Expectation and Comfort down on the ground and they immediately started walking down the path beside me.

Raising Expectation and Comfort

Taking care of Expectation and Comfort was a mixed blessing. The hardest part was always finding enough food for us. Everyday I scrounged around for wild berries, and I took odd jobs in the towns along the road we were traveling on. For a long time I worried a lot about starving to death. But eventually I realized that God was providing bread everyday, and that it was really useless to worry so much. Besides, it gave me a stomach ache and made Expectation nervous.

Separation

Expectation and Comfort were growing quickly, and before I knew it they were young adults. Then one day a handsome young prince came along on a white charger and whisked Comfort away from me. It happened so fast that I didn't know what to do. I chased after them until I was out of breath, and then I sat down by the side of the road crying my heart out. "Who would comfort me now?" I thought.

After awhile I stopped crying and turned to Expectation for solace. Then I thanked God for bringing him into my life and prayed that he would never leave me.

Not long after that, the angel came to me and said that I had to let Expectation go away with him. "Oh no," I cried. "I can't do that." "It has to be done," the angel said solemnly. "Why?" I asked. "Because Expectation is too dependent on you. You do everything for him, and he will not grow anymore unless you let him go." I looked at the angel and started crying. "No," I said. "I cannot let him go." The angel looked at me with great sadness in his eyes and then he left.

A few weeks later I noticed that Expectation was getting sick. His face was pale and he hung his head all the time. I didn't know what to do. I thought about what the angel had said and realized that my child was dying because I would not let him go. I began weeping.

The next day Expectation and I reached a crossroads. I told him that he had to go down the other path if he was to get over his sickness. He refused to go. He said he was afraid to leave me. I touched his cheek, and told him he could not go any further with me. Then I left him standing there on the side of road looking frightened.

Walking away from Expectation was very painful. “It wasn't this hard to leave Passion,” I thought to myself. My legs felt as if they were made of stone—to heavy to move. I didn't know if I had the strength to do this.

After awhile, I turned around to see if Expectation were still standing at the crossroads. I could see the angel standing there with him. They were deeply engrossed in a conversation and Expectation had a bright smile on his face. Somehow this didn't comfort me, but I kept moving—grieving the loss of my son.

The Storm

It took a long time for my sorrow to give way to the excitement of getting on with my journey to find God. But the excitement did come back, and eventually I was happy again.

Then one day the sky filled with clouds, and before I knew it, a downpour had begun. Then the thunder clapped and bursts of electricity flashed across the sky. I bundled up and kept walking. Eventually, I reached a bridge. Beneath it the river swelled with rainwater, sweeping away everything in its path.

I stood and watched the river for a long time wondering if it was safe to cross over. Then I decided to wait for the storm to end. Unfortunately, the storm showed no signs of letting up. It seemed as if the whole world had turned upside down. The river was washing everything away. Bodies floated everywhere. I tried to save a drowning child but she slipped out of my arms, and the unmerciful river washed her away.

Finally I knew that I had to cross the river and go on. I wondered if the storm was worse across the bridge. I tried not to think about it, but I was really afraid. Still, I felt I had no choice. It was either turn back or go on. I went on. As the wind tore at my skin I pushed forward praying to survive.

The Rescue

I made it halfway over the bridge and then collapsed. Just as I passed out I felt someone pick me up. Then everything was dark. When I woke up the storm was over and the sun was shining. I could see the angel looking down at me with tenderness in his eyes. “Are you all right?” he asked. “Yes,” I replied. “I'm just tired.” “Then sleep,” he said. “I will watch over you.”

Another Setback

I began my journey again when I was feeling better. I was so glad the storm was over. Surely, it would be smooth sailing from here on in.

After a few days had passed, I got impatient. I had come such a long way. How much further was it? Then I got bored. There was nothing exciting to do. Suddenly the journey seemed so meaningless and I missed Passion.

Then one day I noticed that the road was beginning to curve backwards. I was horrified. Was I to go back the way I had come? I stopped for awhile to ponder this dilemma. I wondered if this were a game God was playing with me. Had this whole journey been a joke?

This can't be true I thought. Then, I looked for another path but there was only one. In despair, and full of doubt, I trudged along. Somewhere, deep within, I still cherished the promise of the angel, and I knew I must persevere. So I began praying for strength and this helped. Then, eventually, the path curved back again, and I could once more see that I was going forward. I breathed a sigh of relief and even cried some tears of gratitude.

Weariness

I knew I was making progress, but I noticed that I had slowed down considerably. Then one day I sat down by a stream and looked at my reflection. For the first time I realized that I had grown old. "So this is why my bones hurt," I thought. Maybe this means I am getting closer to the end of my journey. I hope so. I was ready to find out where God lived and experience that special kind of happiness that we can only find in heaven.

Now that I was getting old I had to stop and rest more often. Once, instead of sleeping on the road, I stopped at a village to rest comfortably overnight. It was so nice there that I didn't want to leave. But I did eventually. By now I was driven to go all the way.

Anger

One day I got so tired that I stumbled and fell. Lying on the ground I started to cry. Then I got angry. "Why is it taking so long?" I yelled. "I don't understand. I am so tired." I secretly hoped that the angel would appear to sooth me and give me hope. But there was no answer to my pain. So I just lay there feeling sorry for myself and wondering what to do next.

Refreshed

Eventually I stopped grumbling and got up. I felt a little refreshed from releasing all my pent up emotions, and I noticed I was moving faster now. I even got excited again about my journey and I started singing. As my heart poured out my love for God, my pace picked

up even more. I was even light headed for awhile and quietly accepting of how long the journey was taking. And to make the time pass I started looking around at my surroundings. I listening to the birds sing and watched them bathe in the sunlight. It occurred to me that I should be enjoying the journey more—that I had become too concerned with getting somewhere, as if that was all that mattered.

The Final Barrier

I was content to be on my way, no matter how long it took to get there, and I felt God's presence near me almost all the time.

Then one day I noticed a change in the countryside. The sky got dark and the birds stopped singing. There was mildew on all the foliage and it got very cold at night.

After awhile, I saw a mountain looming up in the distance. It was ominous looking, and I was frightened. As I got closer I could see buzzards circling overhead and a chill went down my spine.

Eventually I got to the base of the mountain. It was too steep to climb so I just sat down to wait. I huddled by a makeshift fire—praying and waiting. Nothing happened for a long time.

And a Child Shall Lead the Way

I fell asleep, and when I woke up I saw a child standing at the base of the mountain holding a torch. “Are you ready?” she asked. I slowly nodded my head and followed this little child to a secret path hidden in the dark crevices of the mountain. Then I took one last look backward and began to climb.

I had hoped that this last part of the journey would be short, but it seemed endless. The thorn bushes on the path tore at my clothes. I lost my shoes on a muddy slope and my feet were bleeding. Sometimes I had to grab onto the bushes to pull myself up, so my hands were torn as well. Most of the time I couldn't catch my breath, and I had to rest every few feet. Several times I begged my little guide to slow down. Once I even pleaded with her to let me die on the spot. I did not think I had the strength to go on.

Finally, I couldn't stand it anymore and I lay down to sleep. I gazed at the moon and drifted off into the most pleasant slumber I had ever known. My last thoughts were of Passion and my children and all that I had given up to make this journey.

The Arrival

When I woke up I felt different. My body did not hurt anymore. The sun was shining and I was lying in the middle of a beautiful grass meadow at the top of the mountain. I looked around and no one was there. So I took a bath in the stream and ate some wild berries.

Then I noticed that I was a child again, and that my wounds had been healed. I gasped at the thought that maybe I had reached my journey's end. Frantically I looked around for God but he was no where in sight. So I sat there waiting, feeling peaceful and content.

Later in the afternoon I began to wander around looking for a sign that I had finally arrived in heaven. Eventually, I saw a beautiful castle nestled in the corner of the meadow. It had elegant spires which sparkled in the sunlight, and it was surrounded by a wall of diamonds.

The Sacrifice

I made my way to the castle and stood in front of a gigantic wooden door. Scattered all over the ground, at the base of the wall, were beautiful treasure chests full of jewels. It looked as if people had just dumped all their valuables there before going in. I wondered if I should put the pearl Passion had given me with the other jewels. I decided that I should, so I bent down and gently let go of my last worldly possession. Then I stood there for a long time gazing at the door wondering what to do next.

Knock and the Door Will Be Opened

Finally, I reached up and knocked on the door. There was no answer so I just stood there. Tears started flowing down my face, and yet somehow I was very peaceful inside. I suddenly knew that I was in the right place, and now I just needed to wait. My patience was rewarded, and eventually I could hear someone on the other side of the door. Then the door cracked and a burst of light came streaming through. Finally, the door swung open. My heart leaped, as I saw the angel standing there smiling and reaching out his hand. Then I walked through the doorway and he embraced me. "Welcome home he said. What took you so long?"

Angel Heaven

I was very happy in Angel Heaven. It was a joyful kind of happiness that I had never known before. One day, I asked the angel what made this happiness so much better than the happiness that I had known on earth. He told me that the happiness here was always present. It never left and it was not contaminated by the fear of losing it. "Yes," I thought. "This is true. The happiness I was feeling now flowed like a river that never seemed to dry up."

The Other Heavens

One day I asked the angel what happened to all the other people who did not make it here. He explained that they were in the villages outside the wall of the castle. "These

villages are called the “Other Heavens,” he said. “Are they happy?” I asked. “Most of the time,” he said. “But their happiness comes and goes. “Are they lonely?” I inquired. “Yes, they are very lonely, because they are not with God. They always feel a little bit empty because they want to go home, but they do not know where home is.” “Where is their home?” I asked. “This is home,” he said. “They were all born here before the angels carried them to earth.” “Why did they not realize this was their home?” I asked. “We visited each one to tell them, but they did not listen. They were too distracted. Some of them made it to the gate, but they would not let go of their treasure. So when they knocked at the door no one answered.” “Oh,” I said sadly. “What a shame they did not understand.”

Getting My Wings

Angel Heaven was great, but I wanted something to do. Even happiness can be boring after awhile. So I talked to God about it and he asked me if I wanted to be a guardian angel. That sounded exciting so I agreed. “What do I have to do?” I asked. “Well, you have to go back to earth and help people.” “How do I help them?” I said. “We will teach you in Angel School,” he said. “For the most part, just be sympathetic and try to encourage them.” “Okay,” I replied. “I will try. Maybe I will just tell them about my journey and how it was worth all the struggles. Could you send me to help a little lost girl who broke her leg after getting drunk?” “Sure,” God said. “That ought to keep you busy and out of trouble.”

Standing in the Light

After God and I talked a little while about my being a guardian angel, he smiled at me and I beamed back. Then a great rush of joy filled my heart and a stream of light poured out of the sky filling up the space where I stood. The light was warm and exhilarating. I thought to myself “This is great.” Then I asked God what the light was. He said, “This light is peace. Doesn't it feel great?” “Oh yes,” I replied. “This is wonderful. Can I take it with me when I go back to earth?” “Yes,” he replied, “You can stand in the light wherever you go.”

I took a deep breath and thought to myself. “How lucky I am.” Then I looked up at God with adoration in my eyes—wondering if this were really happening to me. Reading my mind, he bent down and whispered softly into my ear, “Yes, little one, you really are standing in the light and no one will ever take it away from you. Now, off you go. And while you are trying to save the world have some fun.”

Angel Class

Before I could be a guardian angel I had to go to Angel School. As I stood in line that first day I was very nervous. The angel next to me looked a little shy as well so I leaned over and said, “Hi, my name is Sorrow.” She smiled right back at me and held out her hand. “I am

Loneliness,” she replied. “I am so happy to meet you.” “Are you frightened,” she asked. “A little,” I admitted.

I asked Loneliness if she knew what was going to happen in Angel School. “Oh, yes,” she exclaimed. “One of the other angels told me. We are going to learn how to be the guardians of people down on earth. Spirit will teach us.” “Who is Spirit?” I asked. Loneliness drew me close and whispered in my hear. “Spirit,” is the mother of the Prince.” “Who is the Prince?” I asked. Loneliness looked at me with surprise. “He is God’s son,” she said. My eyes widened. “Oh,” I said.

As it turned out, Spirit was very nice and easy to talk to but I was still in awe of her. She was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. She looked young but at the same time her face had the a kind of wisdom that made me feel as she had always been here—from the beginning of time. While she was not aloof at all, she did hold herself with such countenance and composure that I was afraid to take up too much of her time. The most amazing thing about Spirit was how she handled so many people all at once. A crowd of angles could be gathered around her, but she gave each one of them her undivided attention. I don’t know how she did that, but it was wonderful.

Spirit taught us everything we needed to know about being guardians. We spent at least a week learning how to whisper in just the right tone of voice. We were not allowed to appear to humans, so whispering in just the right way was crucial. “Use short, declarative sentences,” Spirit advised. “If you interrupt their thoughts you are more likely to get their attention because they will wonder where the voice came from.”

Next the other angels and I studied how to make our presence know to humans without appearing before them. “You have to be subtle,” Spirit explained, “but if you do it right they will know that you are there and they will be comforted. Also,” Spirit continued, “One of the most important things you can do for your earth-bound people is to give them courage. Life on earth is a challenge, as you all know, and they need strength as well as comfort.”

I loved Angel and everything I was learning. And Loneliness and I became great friends. We loved to giggle, and we did it a lot.

The Prince

I had been in school for about a week when my mind wandered a little and I found myself gazing out of the window. This is when I noticed the door. It was made of beautiful rosewood and ornately carved. From under the crack at the bottom I could see a golden light streaming out. I was mesmerized.

After class that day I asked Loneliness if she knew what was behind the door. Loneliness got a very serious look on her face and said, “That is where the Prince stays,” she whispered. “The story goes that a long time ago he went down to earth to talk to people and something horrible happened. When he came back he went into the room and he has not

come out since. Apparently he prays for the world in there. Sometimes God goes in there with Spirit and when they come out they give us an assignment. It is all very mysterious.” “Wow,” I said. “I wonder what happened to him.”

Beloved

Soon it was time for graduation. All the angels got very excited. The ceremony was wonderful. We all got robes and beautiful wings and marched in a procession in front of God. Then we each knelt before Spirit and she gave us our new names. I couldn't wait for mine, but I was at the end of the line and I wondered if there would be any good names left. My friend Loneliness had gotten the name Empathy. It was perfect for her. Finally, it was my turn. I knelt down in front of Spirit and bowed my head. I could hardly breathe. Suddenly, Spirit cupped my face with her hands and tilted my head upwards. She was radiant and I loved her so much. Finally, she spoke in a very soft voice. “And you, Sorrow, you I will name Beloved.” My heart stopped for just a moment. “What a beautiful name,” I thought. I was not expecting anything so special. And I felt so shy that I couldn't even look at Spirit. But I could tell she was smiling at me.

Anxiety

My first assignment was short term. I was to help a young woman stop drinking. Her name was Anxiety and she had gone for a month without drinking but her resolve was failing. I was to give her something she did not know she had—a choice.

I watched Anxiety for a long time and she seemed to be doing okay, except when she was alone. Then she would get so sad and nervous. But she was really trying hard and so I kept vigil.

One day Anxiety's friends told her there was going to be picnic out in the woods. She was excited about the invitation and packed a wonderful picnic basket full of food. I was a little worried because I knew Anxiety was really afraid of crowds, but I was hopeful, and when she left home that morning with her hastily written directions she was so excited that I set my worries aside.

The drive to the edge of the woods was scenic and Anxiety was calm as she looked for the side road that would lead to the picnic area. She found the road and after awhile she pulled into the parking lot just a few yards away from the tables laden with food. Then she looked around for her friends but they were not there. She asked someone about them and found out that they couldn't make it to the picnic after all. Anxiety got nervous when she realized that she did not know anyone here and held back from the crowd.

After awhile Anxiety got a feeling of panic and decided to go home. She got in her car, leaving her picnic basket on the grass, and rushed to her car. Suddenly she was overwhelmed with a desire to drink. I could see it on her face. She was going to find a drink

no matter what it took.

I got in the back seat of the car with Anxiety as she drove madly through the woods. It was getting dark and before she knew it Anxiety was lost. I looked at her in the rear view mirror of the car. She looked like a distorted vision of herself. I did not recognize her reflection. "Did I look like that when I was drinking?" I asked myself. "I hope not."

I was not sure what to do at this point so I stayed with Anxiety as she tried to find her way out of the woods. Eventually she did find the main road and was on her way home.

Once Anxiety got back to town she pulled up in front of a liquor store. I caught my breath. I didn't know what to do. So I just watched her go into the store and then I followed close behind. Once inside, Anxiety found a bottle of whiskey. I recognized the brand. It was the same kind of whiskey I used to drink. Suddenly I had a flashback and remembered the angel who helped me when I was stuck in the ditch with a broken leg.

The next thing I knew, Anxiety was standing in line to pay for the whiskey. I thought about what Spirit had taught me and I decided to intervene. So I leaned over and whispered in Anxiety's ear, "You don't have to do this." Anxiety jerked her head to the left. She had heard me. I could see she was frightened, and I prayed that I had not whispered too loudly. But Anxiety put the bottle down on the counter and left the store. I was so relieved.

I went home with Anxiety and watched her as she called her friend Sympathy. I had arranged with Spirit to make sure Sympathy was home to receive the call and just as I had hoped Sympathy calmed Anxiety down. I could hear her say, "Anxiety, you can drink if you want. No one is going to stop you. But remember, if you drink tonight you only have to start over in the morning."

After awhile Anxiety calmed down and became sleepy. So she got off the phone and turned on the radio. Then, per my arrangement with Spirit, Anxiety fell asleep to the strains of "Help me make it through the night." I could see Anxiety being soothed by the song and so I softly brushed her brow until she fell asleep. Her last thought was, "Maybe somebody is looking out for me after all. Could God really exist?"

Anxiety did fine after that night. The worst was over for her and so I was re-assigned.

Romance

My next assignment was with a young man named Romance who had a broken heart. He did not want to live anymore and my assignment was to give him hope and something to live for.

Romance reminded me a little of Passion. He was so anxious to experience human love that he could hardly contain himself. He had decided as a young boy that nothing was more exciting than loving another person. "Erotic love is the only kind of love for me," he declared to his friends at the age of fourteen.

Unfortunately for Romance, he was too anxious for love. His neediness overwhelmed all the girls he was attracted to and one by one they rejected him. For years this did not

dampen his enthusiasm but then, as he got older, he did get discouraged. By the time he became my assignment he was very distraught. His girlfriend had left him and he was depressed more than he had ever been before. He thought often about killing himself, but he was afraid. He thought God might punish him if he didn't stick it out.

I was not sure what to do for Romance so I just kind of watched him from a distance for awhile. It was in observing him that I realized he had no friends or activities that gave meaning to his life. Then it hit me. He so preoccupied with romantic love that he didn't have a life without it. This was the problem, but what could I do about it?

It was about this time that I realized my assignment was going to take quite awhile. For a moment I got a little worried, but quickly I realized how selfish I was being and decided to give this assignment all my attention no matter how long it took.

The first thing I did was go to the angel library and see if there was anything written about this preoccupation with romantic love. Unfortunately, there were no books on the shelf, but Spirit took me to the house of a woman who was half way finished with a manuscript on the subject. Her name was Wisdom. I looked over her shoulder to see what she was writing. It was okay, but she needed a little help. So I whispered in her ear off and on for the next few months.

When the book was ready I wondered how I was going to get a copy to Romance. He lived hundreds of miles away from Wisdom and I had no way to bridge the gap. Then Empathy gave me the answer. "If she gets the book published," Empathy said, "I bet we can get a copy to Romance." "Great idea," I replied.

Unfortunately, Wisdom had no luck getting the book published, so after a few months I had to take matters into my own hands. First I whispered in her ear that she should send the book to Celestial Printers. It took her weeks to get around to it, which irritated me, but finally she dropped it in the mail. I watched as it arrived at Celestial and was placed on the desk of an editor named Insensitive.

For weeks the book just sat on Insensitive's desk. Then, finally, she read it. I was sure she would like it, but to my surprise Insensitive sat down to write a rejection letter. I was horrified, but no matter how much I whispered to Insensitive she would not pay attention to me. She typed up the letter and put it on her desk. I was desperate at this point, so I blew on the envelope and it fell on the floor behind the desk.

Meanwhile, I looked around Celestial Printers for a more interested person and found Perception. Perception was the owner of the company and he was very open to the suggestions of angels. "I'll just work with him," I thought.

The next day Wisdom was sitting at her desk at work when I whispered in her ear, "Call Celestial and ask for Perception." I could tell Wisdom heard me, but she hesitated. There was nothing I could do but wait. A few minutes later Wisdom picked up the phone and called Celestial. I heard her ask for Perception. (I didn't tell her he was the owner of the company. I knew she wouldn't call if I told her that.)

Perception was a hard man to pin down, but I put it in his head to be in his office

around 10:00 a.m., so he was there when Wisdom called. They chatted for a few minutes and then Perception invited Wisdom to come in for a conference. Everything went smoothly. Perception liked the book and decided to publish it. He assigned Joy, his favorite editor, to work with Wisdom. (As Wisdom was leaving the conference I saw Insensitive pick up the rejection letter from behind her desk and put it in the mail. But that didn't matter now. Wisdom had already signed a contract with Perception and this part of my mission was accomplished.)

A few months later Romance found the book and read it. (Spirit helped me arrange all that.) As it turned out, Romance was astonished at the idea that too much Romance was not good for you. And very soon after reading the book he took Wisdom's thoughts on the matter to heart and decided to do something about his problem.

Wisdom suggested in her book that people like Romance get some balance in their lives, so Romance went out and made new friends. He also got a better job and began some charity work. I could see that he was fulfilled and hopeful about the future and I was no longer worried about him. And, I knew from talking to Spirit, that eventually he would meet a nice woman by the name of Friend and that they would be very happy together.

The Pool of Time

At the end of my first year as a guardian angel Spirit told me that I could go to the Pool of Time and see how my relatives down on earth were doing. When I heard this I thought quickly of Passion, Comfort and Expectation. Tears came to my eyes for just a moment, but I blinked them away.

Finding My Family

When the time arrived to go to the Pool of Time I was very nervous. Some angels got homesick when they went to the pool of time and wanted to go home. I was sure this would not happen to me. I loved being in Heaven and serving as a guardian angel.

Since I was so nervous Empathy went with me to the pool. She had already been there and she knew the way.

We started our journey early in the morning and tiptoed by the chamber where the Prince lived. Everyone else was asleep and it was very quiet.

The path to the pool was wide and easy to follow, but the journey took a long time. There were also warning signs along the way. They said things like "Be Careful," and "Enter Here at Your Own Risk." I asked Empathy why the signs were there but she said she could not tell me. "Just make sure you want to do this," she said. "Looking back is not for everyone." Of course I ignored Empathy and stormed ahead. I really wanted to see how my family was doing.

Around noon we arrived at the pool. Two other angels were just leaving. One was smiling and the other had tears in her eyes. For the first time I hesitated. I looked at Empathy but she had absolutely no expression on her face.

“What do I do now?” I asked Empathy. “Just look into the water,” she said, “and ask for the person you want to see. You only get three requests—no exceptions. I hesitated just a moment and then decided to go ahead. So I knelt down next to the pool and peered in. The water was like glass at first, but as I kept looking I could see figures appear. I asked to see Passion.

Passion

Passion appeared in the reflection of the pool and the first thing I noticed about him was how young he still looked. And he still had that wonderful smile of his. For just a moment I could feel the stirrings of love that I had once felt for Passion. Then, as I continued to gaze upon him, I could see that he was not alone. There was another woman with him. She was beautiful and smiling up at Passion. Her name was Rose. I gasped, and Empathy, reading my mind, said, “That is his wife; he got married again.” “Oh,” I said, trying to compose myself. “Is he happy?” “Yes,” Empathy said, he is content. You know Passion cannot be alone. He needs someone. But he keeps a secret from Rose.” “What secret?” I asked. “He keeps a pearl hidden from her. It is the twin of the one he gave you. And he does not tell her how much he still loves you. He doesn’t want to hurt her feelings.” “Oh,” I sighed. “I guess that is best.”

I watched Passion and Rose for awhile and then dried my tears. I had chosen what was right for me. Passion would be in his own Heaven someday and while I would never see him again I would always love him. I looked at Empathy and she smiled. “Who do you want to see now?” she asked. “Expectation,” I quickly replied.

Expectation

When the pool revealed Expectation he was all grown up. My thoughts went back to the day he had left with the angel. Once again I began to cry. But soon I pulled myself together and tried to soak in as much of the vision of Expectation that I could see.

As it turned out Expectation was happy now, but it had taken awhile for him to find himself. Even with the angel’s help he has gotten lost and wandered down the wrong path more than once. Once he got in an argument with another man and almost got hurt. He went from job to job and woman to woman, not sure of what he wanted to do with his life. He also dropped out of school and ran around with the wrong crowd.

But, as it turned out, he found his way eventually and settled down. Now he was married with three children. He also had a good job working for a charity organization that sends doctors all over the world to restore the sight of abandoned children. I was very proud

of him. He had met all of my expectations.

I asked Empathy if I could talk to Expectation, but she shook her head. “That is forbidden,” she stated firmly. So I just watched my son for awhile, took an deep breath, and with just a touch of sadness asked the pool to let me see Comfort.

Comfort

It was Comfort I missed the most. She was such a precious child— always thinking of others and never complaining. Whenever I needed her she was always there.

When I saw Comfort in the pool, I could see that she was still with her knight in shining armor. His name was Remembrance and he was a very nice man. I could see how much he loved Comfort and he was a good husband.

Comfort had two little daughters, Promise and Heroine. They were so cute and happy. “What a wonderful family,” I thought to myself. And Comfort seemed happy too. She and Remembrance had joined a church and were busy helping others. I was really pleased.

I had been watching Comfort for about ten minutes when her husband and children left for awhile. When Comfort was alone she suddenly became very sad and had a far away look in her eyes. I gasped and turned to Empathy. “Why is she so sad?” I asked. “Well,” Empathy hesitated, “I am not sure I should tell you.” “Please tell me,” I begged, “Why is Comfort so sad?” Empathy took my hand and looked deep into my eyes. “Are you sure you want to know?” she finally said. For a moment I hesitated, and then my love for Comfort welled up in me. “Yes,” I said solemnly, “I want to know.”

Empathy got very serious and told me the story. “When Comfort conceived her first child she was so happy,” Empathy explained. She named her Jewel. Then just before the Jewel was born God decided to keep her in Heaven. She was one of his favorites and he could not part with her. He felt bad for Comfort, but the decision was made.” I just stared at Empathy in shock. “Comfort never got over losing her baby,” Empathy went on to explain.

“Will time heal her pain?” I asked Empathy. “It could,” Empathy explained, “if she knew that Jewel was all right. Comfort is worried because she does not know where Jewel is. God chose not to reveal this to her.” Anger flashed across my heart for a moment. “Why would God do that?” I asked. “I don’t know,” Empathy replied. “Maybe Faith would know. Do you want to go ask him?” “Yes!” I said, turning one last time to the pool and whispering to Comfort that I loved her. “Let’s go ask Faith.”

Empathy and I left the pool and walked in silence until we were back in Heaven. I looked at all the warning signs that we had passed on the way up. How I wished I had heeded their message.

Faith

When we got to the chamber where Faith lived there was a long line outside of his

door. There were hundreds of angels lined up with questions. I was dismayed, but got in line anyway.

Faith was a stern task master with the resolve of steel. At first glance he seemed to have no compassion and yet there was something that drew me to him. He seemed to hold some unknown promise and I intuitively knew that I would get to like him once I got past his cool exterior.

Empathy got in line with me and we waited patiently until it was our turn. Finally, I was standing right in front of Faith and he asked me what I wanted. “Well,” I sputtered, “I was just wondering why you would not reveal to Comfort where Jewel is.” “Who is Comfort?” he asked in a thundering voice. My hands started shaking and I said with all the bravery I could muster, “She is my daughter. She lost her first baby and no one has told her where she is. The baby’s name is Jewel.”

Faith glared at me and walked silently over to a book laying on a table near by. He leafed through the pages and then ran his finger down the lines of entries. Finally, he came back to where Empathy and I stood. “She is being tested,” Faith said. “God wants her to have confidence in him.” “Oh,” I said. “Does that happen very often.” “Yes,” Faith replied, “it happens all the time.” I stood there for a moment and then asked in a quavering voice, “But where is Jewel? Can I know where she is even if Comfort can’t?” “Well,” Faith said, “Since she is your granddaughter I will tell you. She is in the nursery with Patience.” “Where is that?” I asked. “Enough!” blasted Faith. “Go away. I am tired of all these questions.”

The Dilemma

I quickly left, with Empathy following close behind. Then I started looking for the nursery. Unfortunately, nobody knew where it was. Finally, in desperation I went to Spirit and asked her. Spirit quickly responded by saying, “The nursery is in the outer foyer of the Prince’s chamber. He likes to have the babies close by.” Then Spirit looked at me very seriously and wanted to know why I was looking for the nursery. “My granddaughter, Jewel, is in there and I want to see her.” “Oh,” Spirit said, “Are you sure you want to see her.” There is only one visit allowed and once you see her you might miss her terribly from that point on. Maybe it is best to just forget about her.” “Oh no,” I replied. I have to see her and take her to Comfort. My daughter needs to know that she is all right and being taken care of. She needs to know she in Heaven with us.” “That is impossible,” Spirit said. “First of all, there is the fact that she is being tested and you don’t want to interfere with that. And furthermore,” Spirit said, “If you take the baby to Comfort you will have to make a great sacrifice or you will not be allowed to return Jewel to the nursery.” “What sacrifice is that?” I asked. “If you take the baby to her mother even for just one moment you will never get to meet the Prince at the Jubilee. And,” Spirit added, “You will never find out where love abides.” I gasped. This was too much to ask. The greatest gift that an angel could be given was to know the secret of where love abides. They say when you go there you are bathed in

light and become fulfilled. And, as for the Prince, the angels had been waiting for millenniums to meet and adore him. “That would be so much to give up,” I thought to myself.” I looked up at Spirit and said solemnly, “I will think about it and get back to you.”

The Land of Dreams

I had a lot to consider and I knew I had to do it by myself. So I said goodbye to Empathy and started my journey to the Land of Dreams. I knew I would find my answer there.

It took about twelve hours to get to the Land of Dreams. I knew it would be a beautiful place, and it was. The grass was green and soft to the touch. The flowers were blooming and the sky was so blue it almost hurt my eyes. Soon I found a comfortable place to lie down and before long I fell asleep and began to dream.

In my dream I saw my guardian angel—the one who had helped me out of the ditch when I was just a young girl. He had been the first one to show me the way to God. In the dream he was standing in the corner of a small shack where a mother and her two children lived. At first I could not tell who the family was, even though it was obvious they were poor. But as I looked closer I could see myself as young woman huddling before a fire. In the dream, Expectation was telling me how hungry he was and how much he missed his father. Before I knew it, I could see myself burst into tears. Then, suddenly, as I watched myself crying, I saw Comfort, who as about five years old at the time, go over and put her arms around the me. “Don’t cry, mommy,” Comfort said. “Everything is going to be okay.”

As I looked at all of this I was very sad. Comfort was always taking care of me I remembered. What a sweet child she was. All of a sudden I looked up at the angel in the corner of the room. He had a smile on his face. I reached out to touch him but he quickly disappeared. Then, without warning, I was transported to the hospital where Comfort had given birth to Jewel. Comfort was sitting in the Chapel just moments after the doctor had taken her baby away. I was horrified by the pain I saw in Comfort’s face. No one could console her. Her tears broke my heart. During all the trials and tribulations we had suffered together while she was growing up, she had never complained and she had never cried—not once.

All at once, I woke up from my dream with a start and found myself cradled in the arms of Empathy. She had secretly followed me to the Land of Dreams in case I needed her.

My heart ached as I shook the sleepiness out of my eyes, but I still did not know what to do. Then it happened. I smelled the scent of a beautiful perfume. At first I could not identify it and asked Empathy what it was. “Don’t you recognize it?” she said softly. It is jasmine.

Then I knew what had to do. I hugged Empathy and we made our way back to Heaven.

Passing the Test

Back in Heaven I sought out Faith and asked him about the test Comfort was taking. “How is she doing?” I asked. “As a matter of fact,” Faith replied, “Comfort has passed the test. She is still sad but she has accepted that Jewel is and gone and she believes that God loves her and knows what is best for her life. Last week she got on her knees and prayed for strength to be there one hundred percent for her husband and children. Then she went to console a neighbor who had lost her husband. I must say, Beloved, your daughter is very special.” “Oh, yes,” I agreed. She was my gift from God before I even knew him. Of course, I adore Expectation, and I will always miss Passion, but there is no one like Comfort.

Patience and the Nursery

The next day I went to the Nursery and knocked on the door. A beautiful woman answered and invited me in. “Are you here to see Jewel?” she asked. “Yes,” I replied. “How did you know?” “Spirit thought you might be by. She said to watch out for you.”

Patience ushered me into the Nursery. It was spotless and bathed in light. Everywhere, as far as the eye could see, there were babies. Some were in cribs sleeping. Others were playing with their nurses. All of them were so happy and pleasantly plump. It thrilled me to see how content they were.

I followed Patience to a small crib over in the corner of the room. It was pink with little bunnies painted on the side. I peeked in and there she was— the most beautiful baby I had ever seen. Her cheeks were rosy and she had the most adorable curly hair. She was sound asleep so I just gazed at her for a long time.

Eventually Patience came over to see how I was doing. “Have you decided what you are going to do?” she asked. “Yes,” I replied, “I am going to take her to see Comfort.” Patience looked at me with great compassion in her eyes. “Spirit told you what that will mean, didn’t she?” “Yes,” I admitted, but I am going to do it anyway. I have to.”

Patience did not say another word. She just bent over the crib and gently picked up Jewel. Then she put her in my arms. Finally, she said, “She will sleep throughout the whole trip. It is not a good idea to let her see her mother. She thinks I am her mother now and it is best to leave it that way.” “Okay,” I said, “as long as Comfort can see her and know that she is in Heaven with me.” “Yes,” Patience said, “That’s the agreement.”

Going Home Again

Going back to earth took only a few moments, which was so strange since it had taken me so long to get to Heaven in the first place. Once I arrived, it did not take long to find Comfort. She was alone in her sewing room while her husband and children slept. It was June 16, Jewel’s birthday, and Comfort was holding the little gown Jewel had worn the night

she went away.

I stood for awhile looking at Comfort. She had grown much older, but she was still beautiful. Jewel slept in my arms with her soft blanket nestled around her face and time seemed to stand still. Then, carefully, I drew closer to Comfort and held Jewel out for her to see. But nothing happened. Comfort did not even look up. I was at a loss. “What should I do now?” I muttered to myself.

Suddenly Spirit appeared beside me and whispered in my ear. “Close your eyes,” she said, “and feel the love in your heart. As it burns brighter and brighter Comfort will see you and Jewel.” So I closed my eyes and I could feel myself getting warm. Then, before I knew it, there was light radiating out of me. Then suddenly Comfort looked up and saw me. She looked surprised and almost frightened, but I quickly said in a soothing voice, “It’s okay Comfort, it’s me, mommy.” Can you see me?” Comfort tried to speak, but no words came out. Then she looked down in my arms and saw the baby. “Who is that?” she gasped. “This is Jewel—your baby,” I said. “I brought her from Heaven for you to see. I wanted you to know that she is with me and all the other angels in a wonderful place. And we are all taking care of her for you. So don’t worry Comfort. God is so happy with you that he allowed me to come down and tell you this.” Comfort looked up at me with tears in her eyes. “Thank you,” she said, “Oh, thank you.” Then I put Jewel in her arms and she sat back in her chair with such happiness on her face. She rocked Jewel back and forth and I could see she was at peace. Finally, she fell into a deep sleep and all the lines in her face disappeared. Then Spirit whispered to me, “She will remember all of this when she wakes up. She will tell everyone it was a dream, but in her heart she will always know that it really happened.”

“Thank you, Spirit,” I said. “I can’t tell you how much it means to me to finally comfort my child as she used to console me.” Then I looked at Comfort one more time, took Jewel in my arms, and in a flash I was back in Heaven.

The Jubilee

I never regretted the sacrifice I made for Comfort. The years flew by and I was happy. Coming to this Heaven had been the right choice for me. The rest of my family were going to a special place as well, because they were all good people, but they had chosen not to make that special journey here so I would never get to see them again.

It was a long time before the announcement of the Jubilee was made, but finally the time had come. The Prince was to come out of his chamber and address the angels. Then he would make a trip to the other Heavens before he returned again to his chamber. For the first time, I felt a little sorry for myself, not to mention envious of the other angels. But I held my head up high and did not complain.

Of course, the day of the Jubilee, I had to stay home. That was the promise I had made. So the others went off to the auditorium and I made the best of it. I just kept imagining Comfort’s face when she saw Jewel and I was flooded with joy.

For the next few hours I kept busy. Off in the distance I could hear the crowds cheering and the roars of laughter. It sounded like they were having a lot of fun. Then things got very quiet and you could hear a pin drop. “He must be telling them were love abides,” I thought. “Oh to know that would be so wonderful.” Finally, I fell into a fitful sleep and dreamed of Passion, Expectation and Comfort.

Where Love Abides

A few hours later, I awoke to someone touching my shoulder. Then I heard a soft melodic voice talking to me. I rubbed my eyes and looked up. I saw a beautiful man standing there in a blue robe. I didn’t know what to say so I just looked at him. He was smiling at me. “I was walking back to my chamber,” he said, “and I saw you sleeping here. I was just wondering why you did not come to the Jubilee.” “I didn’t get to go,” I said shyly. “I gave up the privilege in order to take my granddaughter down to earth to see her mother.” “Oh,” he said, “so you’re the one. Spirit told me about you. Well, you missed a great event, but I am glad we got to meet.” “Oh, yes,” I said, “I am so happy you stopped by.” Then the Prince smiled and just stood there gazing down at me. Finally, he said, “Don’t you want to ask me something?” I was confused for a moment and then I realized the Prince was giving me an opening here. “Well,” I said, “I would dearly like to know where love abides. Could you tell me or have I lost my chance forever?” The Prince threw back his head and laughed. “No, you have not lost your chance,” he said. “I will give you a dispensation.”

I was so excited I jumped out of bed and burst out: “So where is it? Is it a beautiful place? Is it easy to get there? Can I go?” The Prince bent down and put his hand on my shoulder. I trembled as he opened his mouth to speak. “Love can be found in many places,” he said. “It is wherever you find compassion, mercy, kindness, generosity, empathy, faith, understanding, sacrifice and even endurance. But most of all,” he whispered, in the most tender voice I had ever heard, “love abides in the heart of a mother. It abides in you Beloved.” And with that the Prince walked away with God and Spirit close behind. And I—I was fulfilled more than I could every imagine.

The End

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