

Despair in the Quiet

POETRY

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Gold Medal, **New York Life Award**

I had no words to write and no way to say them
I had no way to write anything I could've said:

When I heard it, I was silent
I was still
I was scared to move
To breathe
To think

January twenty-seventh
A thursday
And suddenly the world is quiet

It is quiet as I throw my life into a bag
It is quiet in a friend's embrace, calming and warm
With wet tears on her shoulders
It is quiet as I walk out to the car

It is quiet in the car
The conversations are sparse and awkward
How is it that where there was always music,
Blasting through the speakers
Jams and words no one understands
Or the news of the world around us
Politicians and their laws seem so unimportant now
They are both gone, voiceless as the void
We pass familiar roads, scattered pavement,
The pathway home is quiet

That night
The world had gone silent

And it is loud, roaring, and agonizingly loud
All I have are questions
All I have are screams and swears
All I have is emptiness and tears until my pillow
is a spring
All I have are wretched cries until my throat is too
hoarse to speak
It is all I can do to even move

It is all I can do to eat
It is all I can do
It is all that I can

Suddenly all those all came rushing out
Spilling loud and forth every thought into somewhat
coherent prose:

So how is it that all but few of my memories of you
Are loud and boisterous, spilling with volume
When now your voice has gone silent
How is it that you will never hear the things I
wanted to tell you
How I'd never know your thoughts on me,
How there were so many things so important
Words that never met your ears
How I'd never tell you the deepest secrets I ached
to share
How you'd never the hear last songs I got to sing
how you wouldn't see my last concerts or plays
How you never read the poems I wrote about you
How you'd never know the terror I had when you
first bought your grave

I am told by others that the hardest pain brings the
greatest beauty
What is so beautiful about this?
What is so beautiful that I will never hear your
voice again?
What is so lovely about the emptiness I feel without
your warm embrace?
What kind of determination or drive do I bring from
this experience, when my experiences are those you
will never see?
That my achievements, that my accomplishments
That anything I will ever be proud of will never be
witnessed by your eyes or heard by your ears?
What is so poetic about you being gone?
It is ironic then, that I write this as poetry
How am I supposed to even begin to write when it

has taken me this long to even start?
That when I try to put my voice to paper or ink
upon a screen
All that comes out is some frivolous words or
nothing at all
Like anything I write could do justice to this
What is even the purpose?
When did this turn from poetry to a spilling of my
mind?

But it has to have a purpose, or else why do I sit
here writing it?

You believed in a godly faith
A holy father that would bring you home to a heaven
above
You believed in a faith that said you would always
exist around me
In life, in death, in spirit
So then as I write, do I write to you?
Do I write to the belief of your spirit?
In a faith I find myself lacking in?

I will not attempt to believe in something for one
person's sake if it's not my own
I will not say I write this knowing you'll see it
Or that you were by my side, that you know the
words as I type
But I'll write to you to honor the memory you left
The feelings you left on me which I'll never let go
I'll write ironic frivolities about your tragedy
I'll turn your life and death to poetry
Into words like faith, I'm not sure that I believe
And pray that it will do some justice to my love for
you
I'll hope that these same words will somehow seem
as warm and real as you were
Because both are real, are they not?

It is reflection now
I wrote a little more
And I wrote a little more
A little at a time
A chunk at a time
Is this how it felt?
How does it convey?
Is this really what I want to say?

There is only one chance, although there could be
dozens more
But to make it one chance
To dedicate one thing to you, to you alone
One piece to encompass every feeling
How will I ever manage it?
Did I show it right, every feeling, every heart?

Did I tell it right, did I speak to you in the way I
wanted?

Can you hear what I've said?
Do you see what I've written?
What is the right way to write
Will anyone feel this despair,
This ache, this missing piece,
This indescribable yearning,

Maybe I need more time
I will always need more time
Will there be more time?
I wish we had more time ■