

What does one do when they finally discover they are alone? Their spouse is really gone and will not return.

Breakfast for One

The desire for spiritual strength brought me to my knees, and as I begged God to minister to me, I received a miraculous surge of energy and hope. Soon the ability to think rationally returned but so did the familiar pain that had become a part of my every thought since Dennis' death. You know the one, it starts deep in your lower bowels and expands to your lungs, you struggle for breath and finally with a gasp, a stream of tears spill out of your eyes and flow down your face.

Having experimented with the many methods designed to relieve this sorrow, I searched my memory for quick relief. I tried thinking of my favorite things, only to realize each of them had some tie to Dennis. Finally I decided that I would focus on football.

I love football and the Dallas Cowboys are my favorite team. Thoughts of them reminded of my first wedding anniversary with Dennis. I had a friend, who had another friend, who was able to get us into Texas Stadium for a mid-night picnic celebration. Obviously, Dennis too was a Dallas Cowboy fan and it was a wedding anniversary gift that we happily discussed for many years.

Dennis loved the 'Boys,' as he called the team and being six foot four and 220 pounds he resembled a football player. Before he proposed marriage to me, he sheepishly requested information about my idea of sports. He exposed the fact he spent Sunday afternoons watching football and made it very clear that he believed the only reason the NFL exist, is the Dallas Cowboys. Other professional football teams are in this world just to give Dallas someone to play.

When I heard his commitment to the only team I had ever supported I was happy, but when he discovered I liked the Cowboys as well, he thought I was just trying to win his affections. So I informed him that I attended St. Edwards University in Austin, not only because it was a fabulous school, but because the Cowboys had their Summer Camps there.

Then I continued to impress him with my knowledge of the early team players, including Hollywood Henderson, Drew Pearson, and Ed "to tall" Jones. We discussed Roger Staubach and Tom Laundry then

compared their techniques to those of Jimmy Johnson and Troy Aikman. He finally conceded that I must be a true fan.

Okay, one of my favorite things was football and the thoughts of Dennis did help get me through the moment. As I re-lived our conversations I felt better but only for a minute then the hurting was back. This time it was the one that depletes your spirit. Yes that's it, the one that starts in your head right behind your eyes and swell like the ripples at sea and finally explode in huge waves crashing on to the beach.

The agony that somehow transforms itself into tears and spills out of your eyes with just enough moisture to re-hydrate the pathways in your makeup made during the last episode of grief.

This time to evade the pending trauma, I tried to think of reasons that I was thankful. Let me see. Am I thankful I am alive? Really, I could be dead, hmmm. You see, right after Dennis died I had a very difficult time waking up.

I started early morning walks with a friend but waking up was a chore. I discussed my difficulty with the doctor and he suggested that I was depressed. Yes, I was miserable, but not depressed. I had the prescription he gave me filled, but procrastinated taking the pills. It became so hard to get out of the bed; I had folded my hands and prayed. "God" I pleaded, "please get me out of this bed." Then at that very moment a preacher I was watching on television placed his microphone up to a ringing alarm clock and yelled, "WAKE UP, WAKE UP!" I decided his yelling was the answer to my prayer as I jumped up and prepared to go to work. The next morning I was not as inventive.

I could not wake up. I struggled and struggled but I could not shake the cob webs from my head. Soon I heard the shrill of the carbon monoxide detector but still could not move. I remember thinking, I really should buy myself a new bed, after all this is where Dennis and I slept and he is no longer here. The next thing I remember is my walking partner calling my name. The fresh air that filled the room when she opened the door had rescued me from sure affixation.

When our children started college Dennis and I moved from our country home and rented a small older home in the city. It had gas heat, a gas water heater and a gas stove. Having not lived with gas appliances I believe God used my concern to initiate my expedient purchase of the detector.

My error was made when I calibrated the sensor too low causing the alarm to sound only after the poison in the air had surpassed lethal levels. My morning fight to escape had reached the point of death. I know God wanted me to live. My children didn't need to bury their mother before recovering from the death of their father and I really needed to write this book. Besides, the entire community would have believed that I missed my husband so much I committed suicide.

So, now having remembered my personal brush with death I was actually feeling better. The feeling better I experienced would measure as depression to many others, but compared to deep seated anxiety I've suffered this morning I welcomed the despair I felt now.

A few minutes later I was stable enough to climb back into my truck and continue my journey. What truck? Well, here it is. My mother's oldest sister had died in January and her funeral was in Virginia. I couldn't imagine my parents driving the 1200 miles from Texas to Virginia through the Smokey Mountains in the middle of winter, so I took on the task. While visiting the home where my mother grew up, and where I spent every summer of my childhood, I inquired as to what was going to happen to my late aunt's furniture. It had actually been her great-grandmother's furniture. My other aunts said that I could have my choice of the 18th century antiques if I picked them up in the next 30 days.

So I drove my parents back to Texas, immediately hopped on a plane, and returned to Virginia to pick up my heirlooms. The truck I rented had enough room for twice the goods, so I decided to take my time driving back to Texas and shop every chance I got. It was a very quiet drive and I thought a lot about Dennis. It would hurt then it would hurt some more. Would this anguish ever end?

I listened to a number of teaching tapes, and after their encouraging messages I would just drive and appreciate the sound of the silence. This morning I was incredibly lonely but now finally feeling steady, I decided to go to a restaurant and have a good breakfast. After all it is the beginning of a new day, breakfast is the most important meal of the day, and I was driving across country trying to start my life over, so why not have a good breakfast? My point of view had changed and I was sure I was on my way to recovery. I pulled into the parking lot of a national chain restaurant and when I got out of the truck I could smell the ham, Virginia ham in Tennessee, and I completely

experienced the aroma that only months of maple smokehouses of can produce.

I was rehearsing my menu order of ham, eggs, pancakes, and grits when the hostess interrupted my reflection with an innocent question; a question that revitalized the pain from the early morning period of hopelessness, a question that hurled me around and forced me back into my previous state of doom. This hostess was doing her job so she turned, faced me, and graciously asked, "Breakfast, for one?"

For one? Oh my goodness, I was really alone, since Dennis' death I never thought of myself as alone, I thought of him as with me, but this waitress only saw one person and her question made me realize that Dennis was gone. I forgot about breakfast and in a blur I left the restaurant hunting for a Godly answer.

I remember spending endless hours searching a variety of Christian and Secular bookstores looking for a book, any book that would give me the desire to hope for a better tomorrow.

I had to know that another person had survived the death of their spouse and was doing well. I found many books with inspirational passages and a lot of Topical Scripture books, but I had already memorized many of the faith and hope scriptures and I believe those scriptures helped me get to this point but Dennis was gone and I needed a "Survivors Guide". What did others do after they woke one morning to find that the love of their life, the father or mother of their children, their prayer partner, their best friend, their lover, their partner in business, and their mental counterpart was suddenly gone? What are they doing for a stabilizing force now? How do they handle unpredictable times? How did they sleep at night, how did they face their friends, and when did they stop expecting their spouse to come home? How did they go on and what made them choose to do so?

As I begged God for an answer, I heard him clearly speak to my heart. His words were simple. "The Bible has your answers." "But God", I complained "I need strength right now, right now or I will not make it." "Stop" He said. "Now breathe, don't say another word, stop and breathe." So I closed my eyes, folded my hands, took a deep breath and dried my tears.

Sitting in the truck, I reached for my Bible, I opened it and read Mark 9:23" Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible

to him that believeth." What is possible? What am I suppose to believe?

I know I have to go on, but I don't think I can. Okay, I needed to slow down my thinking, so I did, and then I re-read the scripture. All things are possible, meant that I could make it. I can survive I decided right then, right there that I would survive and that God would make it possible. He would bring me out better than I was before. I decided to become the victor and not the victim. I knew God and I knew His love and I made the choice to get through this. I proclaimed that I could do all things through Christ who strengthened me.

The Widow's Might is the chronicle of my spiritual endurance during the time of my recovery from the death of my husbands. I've been able to continue to live because God gave me strength. God Himself gave me the desire to out last the pain.