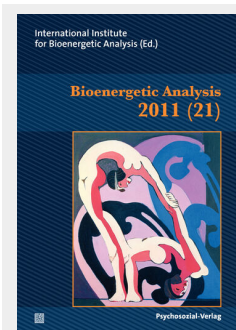


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GRIEVING MOM POEMS

Vincentia Schroeter

The following are some poems I wrote to help me cope with the death of my mother. [Living with an Empty Chair](#) is a book on grief by Dr. Roberta Temes¹. Temes states that the stages of grief are Numbness, Disorganization, and finally, Reorganization. In the Numbness stage, one is in a hazy state in body and mind. This normal state helps protect us from the enormity of our grief. In the stage of Disorganization, the haze begins to lift as the full meaning of our loss is felt. It is normal in this stage to feel the vacuum of acute loneliness and emptiness. During the Reorganization stage, we begin to re-invest in the future. We gradually displace some of the emotional investment we had in the deceased. It is normal to displace some of that emotion toward other people and things.

Although these stages are universal, Temes makes the point that grief is as individual as those of us who feel it and as varied as the circumstances of death which occurs. These poems are my individual expression and the circumstance was the death of my mother, who died after a long and well-lived life. The poems are divided by the stages of grief stated above.

¹ Temes, Roberta, (1991), *Living with an Empty Chair, a guide through grief.*(New Horizon Press, Far Hills, NJ)

(GRIEF STAGE 1: NUMBNESS)

MAMAGONE

Time to stare out over a vast sky.
Watch ocean waves ebb and flow me into space,
Let a hot wind warm me,
A cold drink cool me.

I want only to be passive and still.
My body wants to rest.
My mind wants to float.

But the world pulls me back
When I just want to sink
Into my husband's arms,
A big stuffed chair,
A cozy warm bed.

I stare at a smiling puffy lamb I had given her.
His arms encircle a purple teddy bear whose shirt reads,
"Love you, Mother" ...

It is unreal that you are gone.

8-8-2006

MAMAGONE 2

They took her away.
We all arrived
One by one, family by family falling into
Fears, tears, hugs.

Slow motion, everyone pausing at her empty bed,
Reverent.
One sister touches and smells her pillow and sheets,
While I sit frozen in a chair, clutching a pillow,
Watching.

In other rooms, they plan her funeral,
Cleaning, eating, preparing words to honor her.

On the periphery of stunned adults in startled grief,
Kids run through the house and around the summer yard:
Jump off the roof,
Chase each other with water balloons,
Dart around corners, surefooted,
Laughing, bonding with cousins,
Oblivious.

One day,
They'll become adults
And slow in the wake of the death of their parent.

Everything changes.
The worn, smooth, familiar stones beneath me,
Once sure in their support of my every step,
Are loose,
Making me slip and walk gingerly,
Surprising my feet, who don't seem to know:
She was my ground.

8-26-2006

(GRIEF STAGE 2: DISORGANIZATION)

BENEATH THE REUNION PLANNING

Doing is Being.
Keeping us alive since Mom died.
Everybody planning details for a reunion:
Site, decorations, evites, and food.

Then my brother sends an email ending in capital letters,
“I MISS MY MOMMY”.
Doing stops in its tracks.
I blink and stare at those words as my eyes water.
I pause in my feverish planning of a family reunion
To understand its urgent purpose:

Just hands grabbing other hands
To pull us up into life
When gravity pulls us down
To hover at our mother’s grave.

I drag around my bucket full of tears,
Ignore its weight,
Pulling myself through these days.

My eyes squint because the sun is too bright right now.
I feel drawn to night.
In the cool of the dark sky,
I could stare forever at stars.
Night stars know more about the mysteries of heaven and the afterlife
than these forced sunny smiles of daytime doings and actions all cover-
ing for truth best revealed to me at night:
I am in deep sorrow.
Night slows the day and invites me to pause and breathe more truth:
To be sad, to cry, to hurt, to feel a little scared of dying myself.

The bucket fills with tears, I succumb to the heaviness of its weight,
Stop and pour it out into the welcome blackness of night.

Life seems shorter, more real in its shortness, since Mom died.

Dad just lost his best friend after sixty years of marriage.
What does he reach for to get through the day?
Does he grab for a hand?
Flesh he can still touch in life, which belongs to those he has left?
He visits, he calls,
He helps plan a reunion for a sunny day next Spring.

11-13-2006

SIBLING POEM

A leaf drops into the river.
I watch until it disappears from sight.
I want to float away myself.

I see you on the nearby shore.
I hear you sobbing.
I hold you as you cry.
I feel the hot rush of my tears.
You hold me while I cry.

Our hearts are breaking in the same place,
The place reserved for mother love,
Where the one who carried us into life
Has gone and left us here alone.

If not for the mirror we become for each other
I think I could break.

I feel the gritty pebbles of sandy shore beneath my bare feet.
We walk together in this tenuous land between life and death.

12-11-2006

(STAGE 3: REORGANIZATION)

LAS FLORES BLANCAS

I wake up cringing on the first day of Spring.
Today is Mom's first birthday since she died last summer.

I walk downstairs feeling fragile.
A profusion of new white flowers dot the dark green bushes that climb
the walls outside my kitchen windows.
Startled, I gasp at this beautiful greeting from nature.

My eyes fill with the slow undulations of white petals.
I sense a confident smiling power above me,
Like when Glinda, the Good Witch, looks down from the sky, circles
her wand and wakens Dorothy from her drugged sleep.

Once on her birthday Mom proudly told me, "I bring the Spring."
She opened a hundred white flowers in my garden today.
I feel her faith-filled, hope-filled presence drawing me to look closely
at these flowers:
Each shaped like gently cupped hands,
Swaying slowly in the warm breeze.

They beckon me to climb inside.
I crawl inside their lap,
They rock me until my pain subsides,

Creating room for hope and love,
As nature insists with buds that burst through each new Spring,
No matter how harsh Winter has been.

3-21-2007

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vincentia Schroeter has kept personal journals since she was fifteen. She likes to both draw and write in these journals. Working through painful issues has often involved some creative writing. In her psychotherapy practice, one of her specialities is working with grief. Workshops on grief have included some of the poems that are included here. Her website is vincentiaschroeterphd.com.

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