

Sole Soul



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“Love’s a small word, part time thing...I know it’s been done...right or wrong, weak or strong. Don’t know that I will, but until I can find me...I’ll be what I am, a Solitary Man.”

~from Neil Diamond’s *Solitary Man*

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We enter this world alone and we leave this world alone, and in between these two passages, the life we live, hopefully, is shared; because does it really matter if we were on this earth with no human recording our presence? That is why, perhaps, we are provided with parents and children. At least most of us have this privilege.

Some of us never know love at any point in our lives—and I am speaking strictly of human love. And without this required commodity, can we truly lead a meaning-filled existence? We always hear of victims of fire and their wish to have saved the family picture albums. They generally say, “All of our memories are gone.”

They are wrong, of course, because our hearts record memories each moment of our existence on this earth. So, really what they speak of is shared recordings of our lives. With this insight, then, like the tree that “falls in the forest without ears to hear it”, did it really happen? Likewise, without others to share in our life, did we really live it? They are the witnesses to our presence, and without them, we might just not “be” at all.

We know it is the greatest human desire to love and be loved. And sometimes life allows us this opportunity, and the dreams we dream come from a heart bigger than implements can measure. It is in these times that heaven touches earth, angels walk among us, love becomes the simplest of acts, and the existence of miracles is acknowledged.

We are not alone, yet alone each of us is a

sole soul

searching for our life, our family, and our love.

He was named Sea (pronounced Shay) by the attending nurses in the dirty inner-city hospital where he was born, because the liquid pools that were his eyes brought to mind the palest ocean. And being born along the coast, it just seemed appropriate. Sea was destined for greatness—from the moment he was born, there was just “something” about him. The hospital staff couldn’t put any particular definition to it, but neither could they resist fighting over who would feed or hold him...he was just so not ordinary. His ample lips were frozen in a perfect smile; he looked perpetually amused with his dancing eyes and pixie nose. They were all captivated by his mere presence. And unlike the other crack-addicted babies, he never cried.

Life abandons orphans, and surely each solitary human finding themselves in this circumstance never hoped for this particular existence. Lonely, sad, lost can hardly put a name-tag on this condition. And as capricious and unkind as this condition is, it surely happens more often than any loving person would hope. Such was the predicament of Sea. He was just born to the wrong mother and had no father (at least none was named on the hospital certificate).

The nursing staff all wanted to take him home, but unfortunately when his drug-addicted mother died shortly after leaving this inner-city hospital, Sea was left to the cruelty of this world. If it hadn’t been for the nosey landlady down the hall suspecting his mother’s neglect of him, he would never have even had the opportunity to grow up. As it was, the two days it took for her curiosity to kick in was almost his demise, but again, he was destined for the extraordinary.

So, as predictable as the ocean’s tide, his mother’s life was over. Such is generally the case with so many incapable of handling life; turning for solution to the destructive life of a drug addict, which usually favors an

untimely outcome. And predictable as this was, it was not so wonderful for Sea. Now, there was no one remaining who might love him, for he was alone in this world with not one human he could call family.

It was in the bowels of the foster care system that Sea found himself. Since he was young when orphaned, luck found him a family, but their idea of love was not how most would define this heart feeling. The Corbetts had been unable to conceive and so adopted Sea. Unfortunately for him, his adoption set into motion a less frantic phase, and soon the births of three natural children followed.

Sea was to take a solid step backward as the adopted child to parents with now plenty of their own children. So, he became the scapegoat for each problem and issue for the many years that followed him into adolescence and even though an excellent student, talented athlete, and exceptional musician, it seemed that Sea just did not measure up to the significantly lower standard of the natural Corbett children. Pure and simple, the DNA did not match. And when he continued to surpass every success of his siblings, his parents continually had the acknowledgment that their biological progeny were somehow inferior. And this became so unappreciated. He became the one who was picked on and taunted. Of course, this was not right or kind or loving, but how often in this world can these words be applied and found inapplicable?

It wasn't long before Sea became clear on what his next step would be. It just hurt too darn much to try so hard and never hear words of loving encouragement. So, on the occasion of his sixteenth birthday, he found himself hoping for a ride to encounter his future where he was appreciated. A sad, single soul again went seeking a family, a love he could paste to his heart for the length of his life. Until now, it had somehow always managed to fall away and leave him alone.

Just as his birthing mother had left him, his adopting mother had also left...and it hurt so much more because this second occurrence was intentional. It just hurt his huge heart so much, the ache compressed his soul and tears were so meaningless that he never even considered this an option. Sometimes, this release is so trivial as to become a

caricature for brokenhearted lovers. Yes, his heart was split in many pieces, but like the egg on the wall, nobody had the ability to put it back together once it fell off.

So, Sea just shrugged his shoulders when the truckers picked him up for the multi-mile rides. He said he was an orphan making his way to the West Coast to find his destiny. But, it seemed so wrong in these times of opulence that a precious, gifted child could be alone, and at such a tender age.

Sea had lived two lifetimes in his scant 16 years and he had known great loss—the loss of not one, but two mothers. His heart could not correct this grievous error to his life, so likewise there was no perspective he could draw from. It just seemed so wrong—truly beyond sadness. But, the perpetual smile on Sea’s face came home to stay, and he never cried.

It was the third encounter, when her stepfather mounted her 15-year-old body, that Sammy Jo used his own pistol on him. And even when his lifeless body fell and pressed his entire two hundred pounds on her, she merely wriggled out from under, rolled him off her bed, changed the sheets, and began to fill her school backpack. She put her CDs, her diary, her favorite picture of the Jonas Brothers, and her teddy bear inside, and there was little room for her clothes or any food...oh, well.

Then Sammy Jo left a love note for her little brother, another one for her mom, and walked away forever from sexual abuse and into a world with no promises. Perhaps, now she would at least not be violated by the likes of an old, smelly, hairy man breaking a marriage vow to her mother. The thought of Clyde sickened her. Of course, her mother never knew about their “special time” and in her note to her mother, she didn’t mention anything about Clyde’s indiscretion. She loved her naïve but well-meaning mother and didn’t want to hurt her further. Clyde’s death would be enough of a challenge for her life, and this final dispensing of information would have been the straw for her camel’s back.

As she hitched along the interstate, Sammy Jo imagined a world without the immorality that had violated her child’s body for the last year. The prior year, when she had finally gotten her period, Clyde had begun to pay increasing attention to her. Previously, he had largely ignored her and just spent time with her 10-year-old brother, Benji. But now, his unexpected attention raised the hairs just at the base of her neck. His leer and drool were giveaways to a no-good heart.

Sammy Jo didn’t know yet to trust this hair tingling and had gladly accepted Clyde’s invitation for a trip to the ice cream store. The feeling-up with his hand in her blouse and down her shorts wasn’t worth the

special treat. She was going to tell her mom, but Clyde mentioned how he would just misplace Benji in the woods on one of their many fishing trips. So, she just kept quiet. And when the touching wasn't enough to quell his sexually perverse mind, he bedded Sammy Jo the first day she was left alone in the house with him.

The only remembrance she had of the event was a terrible pain down there and bleeding which eventually stopped. It had seemed similar to a period, but this was such a new occurrence to her that Sammy Jo just could not be certain. And unfortunately, this first event was followed by another and then the fated third encounter.

Sadly for Clyde, he had shown both of the children years ago where he kept his revolver for intruders, how to load the bullets, and how to shoot and aim the gun. The trips to the shooting range had been successful. She had hit her intended target with a single shot.

Sammy Jo didn't consider herself a murderer, but the world might; so, as she watched the traffic continue to pass her by, she tried to find words to explain what she had done to a world where little girls aren't raped by those who should be protecting them. She missed her mom and Benji already, and as the big green truck pulled past her and then slowed, she began to run toward it. Now, she would be safe.

It wasn't long before the personable traveler was picked up by a trucker heading to Denver, Colorado, by way of Florida. Sea probably should have been apprehensive, but his life told him about tragedy, and the primary goal now was to run away from this sadness—or maybe, he was running toward life—he could not be certain. But, he had prepared well for his journey and had filled his school backpack with extra clothes, snacks, and reading materials. He was a good student and understood the value of education, and he was not going to neglect this part of his life.

In his pack were *Great Expectations*, *Gulliver's Travels*, and the worn bible his mother always made him drag to church on Sunday—he didn't know why he included this, but somehow it made its way on the road with him. So, each night when the truckers stopped and they slept in the cab, he read a few pages of each book with the pen light he so cleverly remembered to bring.

Truckers are a distinct bunch—distinct in that nothing really defines them; they are as varied as the colors in a box of crayons. Each had a different story for Sea, and he eagerly listened to life as it unfolded on the road heading west to his destiny. This was to be his education, and he eagerly listened with rapt attention as some told of strip joints, booze, and loose women. Others, family men, warned him of the corruption on the road as a runaway—which is what they all thought him to be.

Though Sea knew that his family would be surprised by his note, he also knew that the burden of one less body to clothe and feed would most assuredly be a blessing for them. So, when he began composing his note three months prior to his eventual departure, he outlined why he was leaving and why they should not worry about his adventure.

No, he assured the truckers that he wasn't a runaway but an adventurer with the approval of his adoptive parents. They hardly believed his story, but chose to look the other way—he was such a determined young man.

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