

# The Trust

*by G Zarek*

Today marks four months since my beloved flew to another world. I know he flew because that Sunday before he left on Tuesday, he often gazed at the ceiling, extending his thin, bruised and needle-punctured arms trying to catch something out of my sight. "Angels," I heard him whisper, eyes averted.

Good news and bad news seem to travel together. Until that day, I believed with him that he would survive the surgery and I would stand by him once again while we rebuilt his weakened body. What a beautiful body and mind he had. Even riddled with stage 4 cancer that had metastasized to the bones, he had doggedly ridden his cherished motorcycle with enthusiastic confidence. If anyone could believe in his recovery, John Thomas Zarek could.

It was not meant to be. He opened his eyes, focused on my face and strained to articulate his first words to me in days: "My Princess". It was accompanied by a devoted smile and the familiar gaze of his green-flecked, ocean-colored eyes. This intimate moment held our profound promise to each other. His last lucid sentence, however, shook my peace. "I can't fight anymore."

I had two choices; burst into tears of self-pity or allow his dignity. My calm voice surprised me. "You may lay down the fight, my love; I will be here with you." My internal clash was echoed by the whorl outside our window.

By Monday, the doctors verified what John had told me the day before; he was leaving us. His Mother came to sit at his side, hold his hand and share her tender words with him. She asked a priest to say Last Rites over her cherished son. I was helpless to ease her pain.

That last night, I recollected dear stories in his ear. We had been trusting friends before we became best friends, mates and constant companions. I had rarely left his side while we shared the last four years of his adventurous life.

Even while dying, John shared himself with all who sat with him during his last hours. He imparted spirit to each hand that took his and every voice that

spoke in his ear, through a flick of a finger, eyelid or some feeling shared. We each received some personal message of blessing from him.

After all the tubes and needles had been removed, I crawled into bed with my husband, held him close and sang our favored, Amazing Grace. It was grace that brought us boldly into each other's life; grace that gave us courage to celebrate living while death lingered in the shadows, and grace that anchored our faith that dying is part of living. It was an honor to share this gift.

One tender surprise for us all was when his sister placed her i-pod with speakers on his pillow and played his music. It startled him into response to hear the tunes he had created from his own heart. Briefly, he was playing his treasured left-handed bass. His children sang the words of the songs they had grown up hearing. We knew he knew we were there.

A single tear flowed from his right eye and down his cheek as he breathed his last belabored breath. We sat with him for a while and held onto each other before we began moving without thinking, only feeling. I caressed his hand, cheek and ten-inch braid, of which he was so proud, one last time before leaving his body in that hospital bed.

A week later, I retrieved the ashes of my 6'2" husband sealed in a box weighing just seven pounds. I drove silently to a park, took him with me to a bench and sat quietly with him by my side. At home later, I restlessly slept with my arms wrapped around him one last night.

Feeling has brought many tears, but tears have not all meant sadness. It is hard to distinguish which are sad and which are happy; they seem to mingle on the cheeks as one and somewhere on their way to the heart, the sadness washes away a bit at a time and the happiness is stored. The feelings of pleasure take the shape of memories that curve the lips upward and create a feeling of warmth that conceives hope. It seems since we lived in hope, I should continue the lifestyle that honors the trust.

Six hours from now four months ago, I became an unaccustomed widow; all feelings, all unexpected behavior, tears without notice, and vulnerable to compassion. As a widow, I am learning to sleep alone, eat alone, take walks alone, but be confident I am not alone. My devotion translates to memorizing tiny details for companionship on the lonely nights. I want to remember it all.

As in all excess, too much feeling can become a problem. Sorrow has its season and I am thankful for time to mourn. Today, however, I am also thankful to finally find another path of expression that honors our love. My Johnny reveled in my pursuits of passion and was all encouragement. He will be delighted to see my tears transformed into words.

"Happy Anniversary, Honey."

I am G Zarek. Upon reflection, jewels of value, purpose and resolve lie just below the surface of my memories revealing the trail of my roots. Chronicling the people and events in my perception, I entrust insight, heart and humor to those who respond to these beauties I savor.



Having grown through struggle, I now find my voice as a bridge of joy; releasing the wrongs of the past, discovering the delight of the present, holding the hope of the future.

My vignettes summon you to remember your own.