

By David Paul

(4 actors enter a dimly lit stage from different parts of the audience. As they enter the stage area the center of the stage gets brighter.

Ideally there are 2 men & 2 women...a mix of ages & ethnic backgrounds. N is the Narrator, 1-3 play different characters as needed. When not speaking they turn their backs towards the audience in between sections when the Narrator speaks in transition areas. The Narrator always faces the audience.)

N: In a certain city on the shore of a lake, at the edge of the prairie, there lived a woman whose happiness was suddenly shattered by a great and sudden sorrow. Her only brother, a good man and dearly loved gay school teacher, died of AIDS in the prime of his life. Now the woman was a faithful soul and believed firmly in the power and goodness of the Holy One. She was deeply torn by this sudden and cruel event...in her anguish she cried out loudly in tears...

1: Why O God? Why take my only brother? Why take him from me so quickly and suddenly?

N: No answer came forth...only silence. The woman, however could not be satisfied by silence, and she was determined to go out in search of an answer that would bring some peace to her soul. There must be some meaning for her pain. She resolved to pursue this quest, if need be, to the very presence of the Holy One. And so she set out. She had not gone very far when she came upon an old man sitting on a bench beside the road weeping...

1: Why do you weep so old man?

2: I have suffered a great loss. I am a painter, and I have lost the sight of my eyes. I shall never see beauty again, or be able to spread it out on my canvas.

1: I too have suffered a great loss. Tell me, do you know why God allows such things to happen?

2: My friends tell me that I am suffering the penalty for my own misdeeds. The Holy One is just, they say, and so my blindness must be only what I deserve.

1: Do you really believe that?

2: No..I cannot! I did nothing so wrong to deserve this.

1: Nor do I. Come with me and let us seek the real truth together.

N: And so, taking her arm, the old man went with the woman. As they walked, they overtook a young woman who trudged aimlessly along the road. She seemed lost and confused.

2: Come and walk with us.

3: You will not find me very good company. My heart is heavy, for I have suffered a great loss.

1: What loss is that?

3: My partner, the joy of my life, has suddenly chosen to leave me for another. I am in shock and feel so alone in this world.

2: This is indeed a great loss. But have you found the meaning of your pain?

3: My friends have tried to comfort me. They tell me that the Holy One is wiser than I and most surely they have done this for a reason...maybe to make me strong.

1: Do you believe that?

3: I try....but I can't. Why do I have to experience such a loss?

2: Then come with us and we will seek some answers together.

N: Yet a little farther on the road, they came to a cottage where a young man sat on the step. His hands covered his face, and they could hear him sobbing softly.

3: Why do you weep?

2: My adopted child has died. We had waited so long for her to join us. She was only a few weeks old, healthy and full of life, and now my arms shall never hold her again or my eyes see her grow into womanhood.

1: We weep with you, for we too, have been visited by grief. Tell us, has the Holy One revealed to you why we must know such pain?

2: My partner is very bitter...he says there is no God in a world where babies die. He says all of life is just a chance and roll of the dice. We have to deal with the hand that has been dealt us and go on. He says that faith is for fools and justice just a cruel joke.

3: Do you believe that?

2: I don't want to...I would not want to continue living if that were true. I know he is hurt too but I can't live with such negativity.

1: Then come with us and let us seek another answer, even if we must search to the very presence of the Holy One.

N: Together the four of them went off down the road, and they walked a very long time. They spoke with many people on their extended journey. Always they asked their questions, but nowhere did they hear any new answers to their pain. They were bent over with discouragement and weariness. At last they reached the bridge of

twilight been this world and the next that leads to the presence of the Holy One. They were about to cross over when they stopped short. There in front on them on the bridge coming towards them, clothed in white light, was the very Holy One they had been searching for. Terrified, they covered their eyes with their hands and bowed their heads in fear. They were about ready to run away when the light parted and they beheld a face as careworn as their own.

1: You have come a long way...what is it you seek from me?

2: We seek the truth of suffering...why do you visit your children with such tragedy?

3: Is it to punish us for our misdeeds?

2: Do you torment us to make us strong?

3: Is our faith in justice only folly?

2: What answer can you give to heal our pain?

N: For a long time there was no reply. As the four seekers waited, first one of them and then the next drew back in wonderment. For there, before them, tears rolled down the cheeks of the Holy One.

1: Forgive me...my heart is heavy, for I am bearing a great weight of sadness. I weep today for a woman who lost her only brother very suddenly and for a new father whose adopted baby has died. I grieve for the love of a couple I once delighted in and which now are torn asunder. I weep for an artist whose eyes are veiled in darkness. I go now in search of those who can comfort me.

N: Even as these words were spoken, the woman, moved with an overwhelming pity, stepped forward and took the arm of the Holy One, placing it about her own shoulders. The young man supported the other arm, and the young woman came forth to wipe the tears from the moist

cheeks. The blind man groped and found a wrinkled hand and clutched it tightly in his own. They stood this way together for a long time.

Then at last the woman spoke:

3: Why, Holy One? Why in your realm must even you endure such pain? Why do you let it happen to those you love?

1: My dominion is not of this world...but is the dominion of the heart. There I cannot prevent pain. I can only heal it.

2: Then what is the purpose of suffering?

1: It has no purpose. It can only be endured.

3: But how can we endure it?

1: Only by sharing it.

2: Then show us how to share it.

1: That I have already done.

N: Then the Holy One said no more and suddenly disappeared.

The woman looked up, and it was the young man's arm which lay upon her shoulder. It was he who held the artist's hand, and the young woman's caress wiped the tears from his cheek. For a moment longer they just stood there, each holding the next in a circle.

Then slowly, arm in arm, they turned...and together walked back down the road that led back to their homes.