
Short Story Page

Friends

By: Michael Craig

I walked down the lonely halls of that place one more time smelling the stench of bleach mixed with that all too familiar smell of the hospital. With each passing clank of my Sunday shoes on the cold hard floor the smell, the taste of death just got stronger. Passing the rooms, looking in the right one, then the left, and back to the right all the way down the long hall, each time seeing lonely people staring into some unknown abyss about six feet off the floor.

I had always wondered what exactly all these people were looking at, or for. One day ten years or more ago I ask a kind lady named Sue what she was looking at. Sue said, "I've been looking and hoping to see God and others I love and soon I think I might just be seeing them." After about two years of talking to Sue at nine o'clock every Thursday morning when my father was doing his rounds, I walked into room one thirty-two just to find it empty. At such a young age of eight I never did get the idea that she was dead and when my dad said that I would see her again, I had no idea I would have to wait till heaven. I guess Sue found what she was looking for in that abyss just above my reach. Amazing the memories and simple things that make us who we are.

Reaching the end of the hall and passing through the empty emergency room I came to a stop. Looking up I could see a tall, donsiely built man with an over sized mustache in his Sunday's best with a sheriff's badge on his left coat pocket and pair of surgical gloves pulled over the aged vessels covering the back of his hands. After a few pleasantries, the officer opened the door and lead into a larger than normal exam room. With even the cracking of the door I could smell and taste the death that laid just a step farther. So before I took a step in, I took a good long breath of fresh air hoping with a morbid humor that maybe it would last the next hour. Pulling out the chart the officer read, "thirty six year old female, plausible suicide, drove her car into the lake, found by local divers, missing person report filed ten years ago." By this time I had made it over to a tall stool and sat were I could look on what the coroner was doing.

At this time I slowly lost myself in that spot, that unknown abyss, just above the table where a pile of bones lay. The spot seemed to shoot out, or was I sucked in? It did not mater to me. I was in, in the spot that all the hopeless people stared at on their deathbeds. I remembered what Sue had said about God in this abyss but I found nothing of the sort in this place. What I found was far, far different. I looked in my mind's eye up at the crescent moon shining over the ripples in a lake with the faces of a thousand people flashing before my eyes. I felt a slow movement below me and yet did not look down to see a car slowly creeping to the water.

I lost the abyss when I heard the sheriff laughing at the coroner who was holding up a pair of non-biodegradable panty hose containing foot bones in it, which he played like a musical instrument. Trying my best to ignore them, I ended up finding my self back in my abyss. This time I find myself speeding down the boat ramp; I am thinking about what my mother had last said, and how my pastor gave me his number and said to call any time, and ironically I think "please get help somewhere" or "just wait five minutes and then make up your mind" and still in my mind I laugh to think how "that's not for me." I am looking up, coming out of my trance just as the window spider webs from one side to the other under the pressure of the water that is now seeping in.

I see the coroner playing with a small piece of brain that the fresh water fish did not want to eat for some odd reason. When the coroner tried to hand me his newfound squeeze toy I got a little sick and rushed out into the hall in fear that I was about lose it.

Sitting on the floor in the hall I could not help but wonder, what was wrong? Why did she not call? Why did she not just wait five minutes to think what she was doing? Where were her friends? Why had she not talked to Sue? Sue could have helped her. Heck, ten years ago she could have taken up right where Sue left off and be my friend. Or maybe she was...

Why do we lie to those we love? Stories to make us fill better in the moment but destined to shatter hopes, dreams, and lives in the end. A place with God and those you love, or just a comforting thought to them you want last to hurt? Sue's abyss just seconds long had no God, no friends, no hope, and was no heaven. No place where I will meet her and no place I will willingly go. That place just six feet of the floor over the pile of bone is the resting spot of my dear friend and is the resting spot of part of me that she selfishly stole. For that I will forgive her and all I hope is that what I last left her was more than the nightmares and the abyss she left me.
