

Life After Death

*A woman's reflection on the death
of her husband and her life thereafter*

*A collection of poems by
Margaret Rowlandson*



*In Memory of my late husband,
Paul Rowlandson.*

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Introduction

My husband, Paul, died peacefully in Foyle Hospice on 30th October 2015.

Thanks to the wonderful care he received there, we were able to spend time just giving him all our love during those precious last few days.

Even though we knew his death gave release for his spirit from his poor wasted body; the pain of loss and separation was almost overwhelming.

I found writing these poems helped a lot. Five years on I have just about reached the stage of being able to look at them again. I hope that they may bring some solace to those of you who are mourning the loss of a loved one.

With God's help and the support of a loving family I have learned to live with the grief and can now focus mainly on the good memories of the special love we shared.

September 2015

'Realisation'

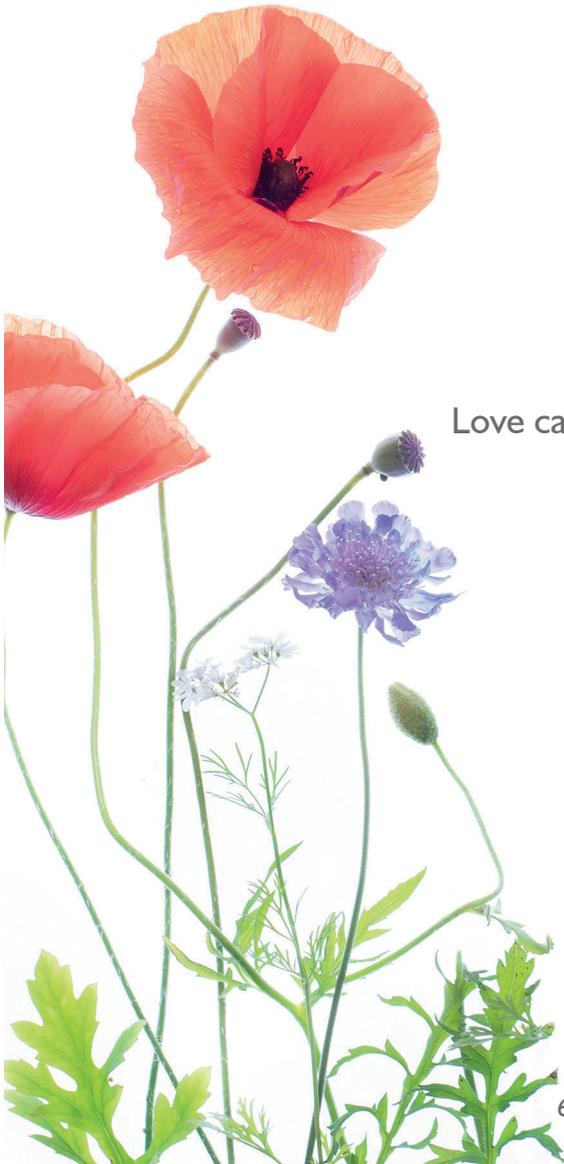
Silver cobwebs hang
Smell of autumn in the air
You will find peace.

'The Funeral'

Love cannot heal your broken body
Or mend my broken heart
But it will enfold me
While we are apart.

'Robin'

Your song breaks my heart
Your eyes look into my soul
And see him there.



Introduction

While I have never minded being on my own, there is a big difference between that and suddenly realising that the person you have chosen to spend your life with is no longer there.

I was in the bath one morning when it occurred to me that there was no-one else in the house, that that was how it was going to be and I had to find some way of dealing with it.

I decided to be gentle with myself and very gradually try to get used to the idea. I tried to take one day, sometimes half a day at a time, and remember how lucky I am to have a loving family and wonderful memories to share.



'Into the Vortex'

Into the vortex
My thoughts awhirl
You are not there
To break my fall

Then hope floods in
The warmth of love
remembered is
my salvation.



'His Hands'

I knew every vein
Every wrinkle, every hair
Tender strength

The back of his wrist
I stroke soft hairs, small round bone
Fingers meet

Bereavement

Bereavement also brings loss of identity and loss of confidence. You suddenly have to find new roles for yourself and do so without that reassuring presence to back you up.

Keeping busy certainly helps but getting overtired makes it harder to keep the demons away. Going out and meeting others is good too, but you still have to come home to an empty house without that special smile of welcome.

I tried to give myself plenty of time to get the right balance between activity and rest and between being with others and that all important time to myself.

Again, my daughters kept a gentle eye on my efforts and made tactful suggestions when necessary!

I've lost the me
That you let me be.
There's me at piano
Or pottery class.
Going to meetings
Or quiet in church
But when I come home
Our world isn't there
I've lost the me
That you let me be

I've lost the me
That you let me be
The family's so loving
And friends are so kind
I thank God for my
Blessings, time after time.
And keep in my heart
Your love everlasting.
I'll always have the me
That you let me be



The First Anniversary

When we were visiting Paul in those last couple of weeks in the hospice, we often saw the wild swans flying up the river. As I stepped out of the door on his first anniversary a skein of swans flew over my head which I found very moving and comforting.

*Wild swans overhead
Steady wing beats are a balm
Your soul soars free.*

'Without You'

I venture forth
Uncertainly
You were always
The gentle breeze
That filled my sails.
The steady hand
On the tiller,
The safe haven
A welcome home

You left sure hands
To chart my course.
Enduring love
To still the waves,
The knowledge of
The Grace of God.
To guide me home



Never Forgotten

At the beginning, my younger daughter and I were not sure that we could visit the grave. Luckily my elder daughter convinced us and we are very glad she did.

Although I talk to Paul all the time at home, going to the grave somehow gives a focus and intimacy to these conversations. In cleaning the headstone and tending the plants we feel that we are able to continue saying thank you for all that he gave us.

'The Grave'

I see
The sweet peas reach up
Joyously to heaven.
Their perfume fills the air
As once
It filled the ward and
Brought a moment's joy

You loved
The scent of lavender.
I touch the blossom
Rub scented fingers
On stone.
A bee brings a smile
Reminds us of you.



A Different Meaning

Over time the hurt becomes less raw. The daily routine gets you from one moment to the next. You need to show your family and friends you are coping, and so you do. Gradually you learn to live with the grief but don't be afraid to ask for help and to take it, where ever it comes from.

There will always be reminders; a favourite piece of music on the radio, finding a piece of paper with his writing on, a grandson's smile. Somehow it is the unexpected ones that are the hardest, I was completely overwhelmed the first time I went to the optician's without Paul. it's not easy choosing new frames for red-rimmed eyes!

Again, over time the balance shifts and while the memories will always be tinged with sadness this is gradually outweighed by the pleasure they also bring.

'The Gift'

An empty box
Or so I thought
Lift up the lid
My heart stands still

A folded page
An envelope
Under tissue
A tiny book

On the cover
A thought so sweet
I feel your love
Across the void.



Living with Loss

All of us will lose someone we love. The experience of a loved one's death changes us forever and the journey of adjusting to life without them can be very challenging.

This journey of living with loss can sometimes leave us feeling overwhelmed and isolated.

It is Margaret's wish that in sharing with us her own experience of personal loss it will bring others some comfort.

Our Thanks

We are sincerely grateful to Margaret, for allowing us to share with you her tender words and loving memories.



COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITIES

For further information on
death, dying and bereavement
please visit our website
www.compassionatecommunitiesnw.com



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To find out more contact our office
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Opening times: Monday — Friday
9.00 a.m. — 5.00 p.m.