

For Siblings



Brother and Sister

Brother and Sister, each a branch in a tree –
Fighting and playing, brother and sisterly –
So many times their branches tangle: each day and each night –
In love, work, or play, in happiness or fright –

Then comes the spring, brother buds and is awake –
But sister branch hangs without the buds she can no longer
make –
Sister branch is lifeless
yet she remains part of the tree –
Now brother branch, hurt and confused, mourns her memory –

What has brother really lost, a sister, that's not all!
For all the branches make up a tree which stands as one,
big and tall.
Of this tree which brother is a part, a piece of life has been lost
And with this life goes part of brother at his own poor cost.

Someday, the entire tree will fall, inevitably
Then each branch will find its loss which vanished from the tree.
Until that time the tree will live, change, and try to adjust –
Despite its loss each branch has a life to live
As it chooses, as it trusts.
Of course every branch will ask questions to explain
Its own losses left on it like a stain.
Only until after he has died will brother branch know
How is old sister branch and where
did she go!

Written by 15-year old Deron Jon Geuder for his sister, 13-year old Kirsten Joy Geuder who died of a rare disease. Jon died of the same disease 2 years later but wrote this poem 2 months prior to his death. TCF St. Louis Newsletter
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Chapter 2 – Ambiguous Loss Excerpts From “The Empty Room”

I was fourteen when my brother died. My friends didn't bring it up and neither did I. Family friends, I suppose, didn't want to intrude or thought we would actually ask them if we thought of something we needed. As if we knew. We didn't know what we needed. We were lost, even to ourselves. My parents didn't talk about Ted, or his death, alone or together. They were numb, engulfed in their own separate miseries. I didn't talk to them, either, I was numb, too. That summer, our schnauzer, Donner, who'd been a gift on Ted's ninth birthday, was hit and killed by a car. It was my mother who found him. I wondered if Ted had summoned Donner to keep him company. We couldn't stand Donner's absence. He was the only morsel of comfort in the house. We got a puppy, Jackson, the next day.

Years later, when Jackson's kidneys failed and we had to put him to sleep, our remaining dog, Rudy – a flighty character whom Jackson had bossed around within an inch of his life – was so confused, so grief-stricken by Jackson's sudden disappearance, that he hid under my parents' bed for weeks. When he did come out, he wouldn't look anyone in the eye. He ducked his head, averted his gaze. I recognized the look. When Ted died, none of us could look one another in the eye, either. To do so was to risk seeing our own pain, reflected back. Or worse, to risk falling apart. If I let loose my grip on myself, I thought, I might never be able to pull myself together again. We hid in separate rooms of the house, my family, meeting only for dinner, at which point we strained to make conversation. I left the table as soon as possible and my parents often ended the meal by fighting.

One day, in the first months after Ted's death, my parents went out without telling me where they were going, and returned hours later, with cardboard boxes packed full of Ted's things from The Room, as I came to think of it. They stacked them in a walk-in closet at the end of the hallway. Occasionally, when I knew they'd both be out for a while, I'd make forays into this closet, prying open box lids, peeking at what lay inside – records, a guitar stand, the suede hippie hat I'd given him for Christmas, his clogs – feeling as if he might emerge, genielike, if I opened the right container. Those boxes were a good metaphor for the place my brother came to hold in our lives. Sealed up, hidden away, unopened, except for my occasional furtive explorations. This was how it was, and how it would continue to be.

By Elizabeth DeVita-Raeburn

“The Empty Room” is an excellent book for siblings. Since it is a book, I can only print excerpts. I have quoted from it before.



Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

Yesterday – You were here and I took it for granted that you would always be here. Telling you I loved you and was proud of you seemed unimportant. There would be time for that when we were older – when we fought less and talked more.

Today – I know that time will never come and I will never have the chance to say these things face-to-face. So I write them and think them and hope you know I mean them now and have always felt them.

Tomorrow – Each day the pain and regrets of things left unsaid get easier to deal with. I have begun to realize that you knew how I felt because you felt the same way. And as more tomorrows turn into yesterdays, I will find peace in that knowledge. Someday, somewhere, we will meet again and I will have my chance then.

By Shannon Odessa Stiener, TCF Lowell, IN
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