

# 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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