

Awakening

by MrsQ

I was awakened by a disturbing dream. He was no longer with me and I felt afraid. Everything was cloudy, almost blurry. I couldn't see much in front of me, but I knew for sure he wasn't there with me. Then he said the words I feared the most "I don't love you. I love her." Tears. Fear. And then I woke up. Usually, he would be by my side comforting me after this kind of dream. They had been happening too often lately. His absence reiterated the disturbing dream. Tears. Fear. Confusion. Why is this all happening? It was just the night before when he had said he wanted to end it. And yet I was hoping that it was all a dream. But waking up all alone was the confirmation of my most dreaded fear: He was not with me. I was all alone now. I still couldn't understand what was happening. There were a million thoughts racing through my mind. Is that the door I hear opening? I started to hear things and felt him walking through the now empty apartment. The pictures on the wall stared back at me as a reminder of what until a few hours before had been a great marriage. Tears. Fear. I was still playing the tape over and over again in my head. Could something have been done? Could have I done something different? What did I do wrong? Over and over again, playing in my head like an old record stuck on the needle. More tears. More fear. Will he come back? Why isn't he back? What is he doing? Who is he talking to? It has to be me. I must have done something wrong. I must have driven him away. There you go again, this is what you get for being the way you are. It was hard to discern reality from dreams. Being awake and being asleep were now both the same thing. The only difference was that while I was awake, time seemed to pass by quicker, and so I chose to sleep more.

Every time I woke up, I would feel the pain again. That kind of agonizing pain, a feeling of confusion that would take over my body and mind, a mind that hadn't stopped thinking for days now. You see, for the past six years, it was only me and him. Together, fighting the

world, loving each other in spite of the differences and holding on to a promise of always working things out. This didn't make sense. I was trying very hard to understand what had driven him to have left. Abandoning his family, his partner, his lover, his best friend, only for the sake of going on a quest to fulfill the "what-ifs" of life. Didn't seem fair, but it was mainly because I couldn't understand it. It all seemed so sudden, even though for a few weeks now, things had changed. He had stopped loving me, I thought. There had to be someone else, I thought. And yet, he would only give me a phrase I had heard so many times before but that now sounded so horribly and so empty "I just want to be alone." I was now praying. Praying for a call, for a message, for a clue that would help me figure out what had gone wrong. I couldn't stand the television. My favorite shows were now a painful reminder of moments of happiness that we had shared together. And it hurt. The empty couch in the living room, once his favorite spot, was now a place I would visit only to fantasize about him coming back home. Tears. Confusion. I missed him and he had only been gone for a day. I couldn't stand the sound of music, laughter, silence. I turned the fan on to sleep, even though it was February and freezing cold outside, so that I wouldn't have to face the horrible sound of silence. That horrible sound of silence that would trigger my mind to wander, to explore, to listen to itself. I spent every minute, every second of those long days crying, making long distance phone calls, yearning to hear a familiar voice that would tell me everything was going to be ok. This kind of pain was something I had never experienced before and I did not know what to do with it. I cried day in and day out. I didn't want to taste food or even see my kitchen, once my temple where I had prepared so many delicious meals that he loved. I was confined to my bedroom, like a prisoner in a jail cell. Confined to my bedroom, once our bedroom, a place where we had dreamed of starting a family, where so many times we loved each other incessantly, where so many times we had promised to never leave each other. The smell of the sheets was now the only contact I had with him, and holding on to them made me feel him so close to me, even though he was gone.

I heard the door. He was back. I rushed to meet him, but I found myself with a cold, distant him. I did not recognize the person in front of me. I couldn't see the love I always saw in his eyes, the warmth in his voice when speaking to me. His wedding band, the symbol of our commitment to each other, was no longer on his finger. Pain. Confusion. Fear. This was it. This time it was for sure. He asked if he could get his clothes. I sat in the living room while he packed a suitcase. Tears were rolling down my cheeks, and my heart was racing. A cold, and at the same time warm, sensation was in my chest. This feeling was familiar. I had been here before. I could remember feeling this sensation before and yet did not know what to do with it. I wanted to cry, to scream and to ask him not to leave. I wanted him to stay even though I had been miserable for the past few weeks. I wanted him to stay even though he was hurting me. I wanted him to stay because I was afraid. It took him a couple of hours to gather his stuff, but, in my mind, it was only a few minutes. I wanted the clock to stop. I wanted the world to freeze. I wanted to have him with me for a few more minutes. Heck, I would've killed for a few more seconds with him.

I couldn't understand why it was over. I couldn't imagine what my life would be like without him. For the past six years, I had never been anywhere without him, and now, that he was gone, I couldn't find myself. We had been trying to have a baby for a year now, and it seemed so illogical that he would not want to be with me. What did that even mean? Did that mean he had someone else? Wait, maybe it simply means that he really wants to be alone. Yea, right, like that ever happens. You must have done something wrong. Fear. Tears. The truth was that it did not matter what his words meant. The motivation behind his actions really did not make a difference. He was gone and I did not know how to deal with it. Inside, I felt as if someone had torn out a big piece of me. On the outside, I was drained, tired, exhausted. I couldn't help but sleep all day. I would wake up every hour and confirm that the horrible nightmare continued: He was gone.

After two days of being immersed in a pool of sadness and confusion, I decided to reach out to the one person who I knew would help me go through this: My father. Time and time again, papi had known how to console me. His voice was always so comforting and his support and respect always played a big role in every decision I ever made. He answered the phone and I couldn't help but cry. I told him what happened and he immediately asked my mother to book a flight for him. He had to be with me. My mother would fly the week after. It was all decided very quickly. All of a sudden, I felt as if I was five years old again, and I needed the comfort of what was familiar. I knew my father's presence would make it all better. He had always known what to say to make me feel better. A couple of days later, my Papi was with me. He cried when he saw me. I had then lost 10 pounds in only a few days. My eyes were tired, my body exhausted, my soul beaten up. He hugged me. It only took a few hours to converse with him to finally recover order in my life. While he would respect my pain, he also encouraged me and helped me see things clearly. He reminded me of my strength, the one I had lost when I had chosen to focus on the problem, not the solution. He reminded me of the girl who had so decisively told him "I'm moving to NYC." He reminded me of the girl who boarded that plane all by herself, no fear, no tears. He reminded me of my potential, of my achievements, of everything I had accomplished in such little time. He reminded me that, after all and in spite all, I had my family. He said "this is not my girl... not the girl I remember." It was those words the ones that made me realize that I had gone through so much in my short life, and yet, there I was standing in front of him. I had managed to survive the jungle of concrete all on my own. I had managed to make it on my own. And yet, in my pursuit of happiness, I had lost myself. Yes, I had feared many things, I cried myself to sleep many times, but I would start a new day every morning and I would survive each day all over again. I felt the need to reclaim myself, to go back to that place when I had decided to take on the world on my own. It was exactly at that point, when I knew I was going to be ok.

