

Oh For Crying Out Loud by Barbara McAfee

Death has been visiting my life a lot in this past year. During those times, I have frequently heard Mary Elizabeth Frye's well-known poem, "Do No Stand At My Grave and Weep."

This morning as I was lolling abed, I began naming my departed-beloveds in my mind, calling their sweet faces to mind and silently speaking their names one by one. This is one of the ways I honor them and deal with their absence. In the midst of that familiar ritual, I "heard" a distinct voice speaking into my mind. This is what it said.

Now, Honey. You just go ahead and stand at my grave and weep. As a matter of fact, you could fall to the ground if you wanted to. If there's snow or mud, no matter -- you can always get that funeral suit cleaned later on. Or you could forego the suit altogether. Wear your pajamas or your favorite sweats to my funeral. You're hurting enough all ready without having to wear tight clothes and uncomfortable shoes. And please, please...weep! It's bizarre to be where I am now -- in this lovely though totally indescribable place - and see you expending such precious energy on NOT weeping, NOT breathing, NOT living this experience. Sweetheart, you are still alive. So be...alive!

We don't get to weep here. We don't get dirty. Our hearts don't shatter. That only happens where you are. To be honest, I miss the mess of living. It's a privilege. So, go ahead and weep, wail, rant, gnash your teeth, carry on a bit. There will be plenty of time for silence and stillness when you're where I am.

And when you are finished with crying - or when you pause for awhile - go ahead and sing. Singing reaches right across the divide between where I am and where you are and brings us together in an instant. You've felt that, haven't you? You'll know the song to sing, but not until you take the breath to begin it. That moment will allow me to plop one right into your heart and out it will come. Be warned it will likely make you cry again. I think I've made myself clear about what to do when that happens.

Now here's another thing. This one is for much, much later -- after your suit is back from the cleaners, the casserole dishes have been returned, and the rest of the world has moved on from your cataclysmic loss. Begin to find some life around and beyond your grief and gently, gingerly start to live into it. Sadness and loss will still be around because frankly, you won't ever "get over it." You're not supposed to.

I don't know how you will find your way back to living your life beyond grief, but I hear rumors over here that being out under the sky is good start. Connecting with other living things is good as well - plants in the garden, friendly dogs, old friends who don't bring creased brows and "concern" to every encounter. So - go ahead - stand at my grave. Cry your damn eyes out. Ride the storm of grief bravely and it just may carry you - in

time, Dear One, in time - back to the amazing place of being alive. I'll be cheering you on from here.

From Barbara McAfee comes this gospel-flavored ballad that celebrates audible weeping and all the healing it brings.

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