

A Promise of Hope

Autumn Stringam

EXCERPT

The miracle of the discovery was not lost on us. My strength came back. By summertime I was hiking and riding my bike. I put my handicapped parking placard away for good. I still wavered between good and bad days, but I marvelled at the changes in my health and mourned for the lost years.

I was clear and predictable. I was off all my psychotropic drugs. No lithium, no Prozac, no Paxil, no Tegretol, no Haldol, no Rivotril, no Ativan, no Cogentin, no Epival. And none of the others, the nameless drugs slipped into me in needles and during psych ward stays. None of those given to me in trial and error, one experimental combination after another, the doctors waiting to see what good—or what damage—the latest experiment might do, never having a clue as to what outcome to expect until they saw it. And now this. No prescriptions. No wild outcomes. Nothing but a natural food supplement.

Discovering my new life took patience. The photo album was full of pictures of me on vacation in places I had never been: Las Vegas, Vancouver, Seattle, Utah. Dana sat and flipped the pages and told me about my life during the previous three years when I had been here in body, but not in soul and seldom enough in mind.

Adjusting to the quiet in my head took practice, and sometimes I missed the excitement, the high of my mania. Sometimes normal was boring.

“What are you doing?” Dana has joined me on the lawn. I’m picking at the grass.

“I’m boring.”

“Bored?”

“No, boring. I miss the creativity. I’m boring.”

“I like you boring.”

I think of the decidedly un-boring moments I’ve given him. I can see why he’d positively adore boring.

But . . .

“Do you like me? I struggled all these years to come back, and now I’m here and I don’t like myself.”

“It’ll come, babe. You’ll find your balance.”

He likes me boring. Suddenly it hits me—hard. A new phase of my wellness. I stop thinking about me and think about Dana. He has been here all along, living through my madness. I see me through his point of view. I have hurt him, shamed him, scared him.

“I’m so sorry, Dana, for the pain, for all the things that I did and said to hurt you.”

“I know.” He kisses me. “I love you. I thought I would just be with you until you died. I was sure you would die. I’m so glad you are alive and with me. It’s still Love Only.”

From Dana’s point of view I could give it up, the creativity. The ideas, music, and voices did not improve me. The mania was not brilliance. I would find my balance. I would stay boring. He loved me.

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