

Love Can Let Go



June 22, 1993 . . . Annee and I arrived mid-day. I was so anxious to see Steven. His sister, Helen, met us at the door. She said Steven had been asking her all morning, "Are they here yet?" We followed Helen to his room. There he was, this beautiful soul, laid in bed in a fetal position. Helen said, "They're here." All he could do was raise his head, but oh, what a smile. Annee and I sat on the bed and gave him a big hug. He wanted to sit on the side of the bed. We had to help him. Then I knew. He was so frail, too weak to even stand up. As I looked into his eyes, the window of his soul, that spark that had always been there was dimmed.

We knew, but our souls did not speak of it. Here we were, Steven and I, about to complete that journey started two years before.

I remember. . . .

. *"Robert, our relationship has moved to a higher plane it has become purely spiritual."*
"Yes, the highest realm of love."

June 22, Evening: That night, Steven and I had a soulful conversation. "I'm so tired, tired of being sick. I have pneumonia again. I don't want any treatment." I said nothing. I acknowledged by moving my head with a Yes. We understood each other. No more was said.

Love can let go.

June 23: There was a sliding-glass door to the outside from Steven's room. Earlier that spring, with the help of his brother Mike, Steven had planted a garden just outside this door. The garden was small, only about 4 feet by 6 feet. He had planted a couple of tomato plants, squash and, oh yes, lots of flowers. In the afternoon, Steven said he had not looked at his garden in some days and he would like to see it. There were a number of people there, his sister Helen, his niece Lisa, Annee and me. We all scurried around to help Steven have his wish. "I'll get a stool for him to sit on. I'll open the door. Steven, are you warm enough, do you need a jacket?" We all wanted so much to please him. He could not walk on his own. We got him up, standing, and with Annee on one side and me on the other, he would take very small steps, almost a shuffle.

We got him outside and seated on the stool. He bent over so he could be close to his plants. I stepped a few feet away and took a long look at him.

How can I describe what I saw? He was so thin, his face gaunt, he literally looked like a very old man. However, there was something else. He was so much at peace and there was a look of great wisdom on his face. I noticed that he was starting to sway, so I quickly moved behind him and took hold of his shoulders in order to steady him. It felt nice to touch him. He leaned back against me. I felt a sigh from his body. *"Robert, you know what I have done with the rose bushes? I have let the long stems grow up through the briars so that the blossoms can reach the Light of the Golden Gate."*

At first, this did not make sense to me because there were no rose bushes in his garden. It took a moment for me to fully understand what he was saying. I was the only one present who understood the significance. He was speaking of his rose garden in West Virginia. He knew when the light of summer began to dim; his roses would reach for the light. *"Reach for the Light of the Golden Gate."*

A short time later, he wanted to go back inside. I helped him stand and walk to the door. Once there, Steven was his old self. "I can make it by my self." He crawled on his hands and knees inside and sat up yoga style. "See, I can still get around."

All the others that were with him seemed to disappear into the other part of the house, leaving Steven and I alone. I was setting on the floor with him. We somehow ended up in the same Yoga position. Facing each other, knees touching. Looking eye to eye, smiling at each other. He reached out and pulled my hands to him. There was no conversation; we were just "being". For a moment we were collected, so untroubled, touching and looking, being one.

Annee later told me that she started to enter the room, but stopped at the door when she saw us. She said she knew something spiritual was happening. "The two of you were glowing, there was an aura around both of you."

That night, Annee prepared a beautiful meal, jumbo shrimp and pasta. I truly do not think he was hungry, but with Annee's help he ate what he could. He knew it would make us happy to see him eat. After dinner, he wanted to hear some music. The music was soft and slow. Annee turned to him and asked him if he would like to dance. He looked confused as if to say, "How." Annee stood up in front of him, putting her arms under his; she pulled him up until he was standing. She put his arms over her shoulders and had him put his feet on hers. It was almost as if she was dancing with a rag doll. He smiled and held onto Annee, as they slow danced around the room.

At 10:00 p.m., Steven had his medication to take, and, we were all tired. Annee and I stayed in the room with him. She slept on the couch and I slept on a mattress on the floor. It was time to put Steven to bed. Annee was perhaps already asleep. The lights had been turned off except for Steven's bedside lamp. He was sitting on the side of the bed taking his pills. I left the room for just a minute. When I came back, I do not believe Steven heard me. As I approached him, I reached out and touched him on the shoulder. He drew back almost as if frightened. I said, "Do what you have to." I have pondered those words many times as they were the last words I would say to Steven. I believe my soul and I spoke simultaneously with two different meanings. For me, these words were said with anger, for my soul knew that Steven would soon part. My conscious mind knew none of this. I only felt the emotion of loss. Steven was going to leave me and I was angry, "Do what you have to." His soul and mine both knew . . . it was "Time."

June 24, 1993: It was two years to the day when I took Steven to the hospital for the first time, when he was diagnosed with AIDS.

It was my soul that saw and understood these happenings. For the two of us, there was a weaving in-and-out of this plane and the next. For me, the needs of this side, for Steven, the expectations of another state, where he was becoming more and more pure love. The closer he came to the end of his journey; the concerns of our finite existence were no longer meaningful.

7:00 a.m.: As usual, I was the first one up. It was time for Steven's medications and to fix his breakfast. As I headed for the kitchen, I walked past Steven in bed. He was propped up with pillows; he could sleep better that way. I paused for just a moment to look at him, then went to the kitchen and started to fix his breakfast. Something told me to go back. Something was not right. I dropped what I was doing, and returned to Steven's bedside and looked at him. He seemed to be resting peacefully. I reached out and touched his hand. It was cool. I felt his face, it was cool. I put my hand on his chest, he was breathing. I softly said "Steven," he did not answer. My whole being knew.

I went to Annee and woke her. "It's Time. It's Steven. Get up, but you don't have to rush." I then went into the other part of the house and woke Lisa. I told her the same. I called Helen, Wayne (a friend of Steven's) and Hospice. It seemed only minutes would pass when all were at Steven's bedside. The nurse from Hospice examined him and turned to me and said, "You are right Robert, it won't be long." We tried to contact the rest of his family. Most were on their way. Annee, Lisa and Wayne were on the bed with him. Helen, the two people from Hospice and I was standing next to the bed. Those on the bed with him through weeping voices, pleaded with him not to go.

His work was finished. The separation between this world and the next was ending. Lisa said,
"He stopped breathing."
It was over.

*This gentle soul was gone,
"Reaching for the Light of the Golden Gate"*

*I stood frozen, locked in time, listing
as a great cry rose from all
"No, No"*

*I went to him,
held him in my arms,
with aching tears
removed the silver cross from around his neck
replaced it on mine,
then ever so carefully lowered him back onto the pillow.*

*Annee said,
Sweet dreams, my Prince.*

*Those with AIDS, through their suffering and death
have taught us
"It is a Gift of Love."*

*This blessing was not unique to just Steven and me.
Whenever the Gift of Love is present
there is a communion of souls.
The entire meaning of Steven and I meeting
and the union that followed
had but one purpose
to be together these moments in time.
Being gay had nothing to do with it.
It was true and **human**.*