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An Invisible Procession

A Mixture of Memory Interwoven with a Social Commentary on a Topic Unfamiliar to Most

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Readers of this essay will find perhaps that the style the writer has adopted is unusual, being a mixture of memory, interwoven with a social commentary on a topic unfamiliar to most. The writer has attempted to draw the reader into a strange place, a place where the writer has been imprisoned for nearly half a century. The bars on her cell are made of prejudice and the gaoler is fear.

Against the black light of prejudice she's stronger now, for she knows she will never again be ashamed, guilty, or afraid, in the face of ignorance.

As the teacher reads the faces in each class, sometimes a bewilderment is felt, glimpses of talent that shows but briefly, before the flame flickers and dies in unseen winds. The teacher wonders at some students consistent inability to fan talent into success, wonders if these typically quiet students are yet other shadows in an invisible procession she knows so well. Are the unseen winds prejudice and fear?

Prejudice and fear are social animals that have savaged so many educations. Fear that strangles the joy of communication without which, an individual is unable to develop an

identity that gives them a place, that 'is them', within society.

The prejudice that societies construct feed a stifling fear, the teacher knows well what fear will do, for the teacher is transsexual. Having been a part of the invisible procession, having had her education ruined by the usual early onset of gender confusion, (at seven years of age she knew what her trouble was, without having any inkling of what her troubles would be), for the world said she was he, for that's the way she looked.

She began to feel uneasy with the place her society decreed she must fit, and the tourniquet of fear was applied to ensure silence and conformity to its expectations of her.

Transsexual children know earlier than most, the power of prejudice, very few in society have the independence of mind to avoid being mired in prejudice's unthinking grasp, the growing child is taught very early that no-one is likely to stand out from the mainstream on her behalf.

A loneliness developed that grew slowly into a mourning, a mourning for the life that was not allowed her, her feelings, her expressions, her need to communicate her loss, she was continually left behind in her confusion. The teacher remembers a little of her high school experience, mostly as incidents, periods of intense torment, the odd bullying (the students knew she didn't fit, even then they picked upon little things that the system wouldn't see).

Looking back she knows it was hope, only blind desperate hope, that kept the teenage girl going in a sea of males, she longed for a cloak of invisibility from within which she could find some peace, some agreement with the relentless knowledge of being she. She in all of life, in every class, in every distracted failure, she in loneliness.

Her torment at the knowledge that her failures academically were due solely to her gender distress, drove her to make resolution after resolution to reform, switch off the female, to conform to the body not the self, to break the chain of distress and guilt that ruled her life.

But no, 'she' could never be dismissed, made to leave the body to somehow feel as it looked, for if 'she' went, the shell would be empty, for 'she' is 'me', the only 'me' there is.

All through her life, through many occupations that culminated in a return to education and a teaching career, what we know as the dichotomy of gender has decreed that she didn't have the right to the pages of her life. She must live as an endless series of covers each one untrue but not a lie, just forever incomplete.

Not through choice do transsexuals exist, for it is a cruel unreasoning place, their place in the invisible procession. Their frequent prayer "Oh god, why me? Why? Why?". All trannies know that prayer and to all trannies, comes the day when living a life of denial is just no longer possible.

The teacher sat for three nights in succession on a cliffs edge, crying in utter distress, tossing the question of causing the lesser harm to her family, from the only two choices available to her. To take one step to god? Or to seek help in the sure knowledge of the pain this move would cause.

That blind desperate hope that had been her life-long companion won a very narrow victory, and now the teach will live as the pages relate, the taunting dream of being able to love, to hurt, to share in peace, her inner female self.

Not for one minute will she pretend a bed of roses, for she has long realised that medieval morality demands its victims. Persecutions have forever been part of religious self-righteousness.

Transsexuals are prime targets for modern 'witch hunts', as they reach deep into the minds of society, to burn intelligence and reason at the stake of ignorance. Nearly all the people in the lives of transsexuals are gripped by the fears, grown into them by the ranting of religious leaders who seem to be in love with hate.

Her teaching career in non-government schools is now gone - forever! Institutionalised prejudice have decreed that such a gentle committed person has no right to teach in their schools, for when forced to survive as herself or perish, her rights and values are declared meaningless.

Against the black light of prejudice she's stronger now, for she knows she will never again be ashamed, guilty, or afraid, in the face of ignorance. The faces of classes yet to be taught drift distantly in the haze of possibilities facing her, as the long process of making the cover match the book brings peace, blessed indescribable peace to ease away the tears.

I dream of days when I might revisit the hurts the mind rejects, to hold the candle of acceptance into the tunnel's shadows, and bring a little peace to the lives in the invisible procession. I wish you love and endless hope.

There is very much that I have no space to say in this essay. Perhaps a poem I've written to my love the mother of my children (six sons and one daughter) all adults now, might offer a further vantage point into the life of the teacher.

Pretty Wings ...

*After winter's night, I knew you first in spring.
From my cage in me, I saw you pretty wings.
A dawn I'd never known, rose softly in my life.
And grew in me a love of you, so warm in the mornings light.
Each day to soar in vaults of blue, far from sight you'd set me free.
To share you sky, your life, your love, all from this cage in me.
And through your eyes I learned to live and leave my bars behind.
Free to know the wind I'd dreamt, and dream it could be mine.
Each dream of dawn I'd share your wings, you'd bring the daylight in.
And dart together through the bars to share our love in spring.
Love brought to life new ways to feel, new ways to see each day.
I couldn't help deny my plumes and hid my wings away.
It might have been you'd never know, but the cage in me grew tight.
The bars bit deep into my soul with torment from the night.
I should have told the truth my love, told so many things.
But the years themselves were won by fears, of losing pretty wings.
So suddenly ... the cage dissolves, I dart in Autumn's blush.
To share with you unflown miles, and leave cruel winter's crush.
As season's flow to make our years I'll always love first spring.
First hope, and last, tied up in love of you my pretty wings.*

Veronica

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