

Finding Home

The greatest threat of injury we face in this life comes not at the hand of our enemy, but from the hand of the one who claims they love us.

Our greatest pain comes from one who was thought to be the greatest source of comfort. The circle of love has always been an exhilarating ride that, inevitably, plunges many into the shear depths of heartbreak and hell. I admire those who have been dealt kindly in this regard ... they are the lucky ones.

Love places us at great, grave risk.

The one we love has a harsh, powerful and deadly weapon at their disposal ... the ability to simply change their mind. The loss of love is our most cruel of all pains, because it is often done at the hand of one we loved, needed and trusted the most. Don't ever take for granted that the person you have deep affection for will be there tomorrow ... the first step for total loss is often complete confidence.

And trust.

There is no shield for this. No defense. No protection. No warning. We can accomplish many things in this life except for one basic fact: we can not change anybody's mind about anything. This is something they have to do themselves.

I couldn't help but reflect back to losses and love lost. Even my own. So many have felt this emotional knife plunge deep into our souls at the hand of one we trusted and needed the most.

And, my, how the walls of an empty home can thunder in a tsunami of dark stillness at four in the morning



And so it was one Saturday morning, a spring day in the month of April. I was off the road this particular weekend and ventured out to support the Lexington *WoodSongs Coffeehouse*. A fine hometown singer, Rennie Neubecker and his friends organized it and hold it every second Saturday of the month, at the time in a wonderful bistro with a great stage called Natasha's.

I liked Rennie's creativity a lot, and he would hold the event

as an open stage starting 11 in the morning, which attracted a tremendous amount of young kids that would jump up onstage for a chance to sing their song in front of an audience.

As usual it was a pretty full house when I arrived. There were some good friends there that morning so we settled in the back of the room so our conversation wouldn't disturb the performances.

I was there for about an hour when all of a sudden this delightful, unusual voice filled the room during a song. I look toward the stage and there was this striking woman with a guitar.

OK, let's get this part straight ... the music world is loaded with a plethora of good looking women with guitars. That wasn't the attraction, but her voice was.



I had been considering for some time adding a female vocal to my opening song on WoodSongs. I wondered if she would fit? Not wanting to be too forward or even run the risk of imposing the idea, I asked a friend who knew her to see if she would be interested. She could send me a simple email if she felt like it was a good idea.

Well, by the time a friend told a friend who told a friend who finally told Melissa, she was “booked” to sing on a live audience,

international broadcast that very Monday.

And she freaked out.

The next day, I'm playing my banjo on my front porch swing, the cell phone rings and it's a friend of mine who knows Melissa.

"She's totally creeped out, dude."

"How can she be creeped out, she hasn't even met me yet," says I.

And to make a long story short, we finally met, she came on the broadcast and it was perfect.

Melissa has one of those beautifully intonated singing voices, she loves music and had started writing her own songs. She was smart, a very hard worker and had a plethora of interests that she acted on.

She was a gymnast and an ice skater.

She was an airline attendant and was working on her pilot license. She had a major weather fetish and knew all the names of the cloud formations. She was a poet, a painter, an artist, a singer, a guitar player, jewelry maker and an artistic craftsman.

And heck yes, she was pretty.



**Melissa onstage during a broadcast
singing with a Barber Shop Quartet**

Even with all of her exceptional traits, Melissa was also a bit insecure, which was attractive. She didn't have a big ego, although she could have if she wanted.

And as we got to know each other better, she loved being with me. And that was a wonderful feeling, although I was distrustful of it. I didn't want anyone to know I was even interested in Melissa out of fear it would blow up and be over. I didn't need any public disasters at this stage.

But the more I got to know her, the more inviting it all seemed. She enjoyed helping at the cabin, working on buildings and various projects. She would get down and dirty and haul timbers, logs, bricks, anything that was needed.



Melissa had a great sense of fashion and always looked pretty, she kept herself in good shape and, although I wouldn't exactly call her diet healthy, she survived well on her hamburgers and fries.

She loved to perform and on the occasions she could be onstage with me, it was great to see the audience enamoured with her. They loved to hear her voice.

That *voice*. I told her when she spoke it was almost like hearing a cartoon. I loved it.

In many ways, we are polar opposites on several things. I like tomatoes and lettuce salads. She would rather eat dirt than get anywhere near lettuce. But she enjoys gardening, so we compromise. Musically we are also quite different. I can listen to Josh White all day, she never heard of Josh White. I can expound on Leadbelly,

Patrick Sky and the Carter Family. She has no clue.

On the other hand, she loves country music, especially the stuff heard on radio. I had no idea who Luke Bryan was until Melissa did a cell phone parody of one of his songs that got 10,000 views on YouTube and the NBC TV affiliate came to the log cabin to do a news story on it. So, we compromise. When she is with me onstage we perform folk songs. When in the car we listen to country radio.

EE were married at the log cabin with Judge Ray Corns officiating. In short order Melissa comes to me and says,

"You know that big music room you built as an addition to the log cabin?"

"Yes."

"It will make a nice nursery ..."

"Say what??"

Yes, a baby was on the way.

A month later, she had a doctor's appointment for a check up. I'm sitting at my desk in our studio in the middle of the apple orchard in the back meadow, she comes to the door and says,

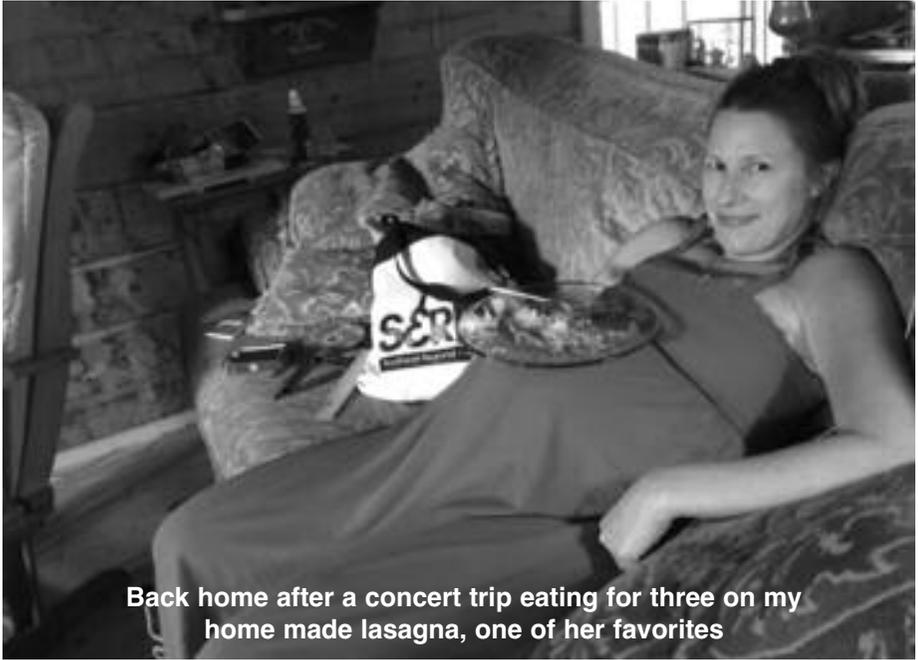
"We need to talk ..."

"How many?" says I, for some reason sensing where that was going.

She holds up two fingers.

"Seriously?"





Back home after a concert trip eating for three on my home made lasagna, one of her favorites

Life was obviously changing fast. In many ways.

Not only is Melissa going to have two babies but my daughter Rachel also announced she was getting married.

“Well, won’t this be a busy summer,” says I.

And, as the cosmos would have it, Rachel’s wedding date would be about one week either way of the twins arrival.

“Seriously?”

Oh, yes.

Well, Rachel got married and sure enough, a week later, momma goes into labor.

We intended on natural childbirth and we were ready for it. At the hospital I paid for a therapist to come and massage her back and legs as she went deeper into labor.

I’m sitting next to her bed checking emails on my cell phone, all of a sudden a doctor and six nurses came charging into the room. In 30 seconds they had Melissa zooming down the hall and escorting me to an operating room.



Rachel’s wedding day

“What on earth is happening?”

The twins were trapped, one umbilical cord was wrapped around the others neck and they couldn't move. One of the babies heart rate dropped way down, the child was suffocating.

I never felt so rattled, scared in my life.

But to make a long story short about 15 minutes later little Makayla came bursting into the world with one eye open, checking everything out. She looked like Popeye.

One minute later, Caleb came ... all calm and humble.

And momma was fine.

Here's the thing: we wanted a home birth but opted for a natural birth in the hospital. If we had the home birth we originally wanted I would have been planning three funerals. We came that close to losing everyone. The doctors and nurses and entire staff of the hospital were wonderful and caring. I couldn't be more grateful.

Today, as I write this, Makayla and Caleb are forever the center of her life. She is a great mom, completely attentive and in



**Momma and her brand new twins,
hours after they were born**

charge. I learned quickly my most supportive role would be to shut up and do exactly as I'm told. Which I do. Well, mostly.

The morning ritual is consistant ... daddy makes momma's coffee, oat bread toast for the babies and Peppa Pig as they wake up.

Makayla, KayKay or "*Kayka-doodles*" as we call her, is an artist, already into books and drawing and writing. And singing.

Caleb is like daddy, into how things work and music. He loves to play his guitar and has a remarkable sense of tempo.

This is gonna be one heck of a family band.

A difficult adjustment is how to manage what I do for a living inside a log cabin with baby twins and a mommy who will rip the



foundation off the house if you dare wake those little buggers up.

Normally I would sit in the evening with a banjo in my lap, writing, rehearsing, trying to work my hands. In the mornings, I am an early riser so it is usually a cup of coffee and my guitar. Most of the songs I write begin late at night and I finish them the next morning.

All of that had to be altered in deference to the twins' schedule plus still try to make a living to support a stay-at-home mom and two infants.

Part of the solution was building a writer's cabin, an artist's dream of a man-cave in the back meadow. My vision was to make it completely from repurposed materials and suitable as a recording studio if I wanted. It was going along fine until a tree fell on it in the midst of framing the ding-dang thing.

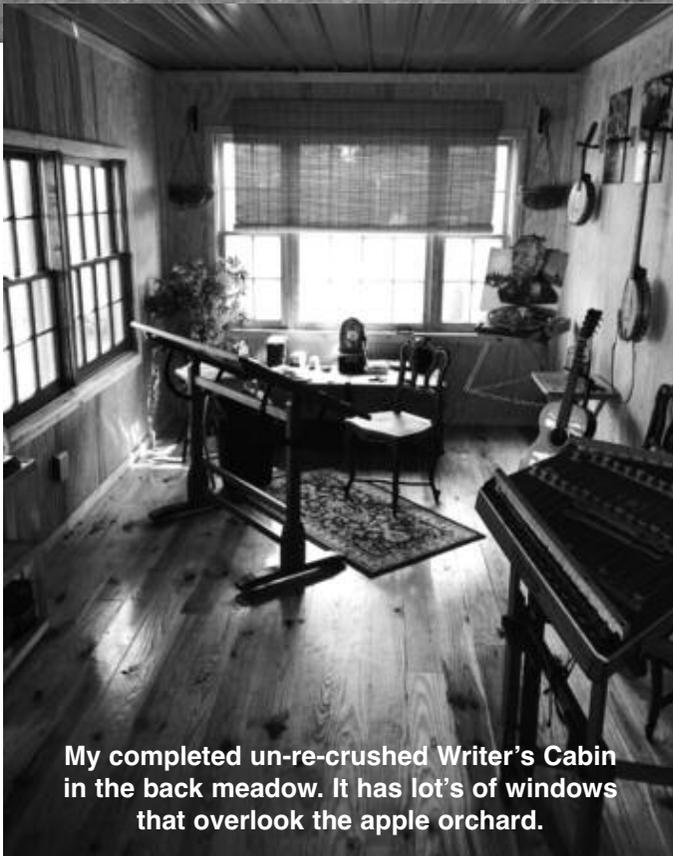


I looked at the wreckage in sheer disbelief ... all that work crushed into splinters. Oddly enough, none of the glass windows I installed into the framing broke. Not a single pane. I took that as a sign that I should rebuild it from scratch.

"How hard could it be?" I wondered.

Pretty ding-dang hard.

But in two days it was reassembled, the site cleaned up and it looked like it never even happened. Soon enough, I had my finished man-cave banjo-palace far from the dozing twins.



My completed un-re-crushed Writer's Cabin in the back meadow. It has lot's of windows that overlook the apple orchard.



Yes, the circle of love has always been an exhilarating ride that, if you stick with it, can come out just fine.

Sure it takes work, and nothing is perfect. Life is like my artist's cabin ... you start with a grand dream and good intentions and then, holy cow, something unexpected happens and it lies before you crushed and seemingly beyond repair.

But it can be repaired, it can be fixed. It can be healed. And with a little time, a little effort, a little patience it all gets put back together.

And when you're done, it's as if the bad stuff never happened.

And healing can be a great adventure if you view the world, your heart and your imperfections calmly. No matter what happens, our roads twist and turn without much help from us. If it goes up, it'll come down. If it turns right, it'll turn left. Always.

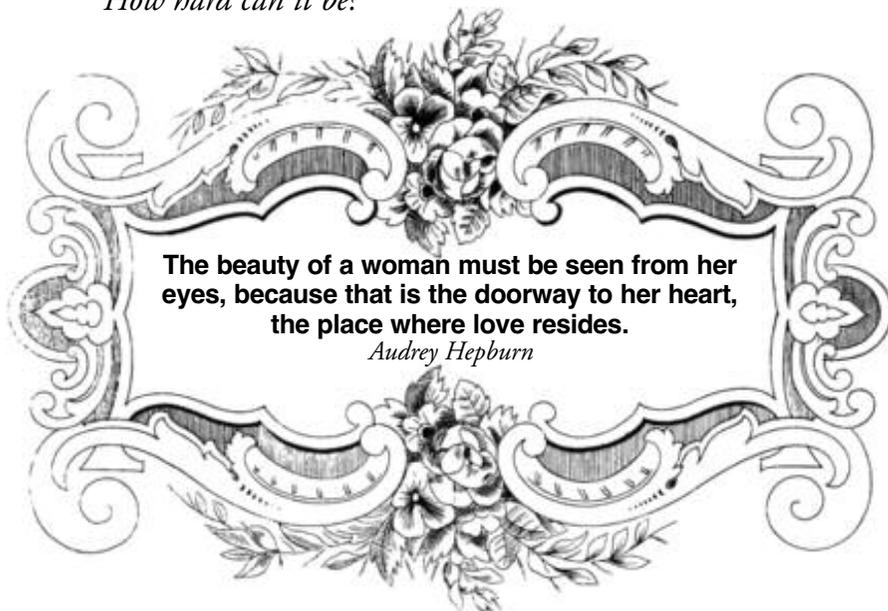
Life is like the weather ... give it a minute, it'll change.

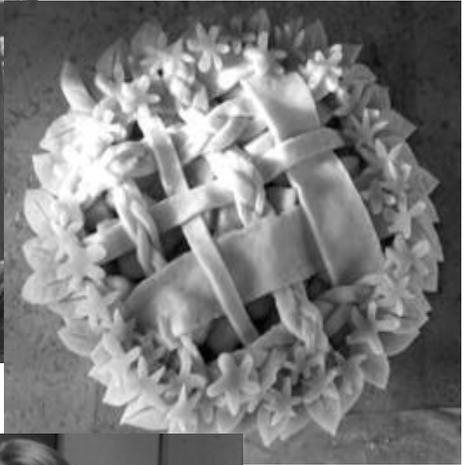
So, a tip of the glass to all on the mend, to any who have carried the weight of someone leaving, to those who have felt the coldness of a steel blade piercing through their soul as the one you love gives up ... and walks away. Hang in there. And if the person leaving was *you*, don't just forgive yourself. Get better. Get bigger. Get stronger. Get wiser. Experience will teach you that time heals and erases, cures and improves ... every building that falls, every project that fails, every heart that breaks.

We can all rebuild.

I mean after all,

How hard can it be?





Did I mention
Melissa likes to
bake incredible
waistline-busting
home made
pies?



Looking Glass

Words & Music

©Michael Johnathon/RachelAubreyMusic/BMI

Performed in the key of B

(played as if in G capo up four frets)

The musical score is written in G major and 4/4 time. It consists of a verse and a chorus. The verse has four lines of music, and the chorus has four lines. Chords are indicated by letters G, C, D7, and G7 above the staff. The lyrics are written below the notes.

VERSE

It's an-oth-er fog-gy morn-ing, I strug-gle with a
fog-gy mo-ment, Parts of dreams un-til' 'round my head.
So I reach a-cross joun-tled co-ven search-ing for a
morn-ing lov-er; That's the way— I want to be— with you.

CHORUS

Once up-on a time I thought I— knew I would be for-
ev-er blue, Look-ing for a mag-ic mo-ment, Search-ing for my
one and on-ly you. Then I found my hu-man— look-ing through a
look-ing glass And that's the way— I want to be— with you.

It's another foggy morning
I struggle with a foggy moment
parts of dreams runnin' 'round my head

So I reach across jumbled covers
searching for a morning Lover
That's the way I want to be with you.

Once upon a time I thought I knew
I would be forever blue
 searching for a magic moment
 searching for my one and only you
Then I found my Lady Lass
 looking through a Looking Glass
 that's the way I want to be with you

Instrumental

Once upon a time I thought I knew
I would never find another you
 searching for a magic moment
 searching for my one and only you
Then I found my Lady Lass
 looking through a Looking Glass
 that's the way I want to be with you

It's another foggy morning
I struggle with a foggy moment
parts of dreams runnin' 'round my head

So I reach across jumbled covers
 searching for my morning Lover
That's the way I want to stay with you.



You can NOT pursue
the dream in your
HEART
if you are addicted to
the technology in your
HANDS

**“The difference between technology and slavery is:
slaves are aware that they are not free”**

Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Once upon a time, folks actually talked to one another ...

Families would gather around a big table and share meals, stories and events of their day. Summer evenings were spent on front porches, living room couches by a fireplace in winter, pulling out their instruments and singing the evenings away.

Then TV and air conditioning enticed them from their front porches and imprisoned them indoors as they sit quietly in darkened rooms, barely speaking less they interrupt the Ajax commercial.

Today, the internet, smart phones, and gadgets have created the most isolated generation in human history ... all the while convincing people they have unseen “friends” in a flat-screen world.

The times have a-changed too much, perhaps. Media is in fact a brilliant, helpful tool but not if it replaces real, human, organic interaction. Media is the "paper" ... not the book.

A SongFarmer celebrates the organic musical heritage of our hometowns and the wonderful, musical world of the front porch. And we are spreading these seeds of simplicity and friendship world-wide into classrooms and for home school families. Especially schools in urban areas.

That’s right ... if folks won’t come out to the front porch then, ding-dang it, let’s bring the front porch inside to them.

It's better to make
FRIENDS
than trying to make
FANS

Once I got to play a Clearwater concert with Pete Seeger years ago in Beacon NY. Before we went onstage a group appeared out of nowhere to meet him, to get an autograph. Pete stopped what he was doing and spoke to each person, one at a time.

When he was done and we started walking to the stage, he winked at me and said, "*it's better to make friends than have fans ...*"

It struck me as a very humble, very correct perspective. How uncomplicated, simple ... and brilliant. Beginning that day forward, I have never used that word in relation to anything I am involved in.

"Indeed, to be simple is to be great."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

"The definition of genius is taking the complex and making it simple."

Albert Einstein

"Any fool can make something complicated. It takes a genius to make it simple."

Woody Guthrie

"Our life is frittered away by detail. Simplify, simplify."

Henry David Thoreau

"Nature is pleased with simplicity. And nature is no fool."

Isaac Newton