

KINDRED SPIRITS FOREVER

We were kindred spirits, made of the same stuff. I believed she would always be there for me

By Skye Bothma

I KNEW it was bad news as soon as I heard his voice. Why else would her father phone me? He told me she was gone and I did not want to hear what he was saying. I longed for him to say that she had run away from home and he was phoning me to ask if I knew where she was. But she had not run away, she had been killed in a car accident.

It was such a shock yet somehow it was expected. She told me so often that she would die young. It was as if, by some premonition, she knew that she would not live beyond her '40s. Forty was young, but 19?

Losing my best friend is the most devastating thing that has ever happened to me. We were not just best friends, we were kindred spirits. We shared the same interests, morals and dreams. We were so alike, it was as if we were made of the same stuff. No one has ever understood me – nor probably ever will – as well as she did. We were both different from our peers but it did not matter as we had each other. Now without her I have to face the world on my own.

It has been difficult to accept that we will not get to do the things we dreamed of doing together. We would dream of romance, of the perfect wedding but now that day-dream cannot come true. For even if I do find Mr Right, I have lost my maid-of-honour and without her it will not be perfect.

The first six months after her death, which occurred in the June holidays, were the most difficult. I returned to technikon after the holiday

with a new and full semester ahead of me. My life had lost meaning and I practically gave up the will to live. My nights were plagued by bad dreams and during the day I found it difficult to concentrate on my lectures. I had to force myself to do the smallest amount of work.

I began to suffer from exhaustion through trying to come to terms with my grief while battling to find the energy to study and maintain the appearance of a happy person. I told only a few friends of what had happened, but generally kept it a secret from the rest of my class and my lecturers. I did not want to be pitied or treated differently. It was the first time in my life that I had lost someone so close and I did not know quite how to deal with it except that it was something I had to get through on my own and being pitied would only have compounded my suffering. I wanted at least part of my life to continue as if nothing had changed.

Though I found it difficult to study, I did take comfort in being in the company of my friends and my wonderful lecturers whose enthusiasm for their subjects helped to give me the strength to persevere.

It has been two years now since she passed away. There is a gaping chasm in my heart which can never be filled again, only hidden by the weeds of time. I miss her so very much and sometimes I feel so alone without her. The experience has made me more sensitive. I can empathise with people in similar situations and I even cry at sad movies which I never used to do. I found a weakness that I never knew I had



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but which I am happy to have. It makes me more humble.

All of life's obstacles teach us something and this one has taught me two things. Life is short, so do not be afraid of living. Before, I had always been afraid to try new things, of what could happen and of what people may think. Now I cast my fears aside, as best I can, and try things at which I may fail and do not let what could happen and what people may think restrict me, as much as it used to. I have gained more confidence in myself and have become more outgoing.

Secondly I have learnt the importance of our relationships with others. Never take anyone for granted. I still feel pangs of guilt when I think of how much more I could have done with her but didn't because I believed she would always be there for me to turn to. Also, life is not about what we can achieve but rather who we can become. By this I mean that no matter what we accomplish, it is meaningless if you have no one to share it with and do not become a better person for that achievement.

I wanted to share my experience in the hope that it may be of some help to others in a similar situation. I also hope that it may make you think

of your own friendships and of just how precious they are. Speaking about it now, letting the secret out at last also resolves it and makes moving on from here easier. It is something I have needed to do for a long time.

There is hardly a day when I do not think of her and I know she still thinks of me. Sometimes I can feel her presence. I will never forget her and I do everything I can to keep her memory alive. I dedicate beautiful days to her, I reread her letters to keep her spirit alive within me and I keep a photograph of her in my locket so she may be close to my heart. We were kindred spirits; we still are and always will be. And one day we will be together again, until then I try to live my life to the full, for her, because her life was taken away so early. V

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