

Me, you and the dog, too (Flash)

by Jo Thomas - Saturday, September 30, 2017

<http://journeymouse.net/wp/?p=4599>

I came back and you were in a bad way, which I guess is only to be expected with the news you'd just had. I could barely look at you because the thing I always loved about you was gone. Your smile is rare but you always – well, almost always – have those lines at either side of your mouth that suggest you're amused by everything. A set of parentheses around the situation that suggests it's better to step back and see the bigger picture. "Smirk" isn't the right word but I can see how some people might think it was.

You're lying on your sofa with your dog. He had his paws on your chest and was staring up at your wet face. There's no room for me there, so I curled up on the floor beside you and rested my head on your ribs. I concentrated on the beat of your heart, the feel of your rib cage expanding, the scent of you.

We don't speak much. We've never needed to. But I couldn't help whispering, "I missed you."

You stroked the dog's head. You put your arm around my back. Or just happened to lay it out off the sofa. Either or.

The dog and I spent the whole damned fortnight soaking up your tears, comforting, holding you, reminding you without words that though someone else had left your life there were still people here who loved you. That there were even two of us for who you really are the centre of the universe. You told the dog you loved him repeatedly and gave him bear-hugs, even when we were out walking. With me, you did as you have always done; silently accepting my presence unless you had something specific to say.

I was there for you at the funeral, beside you through the whole thing, my arm around you as you struggled to hold in the tears you were scared to shed in front of anyone but me and the dog. Then came the bun fight, the watered down wake your family is throwing, and now you don't want me around any more.

It started with a glimpse of someone you used to know, someone who smiled at you and said the right things this time around, someone your mother likes more than me. You walked away from me. Then I heard your mother laugh at someone else's comment and say something about how you hadn't turned out too bad considering your late father and she had been convinced you'd be a lock-in with your imaginary friend forever.

It's my turn to hide away with people who care, with people who drop everything just so they can tell me they love me in anyway that makes it clear. Only you're talking to that other someone and the dog is yours and no-one else can see me. So I just... went.

I didn't even get to see those lines around your mouth this time.

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