



You make me happy

Robert A. Neimeyer

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Editor-in-Chief

This prose poem arose toward the end of a creative writing workshop offered at the annual conference of the American Association of Suicidology, when a group of 15 suicide loss survivors, myself among them, concluded the meeting by immersing ourselves in three undated 5-minute free-writes and shared the results. After hearing a dozen poignant offerings filled with love and longing read by others in the successive rounds, I was moved to draft this one, and read it aloud as my closing contribution. The four-word prompt became the title.

You make me happy
when you share your sadness,
open your heart's pages
and read the small print.

You give me the gift
of your truth,
unvarnished, rough-hewn
from the timbers of your life.

This is how it is
for us now,
as we stand in the ashes,
only see beauty
where it is laid bare,

stripped of ornamentation,
just the sturdy posts
that still stand,
nudged back into place,
re-centered by other hands.

They give no protection
from the howling wind,
but they endure,
and provide a place of meeting,

a place to rebuild.

With a salute to Vanessa McGann and Nina Gutin,
who facilitated the workshop.