
Love's Road



By Paula D'Arcy

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence;
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

~Robert Frost from The Road Not Taken

During the first months after the death of my husband and child I locked myself inside my apartment. When the phone rang I stared at the receiver until it was still. Friends knocked at my door, calling my name and I wouldn't answer. If my arms could not hold the ones for whom I longed, then I wanted them empty. My angry choice.

And my private choice, too. For I was building hard barriers inside of me. In subtle, secret ways I had begun to say "No" to all of life because part of life had hurt me.

Then one day, unexpectedly, my mail contained a letter from a young man in Kansas. He was suffering from a painful and incurable illness and he wanted my friendship. To my chagrin he would not accept any of my "Public" faces, nor would he honor my walls. He hammered into my life demanding that I be there. Without regard he pushed past the shadows and the memory-filled half person I was willing to become. His insistence was like a scream that I be alive.

In effect he was forcing me into the yellow wood and demanding that I face its reality; one inviting road of memories and shadows; and the other, rough road of love. No one grieves without standing at that same fork, waiting to decide. For it's

never that we can't love again. It's that we won't. I knew. I had refused for a long, long while.

The experience of this encounter was the beginning of my fearful steps toward all the possibilities which might be waiting in my new, altered life. It was when I began to live for the new day. It was when I agreed to say goodbye to what had been. It was when I first started re-accepting life. Life in general, and my life in particular.

During those hard weeks when my choices were made I assumed that their significance reached only to my future. Today I see that I was very mistaken. For how we choose to survive casts as much light (or darkness) on our treasured past as it does on our anticipated future. Here is the key: Nothing can give lasting life to the loves of yesterday except our willingness to carry the experience of that love onto the new roads sent for us to travel. In denying the new we bury the old.

For when we cling to memory and live only with regret we do not really have that which we so tightly grasp.

Nothing is ours until we let it go. That's the mystery of life and death both. Lord, give each one who reads these words the courage to take love's road.

