

That Other Woman

by Sally Moore



Some say that everything happens for a reason; there are no chance encounters. Others state that everything happens in threes; there are good, bad and ugly events. My third year traveling through the mists of my husband's Alzheimer's disease tested this hypothesis. I went from a wife and mother to the conniving Captain's daughter and ended up as 'That Other Woman.' Confusion reigned, then and now.

My husband, now sixty, has been sucked even deeper into the quagmire of this disease. I can only guess at the magnitude of his torments. I wished I could join him. I wished I could reach him. I wished; but wishing didn't help. It only brought tears and despair. If I'm to help him, those thoughts had to be banished to the netherworld. If I'm sad and melancholy, I couldn't help him. I smiled often though tears came unbidden to my eyes. I prayed that the flickering wick of hope is not extinguished for either of us.

The Alzheimer's disease process is very frightening; yet, I knew what lie ahead. I shall make my husband's journey as joyful as I am able. Thanks to Mom's wisdom and patience, Herman and I will travel the downhill road of Alzheimer's together. What I didn't know then was that early onset Alzheimer's is a much more aggressive form of the disease. It didn't mirror Mom's journey. I prepared myself for the long haul... twenty-one months later, Herman died.

To survive the isolation, I talked to God. I yelled at Him during times of helplessness. I pleaded for help during times of hopelessness. I constantly thanked Abba/Father for not abandoning us.

Mine is a journal of sorrow. A sorrow that sparked in the war-torn Delta of South Vietnam, and culminated on the battlefield of Alzheimer's in the Florida Panhandle. In the years between, sorrow mingled with joy. Sorrow percolated throughout our fifteen years of Foreign Service with the Agency for International Development and the State Department. During those years abroad, life was not easy; it was never dull. Separations were inevitable; reunions were memorable. During our early retirement years, sorrow dissipated as our sons grew and thrived in the United States. Sorrow ruptured as we grappled with Mom's losing fight with Alzheimer's.

Mine is a journal of love. It didn't begin that way; at least not for me. Herman burst into my life on my first day in Cantho, South Vietnam. He was persistent, obnoxious and refused to take 'no' for an answer. Herman was an ex-marine and I was an ex--nun. We were oil and water; complete opposites in almost everything. Love was slow to spark between us. It simmered beneath the surface for over a year before bursting into flame. War changes people. It changed us. Differences and opinions didn't seem to matter as much as they did in the beginning. We found common ground in music, poetry, the Vietnamese people and their spirit.

There was heartache, pain and forgiveness. There was an enduring togetherness, even when countries separated us. We both believed in the sacredness of the marriage vows. Our life commitment was not entered into lightly. The challenges of raising a family in Third World countries that were either at war or under the communist regime strengthened our bond. It deepened our love; it strengthened our resolve. Whatever life threw at us, we went through it together. Our love is all-consuming and forever fervent. We became one.

Mine is a journal of shared oneness. Our daily struggles to make sense of this disease were arduous. I entered his world and never looked back. We both knew how the story would end; we lived each day as if it would be our last together. We had a blast! We fell in love all over again. Faith sustained us throughout our journey; love is my anchor of hope.