

International Institute for Humanistic Studies

Betrayal

by *Carol Cook, M.A.*, psychotherapist, graduate of Unearthing the Moment training

It is Monday
outside the animal clinic
Jake, Lilah and I playing in the sun
after updating vaccinations and completing the "wellness check."

From the corner of my eye I see them
Three figures
Two human, hovering over the third
A dog
Old
Crippled
Uncoordinated
Back legs unable to follow the front
Eyes glossed over by age
Hair matted and scruffy
Probably hasn't wanted to eat for days

The woman is hunched over crying
The man (a veterinarian)
is standing, leaning toward her
taking the leash
seeming to console in his practiced clinical way

I hear the word "ashes"
I know what this is about
I have had my dogs "put down" before

The man leads the confused and reticent beast
toward the back entrance
The woman stumbles off in tears
Excruciating pain

My eyes are squinted
barely open to see all this
only enough to realize what is happening
I take my own two friends to the car
Knowing our days will come
The wretched pain swells up inside me

It's not about death
I can deal with death
It's about betrayal
The pain of being abandoned at the moment of terror
Of being handed over to a stranger
however well-intentioned
by someone you have served for all your days
Someone to whom you have been unfalteringly loyal
Someone on whom you have depended
for life

I cannot know what within or beyond me
may be the source of this pain.
But my body wrenches when I allow it to be
I do know this moment awakens my most painful and profound repression
I wonder can I finally allow it today?

It would be so much easier to go shopping
Or back to business and family
a nice glass of wine
a rerun of Mash

But how much longer can I put it off?
Knowing it must be faced someday
Why not today?

I get in the back seat with my own two friends
Wrapping my arms around them
Burying my face into Lilah's soft fur
I allow it to happen
Huge heaving sobs, deep gasping breaths, face-flooding tears
Nearly intolerable connection to something that resides
in my lower chakras
Something that has to do with relationship, trust, safety
and betrayal

I grieve
Some for the seeming betrayal of this innocent animal

But more for this woman's lost chance at completion
(I have been in her place so many times)
So afraid to face the pain of losing her beloved
that she passes up what may be the most profound moment
in their relationship
Missing the chance to lay down with him
to wrap her arms around him
to comfort and love him in his last earthly breaths
to hold his weary body
as he surrenders to the greater Reality

To experience the feeling of his warmth
as it leaves his physical essence and transcends into other dimensions
To stay with his body until she, herself, senses
the essence of his newfound peace

Jake and Lilah lick my tears
They cannot guess at causes
They can only be
here at my side
Until the time comes for one of us
All of us
To experience the dreaded and wondrous mystery of death

© 2003 by Carol Cook, M.A. All rights reserved