

A Simple Path

On a cold, rainy South Bend night, I plodded through the muddy grass
In a field of lonesome, sleeping graves searching for a distant memory.
As I navigated monuments of various shapes and sizes, my mind drifted back
To the carefree days of my youth when I stumbled upon an aging, anonymous soul
Who appeared from nowhere to share his soul and guide me
Through his parables of a past filled with goodness, love and devotion.

A simple carpenter by trade, his calloused hands built the magnificent homes of the wealthy.
Surrounded each day by their marble floors, golden chandeliers and
Seemingly perfect lives, he watched quietly as he worked,
Amazed at the consumption and fulfillment of their own desire
As they strayed from the simple path.
Bewildered by their greed, he never had an interest in being what they were.

The sting of the cold of the November night seemed to disappear
As the warmth of the softness of his words
Beckoned me home to the security of a simpler time.
As I rested beneath the umbrella of a gently swaying oak tree,
My mind wandered to the disappointments of a world that seemed to forget,
Where the truth and honor seemed to erode with the falling rain....

As the night and its deepening darkness tightened its hold on my soul
I reverently gazed down at a once solitary stone we had visited so many times before.
I remembered how he lovingly knelt in the falling snow before her grave,
How his ever-lasting devotion never wavered,
How he tenderly cleaned the stone each day and
Spoke of the simple cross this builder would erect in her honor.

And now, as they rested side by side, I pulled the grass and weeds away from their stones
And knelt in silence, amused at how I mimicked his simple ritual.
I smiled as I remembered how a voracious world, intent to gobble down the last home on the highway
On which they lived, never was able to wrestle it away from him.
Despite their pleas to sell his soul, the rapidly spinning, ever-changing world had to wait as
He ignored the rush of humanity and remembered it was their home.

Twenty years ago, the gentle lessons of this elderly man silently touched my soul.
And now, as the winter zeros in and I say a long awaited final goodbye
He sleeps peacefully, resting by her side, where he always wanted to be while
The idealism of my youth has given way to an uncomfortable acceptance of reality.
Despite the harsh and rapidly changing times, his simple, but profound message calls me back
Begging me to never forget....

As morning approached, a perfect leaf fell softly through the still of the night.
I watched it slowly descend, and despite the harshness of the wind and rain... it knew its path.
As I walked back through the alone of the night,
I fondly remembered how he refused to accept a world filled with insensitivity, jealousy and greed
And was determined to make each day the unique manifestation
Of his unselfishness, kindness, and love.

May this Christmas season instill in each one of us a desire to live each day
Determined to venture from the path of security to touch the lives of others.
May we understand that the true meaning of Christmas is in living the spirit
Of this holiday in our daily lives every day of the year.