

Commentary: Why Shepherd Must Go¹

Cecilia Faulconer

Where do we hide?
Where is our protection,
When one walks amongst us called, "Shepherd"?
Who, by his very being
Represents what it was we once were,
Before the endless compromises,
Of which integrity became one. . .
And later. . . "me."

But wait, maybe I am still a part.
Yes, I will assign tasks to him;
Helpfully, point out his error,
As he struggles to find his way;
Remove those obstacles which might tempt him
to weaken,
Or transfer his responsibilities.
Yes, I will help him,
Because secretly I know how I sold out.
Preserving him—Yes! In that will lie my integrity.

Watch him though.
He does not need our protection.
He stands alone as others cast stones,
And yet after the last cast,
His honest eyes mirror the inner strength
And worse. . . us,
As he faces us in silence.

The silence deafens our ears
With the transgressions of us—not him.
Why can't he scream or yell?
At least then we could label him "pious,"
And end the hell—the hell of his silence.

He walks again. . . alone.
From far off, I watch him.
We must remove him from us,
If we are to progress.
For his movements begin ripples within me. . .
"Why?"

As I secretly search through me,
I discover:
"Why did I sell out?" —
My lack of desire to sacrifice.
"Why did I hurt him?" —
My humanness was one of the compromises.
"Why did I compromise?" —
I was afraid I couldn't.
And afraid to discover if I could learn.
. . . What if I couldn't?

¹ This was written by a graduate student as a reaction to the in-fighting, power plays, and personal conflicts which often accompany an institution's struggle to redefine its mission and programs.

But, he stands reaching back to us who hurt him,
Saying, "What if you could?"

Until he leaves:
Our compromises,
Our fear of risks and reachings,
Our nostalgic taste of submerged human-
ness,
The hypocrisy and futility of our lives
Will remain illuminated in his silence.

Yes, he must go; he is sick.
So sick he will not defend his actions with words.
His silence indicates his life and past record are
his defense!
Yes, he is sick; he must go.

GOODBYE²

Gene Shepherd

It's ok Mark,
What you held was yours to grasp
What you chose to release was yours
to free

it's ok Mark.

It's ok Mark,
When fragmentation becomes permanent
quicksilver,

When what seems like non-direction
brings you to provide direction,
it's ok Mark.

It's ok Mark,
To create a peace to end fighting
To become quiet to silence a hell
it's ok Mark.

It's ok Mark,
When crippled by gentleness and
introspection, to choose to crash
rather than not to fly.
When too gentle to live among the
wolves, to leave in quiet solitude
It's ok Mark.

It's ok Mark,
Words you could not hear while
you struggled
Now become words you can't hear
as I struggle.

It's ok Mark.

² *Author's note:* This was written as I flew to claim and return the body of my nephew who had committed suicide. Although he was a very bright student, in dealing with his personal problems, the elementary school, high school, and college further fragmented his self-concept. The result. . .

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