# HIMDAG

Loneliness

difficult to understand

is it an emotion?

or is it a feeling?

is it an emotion like happiness, or anger, or love?

or is it a sensory feeling like fear, or cold, or hunger?

He thought about it, as he lay in his cocoon of loneliness

and he realized

it wasn’t an emotion

it was a feeling, just like hunger or thirst

but it was much more complicated.

Hunger, thirst, tiredness, cold, desire, are all feelings

and the solutions to them are easy to find

there is a feeling when they are lacking

and when they are fulfilled, there is the opposite feeling

hunger to fullness, cold to warm, desire to satisfaction

but feeling lonely is not like this

every other negative feeling

you can buy, borrow, beg or steal your way out of

but to remove the feeling of loneliness is much more difficult

and when it is gone

when it is satisfied

what is that feeling called?

Truly dissolving away loneliness is difficult

the methods of numbing it are a well-developed industry

Novocain manufacturing on an industrial scale

it can be hidden in alcohol, television, books, shopping

it cannot be resolved by just talking to someone

you can talk to a waitress, talk to a shop-keeper, but it doesn't change the feeling of loneliness

for it requires more than words, more than touch

it requires sharing.

Five necessities for contentment

food, water, warmth, sex and sharing

and tonight, once again, sharing was missing

well, sex wasn't on the entertainment bill either

but at least it wasn't eating away at him, not tonight anyways.

The stars were endless and patternless

the desert was astonishingly loud

full of insect clicks, buzzes and chirps

the traffic from the distant highway ebbed and flowed like waves on a beach

the nuclear fusion heat of the day somehow had dissolved away

leaving cool and cold whiffs of air dancing across his face

he pulled his sleeping bag up over his shoulders.

Loneliness is the need to share

share drink, food, thought, touch, warmth

share the noise of the desert and the light of the stars.

This he had found was the curse of the traveler

as a new traveler, he had been thrilled with the names of places

he would study the map of the day and anticipate the towns he would see

and as their names appeared on the highway signs he would sing them out loud

trying different enunciations

trying to find the way that the locals would say it or should say it

he would turn off the highway

on what he hoped was some sort of intuitive feeling for the towns he should see

he was looking at the sights,

the buildings, the people, where and what they ate, how they dressed, walked, talked

but as the days passed, as the towns streamed by, his attention began to shift

he was a traveler who was no longer interested in the malls, the fast food chains, the better business bureaus' list of sights of interest

his eyes began to get better at finding the hearts of the settlements

and there, he found kindness, art and intelligence

but more importantly, he searched for someone to share those instants of truth and beauty

and this was what travelers

tourists wanted sights

travelers wanted sharing

and now and then he found it

and it was always with other travelers.

The travelers he would share with were sometimes temporarily settled in some town

but they still were travelers

and it is the nature of travelers to seek each other out

and to be open to sharing

they would share stories of the road and sometimes more

and afterward he spent a lot of time thinking about these travelers

he tried to find sense in their stories and in relating to them his own story he would search for understanding in their eyes

at first, he was hesitant to tell his story

but he found that no one seemed to find it as bizarre as what he did

and he became more open about it

and in the warmth of sharing stories, he began to see that he was not a traveler

or rather, he did not start out as one

he started as a leaver

one day he just left

actually, turned left

and kept driving

he could never explain it

the road was there, and he just took it

and now tonight, he lay under the stars

and for the first time since the left turn, he felt restless

which was ridiculous, after a year of moving

but all the same, right now, once again, he wanted to get moving

get up and turn the ignition, turn on the lights, turn the car

and to become one more wave in that ocean of gasoline and diesel growls

and the urge was not towards new blue pen marks on the map

it was to turn around.

Turning around just wasn't ever what you expect

the mirage of movement and direction always trick

the road back was not just a mirror image of the road to here

it was related to the road to here

but the relationship was not simple

it was tangled in change, thoughts and feelings

familiar landmarks transformed by time, light and direction

and he realized, as the road sang to him

that although the map said he was back to a previous place

it was an illusion created by closed eyes and static dreams

he could not come back

he could only go forward.

Harvey

Harvey James

a surprisingly confusing name

it's either two first names or two last names

and people would intermingle them indiscriminately

and over time he had quit vigilantly guarding the order of his name

and now he would answer to either one

there was freedom in this

identity was no longer attached to names.

He contemplated this dissolving of his identity that was part of life on the road

you were not defined by your profession or trade

or your name

you were no longer a thing

but rather became defined by what you did

defined by your actions

you were a moving person

a traveler

a wanderer.

This lack of packaging could be anxiety provoking

he found that most other travelers could not accept the formlessness of life on the road

and would take on exotic clothing, decorate their cars or vans with definitions

he resisted this

he remained neutral

was essentially invisible to those who used the social grid to define the world.

Amie

Amie was different

she was a stranger here in this world

yet she stayed rooted

she viewed the world around her like it was a twisting kaleidoscope

colors and patterns forever changing

a world of organized confusion

this is how the world appears to someone with straight linear vision

a straight line in a curved world.

She gardened

she was a mother

a single mother of an adult daughter

she found beauty wherever she looked

her garden spread from her house to her whole life

the smell of earth and life were everywhere

the change of weather, of heat, and of light

gently shifted her world

like an ocean swell

and the garden changed and adapted

but like her remained full of hope and promise.

She had met Harvey like you meet a stray cat

he was just around

he noticed that you noticed

and he would keep a wary distance

but slowly the distance shortened

and it was not long before he was purring on her lap

but he was always skittish and easily startled

ready to run

and of course, he did

she guessed he would be back

that was the nature of strays

they just had to know that they could run

and so, she tended her garden

and then one day he was there again

she smiled at him

and with the innocent ignorance of strays

he found his favorite warm spot in the sun

sat down and with complete awareness

watched her continue the weeding.

**2 TWO 2**

The breaking light through the bedroom window set Amie's skin aglow

through sleepy early morning eyes Harvey watched her as she dressed

she stood in front of the wooden framed mirror and added layers

when she felt that she was transformed enough she quietly left

to work as a bank teller

this was the morning ritual

the ritual that ran through the changing seasons.

Harvey would wander into the kitchen

the smell of coffee lingering

with bare feet, he would pick his way through the floor tiles

nimbly following the line of sun warmed tiles to the stove

where he would reheat the cooling coffee.

The home had two rooms

one room had a bed and the other had everything else

both rooms had books stacked in all the quiet places

paintings were hung on walls like postage stamps on a package from somewhere very far away

someone had mostly scraped off the red paint from the wooden kitchen chairs

old frayed padded easy chairs were placed where they would fit

and it all seemed so right.

Harvey would find a book from one of the piles and sit out on the kitchen porch

and spent more time watching the garden than staring at the book

sometimes he would go for walks through the forest and neighborhood or drive into town

but he found that more often he would be waiting to hear Amie's pickup crunching its way up the potholed dirt road

he would watch her slam her shoulder against the sticky truck door

and like a child released by the school bell

she would dance her way up the path

and then one day

in an instant

as he watched her walking up the path

he knew he had arrived.

Arrived

a change of definition

he was no longer what he was

and he did not know what he was to be

the directionless of it all

the uncertainty of it all

was surprisingly pleasant

there was no anxiety

there was only the warm anticipation of change.

The instant of his recognition of it

was not its beginning

the point in time it began was undefined

it was like summer coming

one day it just was

and winter seemed like a distant dream

this could not be explained

Harvey was in love.

Love

he had no idea what it was

but what other word could he use

what other word could sum up his complicated collection of emotions, feelings and thoughts.

There was no rationale to it

she was beautiful

not a model magazine beauty

but a feminine athletic beauty

she was intelligent

and he was constantly bewildered by this intellect

she could with a gesture

a few words

turn his view of the world on its side

she was passionate

her passion lit up the world around her

her eyes were full of light

radiating her mirth, her contentment, her wisdom, her compassion, her femininity

but none of this was the source of his love

it was a sum of all of these and more

more

it was that he knew her

knew her to her soul

and more

he knew himself when he was with her

and he felt complete

and more

he felt alive

and this was his love.

**3 THREE 3**

Balance

it's not stability

stability is static

there is no movement in stability

a rock sitting on top of another is stable

but it's not balanced.

As Amie walked she studied her balance

for a moment, she was balanced

then she would fall forward

and then find balance again

before once again falling forward

another step

balancing and falling

balance and fall

walking.

This was the process of life

she intuitively knew this

instability and balance

each defining the other

light and shadow

yin and yang.

She walked

the balance and fall

spinning from one to the other

so smoothly that the borders between them melted

the movement of life.

Walking was her muse

she walked and thought

contemplating her life

trying to find balance

seeking the direction for her fall.

She thought of Harvey

she could feel the growing depth of their relationship

and she wanted it, but this was not what she needed

what she needed was to maintain her independence

she could never share her past with him

and she needed to maintain her mobility

and she could never carry him with her.

She appreciated his intuitiveness

he never asked about her past

he accepted her as one would accept an apple tree in a field

a gift

how it got there

was not relevant

and she returned his courtesy

and never asked him to explain the facades of his life

that some people confuse with identity.

This acceptance of each other was the nutritive ground for their growing relationship

and as their feelings for each other deepened

so, did their sensitive care to avoid breaking this fragile acceptance.

Their lives were intertwined

woven together with threads from each other

she could sense his presence even when they were apart

and she could feel herself changing

becoming a part of something

but she knew that this was unsustainable

the balance would break

and they would have to decide which direction they would fall

fall together or apart

and she could not see how he could ever fall, the direction she needed to go

and she accepted this eventuality

as in the contemplative sadness found in the warmth of a setting sun.

She was not being fair to Harvey

there was a risk for him being with her

it was very unlikely that anything would happen

but if she was told to leave or given a new position

then things would change

and she knew that she was too valuable a tool to leave hidden away for very long

the day was coming

and the sooner she ended it with Harvey

the better it would be for him in every way.

She tried to find the right time

the right place

the right way

to ask him to leave

she did not want him to leave confused and bewildered

this separation would be done with kindness and dignity

for she cared for him

but she enjoyed him

so selfishly she waited.

**4 FOUR 4**

Nothing was said or hinted but Harvey felt uneasy

he wanted nothing to change

he had never been so certain of anything

he wanted to be with Amie

for how long?

today and for as long into the future as he could see

he never had a relationship like this before

on the surface, everything was so simple

but every word, gesture, touch

resonated to unknown parts of his heart and soul

and the world was beautifully mystical

and he could not explain it

but the deep warm serenity felt so vulnerable and fragile

that he felt that he must guard and protect it

but vigilance brought anxiety

it brought his unease.

He could see how ridiculously foolish this was

love and beauty caused him anxiety

this was a male dilemma

as a male, he felt a responsibility to guard this vulnerable beauty

and it was his role to nurture and to protect it

but to protect it

he must look for danger

and looking for danger meant a wary vigilance

a wary vigilance

meant unease

unease and anxiety

the male paradox

love and beauty causing unease and anxiety.

Everything started simply

but now there was this feeling of responsibility

that he had to watch out for her

look after her

why?

it now felt wrong to watch her leave for work

he felt uneasy standing by and watching her carry that load on her own

and for the first time

he realized that love is more than just the sharing of love

it is also the sharing of burdens.

Money

he had money

earned in his other life

he could just buy his share, and more

but he knew that with that money would come his past

and that would change how Amie saw him

and more importantly how he would see himself.

Maybe one day he would be able to merge his past with his new-found life

but now, it was too fragile

it was a newborn and had a clean start

and he would not taint it with old definitions.

Really, what he had to do, was get a job

this was something he had not thought about for a long time

when he was a teen he had considered his career path

had some vague ideas

but then his rock band just blew up

and money became a game

a measurement of popularity and status

and as he played that game

he tried to put some real art and emotions into it

trying to convince himself that these small fragments of himself were the game.

He played the game well

but winning made him feel empty

and the game never ended

and you were always fighting

for you were only as good as your last hit

it wore and wore

and he felt himself getting more and more empty.

For years, he tried to leave

he searched for the door and after all the searching, thinking and planning

he found that the way out

was to get out.

Looking back, he realized, that the getting out is never difficult

the difficulty is finding what to get out to

the thought of just leaving and having nowhere to land, was what paralyzed

for when you live in one world, you cannot see any other

well, intellectually you knew other worlds existed

but your heart was blind to it

the heart only knows here and now

and so, he tried to find the path that went from one life to the next life

he tried to find reincarnation without death.

Death

absurdly, when you really thought about it

it was not the death that frightened

it was the rebirth.

Reborn now

he felt alive

filled with warmth, fear, laughter, anxiety, plans, hunger, dreams, love

contentment

filled with contentment.

He would look for work

he would nurture this life.

**5 FIVE 5**

From a bureaucratic point of view

being an American and falling in love with a Canadian

while travelling in Canada

was a strategically poor decision

how do you get a work permit?

you get a permanent resident card

and how do you do that?

well…

the endless cycle of spinning wheels going nowhere, begins.

For now

if he was going to work

it would have to be without a permit.

Ominously, the note pinned up at the co-op grocery store had two of the flaps with the telephone number already ripped off

and the whole note looked frayed and old

but it was the only note on the help wanted board

so, he ripped the third flap off.

Joe

Joe was a bricklayer

in fact, Joe was more of a bricklayer than he was Italian

but still people called him Joe the Italian.

Harvey could see that he was not impressing

Joe looked him over from head to toe

all the time slowly squeezing and shaking his hand

and this bothered Harvey

he wanted to impress this man

but he knew his shoulders weren't big enough

or his hands strong enough

and so, he looked Joe straight in the eyes and told him, that he could work

and he said it with such assurance that Joe knew it to be true

and Joe laughed and hired him.

They worked

there was little talking

they just worked

Joe would never ask Harvey to do anything

if there were no bricks ready then Joe would get up and get them

and Harvey would race to keep Joe bricklaying.

Slowly over the weeks Harvey began to catch up with the flow of the work

and when things went smoothly then Joe would smile and talk

and then Harvey would ask questions

and Joe would shake his head and laugh at Harvey like he was a foolish child

but he began teaching Harvey his art

he really could not help it

he talked of bricks and mortar like an old lonely man would talk of his lost lover.

He would get Harvey to listen to the sound of mortar being smoothed over a brick

“listen”

he would say and wait until the world was silent enough to hear the flop of mortar as he dropped it onto a brick

“listen”

he would smile like it was his baby son

“this is perfect

not too wet.”

Then Joe would say

“smell”

and give him a wet brick to smell

and explain what the smell meant

and how different bricks would smell

and Harvey would listen and smell

and he would lift and carry and shovel and mix and stir

and at the end of the day with an aching back he would stand with Joe and survey the beauty that they had created

and Joe would talk of other worlds and other times

how some bricks were red like a woman's nipples

or heavy as granite

or how his father would build arches and the beautiful patterns on the walls around his village.

When the work was done

Joe told him where to be for the next job

and handed him a mortar stained envelope

and told him

“I got paid this

you get that”

and on Friday they would have wine with bread

that Joe's wife had baked in a forno oven

and Joe would wink at Harvey

and tell him

that one of the two things needed to make a woman happy was a forno oven.

**6 SIX 6**

Amie was stuck

frozen

she knew that this moment was the hub of her world

the spokes of possibilities spinning out in all directions

whatever she said

whatever she didn't say

her gestures

her smiles

or frowns

everything would affect this moment

the hinge for her future life

and she just did not know which way she wanted the hinge to swing

she had to make a choice

and not making a choice was making a choice

this moment she could not escape

and the awareness that she was standing in the middle of a junction was frightening.

Choice

did she wish to continue with Harvey?

or not?

that was the first choice

if it was over, then it would be easy

there would be some pain but that would pass

for the future is filled with dreams

continuing was more complicated

how would she live with Harvey?

how would he live with her?

what would she be?

what would he be?

what would they become?

And there he stood before her

he had his work clothes on

his forehead was streaked

pale lines formed by beads of sweat cutting through the dust

laughing eyes with a wry smile

asking her if she wanted a forno oven

with bright enthusiasm explaining how beautiful it would be.

She didn't want an oven

but that really wasn't the question he was asking

the real question was behind this

and so, she asked, why do you want to build this?

and she saw in his eyes that he awoke to the moment

his smile dissolved, and all his familiar features disappeared

and he seemed like a stranger to her.

She watched him stand beside her in that junction

she admired his calmness

she could sense him gauging the paths

it was painfully cold.

“I thought...”

he looked down to his boots

“I hoped that you would want this...”

he glanced up into her eyes

“I just want to make you happy

would you want an oven?”

she just stood silently

and Harvey heard the questions that she was asking

and he thought for a moment before answering her

“I could learn to bake bread.”

In that moment, Amie knew all the answers to her questions

and laughing she kissed him

and could taste the salty, sweaty dust.

**7 SEVEN 7**

One of the hardwired faults in the human brain

is the universality mistake

we believe that if something is true in one place

then it's true in other places

that rules apply across times, situations and locations

that truths found will be truths everywhere.

How do we see change?

how do we see growth?

we apply rules we have learned elsewhere to growth and change

but these cannot be measured like falling grains of sand

it's not a smooth gradual transition

rather it's like

water and ice

it’s water

and then

ice.

Harvey found that there was now ice, where before there was water

a crystal, where before there was flux

he started piling bricks, then fitting stones, then forming stones and then carving stone

and when the carving became art

he became an artist

when do you become an artist?

when does water become ice?

Amie would watch him as he chipped away at the limestone block

he worked under the overhang of the garden shed roof

he danced with the stone

swirling around it

moving in to chip away a piece

then a step back

swaying side to side

then in again

another blow

another chip

the hammer, the chisel, the stone and the dance

merging into one.

When it was approaching the end

Harvey would ask her how she felt about the piece

and when she saw the magic of creation

she could not understand it

she had watched the fragments being removed

she knew the man breaking the stone

but now it was something else

he was something else

yet it was still stone, and he was Harvey.

The trance of creation was what drove Harvey

the first few sculptures were done more out of curiosity

exploring the power that could transform stone

Joe had shown him how to cut brick and stones to fit them into the walls

and it wasn’t long before Harvey started to play with the techniques

began to form curves and patterns

and then trying to create flowers and vines

and soon, that too, evolved into birds, insects, animals and people.

At first Harvey concentrated on the techniques of sculpting

learning and refining movements and power

but as his skills developed the mechanics faded from his consciousness

and then he found that he would change

he would focus without focusing

he would work without working

he did not know the word for this change

and if he tried to examine it

it would disappear

it just was.

Being immersed in creation

was the opposite feeling of being lost

and it was this feeling, this being

that before sculpting had brought him to music

and when the music became tainted it was what drove him to wander

for a wanderer is never lost

he is where he is

an artist is never lost

he is in his work

this is where he is found

lost in the process of finding the vision within the stone

and finding the vision gave him the same feeling as wandering home.

He started to add pieces of his art to the brick or stone walls that he and Joe built

each piece of sculpture or design that he brought in

would be carefully judged by Joe

most pieces would go back to Amie’s garden shed for Harvey to refine

there was a tension in this

each of them seeing the art differently

to Harvey, his sculpture was framed by the wall

to Joe, it was a flower in the hair of a beautiful woman

and always, in the end, Harvey would see that Joe was right

and it was Joe the Bricklayer

that taught Harvey the difference between art and artists

and gave Harvey the secret shared by all true artists

beauty and truth

not ego.

**8 EIGHT 8**

Amie could see the humor in it all

the ocean of life had just picked her up

tumbled and twisted her in the surf

until she lost all sense of direction

and then washed her up

onto a new beach

she smiled as she remembered her self-assurance

her sense of control

the absurdity of those comfortable beliefs.

She brushed the sand from her body

and dried her hair

and with a smile and sigh took measure of this new beach.

She made the decision she would not tell Harvey

not tell him

that everything he thought about her

was only superficially true

there would be no point, no purpose

part of their relationship was based on an assumed understanding of each other’s cultural background

he took for granted that they spoke the same language

when he said ‘red’ she would know what he meant

and she did understand

but she had so many more words for ‘red’ that he did not understand

and the relationship was based on a thin layer of herself

a partial truth.

These other languages, this other culture

would be foreign to him

and she doubted he would ever be able to understand it

and then, there was perhaps, even the bigger concern of bringing him into danger

and of also creating a dangerous situation for her family

and to put him and her family through all of that

for perhaps, what was only a short romance, was not sensible.

She obviously should give up Harvey

but

she did not want to

and he did not want to give up on her

she could not make sense of it

her heart and mind were at odds

she sighed

it was not her right to make the decision

it was Harvey's

actually, Harvey and Steadfast

she would contact Steadfast and let them sort it out

she would stay with Harvey, if Harvey and Steadfast both agreed

otherwise, the seasons would announce themselves.

**9 NINE 9**

Mr. Green

Mr. John Green

he introduced himself to Harvey

and then turned to embrace Amie

and after their hugs, Amie smiled at Harvey and re-introduced Mr. Green again as her uncle

uncle, Mr. John Green

and even after all these introductions, Harvey still didn’t know how to address the man

the introductions really didn’t leave any room to call him by his first name

it would have to be Mr. Green

but it seemed incongruous

addressing the red bearded, long haired man, dressed in overalls

as Mister.

They toured the garden and Amie proudly showed him Harvey's sculptures

he considered the sculptures

moving around to view them from different angles

and then when he was done, he just nodded approvingly at Harvey

and they moved on through the garden.

Amie nurtured a multitude of plants

but her uncle seemed to know them all

and he and Amie would have detailed discussions on plant families

apparently, he was a gardener

but otherwise Harvey really could not gauge the man

he was obviously powerfully strong

and this could be seen more in his fluid and effortless movements

than by his tall and stocky build

his beard was reddish, hair was blondish

and both were streaked with grey

his eyes were blue

and unsettling naked to his underlying thoughts and feeling

and all of it left Harvey feeling off balance

no, it would have to be Mister

Mr. Green.

They arrived back at the house and Amie went inside to make the dinner

insisting to Harvey that she did not need his help

Mr. Green settled onto the bench on the porch and contemplatively gazed to the distant garden

Harvey sat on the porch step beside him

“where do you live, Mr. Green?”

Harvey accentuated the Mister, and immediately regretted it

it sounded sarcastic

he turned around to face him, smiling, trying to neutralize the sarcasm.

Mr. Green nodded at him with a nearly imperceptible smile

“well, we

Amie and myself

are from Steadfast

has Amie mentioned this to you?”

Harvey knew that eventually the moment would come

when he would have to admit

to a person from Amie’s past

that they knew little of each other’s history

and he understood that this would give the impression

that their relationship was superficial

for how could he explain

that their love wasn’t based on the mechanisms of how they came to be

but rather it was built on what they were?

“No, she never mentioned it”

Harvey tried not to sound apologetic.

Mr. Green turned his gaze from the garden to Harvey

“well, this will be difficult