

DEMENTIA'S DOMINOS

by
Milton Wood

A domino dropped and knocked one to the floor
But no one noticed - there were billions more.
Why it did so, no one can explain.
But it started a chain of horror and pain

.
For the dominos drop,
and they drop,
and they drop,
and they drop day and night,
and they never quite stop,
they just drop,
and they drop,
and they drop,
and they drop

"Dad, I think mom is ill." And so it began
"She needs to get help as fast as she can.
She can't count the cards and can't understand."
So I hugged my wife and held onto her hand
And to the doctor's we went - again and again.
But she is a good one, so it wasn't in vain.

Then came the testing and testing
And testing some more.
They said it was Pick's.
They were really quite sure.
Pick's is nasty and Pick's is unkind
For it steals the person before stealing their mind.

I could not believe what we'd just been told
You must be wrong!!
She is young!!
She's not old!!
She's only depressed. It's that time of life.
After all, I know my wife!!

and the dominos drop,
and they drop,
and they drop,
and they drop day and night,
and they never quite stop,
they just drop,
and they drop,
and they drop,
and they drop

And the you-that-is you lost track of the time.
And the you-that-is-you lost all things divine
And the you-that-is-you lost track of her life
And the me-that-is-me lost his soul-mate, his wife.

and the dominos drop,
and they drop,
and they drop,
and they drop day and night,
and they never quite stop,
they just drop,
and they drop,
and they drop,
and they drop

Sometimes they turn left,
Sometimes they turn right
Sometimes they go backwards, as though out of spite.
Sometime there's a flood,
Sometimes there's a trickle
The course that they take is really quite fickle but -

the dominos drop,
and they drop,
and they drop,
and they drop day and night,
and they never quite stop,
they just drop,

and they drop,
and they drop,
and they drop

And each time one drops a piece of her dies
And the me-that-is-me shouts out against life
What have you done to my soul-mate - my lover - my wife?
And the you-that-is-you disappeared in the dark.
And the you-that's-not-you attacked like a shark.
She ranted, she shouted, she cheated, she lied.
She stole, and she hid things, she raved, and she cried.
She called me a cheat, and called me things cruel
I was stealing her money - she was nobody's fool.

and the dominos drop,
and they drop,
and they drop,
and they drop day and night,
and they never quite stop,
they just drop,
and they drop,
and they drop,
and they drop

But hope springs eternal, although there's no cure
For you smiled at me as I came through the door
And I said that I'd love you forever more.
And the you-that's-not-you just stared at the floor
And the me-that-is-me wept as never before
As the you-that's-not-you stared with eyes open wide
And asked, quite annoyed, why the hell did I cry.

I cursed God, I cursed fate,
And my soul-that-is-me filled with furious hate
And I ranted and raved to the heavens above.
And the you-that's-not-you just gave me a shove
And the me-that's-not-me lets go with a roar
And the deep, black darkness descends once more.

and the dominos drop,
and they drop,
and they drop,
and they drop day and night,
and they never quite stop,
they just drop,
and they drop,
and they drop,
and they drop

Now gone is the you-that-is-you
And the you-that's-really-not-you
And all that remains is the you-that-was-you
Searching for memories - but searching in vain
As the dominos drop like a black, vicious rain
Faster and faster, their bitter refrain

and the dominos drop,
and they drop,
and they drop,
and they drop day and night,
and they never quite stop,
they just drop,
and they drop,
and they drop,
and they drop

Now gone is the husband, the daughter, the son
Now gone is the laughter, the joking, the fun
Now gone is the me, and gone is the you
Now gone is the sunshine, the moonlight, the dew
And all that remains is the shell-that-is-you.

And the dominos drop and drop in her brain
As her body is losing the battle with pain
And the soul-that-is-me is trying to show
The soul-that-is-she that I'm fine - she can go.

and the dominos drop,

and they drop,
and they drop,
and they drop day and night,
and they never quite stop,
they just drop,
and they drop,
and they drop,
and they drop

I lay beside her, quietly crying
For the soul-that-is-me knows she is dying.
Her body has weakened, her heart is now stopping.
And in the silence I hear -
the
last
domino
dropping.

Then the beautiful soul-that-is-you was released
Filled with joy, and with love, and with wondrous peace.
The soul-that-is-you filled the room with soft light
And touched the soul-that-is-me with such joyous delight.
That I cried - and I cried - and I cried - and I cried.

"Be still, my love, be still", you said.
I felt the soul-that-is-you inside my head
"Know this my love, and know for all time.
Our love is eternal, our souls intertwined.
Our passion is timeless, our devotion divine.
Farewell my love, my soul-mate, my life"

And the soul that was my loving wife
Departed from this earthly life

This poem about Pick's disease is written in memory of my loving wife, and soul-mate, Edna. It is dedicated to her wonderful caregivers who helped ease the pain and her immense suffering on her journey; Dr. Anne Meehan, Donna, Vickie, Marie, the two Carols, and to our friend and neighbour, Louise, who was always there for us from the beginning.

Edna was mercilessly afflicted with Pick's disease - a rare, and vicious, form of frontal lobe dementia. I call it Alzheimer's nasty relative since it steals the person long before it steals their memories - and at a much younger age: She was only in her mid-fifties when she was diagnosed. This is my attempt to tell our story.

If you find comfort or inspiration in these words, please pass this on. Had it not been for a series of lucky coincidences - the right family doctor familiar with the disease being one of them - my wife would never have been diagnosed correctly. More-than-likely we would have ended up divorced since I thought it was one of those mid-life crisis events. I was very, very wrong and often wonder how many other people in their mid-fifties have broken marriages and have lost the love of their life unknowingly because of this hateful - and it is a truly hateful - disease. There is no dignity with it, no courage, no hope, only a slow, lingering, living death.

Pax

Milton Wood

Ottawa , Ontario

Canada

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