

The Colour of Mourning



We can wake up feeling displaced and unconnected to this world, where words no longer appear to have any meaning for us. It seems impossible for one to cope with such trauma, as if our primary senses have disengaged.

In such a state of mind, neither able to see what we feel, nor feel what we see, help can be found in expressions matching temporary grief-stricken and displaced thinking. If our mourning has a colour, we may ask ourselves which colour our own grieving could have.

Supposing the colour selected is purple, we might also consider the shade. Would it be deep, soft or rather faded? After having chosen *deep purple*, we might ask ourselves where in life we have seen this colour and in which setting. If the answer is 'while watching *a velvet sky at sundown*' we might state our feeling in an expression like:

deep purple, velvet sky at sundown

As individuals, each one of us is unique – and accordingly, so are our feelings and coping strategies. Sometimes, we may discover solace in recording our feelings either in written or image form, or a combination of both.

If we wish to explore the shape and appearance of our mourning we can have a closer look at different forms of grieving such as: round as a wheel, heart-shaped like a gingerbread cookie, star-shaped like a leaf, having just fallen from the top of a sky-scraping tree, or rather shaped like a shadow at night? If we select the *dark-shaped shadow*, we might add these words to our chosen expression:

deep purple, velvet sky at sundown dark-shaped shadow

Additionally, we could contemplate the sound of our grief. How does this sound reverberate in our minds? Could it be a penetrable alert like a warning signal, the monotonous ring of an incoming phone call, the disturbing noise of an aeroplane, the continuous buzzing of a power transformer, or another distinctive sound?

If the sound of our grief coincides more closely with that of a musical instrument, which instrument might it be? Is it a rhythmic, droning double bass or the frightening hammering of a drum? However, if our grief resonates with the cry of an animal, it might be as soft as a bleating sheep, or loud like a fiercely growling bear. Depending on our state of mind, we might prefer the *frozen sound* of a fly *captured in amber*:

*deep purple, velvet sky at sundown
dark-shaped shadow
frozen sound captured in amber*

In the case of smell, where does the fragrance of mourning come from? Is it a flower, a fruit, a perfume of our loved one carrying an unmistakable scent? Will it cause a pleasant or a less pleasant memory when thinking of the odour of a lonely fading flower, or of the bouquet of Bordeaux found left behind on a shelf? The effects of the fragrances on one person's mood are as wide as a field of daffodils.

Wherever the fragrance comes from, the familiar whiff of our loved one's t-shirts, pyjamas, or from a glass of wine, a *lasting smell of lonely fading flowers*: Each object might revive a different memory of particular moments in life.

*deep purple, velvet sky at sundown
dark-shaped shadow
frozen sound captured in amber
lasting smell of lonely fading flowers*

What will the touch of mourning be like? In a grief-stricken emotional state, the stigma can be so powerful that we can feel severed, if we are unable to sustain contact with our remaining relatives and friends. However, we can be unusually sensitive to touch: whether it might be by the smooth feel of velvet, a creased old letter, a wrinkled autumn leaf or ice-cold waters in the lake lands.

Whatever it feels like, a *touching moment* will arise when something memorable falls into our hands. Shells and stones from our last holidays may touch our soul as well as a soft cover of an old book, containing poems of the departed. During overwhelming moments of mourning, we might just pick up the phrase:

*deep purple, velvet sky at sundown
dark-shaped shadow
frozen sound captured in amber
lasting smell of lonely fading flowers
touching moment*

Also, temperature might be the key for measuring our grieving. If we could be able to feel the warmth and coldness of mourning, we might get the impression that its temperature is shifting from sub-zero to frosty, glacial, harsh, deeply frozen, right up to being fiercely hot, boiling over, *steaming up*, torrid and red-hot. Looking for an expression, we might choose:

*deep purple, velvet sky at sundown
dark-shaped shadow
frozen sound captured in amber
lasting smell of lonely fading flowers
touching moment
steaming up*

What could grief taste like? Bitter like dark chocolate, sour like an unripe apple, sharp like a peppercorn, tart like acidic grapes upsetting the stomach, or even acerbic like a remarkably *sharp reminder*?

*deep purple, velvet sky at sundown
dark-shaped shadow
frozen sound captured in amber
lasting smell of lonely fading flowers
touching moment
steaming up
sharp reminder*

How does our movement change during mourning? Do we move slowly, unhurriedly like a snail, or rather speedy, forcing swift reactions? What we might fear most is the non-stop movement as one sensation follows the one before, so that our souls will seldom have time to cope. As grief generally seems to be moving slowly, we might choose *on a snail's pace* as one last expression.

*deep purple, velvet sky at sundown
dark-shaped shadow
frozen sound captured in amber
lasting smell of lonely fading flowers
touching moment
steaming up
sharp reminder
on a snail's pace*

Touch of Hope

- If hope would have a colour which coloured image will it depict? Will it be bright yellow, brilliant sunshine now fading, or colourful like a rainbow, a universal symbol of hope?
- If hope could be touched what fabric/surface/quality would we feel? Instead of being rough, uneven or harsh, it might feel soft, spongy, *smooth like silk*, or tranquilizing like a silent stream of water, guiding our restless souls along a gentler path.
- If hope would have a shape, what shape or appearance does it have? Curled like the hair of the beloved departed, or straight like the lifeline of a turned-up palm, revealing a *hidden secret*?
- If hope would have a smell, what would its smell be like? Sun cream on our skin, freshly cut grass on a summer day, coffee in the bar next door, an ocean breeze, a new day covered with scents of a nearby forest or the evening air *covered with scents of wild red roses*?
- If hope would have a sound, what would it sound like? Humming of bees, the high-pitched shrill voice of a nightingale or the *infectious sound of laughter*?
- If hope could move, how it would move on? Step by step, gradually ascending on an uphill walk, groundbreaking like an enchanting idea, motivating like a bike tour on a bright day or emotionally while *dancing in the rain*?
- If hope has a temperature, what would it feel like? Could it be a gentle evening breeze on a mild summer night, a room at a pleasant temperature, or *a warm shiver* from head to toe, from body to mind while dancing in the rain?

*rainbow
smooth like silk
hidden secret
covered with scents of wild red roses
infectious sound of laughter
dancing in the rain
a warm shiver*



Epilogue by Philip Wharton

What touched home in the chapter, *The Wheel of Mourning*, part of the book entitled, *From Grief to Relief* by Dorothea Stockmar, were the many familiar landmarks and stepping stones to where I am now. In the section *Touch of hope* I felt positively enlightened to explore each line for myself. And up until that moment, I truly hadn't been aware of how far I had come.

Here is what I thought *my touch of hope*.

If hope had a colour, it would be white. The colour of an artwork by myself, entitled "Night Owl".

If hope could be touched, it would be the raw material of my art permitting myself to be happy as it was wished for me.

If hope had a shape, it would be my latest work.

If hope had a smell, it would be that of freshly cut grass and fresh air.

If hope had a sound, it would be the sound of rustling leaves on a hot summer's evening.

If hope could move, it would be laid back and have loads of time.

If hope could have a temperature, it would be a relaxing warm soak in the bath.

Hope is the light around darkness waiting. If there is a *Rosetta Stone* as such to all this, it was my artwork, as it knew where I was when I didn't.

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