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Dying woman's wish – for husband to be happy again

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Her words broke a million hearts, and that was before we knew she had died.

Amy Krouse Rosenthal wrote what could be called a love letter and a dating profile all in one. The essay, "You May Want to Marry My Husband," ran in *The New York Times* on March 3.

Ten days later, Amy died at her home in Chicago.

The bestselling author of children's books was 51.

"I have been married to the most extraordinary man for 26 years. I was planning on at least another 26 together," she wrote.

"Want to hear a sick joke? A husband and wife walk into the emergency room in the late evening on Sept. 5, 2015. A few hours and tests later, the doctor clarifies that the unusual pain the wife is feeling on her right side isn't the no-biggie appendicitis they suspected, but rather ovarian cancer.

"As the couple head home in the early morning of Sept. 6, somehow through the foggy shock of it all, they make the connection that today, the day they learned what had been festering, is also the day they would have officially kicked off their empty-nesting. The youngest of their three children had just left for college.

"So many plans instantly went poof.

"No trip with my husband and parents to South Africa. No reason, now, to apply for the Harvard Loeb Fellowship. No dream tour of Asia with my mother ... No wonder the word cancer and cancel look so similar."

Her words pack a punch. Especially if you've had cancer or loved someone who has it.

More than 4 million people have read the essay that introduced us to soon-to-be widower, Jason Brian Rosenthal.

"He is an easy man to fall in love with. I did it in one day," Amy wrote.

She described him as 5-foot-10, 160 pounds, with salt-and-pepper hair and hazel eyes. He's a sharp dresser "with a flair for fabulous socks" who is in good physical shape, loves music, is a great dad, is handy around the house and can flip a pancake.

"If you're looking for a dreamy, let's-go-for-it travel companion," she wrote, "Jason is your man."

Who gives away their man?

A woman who is dying.

A woman who is dying for her

husband to be happy again.

And here is where I cried the most, and do every time I read this tender line: "Wait. Did I mention that he is incredibly handsome? I'm going to miss looking at that face of his."

That face I so often take for granted, the face of my husband, she reminded me to savor it every day.

Amy knew what she had while she had it. Dying does that to you. Rubs your nose in life so you smell the shampoo in your husband's hair, stroke the whiskers the razor missed, smile when the snoring keeps you awake.

You savor it all because the parts that you don't like become the parts you love when you realize one day they or you will be gone.

It's powerful on your wedding day to believe that only death has the power to separate you from the one you love. I've always believed after that happens, the person left is no longer bound by that vow.

Friends tell me otherwise. They don't want their spouses to remarry. Ever. One friend vows to stick around to haunt the newlyweds should that happen.

Why would you want someone you love to be alone? To love someone is to want their happiness even when it doesn't include you.

Of course Amy wanted more time with her husband and children. "But that is not going to happen," she wrote. "I probably have only a few days left being a person on this planet. So why I am doing this?"

"I am wrapping this up on Valentine's Day, and the most genuine, non-vase-oriented gift I can hope for is that the right person reads this, finds Jason, and another love story begins."

She gave her husband the greatest gift of all: permission to love someone else. Then she opened her heart wide and left a blank space at the end of her article, and the end of her life. She bowed out "as a way of giving you two the fresh start you deserve."

Her last words?

"With all my love, Amy."

All of her love.

That's a lot of love.

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