

The Giver by Barry Kravitz

The glow of fall's color in a small New England town, the thunderous crashing of an ocean wave across a sandy beach before a storm, the unbridled joy of a little dog seeing her best friend step off the home-coming school bus; moments etched somewhere deep within us, and somehow beyond the ordinary limits of time.

As brilliant and soul-touching as these moments are, they pale in contrast to the experience of taking care of our profoundly handicapped son, Gregory David. During his twenty two years with us, our little family of four glowed through the power of one powerless in every way, except the ability to draw and give love. This was the gift which grounded the rest of us: a dedicated, intelligent and strongly intuitive mother, Sharon; an older brother, Matthew, a warrior of the heart, and myself, the father who often considered himself the luckiest person in the world.

It may seem strange for one who has lost a beloved son to make such a suggestion; that is, to consider himself most fortunate. But, if you have ever observed how people can be so totally free in front of a little baby, trying to get the infant to interact and smile, then you will begin to understand my suggestion. There is no rejection, no judgment, or conditional acceptance from the infant; just pure unabashed love. For over twenty-two years, through easy times, through scores of hospitalizations and, through the full range of otherwise 'normal' endeavors, our family bloomed. Somewhere, deep within each of us, time itself stopped and paid reverence, basking in the magnificent display of love, totally free.

Matthew would describe his brother as being as helpless as any human being can be. "Gregory cannot walk, can not sit, can not talk, can not see, and can not eat. His world is a place of formless images, disconnected sounds, feeding tubes, medicines and water mattresses."

“Gregory is the only human I know who, although he can do nothing else, allows me to completely be the person I am. No expectations, no demands, no disappointment, no wanting more. When I touch his shoulder, or kiss his cheek, or speak his name, Gregory turns in my direction and smiles deeply, knowingly. All concept of time is suspended when we are together. He has nothing, yet everything to give me in this acknowledgment that he just enjoys being with me. Gregory’s calm, his gentleness and purity of spirit, seeps into my heart. Serenity replaces weariness.

Gregory’s great gift to me is the knowledge that I am able to love him just the way he is. I no longer think of what might have been or grieve for what is lost. I no longer feel that Gregory is someone who needs to be fixed. Gregory is “who he is”, in the present tense, the now. What is gained --- this quiet, gentle moment, this laughter, this celebration of being -- is more than many ever know.“