

# In His Shoes

by Sara Myers

In all fairness, when the President came up with don't ask, don't tell,  
He did not claim it was a perfect resolution, but it was a morsel,  
A small sustenance to get us through until the better could come—  
If only the better was on the way, ready to shine through to save us.

For you and me, we started in *secret*, no one could know, we must carefully hide.  
Trusted ones knew and some guessed, but they held true to our private lives.  
If it was found out, then careers miserably ended and we would be shamed.  
Then, steadily, illumined thought, paired with data of excellent service, prevailed.

Improvement built on *Don't, Ask Don't Tell*: the secret became unnecessary,  
The hidden became allowed and Joy-Inclusion-Humanness was accepted and shined.  
It was a beautiful moment, a relief beyond expectation, a happy daily life.  
This new existence was how, of course, it should always have been ...

But for us too late—for me, unexpected loss came too soon and I was stunned in grief—  
So much unrelenting suffering after your passing, no relief to be found, exhausting  
struggle,  
As when trudging in combat boots in faraway deserts, caked in sand and clay mud,  
Forcing steps but nothing in front to bid me along, no reason to move ahead was there.

Your personal things now needed to be sorted and taken care of, little by little I managed,  
But without knowing how it came about, a mysterious trance or plot of sorts developed.  
I suppose I thought it was logical that your hiking boots should be placed just so,  
At the door to the garage, it seemed sensible, they were sturdy and well-made.

I think the undeniable jolt came to me the day I put your rich soft leather shoes  
At the front door. Your very best shoes, reserved for only important occasions.  
You see it was expected that they should be at the front door, ready for steps forward.  
But when I stood up after setting them just so –

I saw that every door in the house was where I had placed a pair of your shoes.  
My hand came up to my forehead as I felt dizzy with the sight of it, my heart beating fast,  
Oh, I feel it now, that they became a sort of—well, afterlife connection of our  
togetherness, where you, could be with me as I left through the door and then tenderly  
waiting for my return, faithfully waiting for me, the one left behind.

So, while I won't say *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* was bad, couldn't the better have come faster?

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**Sara Myers** served for twenty years in the Air Force Nurse Corps, stationed at six duty stations with two deployments to Iraq. She received her master's degrees in Nursing and Public Health at the University of South Carolina. Sara lives with her husband, Hank, a Family Practice Physician and also an Air Force veteran. Together they entertain four daughters and families and one son on the beautiful Grand Strand, whenever they can visit. Sara has one other poem, "Oh, Iraq" published by Military Experience & the Arts. Her current poem "In His Shoes" was written in honor of a co-worker, who suffered before more humane policies came into being.