

A Singular Sensation

Category: Alone

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | June 1, 2023

Even when I share a physical space with people, I tend to be emotionally alone. I am not a social person; instead, I stumble with the small talk essential for human interactions. My shyness and self-consciousness due to my tallness cause me to find a safe spot, usually one in the corner or against a wall, far from the madding crowd.

I grew up in a family of four—parents, older brother, and paternal grandmother. I had a husband, and I have two adult children. I have a niece and her husband and daughter. I have divorced, widowed, or never married female friends. My life is not empty of people, but I most often feel alone.

Yet, I am not lonely.

Books provide me with constant companionship. Through reading, I make friends with heroic detectives and historic heroes, people struggling to find their identity, and individuals coping with a culture that does not always meet their needs. Theatre connects me with the actors on stage. Light-hearted performances enable me to escape from the stresses of my life by laughing for several hours, while more serious ones take me on a journey to my past and memories I thought I had long forgotten. The musicals, comedies and tragedies resonate with me, reminding me that others have grappled with my challenges, survived and sometimes even thrived.

I always have the television playing in my apartment; I developed the need for constant background noise when my parents bought me a television for my bedroom after Grandma moved out when I was about ten. I like hearing voices—the somber tones of the CNN journalists, the conversations between Olivia and her colleagues on “Law and Order: Special Victims Unit,” the loud silence of hope that the “Jeopardy” audience evokes when a contestant is about to ask a question.

To be alone scares me. It makes me feel claustrophobic, as if I am locked in a small closet or lying in my coffin. That is why I provide myself with safety nets—books, theatre, television—to ensure that my aloneness never suffocates me. My mental health depends on my ability to create a world of people; even if those people will never enter my real life, they protect me from loneliness.

Like the song from “A Chorus Line, “I am a singular sensation.” I am alone but not lonely.

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