

*Please Hear  
of My Lost  
Love...*

*Second Edition*

A single, vibrant red rose is the central focus, positioned in the lower-left quadrant. Its stem extends upwards and to the right, adorned with several large, green, serrated leaves. The background is a deep, dark purple fabric with a subtle sheen and soft folds, creating a rich, textured backdrop for the flower. The overall composition is elegant and evocative.

*by Doug Manning*

*Please hear of My Lost Love.  
Nothing you can do will make  
it all better.*

*Nothing you can say will make  
the hurt go away.*

*So just listen while I tell you  
the significance of a love  
that left a hole in  
my heart.*

*— Doug Manning*

## When a Loved One Disappears

My brother died and was no more. At his request, his body was immediately removed from the hospital where he died and cremated. There was no opportunity for a quiet time to say good-bye. There was no opportunity to establish the reality of his death. He died and disappeared from our lives.

The fear that the family viewing his body might be painful, lead to his insistence that it not be done. The alternative to that pain is a hollow sense of incompleteness and unreality. Dealing with his death has been slower. Finding ways to memorialize his life has been harder. Establishing family communication that would keep his memory alive and fresh has, in our case, been extremely difficult.

The death of a loved one is an almost overwhelming experience. When a loved one not only dies but also disappears from us, the loss is made even more difficult. The military calls it "Missing and Presumed Dead." The presumption produces new pain that can last for years to come.

There are scores of families whose loved ones were listed as "Missing In Action" in the war in Vietnam who still walk in presumption instead of reality. The "not knowing" haunts them even yet. Wondering leads to fantasies that make them want to go look one more time just in case their son, daughter, husband or wife is still alive and lost in a country far away, and makes their grieving a much longer journey.

Shortly after the Oklahoma City bombing, I was asked to write something for the families whose loved ones would not be found. We thought there would be as many as fifty such families and

we knew their grief would be deepened by their loved one's disappearance. Every body was recovered in Oklahoma City, but many could not be viewed by their families.

Within hours of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, I began writing the original version of this book for those families. It was evident that very few bodies would ever be found in that unthinkable destruction. Thousands of wonderful lives suddenly disappeared into thin air. They went to work one morning and were never heard from again. I knew the disappearance would add greatly to the tragedy and loss.

These are extreme cases caused by devastating and public events, but they are many of the same experiences faced by families whose loved ones cannot be viewed for a multiplicity of reasons. Some families will not view the body because of decisions made by the loved one or the family. Some families cannot have this experience because the location or condition of the body will not allow viewing.

Some families do not do so because of cultural or religious reasons. In most cases the culture or the faith offer other methods of facing reality and saying good-bye. The Jewish custom of sitting Shiva is a great example of this. A family certainly should have the option and the free choice to decide not to see the body at all. This book is not designed to discredit that decision. My goal is to simply offer ways to help families discover reality when that decision is made or when the conditions make the decision for them.

After studying grief full time for over twenty years, I am convinced that healthy grieving starts when we can find a sense of reality. The reality in grief develops slowly. One mother said to