

## In Defense of Hope

As I sit here looking out my window this early morning, fragrant pine trees filled with chattering birds - intent on feeding their young - it is hard to conceive that grief awakens in so many others with their first rousing today. Even the horses lazing in the distant field have no idea that tragedy co-exists with the sun on their backs, the gentle breeze in their tails or that it has taken up residence right along side the fresh grass they nuzzle. What do animals know of tragedy like this? Yes, they live in a world filled with the joys and cruelties of Nature in equal measure. But same-species inflicted harm - just for the fun of it? Ah, yes. This level of cruelty? This is man's domain alone.

We say it is inhuman. In human. It must be in us somehow - this extra genetic veil keeping that view of humanity murky in some of us. Like a cowl obscuring one's view of love, kindness, compassion, empathy and hope. Clearly, the perpetrator of the July 20th tragedy in our beloved Colorado had long ago slid that mantle into place. We are left to wonder what happened to his once young self - open, eager, malleable and capable of joy. Was it something we did as a culture? Did we miss so many the clues he left revealing his pain that he felt the need to retaliate? Is our society to be held accountable in some way for stunting his ability to relate to his fellow humans? Or is it that aberrant genetic fleck - clinging there on the edge of chromosome "xyz" - barely visible in the microscope? We will likely never have these answers in our lifetimes.

What we are left with is what we are always left with: hope. Even as the ogre systematically selected his victims their collective hopes could likely be heard from the cosmos as a great choir. *Let me make it. Let my friends make it. Let me live. Let it be over.* And so that hopeful chorus was picked up by the first responders and then the tweet receivers and then the radio listeners and then the night-owls watching TV and then the parents wondering who on earth could that be calling at this hour. Hope is the only antidote we have against such venom. Just as being inhuman is in humans - so is hope. Ever changing. Ever fluid. Ever adaptable. Everlasting.

We hope against hope that it will never happen again. Hope that if it does happen again, everyone we love will be far away. Hope that if they are caught in the fray, they will be overlooked by the monster. Hope that if he does spy them hiding there in the mayhem, they will only be slightly injured. If they are seriously injured, then we hope they survive. If they do survive, we hope they will remain themselves as we knew them. If they are not themselves, we hope we can adjust to the change. If we cannot adjust, then we hope they are unaware of our inability to see them as we once did. And on and on hope goes. Coursing in all directions like water percolating in a stream bed. Ever changing. Ever fluid. Ever adaptable. Everlasting.

Let us send our hopes via the universe's highway - accessible to us all through our thoughts, prayers and well wishes - straight to the hearts and psyches of the Colorado victims and their families. We pray that hope will now pull them through, lift them up, ease their pain and dull their grief.

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