

The Illusion

By Aric Manly

My heart groans

 longing for laughter.

My soul aches

 heartbreaks big and small

 accumulating

 building

 echoing

My mind races

 ...processing

 ...chewing

 ...resisting

 ...worrying

 ...fighting

 mostly with myself,

 then with imaginary versions of others,

 then with imaginary versions of you.

My will weakens.

 The pain becoming too heavy.

 I want out.

 I want to withdraw.

 I want to hide.

 I want to quit.

A flame of resentment grows.

 I am tired

 ...of feeling alone

 ...misunderstood.

The hot winds of grievance begin to blow.

 My soul begins to dry out.

 Life and joy slowly,

 subtly,

 evaporating away.

Scarcity shakes its head in mockery.

Shame chimes in:

 “So sad...”

 “So ugly...”

 “So desolate...”

 “You aren’t just misunderstood, you are not understandable.”

 “You aren’t just unseen, you are unseeable.”

 “You will never belong...”

Alone starts to look like rejection.
Hurt looks like abandonment.
Unmet desire looks like hopelessness.

Blame speaks
“Who? Who will you hold responsible?”
“God?”
“Yourself?”
“Others?”

Vengeance makes an enticing offer:
“Dismiss the dismissers.
Judge the judgers.
Hate the haters.
Fan the flame of resentment.
Let resentment grow into despair,
despair into bitterness,
bitterness into a consuming rage.”

It's loud now.
It feels just.
It feels right.
It feels true...and pleasing...
...wise even.

You respond with silence.
Or do I close my ears?
My heart?
My eyes?

I am being torn apart inside.

You wait...
...I wrestle
...I hurt
...I
...cry

Your silence feels like
...disinterest
...condemnation
...distance

It feels so *real*.
I can't see you.
I can't hear you.
I can't feel you.

A single thought penetrates the noise.
Something you said once:
 "I will never leave you...
 ...I will never forsake you."

It doesn't feel true.
 But something deep within me remembers.

Into the noise,
 I weakly utter what I have left.
A whisper that cannot be heard.
 A whisper from a place still untouched by the noise
 ...the chaos
 ...the illusion.
From there
 ...one word:

 "Abba!"

Then...
 ...
 ...into that place,
 you whisper back.
 ...one word:

 "Son!"

A flame of hope begins to grow.
 I remember
 ...who I am
 ...to whom I belong.

What felt like disinterest
 begins to look like honor.

What felt like condemnation
 begins to look like knowing.

What felt like distance
 begins to look like
 presence,
 invitation,
 healing.

You make an enticing offer.
 Come with me.
 You are weary and burdened.

I will give you rest.
Like a child,
I climb into your lap.
The noise stops.
The illusion fades.
You look at me and speak healing into the pain:
"Welcome home."
You hold me
"Be still," you say.
"I've got you."
There in your arms I lean in and hear your heartbeat.
And it is there I find peace.
Seen.
Heard.
Known.
Understood.