

"What would you suggest to anyone who has to spend Christmas alone?" I was asked this question by a journalist some time ago. Emphasised pause ... I do well remember this difficulty from my university days – the most romantic and beautiful time of the year, around winter and summer solstice – is more depressing for some people than any regular day. The largest number of children is conceived around this time, but departure into eternity also reaches its height around the same time. It is sadness that takes people away early.

In thinking of my answer to the journalist, I remembered my very own experience of Christmas spent alone. This happened just once in my life, many years ago, but this is perhaps the very reason I still remember it.

Actually, I did know in advance that I was going to spend this Christmas alone. I only had one person in the world that I wanted to be with – but he couldn't make it. So I was planning – either knowingly or subconsciously – this Saddest Night in the World for myself. I didn't cook a Christmas dinner. I wasn't planning on attending church, which I've always done on Christmas Eve, even as a child when this was still a taboo. I didn't picture myself with my mother and sister and sitting down to Christmas dinner with them. Quite the opposite. I didn't even tell them that I was unexpectedly suspended in the universe at this time. Without a support point. Hopeless. Miserable.

I was sitting in my small apartment, surrounded by silence. I never thought of switching on the TV or radio. As the twilight was turning into placid darkness, despite the city lights, I lighted some candles. I've always had many candles in my homes. My grandmother once explained that burning candles cleans aura, banishes bad thoughts and invites good elves into the house; my tensions slowly started to evaporate and thoughts began to wander along brighter paths, emerging from the gloom. Why should I hang on to something or someone for dear life? Why search for happiness outside, instead of looking inside of ourselves? Who actually did organise such a depressing evening – was it this most cherished person in the world or was it me? The honest answer I gave myself worked as a wake-up call.

I bundled myself into a woollen jacket, donned my Anseküla bobbed hat and long mittens with protective patterns and went outside. Everything was brightly lit, compared to my gloomy room. Single people were wandering along the streets, covered with soft snow; enticing warmth radiated by heated stoves was in the air, churches shone with bright lights and tinkled in their Christmas gear. My felt boots were soon filled with snow. A thin and grey streaky cat was sitting under my kitchen window, looking longingly up. I turned around and brought it some fish. The

grateful look from these blue cat eyes was the turning point of this evening. I suddenly felt warm and happy. The tiny good deed and shared sadness I'd experienced was enlightening. Regardless of the fact that it would have been easier for me to explain this feeling with complicated chemical formulae instead of using words to express the emotions I felt.

As I returned home just before midnight, I heard a knock on my door. He did come after all. This moment will stay with me forever. Explaining the unexplainable – or that things happen when the time is right. Sometimes it's a consolation, sometimes hope. Nevertheless – the law of life.

Being alone has several dimensions and thousands of colours. I'm quite sure about one thing – clinging to solitude won't help. The same goes for withdrawal, although this can sometimes be necessary. We can and have to share our sorrows. Even with a voice coming over the radio or a book. This will definitely serve to diminish our solitude. And helping others will also help ourselves, even during the most difficult times for us. Always.

"What was your own last good deed?" The journalist was persistent.

We took a cat from a shelter. I do believe that Pussy will now have a new, better life that it shares with its friends.

Merry Christmas!