

Lessons to Learn

A woman I never met in person died today. Yes, that happens all the time, but in this case I feel ... guilty.

She first sent me a "hello" on an obscure social media site the day my daughter died—just a couple of hours after I had found out. I did answer, but only to tell her the situation and that I'd have to get back to her later.

I did, and we chatted some here and there, and we even texted back and forth a little. She "friended" me on other social media sites and we kept in touch—not closely, but fairly regularly.

She was troubled, and I knew it.

Her son was in trouble with the "law" and in jail, and she would tell me about his hearings and how they went, and the pain it caused her. She told me about her past drug abuse. She had financial troubles worse than my own. She had some health problems, but she never really said much about it. She loved her dogs and talked about them a lot. Mostly, I just listened to whatever she wanted to talk about.

But it had been a couple of months since I had talked to her, because recently I've been a bit withdrawn and haven't really kept in touch with people like I should.

Then, today, her mother posted on her FB page that she had died. It was the first I had known that things were as bad as they had been. I went back and looked at things she had posted recently, and she had been begging for help, saying she was in so much pain she couldn't even get off the floor to go to the bathroom. Then her mother and others began posting that she was in the ICU. I saw nothing of all this until today's death announcement.

With as many "friends" as I have on FB, I rarely see any particular person's stuff on any regular basis. Not an excuse, just an explanation. Her death isn't really a *personal* loss for me, so I am certainly not looking for sympathy—save that for those who really *knew* her. It's just that things like this seem to affect me more now than they used to. I wish I had known how dire her situation had become. I might not have been able to do much, but... maybe. It still brings a pang of guilt that I didn't even know.

So, again, I am reminded to appreciate people while I can, and try to stay aware of their needs and situations. I wonder if I'll ever really learn the lesson.