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John Pison

Outside Heidi Snow's window, the streets of Manhattan buzzed with life. But inside, Heidi sat alone on her couch, her thoughts and heart lost in memories. Over and over, she flipped through the photo albums piled around her.

Michel and her on the beach . . . Michel, his cheek pressed against hers, at her last birthday party . . .

Oh, Michel, Heidi sighed sadly, her finger tracing his smiling face. How will I ever go on without you?

Heidi first met Michel two years earlier while vacationing in Massachusetts.

A woman's story

When Heidi Snow's fiancé was killed on TWA flight 800, she felt as if her life had ended too. But then she realized that other people needed the same support she'd been so hungry for . . . and that her own heart yearned to love again



"Time really does heal. I'm smiling and loving life again," says Heidi, with Arthur.

The heart can heal

"His name is Michel Broiestroff. He's French," Heidi excitedly told friends later.

He was in America for college. "A Harvard man," she bragged. But more impressive to Heidi . . .

A player on his university's hockey team, "He gave up his summer to come here and teach kids how to play," she sighed.

Michel was just as taken with 22-year-old Heidi. And happily, she was starting a job in Boston—just minutes from the Harvard campus.

They spent every free moment together. And by Michel's graduation in the spring, they were in love.

Then . . .

"A plane headed for Paris just crashed," her mother said

"I've been drafted to play on the French National Hockey Team!" Michel announced excitedly.

Heidi was thrilled for him. But she knew it meant he'd have to return to Europe.

The next few months felt like forever to both of them. As soon as hockey season was over, Michel rushed back to be with Heidi, who'd moved to New York City.

It was June 1996. Michel was due back in France for

training in mid-July.

This just isn't enough time, Heidi thought sadly.

Michel felt the same way. And before he left . . .

"Let's get married!" he said. "Yes, yes!" Heidi cried.

But knowing they would soon be together forever didn't make saying goodbye any easier.

Michel even called from the airport before boarding. "I love you," he whispered. Then, "I have to go. We're boarding now."

"I love you, too," Heidi wept as the phone clicked.

Not long after, it rang again. "Is Michel with you?" Heidi's mother asked.

"No, he's on his way to Paris, why?" Heidi asked, hearing the worry in her mom's voice. Silence. Then . . .

"A TWA plane headed for Paris just crashed into the Long Island Sound," her mother choked.

"No!" Heidi wailed and raced to turn on her TV.

Seeing the horrific scene, Heidi sobbed. It can't be his plane! But in her mind, she saw it clearly: the bold red T-W-A on the ticket Michel was holding when she kissed him goodbye.

Oh, Michel! Heidi cried.

Hearing that families of victims were gathering at a hotel near the crash site,

she rushed to be with them.

"My fiancé was on the plane," she stammered at the door. But . . .

"I'm sorry, this meeting is only for next of kin," the airline representative said.

"I'm hurting, too!" Heidi sobbed as the door closed.

"Yes, you are," a police officer standing nearby said. A few minutes later, with his help, Heidi was let inside.

There, a Red Cross volunteer listened sympathetically as Heidi's grief spilled out in a torrent of tears.

"Can I call you if I need to talk?" Heidi asked.

"I'm sorry," the woman said. "I have to move on to the next person."

Heidi tried to move on, too. But as the months passed, she wondered sadly, How do I go on when my heart is in a million pieces?

Then, Heidi heard about a support group that families of victims of Pan Am Flight 103 had formed back in 1988 after the 747 exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland.

Maybe they can help me, she thought hopefully.

"Your family and friends have never experienced a similar tragic loss. They can't imagine your pain," the group explained to her.

But each person in that room could. They'd lived it—and survived. Knowing that made Heidi feel better.

There should be an organized support network for everyone who suffers a loss

like ours, Heidi thought.

"We could have a toll-free number for survivors to call," Heidi began thinking out loud, "and we could match callers to volunteers who suffered similar losses."

Ideas kept coming, and as Heidi spoke, the heaviness in her heart gave way to a new energy.

By the time she went home, ACCESS (Air-Craft Casualty Emotional Support Services) was well into the planning stages.

Over the next several months, Heidi worked tirelessly to garner funding and support for her project.

But while Heidi was busy, her loneliness lingered.

"You should start dating," friends encouraged.

I don't think I'll ever be ready, she thought.

Then one afternoon at a fundraiser, Arthur Cinader, a website designer, offered

to build a website for ACCESS.

"That would be great!" Heidi gratefully accepted.

Wanting her input, Arthur began inviting Heidi to meet with him in his office.

He was smart and funny, and he knew ACCESS was a personal mission for Heidi.

"Let's take a break," he'd say, taking Heidi out for a walk when he saw her eyes cloud with sadness.

By the time www.ACCESSHELP.org was up and running, they'd become good friends.

Heidi knew Arthur wished they could be more, but he never pushed. He truly is a nice guy, she thought.

When Swiss Air Flight 111 exploded over Nova Scotia in September 1998, "What can I do?" he asked Heidi as calls flooded into ACCESS.

He really cares about me and what I'm doing, Heidi thought. And she cared about him—more than she'd been letting herself admit.

And after more than two years of sorrow . . . it's time, Heidi decided. Michel would always be in her heart, but . . . I need to feel love again.

The two began dating. With each passing month, Heidi felt her heart open more and more, and finally, after two years . . .

"Yes!" she breathed when

Heidi cared about him, more than she'd let herself admit

Arthur asked her to marry him.

And on a picture-perfect day, "I do!" Heidi pledged joyfully to Arthur.

"When Michel died, I didn't think I could go on," Heidi says. "But my love for Arthur is proof: the heart can heal. And knowing I'm helping others to heal, too—I feel lucky . . . blessed . . . happy!"

—Shari Cohen

Do you have a story from the heart to share? Please send the details along with your name, address and phone number to: A Woman's Story, Woman's World, 270 Sylvan Ave., Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632. If we print your story, we'll pay you \$250. Submissions may be edited for style.