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The Humor in Insanity

"Out of the way!" Brian cried.

"Oh, 'tis fun," giggled six-year-old Julie, as the car swung from one lane to another.

"Hey Guys! Adults, front and centre," Brian screamed to the others.

All at once a number of "people" came to the rescue and slid Julie back to where she belonged.

"It's time for a council meeting," Brian said.

As Brian was organizing the meeting of the heads of the compartmentalized sectors, I was in another reality. The outside world saw the body of a 36-year-old woman, with short spiked hair, wearing a black leather jacket, the sleeves rolled up to the elbows, and new black Levi's.

I was oblivious to this. In my sphere, I was calmly driving along the highway after an uneventful afternoon. I didn't hear the honking of cars nor did I see the stares from other drivers. I had long, wavy, blonde hair and did not own a leather jacket. It wasn't until I arrived at home that the shaking began and with it the confusion of pieces of memory returning. I felt like I had been caught doing something wrong, yet I had no idea what that was. Had I known a whirlwind of reality encompassing acknowledgement and acceptance of something so far fetched and bizarre, that even the psychiatric world would be divided down the middle, I would have run and never looked

back. In my ignorance though, this was no longer an option – the wheels had begun to turn and it was out of my hands.

After spending years denying and pushing memories and feelings attached to them away, I became like many others, a victim turned survivor. I have been misdiagnosed through out my adult life as being afflicted with Schizophrenia, Borderline Personality, Manic Depression and so forth, until the final ruling that fit my life was confirmed – a diagnosis of Dissociative Identity Disorder.

Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), formerly dubbed Multiple Personality Disorder by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, occurs as a result of prolonged emotional, physical and sexual abuse usually started in infancy. This, further administered by means of starvation, sleep deprivation, drug use and other fear driven actions terrorize the child into submission, especially if the abusers are family members. Relying on these family dynamics, the child becomes isolated with no real feelings of safety or independent identity.

A young child can survive in a phenomenal way. She can learn to split off parts of her mind into separate compartments where each can take control of the child's body and mind, without the knowledge of the original child or the other split off parts.

Over years of continued abuse, the child could create essentially tens or hundreds of these split off parts (alters); each performing the task they were created for. As in the case of our little Julie, it was another alters's 'job' to make me aware of the existence of my other alters in 1996. He was created over thirty years ago for this purpose and has been missing ever since he completed his job. Though it was effective, putting a six year

old in the driver's seat was dangerous and could have had dire consequences. For those guarding the system (a system encompasses all alters), it is imperative that some alters, especially the children, participate in age appropriate activities.

From that night forward, the message reverberating through the system was clear: "She knows about us."

My alters introduced themselves to me in unique ways and at times it was embarrassing or frightening, but looking back there were times when it was comical.

Having been shopping one afternoon, one of my adult males needed to use the bathroom. Which bathroom did he choose? Scaring a little boy senseless brought the building manager to the men's room where I was made to explain myself. Unfortunately for me, I had not just walked in when the terrified little boy reacted, but was in the middle of undress as my male alter was looking for his penis and could not find it. He was unaware he lived in a woman's body.

In a related episode, Christine, who was a heavy drinker, was in a physical fight with another woman in a pub one night. The fight carried them to the washroom. Shouldn't have been a problem, right? Female alter going into the female facility? Wrong. At that time, Christine had hardly any hair, wore a black leather jacket with Hell's Angels biker tags, black leather pants and boots, blood clearly seen from a split lip and was twirling a stick not unlike a policeman's baton. Christine terrified a young girl who started to scream at the top of her lungs. Her mother came rushing in and grabbed her child. In the end Christine was escorted to the door by bouncers. It didn't end there.

The woman Christine was fighting turned out to be our bosses' sister-in-law, so after a 10 year career, we suddenly found ourselves unemployed.

We have what we have termed "Hallmark Days." Just like the greeting card, we have memories of abuse for specialized days, like birthdays, Easter, Christmas, etc.... All of our doctors are quite prepared for a Hallmark Day approaching and prepare for battle on some level. Over the years, things have become more bearable on these days, but we like to think that when Hallmark began the greeting card business, they had a DID person in mind.

As our healing over the passing years has brought many hills and valleys, and as we attempt to meet each incident head on from a place of respect for each in our system, we have come to realize the importance of humor in the context of living with the horrors from our past. As our psychologist tells us, "I sometimes think the human race is like one gigantic multiple personality and each of us are just another part of the system that makes humankind what it is today."

