

Observations by Joanne Wannan, Writer

A computer search for “getting over a breakup” yields 881,000,000 Google hits. Amazon.com lists 283 books on the subject. 1,370 websites are devoted to the not yet medically recognized “obsessive ex syndrome.” If breaking up were easy, this would not be the case. Countless advice columns would not exist, millions of country and western songs would never have been written, and therapists would have to moonlight to make ends meet.

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross & David Kessler define five stages of grief when dealing with a loss. These are: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Grieving for a breakup – as opposed to a death – can be further complicated by feelings of betrayal, blame, guilt, and a desire for revenge. The fact that the other person is still alive, and the potentiality for reconciliation exists, adds further fuel to the fire.

Joni Goes Postal deals with one woman’s breakup, and her struggle to get through the resulting turmoil and come out the other side. This is particularly traumatic for Joni since it was her most serious relationship, one she hoped would lead to marriage, a family, and “happily-ever-after.” Now she must also face the fact that these dreams may never become a reality. It is not easy, but it is only in doing so that she can experience growth and begin to heal.

At the beginning of the story, Joni is not living an authentic life. She is stuck in a dead end job, and is in a relationship with a man who won’t make a commitment. Joni has lost her sense of self, and she is afraid to change. Joni’s desire to love is not a weakness; her flaw is that it was directed at the wrong person, someone who could not love her back.

Joni Goes Postal is not about whether a woman needs a man in order to be happy. She remains single at the end. There may be another man in Joni’s future, but that isn’t the point. What Joni learns, through the course of the story, is that happiness can only occur when you are true to yourself, and that true growth can only be achieved by coming to terms with pain. This enables her to begin living a more authentic life, and to realize she is whole -with or without a man.