

Lorne

“Only when you drink from the river of silence shall you indeed sing.

And when you have reached the mountain top, then you shall begin to climb.

And when the earth shall claim your limbs, then shall you truly dance.”

From *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran – Lebanese American artist, poet, and writer

Lorne reached over and patted me on the arm. “He’s just signed his death warrant.”

I smiled. Lorne and I had been going to movies together for over 30 years. We’d seen hundreds of movies – good ones, great ones, the mediocre and the really bad. This particular movie was an action flick and as with every film of the genre, there comes a point when the token “bad guy” makes a fatal error that will ultimately spell his demise at the hands of our hero.

Old friends often have rituals and Lorne and I were no exception. About half-way through any given movie, I would lean over and give Lorne a gentle punch on the shoulder. He’d smile, nod his head, and pat me on the arm. It sounds silly when I describe it now, but it was our way of saying – without saying a word – how much we enjoyed each other’s company.

It wasn’t unusual for Lorne to talk during the movies. In fact, my wife refused to sit beside Lorne because he was forever commenting on the picture. It was especially bad if he had seen the movie before. If such was the case, he’d often say, “Oh, you’re going to like this part!” or “You won’t believe what happens next!” or “This next scene is absolutely hilarious!”

Lorne loved to laugh so we watched a lot of comedies. Sometimes he’d laugh so loud it was a little embarrassing. I’d frequently whisper, “Lorne, not so loud.” He would just nod and smile.

So, I wasn’t surprised when, near the end of our action flick, I heard Lorne say my name. I looked over and when I did, I could see that something was terribly wrong with him.

“Hold on, Buddy!” I said. “I’m going for help!” It took me less than 30 seconds to bolt from the top row of the theatre, down the stairs, out into the lobby, yell for help and then return to Lorne’s side. When I got back, I knew it was too late. Despite the best efforts of everyone, theatre staff and paramedics included, we were unable to revive Lorne. Though life support would keep his body alive for a time, the friend I had known for 30 years was gone.

To employ an old cliché, “life can turn on a dime.” I think that most of us share the belief

that life will continue along tomorrow in much the same manner it did today. The truth is, life is ever-changing and evolving and there are no guarantees of a predictable outcome. Life provides us with a variety of experiences and the true test of our mettle is in how we handle these experiences. Will we in the end grow wiser and stronger or be damaged beyond repair?

Teddy Kennedy Jr. in the eulogy for his famous father said that one of the most important lessons his father ever taught him was that even our most profound losses are survivable.

I can't advise you on how to deal with the profound loss of a loved one. Each person deals with death in his or her own way. I can tell you from the standpoint of a self-esteem author and facilitator how I've dealt with death over the years and how I approach the experience today.

As may be the case with you, I've lost many close friends and family members over the years. When I was younger, I viewed the experience as tremendously unfair. I mourned the loss of the individual but also the loss of all that might have been – the time that we could have spent together and the grand adventures we might have shared. Memories were bittersweet and coloured by the belief that something precious had been taken from me.

As time went by and I became more self-aware, I began to realize that I hadn't so much lost something but been given the precious gift of sharing life's journey with someone. How presumptuous of me to assume that we would be sharing the entire journey. I had also been given the great gifts of love, companionship and laughter along with the wisdom and insight that only comes from time spent in reflection. I have found that those we love live on in our memories and conversations and continue to inspire us long after our journey together has ended.

The renowned Indian writer, speaker, and philosopher, Jiddu Krishnamurti once wrote, "Have you ever noticed a tree standing naked against the sky, how beautiful it is? All its branches are outlined and in its nakedness there is a poem, there is a song. Every leaf is gone and it is waiting for the spring. When the spring comes it again fills the tree with the music of many leaves, which in due season fall and are blown away; and that is the way of life."

Lorne, thanks for being my friend and travelling companion these many years. Our paths have diverged but neither has ended. I will see you on the other end of the sunset.