



Author's Note: The article below may come off as choppy. I intentionally left it this way as a comment about my state of mind lately. I would apologize, but I feel anyone who has ever lost someone will understand. Thanks in advance for your understanding during this tender time. Special thanks to Katherine Brown and Emily Davis-Fletcher for filling in while I was away.

Ego is a slippery mistress. Always leaves you wanting more. Always knows what scabs to pick at to apply a salt poultice. When necessary, she will assuage us with righteous indignation, always keeping us breathless with desire for more or less of whatever your “drug” of choice is. Never mapping out a real plan for change, but poking holes of doubt into that which is already whole.

Make no mistake, ego keeps us alive. Ego keeps us growing as long as we keep it in its place. Yes, an ego must have its checks to the unbalances.

Two weeks and a ton of water under the bridge passes before I'm able to pick up this article again. Literally, five minutes before I was about to sit down and continue, I get the phone call from my wife I've been dreading but expecting for weeks. I've got to take our daughter out of school and get to Brevard, NC as fast as I can. To say I dreaded it isn't completely accurate as I knew my precious mother-in-law couldn't last much longer, nor should she have to in the state that she had endured for the last few years. The last few months . . . UNIMAGINABLE. She fought the good fight and then some.

“The phone call,” be it the grim reaper or some other calamitous occurrence, is something no one can prepare for, even if they are quote, unquote, a master. But isn’t this something very basic to life? The ending of it. The fear of the unknown it brings to the lives left behind. The void of love left behind. No longer is this person available for the daily “check-in” phone call or text that can easily be taken for granted. Invariably, there’s the question about why the “pleasant to be around” have to die, but those nasty narcissists are just too mean and self-absorbed to die. All too human and all too real.

Perhaps in my line of work where I’ve seen and experienced so many wild things, the wildest of them all is the most basic – death. After all, change is the only constant we have in life and death is the ultimate change. The ultimate healing.

□□□□□□□□□□ *Now, after five brief days at home on Fripp, we’re back at the house where my wife grew up. The house my mother-in-law just died in. Floods of emotions; and torrents of rainfall continue to weep in this idyllic Western, North Carolina. (They had to close roads going into her subdivision in Pisgah Forest. We weren’t sure we were going to be able to get out of town for a much needed, albeit brief, change of scenery.) We’ve no choice but to go through her things to get the house ready to rent. My wife has to make continuous choices on everything from pictures to probate. No rest for the weary. No time for grief.*

Where is the mastery in all this that makes us feel so out of control? We can look at the estate sale as opening up the family’s chest for the buzzards to pick at the carrion or at the sale of Nana’s cherished dining room set as an opportunity for my wife to get the dining room set that she will cherish. I feel it’s the latter and Nana would want it that way as kind as she was.

Death makes way for various things after the initial shock wears off. In nature, a fallen tree provides nutrients for its brothers and sisters as well as homes for various insects and animals. Fear of the unknown makes someone, myself included, cringe into his comfort zone in the face of the uncomfortable. Isn’t this the definition of growth? Diving into the unknown abyss. Death just doesn’t give us a choice in the matter and that’s okay. It has to be, doesn’t it? And while we’re talking about it, do we not die a little each day? This isn’t always such a bad thing. It isn’t always such a painful thing. Even if growing pains invariably present themselves, thank

goodness the teen that was me died. What if that had never happened? I'm sure we all know someone who looks like an adult, but you'd swear they were in high school. Heck, I submit that the period of time between 16 and 25 is more dangerous than when we're trying to stick our fingers in light sockets at age two. I'm working to get that innocence back in myself and others, but don't ever want the impetuosity again. I digress.

□□□□□□□□□□ *Fast-forward again to over three weeks after her passing and I can tell the grief is finally setting in. Sleep is hard to come by as there's still a part of me that's waiting for the call in the middle of the night. The other day the inspection report came on the home my wife's mother left behind. Every bad mark a wound in need of healing before we can move on.*

I've noticed that an odd side-effect of this period of time is how sensitive it has made me. I'm used to being sensitive in my personal and professional life. After all, that's the TM of an in-tuned energy worker and a solid friend/family member. However, now I question if this has taken me too far. Am I being hypersensitive due to sleep deprivation? Regardless, I feel the big take-away I'm gaining, and have gained, from these trying times is patience. Yes, patience with myself I have learned. And patience with myself translates into patience with others. And perhaps another bright spot to the so-called master's passing is it makes way for the reintroduction of innocence. This time with the discernment of experience. Maybe that's where the real power is found. I'll let you know. Thanks for listening.

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