

Life Is Not Short, If We Know How To Live It

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A reader sent word she is “losing” her Scottie dog. Lymphoma. The email was full of the sorrow and not a little panic every dog lover knows too well. Our dogs mean the world to us so it is our world at stake when they die.

But it isn’t true to say the writer is “losing” her dog, that is, it’s no more true to say this after the cancer diagnosis than to say it any prior day of the dog’s life. What the writer is ‘losing’ is the assumption and illusion of future together.

Harsh as it may sound, disillusionment with reference to life and death is needed to wake us up from presumptions of tomorrows. The writer never had more than each moment, each day, one at a time, with her much-loved dog. That’s what she has now and that is all she ever had: one gift-of-life-moment at a time.

Some may choose to see this reality as “losing” with reference to our short-lived Scottish Terriers. I choose to see it as wake up call to the *ISness* of Life, to what is real rather than illusion, a wake-up call to take EACH moment and EACH day as our jeweled last opportunity to live and love and laugh. If we cultivate eyes to see it, what we think is our life falling-apart may be our life falling into place.

Our dogs, whose lives are compact and ‘dense’ like their bodies, are angels in our midst to disabuse us of presumption of tomorrow. We don’t own our dogs any more than we own life. We borrow them till time to give them back. That time-of-giving-back we call “Death” is losing only to those who forget the arc of trajectory that began at birth. To live with Death each day is to find spur to live each moment wholeheartedly as a gift unearned.

Look around you. Have you hugged your dog today? Have you hugged a tree? Have you embraced this moment, I mean really hugged with thankfulness today?

The dogs we borrow are beacons of presentness. They don’t dread and they don’t assume. They simply live each moment with heart and soul. They embody without instruction ancient Stoic wisdom which said, “Life is not short, if we know how to live it.”

“Get busy living the life you love!” is the lesson Death shouts each day if we would listen. And that is the urgent truth at our side: the gift of our short-lived dog calling us to life more than measure: a wholehearted life well-lived.