

Death

by Brenda Feuerstein

Every morning was had a little ritual of going for a coffee and a muffin at our friend's cafe, but as the summer went by it became more and more difficult for Georg to prepare himself for our daily excursion. Then, on August 16, 2021, our life took a major shift, and, deep down, we both knew it was our last time going for coffee together.

As we pulled up to the cafe on that warm sunny morning, my senses were acute. The sky looked so blue and the air smelled damp with greenness. I went around the car to help Georg out, but this body seemed heavier than usual. A friend of ours was sitting outside and came over to help me get Georg to a chair. The silence of that moment was deafening to me and I cried silently; my lover was beginning the journey that would separate our physical bodies forever.

Georg couldn't finish his coffee and the muffin sat uneaten as we watched a small bee touch down on it. I took his hand, and we looked into each other's eyes for what seemed like lifetimes until I saw a small tear roll down his cheek. We sat in the silence of deep love, then made our way home.

Later that afternoon I helped Georg to his desk so he could work on the novel he was writing and respond to a few students and friends. It felt odd to see someone make the conscious decision to work to a specific time and then decide it was time to prepare to let go of his physical body. I guess in some way the office work was part of that preparation, but at the time it seems so unimportant to me. I wondered what I would do if I knew my time was drawing near.

The day came to an end and I helped Georg to his bed in the transition room I'd prepare. I placed our teacher's pictures on his night table, gently put his Tibetan rosary around his neck, lay beside him, and cried. I couldn't believe after all our time together, "the now" also meant the end. I'd never thought of the present moment also being the last moment with someone.

Georg lay awake gasping for breath, while I sat beside him praying for some small miracle to happen. I even played with the idea of bargaining something for his life, but not believing in a saviour I had no idea whom I'd offer that bargain to. I cried, I paced, I got angry, and then I collapsed into the realization that I was helpless in this situation. Nothing I could do would change the fact that my spiritual partner and lover was dying right in front of me, so I made the conscious decision to surrender and be acutely present for him, for me, for us.

Time became irrelevant as the days passed. People visited and left in the same way people drift in and out of one's life. For days the air was filled with stories, food, laughter, tears, frustration, anger, and love. It seems every moment was healing for people—except for me. I was left numb and not knowing how I was going to continue after Georg was gone. Everyone else seemed to be able to make peace with his eventual death.

I knew in my heart that I wanted to give my lover some gift, but what does one give the dying? I sat in meditation with that question, and the answer came to me very quickly. Georg spent his life thinking he hadn't made a significant contribution to the world, even though I told him otherwise almost daily. I went to my desk and found the emails of Georg's colleagues, friend's and other people he spoke highly of, and I emailed them with the simple request: "Georg is now in his final transition. I've been spending my days and nights holding him and reading letters people have sent. If you have a message you'd like to convey, please feel free to send it to me and I will read it with love from your heart through mine to Georg's."

Every person I contacted sent a message with a day or two, and the process of weaving a blanket of words began. Sitting on Georg's bed, I read each letter and watched him transform in front of me. At the end of the day, we held each other as tears flowed down our cheeks, and he whispered to me, "That was the most beautiful gift I've ever received. Thank you." My work was done. The only thing left to offer was my moment-by-moment love until our moments were gone.

During the days and weeks after Georg's passing, people thanked me for emailing them and said it was a great gift to be able to convey their love and respect to someone who was dying instead of holding them in their mind and body until their own death.

Today, months later, I still invite Georg to sit with me. I dream of him and wonder where he is. Grief has become my friend. It's carved me into someone who is often unrecognizable. I go to bed weeping and wake up smiling, then go to bed smiling and wake up weeping. Very little makes sense in the world of grief. It consumes me and yet it nourishes me.

Excerpted from the Shambhala Sun compilation entitled, *Now the Bad News: Birth, Old Age, Sickness, and Death* by Rachel Neumann, Stan Goldberg, Lewis Richmond and Brenda Feuerstein.

Copyright ©2013, 2021 by Brenda Feuerstein. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form requires prior written permission from [Traditional Yoga Studies](#)