

## **TRIBUTE TO MELANIE HENNING**

I have loved my wife. I have lost my wife. When I use the word “wife”, I use it to describe my life partner, through whom I saw the reflection of my own soul.

Yesterday I went walking in the mountains, at Newlands Forest where she loved going with me and the dogs. I felt extremely close to her presence throughout this walk. At one stage, I found a little private clearing, and let the grief that had been suppressed over the last few months come welling out of me. It poured out with an intensity such as I could not have imagined before. It was not an intellectual emotion, but a primal raw feeling of utter pain and loss that comes only when everything that you loved, is taken away from you. It is a soul searing sense of anguish that I let flow through me. At that same time, the clouds opened up overhead and the rain fell down on me, washing me along with my tears. It was a deep and cathartic experience. I felt like the Universe was crying with me, and it was. For although we can ultimately accept her untimely departure, and can know in our minds and even hearts that it is part of some grander plan, it does not lessen the pure emotion that we feel as human beings, and that even the angels in heaven feel. While it may have been her destiny, the whole Universe weeps at the loss of Melanie Henning at such a young age.

No matter how much two people can want something, and no matter how inherently good that dream may be, sometimes it is just unfortunately not to be. The universe works along another plan than our own wishes, and we need to accept that. To be able to do that with dignity and calm is the path that Mel and I recently had to walk, and it was the hardest trial of my life. To hold each other and look into each other's eyes with love and peace while knowing that she was leaving this world of men, required the ultimate in inner strength.

I cannot convey to you, the deep sadness that fills me as I stand here today. Words do not provide sufficient power to enable one to express such profound emotion. However, I know that many of you here today can well imagine what I am feeling, because you too have a reflection of that same sadness within yourself. We are sad because life suddenly seems awfully dark and cold without the warm light that was Melanie Henning. She lit up many lives with her irrepressible sharp brightness, and she especially lit up mine.

I have always been a bit of a cynic, and was amazed at this lady who came into my life and turned it upside down. She would go about her morning processes in the bathroom humming like a little bird that was happy to be alive in the morning sunshine. She would brush her teeth while looking at hand-made signs that she had made herself that said, “Smile, you have no reason not to”, and “Love Life and Happiness will be your Friend”.

When I first laid eyes on her, I was bowelled over by her stunning looks, but also by the air about her. I was entranced by the way that she moved her body to music. That first time as I watched her, I thought to myself “What new kind of drug is that girl on? They look good, whatever they are!” Later on I would come to learn that it was not due to any chemical assistance, what I was seeing that first night was just Mel's natural and powerful zest for life.

I was drawn to her instantly. Subconsciously I knew that there was a match, and I was compelled to get to know her. When we eventually did start to spend some time together, it was Mel who first knew what a superb kind of connection there could be between us. Women's intuition I suppose. On one of our first dates, she sat in the car and looked at me, and had a deep feeling that this was the man she had been looking for, and this is what she had always wanted in a relationship. So, being the strong woman that she was, she acted on this epiphany. It was quite strange for me, having not had many deep relationships in my past for various reasons, including lack of interest, to have this relative stranger suddenly move into my life and home and become part of them. I was not looking for a relationship, but she sat me down and explained what kind of partner she would be, and how she would support me and give me freedom to be myself. It sounded quite appealing, especially coming from this gorgeous warrior princess, so I decided to try it, because it felt right. It did not take me long to realise what a huge improvement this created in my life, and in myself.

I remember when we went to Hermanus right near the beginning of our relationship, and she looked at me and asked, "Are you ready for unconditional love?" To be honest, at the time, I wasn't quite ready for it. It was outside of my paradigm and I was uncertain about what it entailed, and we hardly knew each other. But over time, I became ready for it, and it was the most wonderful thing that I have ever experienced.

What was great about our relationship was that we gave each other happiness just by being ourselves. It was in the second half of last year that I realised that I was ready to marry this woman and to be her partner for life. In the simple act of climbing into bed when she was already asleep, and nestling up to her, I came to the realisation that I felt perfectly content with what I had, and that I needed nothing else. I did not need to look further, I had everything. And now this shared and perfect contentment seems to have been dashed upon the rocks by the unstoppable tides of Fate.

It is difficult to comprehend why two young people should be denied the simple opportunity to live their lives together, when it was a dream that we both held so dearly. We loved each other from the bottom of our hearts, and I can't believe that she has already been taken away from me.

It would break my mind to think about all the things we could not do together. Like go camping with our dogs in the new tent that was high enough for her to stand up in, a tent that we bought last November when we were preparing for our summer holiday, before she suddenly fell ill again. We never took those salsa classes because I was always too busy. We never went to Germany together, to visit her mother and old friends and snowboard.

Instead of lamenting over these uncompleted actions, I will live with the memory of what was fulfilled. We showed each other what love was, what it felt like to love completely, to fall into it and be embraced by it.

This beautiful being came to earth, and slowly I fell completely in love with her. I realised that she was the ideal companion for me, we complemented each other perfectly, two very different parts of the same whole. In the areas where I was weak she helped me to become strong, and I did the same for her, and as individual beings we gained in confidence and self-love. Our life together was beautiful, and it has

been taken away from us before it has even begun. For the rest of my life, the words “Why, why, why, For God’s sake why?” will reverberate around my head.

While my heart is broken from having lost my wife, it is also lightened by knowing that Mel’s awful pain and suffering, is finally over. Her strong and lively spirit has been freed from the shackles of her broken body. She is free, her spirit lives on, and she is with us right here in the room now, enjoying the company of her friends like she always did.

Sometimes it felt to me that part of why Mel and I were put into this position, was to be a living example that no matter what the circumstances, one can be at peace and even happy. Ultimately, it comes down to having faith that whatever is happening in your life is part of your plan, and that you are there, wherever you are, because it is where you should be. Our life plan is mapped out to give the soul the environment it needs for its next stage of its growth. To really have faith, means having no doubt that the spirit is stronger than the body, and believing that you have the power within you to deal with any situation.

I am going to paraphrase a section from a book from one of my favourite authors, as I can’t improve on the wording of what is said: *“The average person, in spite of his or her faith and creed, seems to dread the approach of the grim reaper, and his friends wear black and give every outward expression of having forever lost their beloved one. In spite of their professed beliefs, Death has a terror which they can not overcome.”*

*To those who have acquired that sense of consciousness of the illusion of death, these frightful emotions have faded away. To them, while they naturally feel the sorrow of temporary separation and the loss of companionship, the loved one is seen to have simply passed on to another phase of life, and nothing has been lost – nothing has perished.”*

That is the sorrow we feel now, the sorrow of temporary separation. It is natural for us to feel that deep sorrow, but we should remember that in the life of the soul, this human life on Earth is but one day. For this one day we will be separated, and tomorrow we shall meet again.

For me, I just have to have Faith that the Universe will provide me with everything that I need, including love. I know that Mel’s passing will never, ever make sense to me from my perspective as this human being and man, but I know that from a higher perspective, it is clear how these events are part of God’s complete and caring plan.

May your Spirit be in peace, Melanie Henning. Thank you for touching, transforming, and lighting up our lives. I adore you, admire you, love you, and have the deepest respect for you and your soul.

You will always be with us, my love.  
Jay Henning