

Book Review: *A Journey Well Taken - Life After Loss* by Elaine Williams

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Experiencing the death of a loved one is something none of us wish to experience. However it is an unfortunate fact that this is never a choice - it is a requirement.

It is never a question of 'if', but is rather always a question of 'when'. Therein lies the problem, for it comes always too soon - the time is never 'right' for such things. It is not the event itself that is so painful, but rather what we must do after the event that causes the fear to well up inside. For we know that we will be alone. Alone is a terrible place to be.

A Journey Well Taken: Life After Loss, written by Elaine Williams, is one person's story of such a loss. However, unlike any book I've read on the subject before, this book has struck me right in the gut and taken my breath away.

As readers we often find ourselves mere spectators to the story being told. However here, in Elaine's book, we find ourselves right in the middle of it. There is simply no getting away from the pain, and subsequently the hope she inspires.

The book is raw. To read it is not a simple little afternoon 'pass the time' kind of activity. Reading this book is a mind-numbingly intense experience. I read hundreds of books every year. However, seldom do I read anything that causes those long buried emotions and memories of mine to come screaming to the surface with an intensity that brings tears to my eyes. This book did precisely that. I kept putting the thing down and then picking it up again, over and over.

Elaine hides nothing from us here - she bares her very soul within these 190 pages. Much the same as our own emotional lives, the book is an up and down roller coaster ride of shock, confusion, despair, pain, grief and hope. However at no time do these highs and lows follow a linear progression, as many writers would mistakenly put to paper. No indeed, for here in this book the movement from one to the other is at times sharp and quick, at others painfully slow. This is precisely as in real life. At times it seems as if the pain is finally and thankfully beginning to fade when, without warning, we are dragged backward into the gaping black hole again, only to start all over.

Precisely like real life. For such it is.

What is very unusual here and what makes this book so completely endearing and decidedly different from others written about this subject is the telling of the journey of

the return. Those of us who have experienced divorce after a long period of marriage will recognize ourselves here. As a group, we are often shocked and dismayed at the daunting prospect of entering the dating world faced with the prospect of finding another potential lover, let alone a mate. Perhaps 'shocked' is far too mild a word. Downright flabbergasted seems to better describe the experience. For the world of people and relationships seems to have changed dramatically in the years we have been gone.

Not so. What has changed is us. We had something wonderful and now it is gone. No other person, not one will ever live up to the ideals we now hold. Elaine handles this subject with a sense of humor that had me holding my sides with laughter. I don't wish to give the story away here. Suffice it to say that she handles it all with grace and with a great deal more common sense and dignity than the rest of us might manage to achieve.

When a loved one dies, more than anything else what we need is a friend who can simply understand; a confidant with whom we can feel comfortable sharing the barest of emotions. We need someone who will listen to our story and then tell us their own. What we desperately need at times such as these - even more than family or friends - is a ray of hope where we believe there is none to be found.

What we must find in these times is a word or two of wisdom that might help us to find our own way through it. Elaine provides those words in such a way that, when that time comes crashing down upon me, I know I will turn to this book to help fill that empty place in me.

A Journey Well Taken - Life After Loss

Elaine Williams

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