

LONG LIVE THE KING

By

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“A friend like you happens once in a lifetime”

---Anonymous

The solitary figure was standing on a street corner looking down at his feet. First he tried to move his left and then his right. It was if the soles of his scuffed shoes were cemented to the sidewalk restricting his mobility and rendering him a spectator to all that was going on around him. Frantically he looked, up, down and all around, but as his focus increased he still couldn't find what he was looking for. There was panic in his eyes as he stopped every passerby to inquire if they had seen his friend. Each in their own way asked him to describe the object of his search: height, weight, color of eyes, etc. He struggled to find in his mind, a distinguishing trait, quality, or property even though he had known his friend from adolescence to adulthood, from trying to meet girls to marrying one. His depiction of his friend did not capture his favored companion's uniqueness and instead of clarifying his friend's traits, the object of his search came across as a generic description with no significant characteristics to differentiate his friend from others. The man on the street corner realizing that darkness was nearly upon him started shouting out his friend's name. What reverberated back to him was his own voice as it echoed through the city streets. Pounding his right fist into his open left hand, he fought hard to recall a mental image of his friend, but his visual representation could not be conveyed or understood by those who attempted to assist him in his search. Out of politeness they asked the man on the corner to slowly describe his friend to them. But, alas, they never stayed long enough to hear his passionate words.

About to give up, it was then that he suddenly realized that in order to find his friend, he would have to locate the street corner that was holding him captive. Looking around for a key landmark he asked himself was it Chi-Town, the home of his birth or Colorado Springs where his first recollections of life took place. It had to be Chicago, a city he revisited a second and third time with Allentown and New York City sandwiched in between, and where his memories were the strongest. Yet, none of those attempts to bring back a level of conscious awareness clicked. Adding to his growing anxiety, It was now pitch black outside and the street lamp he stood under offered no light. Out of the corner of his eye, a boy crossed the street from where he was standing, and walked under a lamppost with a group of friends. They were horsing around and having fun and upon

closer scrutiny he guessed they were in their late teens. Though individually styled, they all were dressed in the same uniform; grey slacks, white shirt, blue blazer, and untied club ties that identified the school that they were attending. It was then that a more powerful image suddenly took shape in the form of an apparition who was wearing a prep school uniform and whose facial features were eerily close to his own. As the vision came into clearer focus he started to recognize the surroundings and the street corner he was standing on--- Philadelphia. Here, as a transplanted public school student, devoid of friends, struggling to adjust to his new private school environment, he had bonded with his lifelong friend. That's where their friendship blossomed, but not in the City of Brotherly Love. Realizing this, he was suddenly able to move his feet and in doing so crossed the street and headed on a southwesterly bearing towards Malvern. Hearing the sound of a siren coming up behind him, he looked around to see what the commotion was all about?

The modern day rooster with its mechanical crowing forced its owner to recognize its presence. Ted looked at the alarm clock that defiantly stared back at him: its message, time to get up and go to work. He knew full well that if he refused to acknowledge the robotic time warden, it would simply up the ante by increasing its volume. Given no other choice, Ted reached across the nightstand, and did what he did every morning; ignoring the snooze alarm, he hit the squawking rooster square on its ass. Having shut off his morning nemesis, he was now wide-awake. Sitting up in bed, stretching first his arms and then his legs he looked across the mattress at his wife. Sleeping soundly, she had managed to once again win the nightly tussle over the bedcovers. No wonder he always woke up cold in the morning. With affection, he took in her half hidden face from under the comforter and wondered how she could possibly sleep through every earth shattering noise that woke him. With a how do you do it smile, he wrote it off to one of life's mysteries, knowing with absolute certainty that she really didn't need an alarm clock to wake herself up because she was married to one.

He had risen from another restless night---the fourth in a row--- and though he fitfully tossed and turned his way through it, he recognized that his frightening dreams always had the same theme, a continuous and unproductive search for something or somebody. Looking up, attached to the wall, he spotted the dream catcher (a gift from his mother) and tried to recall the full contents of his nightmarish thoughts, images, and emotions. But as hard as he tried, all he could remember from the previous night's slumber was that what he was looking for he couldn't find. Not wanting to disturb his wife, he quietly slipped out of bed, sunk his feet into the carpet, and headed for the bathroom; it was there on the bureau that he noticed the text message on his phone. Examining it more closely, he saw that the expected communication was sent to him around midnight. It was brief and to the point, "Your friend needs you."

When his wife finally aroused, she found Ted situated at the kitchen table, fully dressed with his laptop closed, sipping on one of two Dunkin Donuts coffees. Pensive, she caught him staring out the window oblivious to her presence. Without his noticing, she took both a seat at the table and the coffee with the lid still on it, the one marked cream and sugar, and waited.

Breaking her silence, she said, “How did you sleep,” knowing the answer before she asked?

“About the same,” was Ted’s unenthusiastic and detached reply as he turned from the window to face her?

“Same dream? Do you think it’s related to you know what?”

“Probably. Not sure, most likely.” Known for his upbeat personality and easy going smile and nature, Ted now found himself dealing with one of life’s inevitabilities. Scrunching his face in frustration, he started to raise the coffee to his lips, stopped, put it down, and with his right hand pushed the mobile phone across the table, so the message could be shared.

Instinctively aware of the circumstance, the next utterance out of Molly’s mouth was, “Do you want me to go with you? I’ll call in sick,” as she put her hand on his arm.

Ted slowly shook his head then leaned over and kissed her on the forehead. “No that won’t be necessary, I’ll convey your thoughts and love to the King.”

Normally free-spoken in discussing their day’s activities neither one of them said another word. In silence they continued to drink their coffees as memories of their friend, a treasured collection of them, came tumbling back, one after the other. After all 16 years was a lifetime, had he expected him to live forever? If only he could, Ted thought.

Wearing an orange and blue Bears sweater and a pair of jeans, he threw on a brown leather bomber jacket and a black skullcap before slipping his computer into his backpack. He had waited until his wife had left for work, convinced that this part of life’s journey would best be travelled alone. As a grad student his resources were always limited, so instead of calling an Uber he walked over to Damen and Lawrence and caught public transportation. Travelling a more circuitous route gave him some time to think. Looking out the bus window Ted watched life’s everyday activities from a distance: a postman delivering letters, a couple running to catch a train, a man walking a dog, and a group of children standing on a corner with a crossing guard heading for school. Life was mundane

until it suddenly wasn't. Reaching his stop, he got off at Chicago Avenue and within 15 minutes had arrived at his destination.

Bracing himself, he keyed the entrance pad and entered the courtyard before heading towards the building's main entrance. Upon entering, it was a tranquil scene, as he expected his own residence would be at this time of day. Taking the elevator to the second floor of the apartment complex, he appeared to be going upwards in slow motion as the elevator took its time before reaching the third floor. He patiently waited for the metal door to open and when it pulled back, he turned to his left and approached his parent's residence on the right. Then just for a second he hesitated, not sure as to what he would find on the other side. Was the King still alive? Slowly pulling the keys from out of his coat pocket, he fumbled with them before selecting the right one. Reluctantly he opened the door.

So use to having crazy and wild greetings when he entered any of the family's residences, Teddy missed the jumping and barking of the two family terriers, Lily and King. They could always sense his presence even before entering and inevitably he would be forced to shout out loud, "Down, Down," before reaching downward and petting one or both of them before they settled down. Talk about making you feel important, they were the official family greeters, and they took their job seriously. Now on a typical fall day, it was 'Terrier quiet' as he stepped into the apartment unit. Lily, a West Highland White Terrier, and the King's running mate for 13 years had passed away in the spring. His mother's dog and her constant companion, Lily shadowed Teddy's Mom everywhere; smart and confident, the Westie, was also known as a bit of a nag, who kept the King in line. Calling out the King's name from the hallway, there was no response. Concerned that he had passed away before he had the chance to say his final goodbye, Teddy quickly went from room to room in search of his canine friend. Then like a lighthouse beacon he spotted a tail wagging near the main sofa in the living room. No longer able to greet him with wild exuberance, Teddy's devoted friend rested on a small bed too weak to move; his master was home, he could tell by his voice.

Carefully kneeling down beside the King, in order not disturb him, Teddy bent over and gingerly kissed him on his nose. In a soft reassuring voice he whispered, "King, I told you I would come," Then taking great care, he carried his beloved Terrier and the bed closer to the sofa, where the two of them planned to spend their day. It was really tough for Teddy to see his old friend in such a bad way. He had been sick off and on for several months and each time that he was taken to the Veterinarian the family fully expected it to be his last. Like the character in 'Gladiator,' Juba, Teddy envisioned King standing defiantly in the Vets examining room saying to Lily the Westie, "I will see you soon. But not yet, not yet..." And then against all odds, that cocky four-legged Cairn terrier would walk out of the Vets, having cheated death one more time knowing that he wasn't ready to go, not yet, not yet. "Lazarus" was the new nickname Teddy's Dad affectionately called the King.

Teddy had mapped out his day with the King while riding, the stop at every other street corner public transport. He had to finish a writing assignment for his Masters in Fine Arts. He had chosen the fourth and last installment of a series of stories he had written, three of which had previously been published and were built around a wandering, adventuresome character that lived in two worlds. The first world in which the protagonist primarily inhabited would be where the population aged according to nature's current laws. The second world known as AW, the protagonist's alternative world, mirrored the first world with one exception, aging slowed down; every ten years in the primary world equaled one year in the protagonist's alternative world. Teddy had created an interesting dilemma for his protagonist, where the main character would eventually have to choose between two worlds, natural aging versus a form of prolonged life? The first novella was written when the King was seven, the second completed in the King's tenth year, the third novella finished in the 13th year of the King's life and now the series conclusion in King's 16th year. It was ironic that on this day Teddy would be bringing to an end his protagonist's journey on the same day that another character, a real one, was concluding his final chapter. Each novella represented a period of time when Teddy and the King were either together or apart.

Having situated the King's bed near him Teddy thought about the first time they met. They had just lost, Johnny's dog, 'Trievery,' his older brother's Black Cairn Terrier. Teddy, 15 at the time, had grown up with Treaver, but he was clearly Johnny's dog. The Veterinarian, a good friend of the family, had recommended to Teddy's Mom that they replace Trievery as soon as possible. His Dad, on the other hand, hearing the Vet's recommendation suggested that they wait and take their time. Ignoring the fatherly advice, the co-conspirators, mother and youngest son, waited till the voice of reason flew out of town on a business trip. Then after scouring the Chicago papers for three days they found what they were looking for, a litter of Cairn puppies. Knowing the time constraints the two of them were under they would make their move after school since little league baseball practice had been cancelled due to rain. Driving to Joliet IL, on their clandestine mission they arrived to find the King playing with his siblings; the only male left, the brindled colored Cairn had huge ears that dwarfed the rest of his body. Teddy spotted him right away, picked him up, and then after holding the King for the first time, nodded his head at his Mom, signaling that he was the chosen one. Hastily completing the transaction, mother and son drove back to the North Shore of Chicago through a driving rainstorm with the latest addition to the clan. Since possession is nine-tenths of the law, they arrived triumphantly with their new charge ten minutes before Teddy's dad walked through the front door.

It's funny how in a family, two members can form such a unique relationship, so strong that it lasts a lifetime. The King was Teddy's dog and vice versa; they hung out, played ball, and slept together. That bond of friendship was formed on the first night that the King spent with his new pack. "King you probably don't remember because you were so young and scared, but Mom let you sleep in my

room. The King just listened to Teddy's soothing voice. "Sometime during the night I heard you crying, so I slipped out of bed and laid down next to you and slept there with my hand inside your cage. You were my dog!"

They were closest when Teddy was in high school, a period of time when they were inseparable. The King, like his father, was slightly larger than your normal Cairn of 13 to 14 pounds, weighing close to 20 pounds. He had a coarse brindle coat of brown and black fur, pointed ears on a broad head, and big paws with the front paws larger than the back. He was a big dog trapped in a little dog's body. Feisty and funny he was typical of the breed, intelligent though stubborn at the same time. He was fiercely loyal, especially to Teddy. What ultimately separated the King from other Cairn Terriers was his bark, which he used quite frequently to protect the family by chasing deer off their Malvern property. His bark sounded like a big dog's, a Mastiff's one would guess, ranging in sound between a bass and a tenor.

As he watched the labored breathing of his Terrier friend, he recalled one of his fondest memories. "You know I don't think that I ever told you what a great ball catching dog you are." And with that he went into the King's toy box and found a yellow tennis ball, the King's favorite, and put it next to his bed. The King, truly, was a ball catching fool who was able to leap high into the air and catch the ball regardless of where it bounced. Someone once asked Teddy, "How do you train a dog to catch a ball like that" and Teddy answered with a sly grin, "You don't. You find a dog, who really likes to catch and you play ball with him." Then looking at the ball next to the King, Teddy said out loud, "King...Treaver was Johnny's dog and a soccer player. He would push a soccer ball around the yard until he was exhausted. When we brought you home I was hoping that you would be a baseball dog, one that I could play catch with. Most dogs when they catch a ball take off with it and play their own version of hide and seek. Not sure if you remember, but I do; it was just you and I in the basement on Foster Street in Glencoe when I threw you the blue ball for the first time during a round of bounce ball, our game.

"Then pretending he was a sports announcer doing play by play sports, Teddy announced in a booming voice, "There is a long drive to dead center...this could be gone." Then looking at King with his special smile, "I bounce the ball as high as I could against the basement floor and I watch like every devotee of the game does as to what will happen next. Will the rookie make a spectacular play or will his attempt to catch the ball be underwhelming. Suddenly your head goes up, like the best All Star Centerfielders and you immediately track the ball, waiting, you confidently move your feet in order to find the best catching angle, yet, you never take your eye off the ball and then in a split second you leap higher than any of the dogs I know; high into the air and with a slight turn of your head you catch the ball at the apex of your leap. I stood there stunned, but to my amazement that wasn't the best part. After your caught it, there was no grandstanding or tipping of your cap to the fans or running off with your trophy---Nooooo---instead you

humbly walk over to me and flip the ball back with back spin. That's when I knew your talent and intuition was beyond what I realized."

Teddy wished that there was something he could do for the King, but he knew that it was now out of his hands and in another's. So he started to write, reading the passages out loud, so the King could hear his voice. Time is either a foe or an ally. In Teddy's case it was the former; he had to finish his novella today, so the first draft could be critiqued tomorrow and with each passing second he was running out of time with the King. Occasionally during the course of his writings, he would close his laptop (get off the couch and lie down next to the King's makeshift bed) take off his collar and gently rub his neck, his favorite spot, and tell him how great a friend he is and that he would never, ever forget him.

King closed his eyes, feeling Teddy's loving hands on his neck. *Dozing in and out of consciousness, he listened closely to the stories and the flood of memories that they recalled. He had fought the good fight, and now his resolve was running low. This was his family and he had always been loyal to them, yet, he didn't know how much longer he could carry on. He had taken his life's role seriously, as the protector of the clan, and the guardian of his master. He wondered where he would be headed next, to another world or would his existence cease with his last breath. Unable to communicate verbally, he had shown his feelings through vocal expression or by his body's movements. He had had a good life, both with humans and, Lily, his female counterpart. Her loss was devastating to him and the family, and because the clan needed him, especially Teddy's mom, he had fought hard to stay alive as long as he could---though he instinctively knew that his body was shutting down. Try as he might, age was the determining factor, and at 16 he had reached the end of the Cairn actuarial tables. Now, based on the stories that Teddy was telling him, he realized that his quality of life was no longer there and it wouldn't be coming back. He had become a burden to everyone around him, as they carried him from one room to the next. This was no way to live, whether you were a human or a dog. After Lily was put to sleep, he thought about death in every dream sequence that he had. At first his impending expiration scared him, but now, he accepted it. He knew that he would not face death alone, that the one that cared for him throughout his life, Teddy's mother, would be there by his side as he left this world for another---he hoped. It was his time and though he welcomed it, he struggled as he watched Teddy and the family's reaction to his imminent departure. Saying his goodbyes with a lick, what bothered him more than the pain that racked his body was the sadness that Lily's and his farewell would initially have on those that loved him. What gave him hope was the family's resilience. Knowing that they would quickly fill the emotional void with a new puppy or rescue dog that would steal their hearts ---the way Lily and he did, and all the other clan dogs that came before them.*

Waking up, King watched Teddy get off the couch and walk towards the kitchen. Grabbing a beer from the refrigerator, Teddy found and moved the water dish

next to King, who in his day could lap it up with the best of them. Ignoring the water, King waited for the next story.

“King, it was the summer of my junior year in college and the basement of our Malvern house was the official social club for my high school and college friends. There was always chow in the house, an outside pool and plenty of room to roam between my room, the family room, the outside decks, and the basement. Video games and movies dominated, though philosophical discussions, born out of college classes and readings, were always at the heart of any of the social clubs gatherings. And in the middle of everything there you were, the official social club mascot, playing catch with multiple throwers, sharing in the food treats and sleeping next to me wherever I put my head down to rest. Lily used to bark outside the basement door knowing that you were eating and playing with the boys. I can still hear Mom’s voice coming from somewhere in the house yelling, ‘Is the King with you,’ which invariably you were.” King’s head suddenly came off his bed and with his black eyes wide open looked at Teddy before he slowly put his head back on the bed. Teddy reached over and gently rubbed his snout and continued. “I had just finished reading the final installment of Stephen King’s Dark Tower and decided to take a swim. Normally it would have been pretty creepy at that hour, but I poured myself a glass of Jack, neat, from the bar and went out the far basement door, so as to not disturb Mom and Dad. You were on a leash, so you wouldn’t take off hunting deer; quietly we walked to the pool. It was a full moon and without the pool lights, pretty bright outside. Next, I grabbed a pool floater seat, got into the water and maneuvered myself onto it, sipping Jack while you stayed by the edge of the pool.” Teddy started to laugh. “Big mistake, three minutes into my reflective period looking at the stars and unbeknownst to me, you take four steps back and like a broad jumper at the Olympic games you race to your mark and hurdle your body onto me and the floater. You had what I’d call a hard landing,” laughing out loud as he recalled the memory. “At first I thought that I could right the ship, but with you squirming about I lost my balance, the floater flipped over and the two of us went below the water. That’s when you learned to swim. I on the other hand couldn’t stop laughing as we both treaded water. All I could think of was that you had been eying that backyard swimming pool from the day we moved in and tonight was your night to test it. No we didn’t get caught, but I had some explaining to do the next morning as to why the carpet in my room was so wet.”

Teddy’s cell phone rang, which was still in his backpack. Recognizing the ring, he walked over to the kitchen counter, pulled it out, and answered. “Hey Babe.”

“How’s he doing?” Molly asked, anxious for a report.

“Hanging in there, ”I’ve been telling him stories about our shared life in between writing.”

“Are you okay?”

“Not really, its tough to see him this way,” the story telling representing an escape from reality.

“I know, but remember we had so many great times with him. Do you remember the towel incident?” There was lightness and laughter in Molly’s voice as she asked the question.

Teddy started to laugh once again, all the while looking at the King. “I sure do. When was that, as he put the phone on speaker next to the King’s bed?

“We weren’t married, yet, and I was staying over at your Malvern house. Molly started to laugh. “We were going out to dinner with your Mom and Dad and I had just got out of the shower and put a towel around me. The King was in our bedroom hanging out. I still had the towel around me and was about to get dressed.”

“Yes, Yes. You asked the King if he was a gentleman?”

Remember as soon as I dropped the towel the King looked the other way.”

Yes, Yes. And we both said, he IS a gentleman!”

They laughed for a while, so hard that tears of relief started to run down Teddy’s face.

Molly was the first to speak. “Ted you’ve had the best gift a boy could ever want. Give him a kiss for me and call me when you’re headed for home.

“I know. Thanks for calling, we appreciate it.”

Teddy put the phone down and sat on the edge of the sofa and just looked at King. He knew that his memory over time would become fuzzy trying to recall the King’s smell, the feel of his fur, the way he wagged his tail or his jaunty walk in his prime. He could say it was unfair, but Teddy understood life’s brevity and like every other living being, King as well as himself had a finite amount of time on this spinning planet. After Teddy left for college he realized that half the fun of coming home was King’s greeting. And like the character in the Winnie-the-Pooh series, Christopher Robin, Teddy was growing up. After university their time together changed significantly, especially when Teddy moved out and got his own apartment in Queens NY. Due to distance and an emerging social and business life, he saw the King less frequently, mainly on holidays. And when Teddy’s parents left Philly for Denver, he didn’t see the King for almost two years before the entire clan relocated back to the Chicago area. Yet their band of friendship stayed in tact.

Returning to his writing he reopened his laptop and watched the words from his keyboard form then fly across the screen. Finally, he came to the last paragraph. It was time to close a fictional work that had been part of his life since he was a senior in college. With a touch of regret, he completed the protagonists inevitable course. Then he stopped and looked at King before refocusing on the closing words of his novella. A slight smile slowly crossed his lips as he started deleting his previous ending. From an experienced perspective the author and his main character, Grogan, reversed their position. Retyping the chapter, he concluded the series with a new and unpredictable, yet satisfying ending. Since he didn't kill Grogan off, he wondered if he would ever see him again? Compared to real life, fiction certainly had its advantages, especially if you were the author.

For the next hour he laid beside the King, the way he did on the first night they were together. He could have told King a lot more stories about their life together, but instead he opted to just lay there petting and telling him how much his companionship, friendship and unconditional love meant to him. His voice, and touch his instruments of compassion. King's occasional licks his response.

Teddy didn't hear the door open or see his Mom and Dad until they were in the living room.

"How's he doing," his Dad asked?

"He's sleeping," Teddy's hand still stroking his fur.

"It meant a lot to King for you to be with him," his mother said, tears welling up in her eyes.

"I know. Hesitating he asked, "Is it time?"

Both parents stood with their coats on, and nodded their heads.

"Let me get my gear and I'll carry him down to the car," as he got up from the floor and put his bomber jacket and cap on and handed his backpack over to his mother. Teddy then leaned over and carefully picked up the King, who licked his hand. Then slowly as if in a funeral procession, the three of them, lost in their individual thoughts, left the apartment and headed towards the back of the building where the car was parked.

As they reached the SUV, Teddy simply said to the two of them, "I can't do it."

"I know...I know," his mother said soothingly as Teddy handed the King over to his mom.

The transfer having been made, Teddy waited until she was situated in the front seat and then leaned over, but before he could kiss the King, his canine friend said his farewell in his own way by licking his hand. Teddy filled with emotion, returned the lick with a kiss on the King's snout for the last time. "I love you King."

His Dad, feeling his son's and wife's emotional distress said, "If there's any solace at all, he was one a hell of a dog. I wished I had a dog like King growing up. And you did! Teddy, you were lucky and so was King and I'll, we'll miss him...as his voice trailed off.

His mother still grieving from the lost of her Lily gently rubbed the Kings head and said to Teddy, "Thanks. He was a great family dog, but he was your dog!"

Teddy looked through the car window one more time, his eyes fixed on the King. His time had come and soon his suffering would be over. He waited until the vehicle shifted into drive, and then stood and watched it slowly pull away. With tears streaming down his cheeks, he put the collar up on his jacket and started walking. On the way home he called Molly letting her know that he was going to stop at Roman's, a local neighborhood bar and family favorite, to have a celebratory drink to the King's life. And that's exactly what he did. Raising his glass high in the crowded bar, he made a toast to anyone within earshot. "Long Live the King." Then he called an Uber and continued on with his life knowing that "A friend like King happens once in a lifetime."

The King came running towards him a step ahead of Lily who had also been in pursuit of the blue ball. Ignoring her nudge King flipped the ball back to Teddy in anticipation of another throw. It had been a while since the three of them had played bounce ball together, but the sheer joy of once again engaging in recreational sport with his terrier friends brought a smile to Teddy's face and an excited wag of the tail from his two canine ballplayers. Teddy held the ball in his hand, but before could he throw it Lily quit the game when Teddy's mother called out her name. King ever ready to play prodded Teddy with his nose as if to say what's holding you up?

Teddy looked the same as when the day started, but King did not; he appeared to be younger than Teddy last remembered him and he had an energy that belied his age. Teddy taking notice of his surroundings recognized the Malvern basement that he once played ball in with the King. Looking at his lifelong terrier friend, it filled him with a feeling of serenity. Responding to King's massive bark to start the game, Teddy threw the bounce ball and King responded by catching the blue ball time and again, and with each catch he would come running back to Teddy with a speed and agility as if he was in the prime of his life. Teddy sniffed the air and reached out for the King's neck. And with a felling of satisfaction he could almost smell the King and feel his fur. Two lifelong companions just playing bounce ball. Life couldn't get better than this!

When the alarm went off Ted woke up refreshed. And while his wife slept, he looked up at the dream catcher above his head, and this time he recalled the entire King dream sequence. While lying there, Juba, a Numidian in 'Gladiator,' suddenly came to mind; remembering the character in his dramatic scene, he smiled knowingly and rephrasing his words he said, "King, I will see you soon. But not yet, not yet." Then with a smile of satisfaction on his face, Ted started his day.