

# Ended Too Soon

I am departing from my usual ranting and attempt at humor for this "chapter". There is no humor in this topic.

What is it about artists as a whole that drives them? Is it love? Joy? Love for their art? Or something deeper, darker, and more sinister? How many artists become the great artists that they are because their tortured souls bring them to their art for release? How many artists ultimately find that their art no longer provides that release or escape and make their ultimate and final decision to end their lives?

I have known two bead artists who have made this final, tortured decision. One was a dear friend, the other I only knew from a few emails, and from having admired her brilliant work. Both were talented artists. The loss of each is a loss to the beading community.

Upon hearing the news each time of the deaths of these artists, and especially that it was caused by their own hand, left me with a lot of questions. The first and obvious one: WHY?? What was so bad, so unendurable that they found no other solution, no other hope than to chose an act so final, so unspeakable?

Of course, many of us shake our heads, with the "If Only's". *If only* she reached out to someone for help. *If only* she had taken her Meds (or sought medical help). *If only* she looked at the positive things. *If only* she believed in Jesus (or whatever religion). If only, *If only, If only*.

I don't fully understand what would bring someone to this final horrible act. I hope I never will. But the suicides of my fellow beaders did make me think, and in each case it made me think hard. It made me reflect on how we as a whole handle such a tragedy. I think maybe our thought process should be diverted away from the *If Only's* since they are not a positive way to think. The *If Only's* tend to be an implied, subtle judgment of the action. The stigma of not being "Strong enough", "religious enough", "healthy (especially mentally) enough" surrounds a suicide, and those questions and allegations are often thought, if not spoken.

Instead of "*If Only*" we should ask ourselves questions. What is it that keeps OUR drive to live? What would be OUR tipping point? I am sure we all have one, if we are honest with ourselves. Yes, life is our most precious gift. Some of us would believe that suicide is a slap in the face of the very God that gave us that life. Perhaps I am not of the same religious conviction as someone who would make that argument because I hold a different opinion.

I *think* I know what my tipping point would be (an absolute certainty is impossible). Even in suspecting what that is, I can't imagine actually taking my own life. The thought is too horrific. But in the event of reaching that point, I would hope that those around me would allow me to go, peacefully, with some form of dignity and not judge me for not wanting to endure the conditions that would cause me to want to pass on.

In our culture, speaking of death is a taboo. We talk of it in hush-hush tones. It scares the crap out of us. I think we *should* talk about it. It is part of our life. Maybe in facing it better and accepting it, death would be less painful when loved ones do pass, and less frightening to us when we ourselves face it. I also believe that an argument can be made much like the argument of when does life begin, when does someone actually die? To me that question is every bit as important. Someone can die long before his or her physical body ceases functioning. What about the spirit? What about the actual WILL to live? What about the artificial means of keeping someone alive while they are terminally ill? These are all tough questions to which we all have different opinions and beliefs. I do not intend to get into religious and moral debates; I only bring these up as considerations of what could influence someone to lose the will to keep living.

We should in no way be judgmental of someone who causes his or her own death. We do not know the depth of their pain (physical or emotional), we do not know how long they might have struggled with their tortured agony, we do not know if there was ANYTHING that could have changed their decision. All we do know is that their agony has ended. The demons, the pains, the illness that caused them to leave us are no longer plaguing them. It matters not if you believe that they are now with the Deity you believe in, or if death is the finality of our being. Death has brought them their final release.

Yes, it is sad, we miss those who pass on, especially when it is so untimely. But sadness is not what they would want us to feel. I think our energies are best placed in remembering the joys that they gave us. Celebrate having known them, especially for how they have positively touched our lives.

Take stock of your own life. What is it that makes you embrace and cherish your own life? What would change that? What can you do to keep your life worth living? Pursue that with all the gusto you can, with every ounce of your heart and soul. Remember those who have passed on, by whatever means with the joy and love they have touched your life and be thankful to have been in their sunshine, how ever brief that may have been.

To all the artists whose lives have ended too soon, Vincent Van Gogh, Kurt Cobain, Marilyn Monroe, Spalding Gray, .....and to Pin and Toika, we thank you for your all too brief time, and thank you for the joy you brought all of us. You live forever in our hearts.