

MADELEINE

Losing a Soul Mate to Cancer



Clancy Philippe

Acknowledgements

Madeleine and I wanted to write a book together and share our experience in the fight against cancer in the hope that our journey would help others in the same situation. Unfortunately, cancer took Madeleine away before a single word was written. However, that has not stopped her from having her say and throughout the entire book she has been its inspiration and guide. She is still very present in my life.

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It would be remiss of me not to mention the love and affection of family and loved ones who never stopped supporting Madeleine and myself through our five year battle with breast and ovarian cancers. Their continuing support since Madeleine's passing has been immeasurable. From deep within my soul, I say thank you on behalf of both of us.

Last but not least, I wish to acknowledge all the family and friends who never lost faith in me, urging me to carry on and accomplish what many thought was going to be an impossible task.

Pouring out my emotions into writing whilst in the grips of the utmost pain and grief after losing Madeleine, has been the hardest project that I have ever attempted in my

life. The box of tissues has been my closest companion throughout the composition of this book - it still is.

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Chapter 1

The Beginning of the End

**Ward 3 South, Cabrini Hospital, Malvern in
Melbourne, Wednesday February 9, 2011**

At 8.30 am, I grabbed my mobile phone and wrote the following:

"I am currently in Madeleine's hospital room watching her slowly fade away. She has lost the will to fight and is slipping away fast. The doctor has advised that it is only a matter of time. I am just devastated to find that such a lovely and caring human being has been almost totally consumed by this dreadful disease. She is now on morphine to ease the pain.

I don't know what more to say. I will keep you posted and give you a call when things settle down. I am seeing the doctor tomorrow re: path from here.

Clancy"

I was watching Madeleine, my beloved wife of thirty four years, in a semi-comatic state and awaiting the inevitable. Cancer was not something that other people had. It was very much with us.

We had tried every possible avenue to conquer that dreadful disease. Madeleine's body had been battered, injected with cytotoxic chemicals and exposed to radioactive radiation hoping that the malignant cancer tumours would die and stop interfering with her bodily functions.

Suddenly, she regained consciousness, opened her eyes, reached for me, looked me in the eyes and said: "Aide moi?" (Help me?) Those two words broke my heart beyond repair.

Real words of comfort could not come out of my mouth. I had no words to say because there was nothing that I could do to help her. There was nothing that the best doctors or even the best hospitals in the whole world could do. My heart was imploding inside my chest. I could not breathe. My whole world was empty and my loving partner, best friend and Soul Mate was leaving me. She was saying "Good Bye". I could see that in her eyes. The same loving eyes that *"talked to me and loved me without the need for words"* were now filled with despair. The same hands that had been so loving and

had done so much for me, had become almost motionless.

Why Madeleine? Why me? What did we do to deserve this fate? Madeleine and I had always been one. Yet, half of me was being wrenched away. Wherever she was going, I was going too. My Louloune*, this just cannot be true. I must be dreaming. A bad dream that has no ending.

* Madeleine's nickname

I was numbed. Tears were running down my cheeks. I became oblivious to the outside world and could not help but travel back in time to the moment when I first set eyes on that beautiful and passionate woman, some thirty six years ago.....



Cabrini Hospital, Malvern, Melbourne

Chapter 2

She was my Cleopatra



Madeleine when she captured my heart

**"If you placed your heart in God's hands, He will place your heart in the hands of a worthy person."
Anon**

I remember meeting Madeleine for the first time. It was on August 1, 1975 at 9.00 am in the Town Clerk's office at the Municipality of Curepipe in Curepipe, Mauritius. I was taking up my appointment with the Municipal Council of Curepipe as Town Engineer.

I was in the Town Clerk's office when a person with an incredible presence, walked in to introduce the new Town Librarian who was also starting on the same day.

That person was Madeleine and I could not keep my eyes off her. She was wearing a Scottish kilt pattern skirt and coat, with a yellow blouse. I was then 26 years old and she did something to me - not quite love at first sight, but she was definitely someone who struck a chord in me.

I settled into my new position and for some reason enjoyed her company whenever she came into the main office. She told me some time later that she had noticed how I always found some good excuse to have a chat with her.

She was one of those people who socialised well and was way ahead of her time in that she had an openness of mind that challenged some of the 'good old days' thinking. Her best friends were male rather than female. She had just been through a divorce and was left to fare on her own with two boys aged 11 and 12 years old. Her pay was not that generous and she was battling with bills and rent to pay. Nevertheless, she found ways to stretch the budget and looked after her home and sons very well. Her house was always immaculately kept and everybody

found a welcome there. When she discovered I had nowhere to go between normal working hours and attending council meetings at the Curepipe Town Hall, she offered me an open invitation to come and have coffee at her place after work instead of being on my own.

I jumped at the opportunity and got to know her better. I walked in one evening after a football match covered in mud and asked if I could have a shower at her place. Those days changing rooms were a rare thing at football training venues. She initially looked at me in disbelief, smiled and then said OK.

I found that she was a woman of incredible intelligence, charm and personality. She was very active within the community and President of the Cercle de Curepipe. This establishment was one of the high profile social clubs in town.

She had a touch of class that showed through in her elegant demeanour and yet simple approach to life. I could not help saying to myself that she was someone special, the kind of person you rarely came across. She had obviously been well brought up and educated. Her manners were impeccable and she was always simply, yet elegantly dressed.

She had a very strong, yet very pleasant personality – always commanding respect without appearing overbearing. Her presence was very much welcomed by one and all, in that she would actively and positively contribute to her social environment. It was something that stayed with her all through her life. Once you meet her, you would never forget her. She was a joy to be with.

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