

A good man attempts to regain balance after great loss

Don Keyshot, newly retired teacher, is establishing himself as a professional counselor. He has just acquired Lamont, a fine intelligent dog, and Don is here engaged in a discussion with his new companion:

Having Lamont with me for only a few hours had already made a great deal of difference in my otherwise uneventful life. Such changes often affect persons and events profoundly, and far out of proportion to one's original estimates. Before beginning my practice I had thought that the lives of my clients would be eventful, soul-stirring, with gut-wrenching problems to probe (and me to help ameliorate). It was certainly so in my observations during my training to become a therapist. It is certainly so in the literature of therapy.

But I have already discovered that the lives of my clients are much as mine appears on its surface to be—uneventful—and the troubles of my clients are compendia of minor irritations. They have no major monsters expressible yet. Only irritations. Irritation with the way a spouse masticates his or her breakfast, irritation with the personal odors of others, irritation with traffic, with noises. It is these minor irritations compounded that appear to drive people to distraction.

I wondered if my own monsters might somehow be construed as irritations. No, probably not. I questioned Lamont.

“Why, Lamont, is it considered so important to produce children?”

Lamont responded, “It is important for one reason alone: to perpetuate the race.”

“Well, others handle that just fine. Some of our Balona families actually over-produce.”

“Yes,” Lamont responded. “I have relatives who do that. My own sire produced offspring in the hundreds, I am sure. Anyway, there it is.”

“The reader is in for an emotional roller-coaster ride...Because of the light tone of much of the writing, I wasn't prepared for the deep sadness, but I responded to the way in which Don continues to 'come to the surface' after frequent dunking...A quiet, thoughtful man who survived Hell, he manages to make his compassion his chief ally...”

—Elsa Cherchak, HS Teacher (CA)

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