

I was not expecting to be here today.

Today Ted is gone, but we have not lost Ted. For we cannot lose what we have, only what we, or he might've had. How do we recover that?

Ted was a good friend. A good man! Best man at our wedding!

I met him at a playwriting group in Bloomsbury around 1966. For forty-five years, he read everything I wrote, and always responded with constructive criticism, just as I hope I did with everything he wrote up until three days before he died. We never lost contact.

We saw each other regularly every few weeks, sometimes more. We became close. Has that all now disappeared?

Ted was a splash of colour! A live wire! Ted was, 'On the page!' But he was no comma, no semi-colon. He was no full stop that brought things to an end. Ted was a Question mark? A great exclamation! And a wonderful raconteur!

Two very short stories.

Sometime around 1970 the phone rang at 2a.m. I jumped up and picked up the receiver.

"Alan you must come round immediately there is someone I would like you to meet. He is quite extraordinary. He told me his name was David Lutyens.

I drove round to Glenlock road to find David Lutyens sprawled in an old arm-chair, still in his coat, holding a manuscript in one hand, and smoking incessantly with the other. He had an unusually large head. They seemed to be in the middle of a rather intense discussion David claiming that Richard Wagner was the greatest Composer who had ever lived because he brought two great arts together. The most powerful words and music ever combined. Ted was arguing that for him there was nothing more sublime than listening to a Beethoven quartet. David then told Ted he had read every book that was worth reading on the subject of music and literature in four different languages. He said he knew Winifred Wagner personally, and she had assured him that Wagner himself was of the same view. Ted's response as I remember it was something like this.

"David you may be the cleverest person in the country. You may well have an I.Q. of over 200, even 300. You may have read a whole library on the subject, and I only one book. But I do have an opinion, and that opinion is just as valid as yours, even if it is a different one. So, I ask you to consider this: Does a great painting need any other art to support it to make it great?" Is a cantata greater than a sonata?"

We never got the answer to that because at that moment smoke started to arise from David's tie. Ted immediately jumped up shouted. Fire! Fire! Don't move

David, and threw a jug of water over David's tie and shirt. So followed a few extraordinary years with Ted, myself, and the extraordinary Dr Lutyens.

It was around this time Ted turned up one day with a stray dog. A light brown and white mongrel who he called Lucky. They were inseparable. Ted carried no lead. He didn't need one. They were glued. That summer Ted went to the Blue anchor somewhere in Summerset with Lucky to work on his play. Viv and I visited him there. That afternoon on the beach Ted asked me what I thought of the cliffs?

They were almost vertical.

"Very dramatic," I said. "Not even a mountain goat could get up there.

Ted now decided to prove me wrong and commanded Lucky to climb this enormous cliff. I begged him not to. I said the dog would be killed.

"You don't know Lucky" he said.

With that Lucky clambered up this cliff occasionally turning to Ted for encouragement... "Up! Up! Up! He shouted, waving his arms wildly, Up! Up! Up! He cried, until Lucky had zigzagged his way to the top. Ted then whistled to Lucky for him to come back down. Lucky now carefully zigzagged his way down and then jumped straight into Ted's arms. What a memorable picture. An exclamation mark, I thought. Two remarkable strays together!

So how do I go forward with what might've been?

Well, I do not miss Ted now. For I have what I have. And I have a pretty good idea how he would respond to most situations. And I am sure many of you here today share that with me. So I go forward with a gap, a gap that I shall fill with wonderful memories, and my endless imaginings for what might've been.