

---

# QUOTES FROM THE EDGE OF NOWHERE

The Art of Noticing Unnoticed Life Wisdoms

---

Gary Lewis LeRoy, MD, FAAFP



**“The ONLY genuine expert opinion of the future is one given by someone who has been to the future and returned to the present to reveal their personal experience of what tomorrow has in store.”**

Prepare, as the reader of this chapter, for a rather bizarre tale of a dream I experienced years ago. It is the genesis of this chapter’s title...

As I recall, it was about three o’clock in the morning. Startled from my sleep, I struggled with my sheets as I sat straight up in bed. It was like a scene in a horror film. I had all the signs and symptoms of a panic attack. My pulse was racing at maybe 130 ~ 150 beats per minute. I could feel the sensation of my heart frantically pounding the inside of my chest cavity in an imagined effort to escape impending doom. I was breathing as if I were recovering from competing in a competitive 100-meter sprint. I felt perspiration cooling on my damp forehead as my hands clutched my sweat-soaked bed linens. Through my dilated pupils, I looked out into the darkness engulfing my bedroom. The only interruption of the darkness was the dull ambience created by an alley’s lamp about 50 yards behind my house. The streetlamp shined faintly through the curtained window directly behind my bed. As my vision adjusted, the silhouetted images of the larger objects in my bedroom came into view. Everything was as it had always been. Subconsciously, my biological defense protocols awakened,

What tomorrow has in store (Continued)

---

but I was safe from harm. Nothing had been disturbed in my room in that early morning hour - nothing except my thoughts.

I sat for a moment in the dark pondering what caused this unexpected emotional eruption. Suddenly, the vivid details of the dream I was having commenced to pour from my memory. The dream began with a vision of a young man, who was about my age, sleeping peacefully in his bed. His name was Malcolm. (Author's note: I have no recall of the character's name. I am fairly certain it was not Malcolm, but instead of just referring to him as "the man" I thought it would be better to provide him with a name.) Malcolm was abruptly startled from his sleep by a frightening dream or vision he experienced just prior to awakening. Panicked, he clumsily climbed out of bed and rushed to his bedroom window. There he stood in the dark looking into the distance at a little wooden cottage on a hill illuminated by the twilight's glow. Malcolm stared at the house as his mind took him back to the terrifying details of the dream that had shaken him from his sleep. In his dream, that same little wooden house on the hill was ablaze with fire that quickly reduced the structure and its lone occupant to ashes. His thoughts took him back to a time when, as a child, he wandered through the market in the town near the cottage. Vaguely familiar with the spinster lady who lived in the hillside cottage, he knew she was kind to all those who knew her, but she was seldom seen participating in any social activities with other villagers. The elderly woman, who kept the little green and white cottage immaculate, was somewhat of a mystery. As far as everyone knew, she had always lived there alone. With no known living relatives, she had never married or been involved in any emotionally sustained relationships. Even the village elders could not recall an accurate history of how long the woman had occupied the cottage or from where she came. Her only known source of income seemed to be from selling the fruits and vegetables grown in her orchard and garden. She also sold beautifully crafted children's clothing at her stall in the town square market. This is how Malcolm knew the lady - as a child, she had made clothing for him. Even when he was a small child, the lady seemed old. He recalled having to stand for what in his child's mind imagined were hours while she took his measure-

ments to create his school clothes for the season. As he forced himself to stand still to be measured, he would gaze into the lady's oddly youthful eyes. The iris color of her beautiful eyes reminded him of the light green limes she sold with the produce from her gardens.

---

**“This thought continued to haunt him as he drifted back to sleep.”**

---

Malcolm continued staring out his window up toward the lady's little wooden house. He recalled his dream of the house engulfed in flames. He had not really thought much about the lady - if at all - since he was well beyond the need of elementary school clothing. As an adult, he seldom accompanied his mother to market, so there was less opportunity to see the lady seated on her aged wooden stool in a market stall surrounded by fruits, vegetables, and the assortment of children's clothing she was selling. Before going back to bed, he wondered if he had this premonition because the old lady in the house was ill or dying. This thought continued to haunt him as he drifted back to sleep.

The next day Malcolm could not get the vivid dream to vanish from his mind. Toward the end of his workday, he decided to stop by the little cottage to check on the old lady. The sun was setting over the western horizon as he began his journey to the cottage. He had never before gone to the lady's house; but he was familiar enough with its location to find the path leading to her door. As a youth, he had walked near it on occasion. He and the other children even played hide-and-go seek near the orchards that lined the western edge of the hill where the cottage stood. However, he never had a reason until today to go to her home and knock on her door.

When he arrived, he took notice of the dilapidated wooden fence surrounding the cottage. The fence

What tomorrow has in store (Continued)

---

clearly hadn't been painted in years. The dirty white paint was peeling off in tiny sheets revealing the weathered grey wood beneath. Overgrown vegetable gardens surrounded the yard populated with an abundance of dandelions in various stages of maturity. Tall grass that chattered as it bowed in the evening breeze infiltrated the once well-groomed lawn. Malcolm walked guardedly up the brick walkway fearful of what he might discover in the house if he were to gain entry. As he approached the door, he mumbled to himself, "What if she is dead?" "What would I do then?" "Who would I tell?"

He stood at the doorway for a moment to compose his thoughts before firmly striking the green wooden door with his knuckles. Then he stood staring out into the distance patiently awaiting an answer. His ears heard the chilling whisper of approaching winds rushing across the old lady's yard. He looked back at the late day sun as it sculpted a beautiful cascade of light and color just above the orchard trees. The sound of the creaking green door opening interrupted Malcolm's random thoughts. The old lady stood staring at him with the same youthful lime-green eyes he remembered from long ago.

Silence lingered between them as the two once familiar strangers examined one another by sight and thought alone. The silence ceased with the lady asking in a low sweet voice, "Can I help you, young man?" Malcolm seemed stunned to hear the familiar voice emerge from the individual standing inside the doorway. Yes, he recalled her sweet voice from a decade or so ago. Nothing about her had changed much other than a grayer head of shoulder length hair and a face with wrinkles that had deepened. She was the same sweet lady he remembered as a child.

Malcolm finally managed to ask, "Are you okay?" He saw the confused look on the lady's face as she pondered his question. Stammering, Malcolm added, "I mean, I know you probably don't remember me, but I just stopped by to see if you were okay... I mean, because no one has seen you at the market lately."

"I remember you, Malcolm," she replied. "I've been expecting you." Her words shot through Malcolm's brain for

further processing. It is amazing that she remembers me after all these years. Why on earth would she be expecting me to show up on her doorstep today?

---

**“Within these walls were a lifetime of stories - hopes and dreams mixed with memories of tragedy and joy.”**

---

"Won't you come in?" the lady kindly asked Malcolm. After a moment of hesitation, Malcolm stepped across the threshold of the cottage door. Mentally, he drank in the sight of the house's antiquities. Contained and stored within these walls were a lifetime of stories - hopes and dreams mixed with memories of tragedy and joy. All of this was palpably present as Malcolm surveyed the faded photographs and paintings on her walls. He noted the stacks of old books, papers, and letters piled high on a walnut desk in the living room corner. In an opposite corner, sat an ancient-looking black sewing machine with gold lettering written on its side. Surrounding the machine were piles of fabric and clothing. The air in the house had the musty odor of age. The odor was not overly offensive, but it smelled like a combination of old wood, stale urine, ancient papers, and decaying vegetation.

Malcolm continued to be preoccupied with examining the house as the lady asked if he wanted something to drink. "Oh sure," he responded. The lady disappeared from Malcolm's view into the adjacent kitchen to apparently get him the drink. They each raised their respective voices to continue their conversation.

From the kitchen, Malcolm heard the lady's voice over what sounded like cans or pans banging beneath a cabinet. "You said that you wanted to know if I was okay. What made you stop by after all of these years to check on me, Malcolm?"

He was uncertain as to whether he should be evasive

What tomorrow has in store... (Continued)

---

or truthful about the reason for his visit. He thought to himself, “She will think I’m crazy. The truth might even frighten her to death.”

After some thought, Malcolm finally summoned the courage to tell her about his dream. He shared with her the graphic details of the tragedy he witnessed in his nightmare. “I just could not get the thought of that dream out of my head all day. So, I just had to stop by to check on you.” As Malcolm listened for her reply, something outside the living room window caught his attention. Through the thin linen drapes, he could see down the hill into the town. There, at the outskirts of town, Malcolm could see the bedroom window of his house where earlier that morning he had been looking up at the little house in which he now stood. He recalled the nightmarish horror of seeing the cottage engulfed in flames.

Malcolm no longer heard noises emitting from the kitchen. Still staring out the cottage window, he heard the lady reply in a raised voice. “That was very kind of you Malcolm to stop by today and check on an old lady.” The slight giggle that followed her comment brought a smile to Malcolm’s concerned face.

As Malcolm continued to reflect upon his twilight dream, he recalled the sadness he felt knowing the old lady had perished in the flames alone. As he continued to look into the distance at his bedroom window. Malcolm cleared his throat and spoke loudly, “Why were you expecting me today?”

Suddenly, a new aroma permeated the musty odor of the cottage. Malcolm felt the moisture of liquid seeping through the clothes on his back. It was as if time stood still. All his senses became intense and focused. He recognized that smell, it was kerosene. Had the lady spilled some kerosene in the kitchen? As he turned away from the window to look toward the kitchen, the lady, standing about three feet away from him, blocked his view. Just as she splashed fluid onto his chest, he saw the metal container in her left hand - the container holding the kerosene.

Stunned, Malcolm recoiled backward toward the window. With the palm of his right hand, he felt the coolness of the glass in the window pressing against him. Unable to step back any further, Malcolm was now about four feet away when he saw the lady strike a wooden stemmed match and hold it in front of her. It illuminated the dim room. Her lime colored eyes reflected the flickering yellow, orange, red match light. Just as she dropped her flaming match on the kerosene-covered floor, she spoke one last time. “I didn’t die alone in the house fire, Malcolm. I don’t know how you saw into my future, but now my past and your future are here in the present.”



---

**“The ONLY genuine expert opinion of the future is one given by someone who has been to the future and returned to the present to reveal their personal experience of what tomorrow has in store.”**

---

What tomorrow has in store... (Continued)

---

If a prophet foretelling your future knocked on your door, would you let them in? Most of us would think they were crazy and demand they go away. However, we consistently seek knowledge about the future everyday through statistical analysis, scientific forecasts, advice columns, social media, gossip, horoscope predictions, expert opinion givers, and self-proclaimed modern-day prophets who have never been to the future. Our biblical, historical, and fictional literature offers us numerous stories of people who somehow have defied the linear march of time by accurately glimpsing into the future. For some, their heralded ability to see beyond the present ultimately resulted in significant societal changes. Most view these future tellers as flawed, eccentric misfits during their season of life on this earth.

So, how is it that throughout the ages these social misfits somehow see through the conventional wisdom of their era to dream about the future in unconventional ways? In 1510, Leonardo Da Vinci, a self-educated artist and sculptor, correctly described the physiology of how blood flows through the human aortic heart valve ~ 450 years before it was scientifically confirmed in the 1960s. How did Isaac Newton, a 17<sup>th</sup> century farmer's son, watch apples fall from trees to the ground and subsequently dream up the laws of motion and universal gravity (there is no evidence that any of the apples hit him in the head)? How did a couple of high school-educated brothers, Orville and Wilbur Wright, from my hometown of Dayton, OH, without benefit of any formal aeronautical training, design and successfully fly the first heavier-than-air plane in 1903? They did so without the financial support of private investment firms, the encouragement of the U.S. government, or the direct input of visionaries who tried before them. How could a young, unknown patent office worker, Albert Einstein, come up with "the world's most famous equation"  $E=mc^2$  without divine intervention? In the 1960s, visionary Rachel Carson authored the landmark book, "Silent Spring" igniting a world environmental movement. While in the same timeframe, a Baptist minister from Atlanta, GA, dreamed of creating a civil rights movement fueled by a commitment to peace and unity.

I was a teenager when I experienced the actual dream depicted in the introductory paragraphs of this chapter. It haunted me for weeks. Even as I wrote the details of my

dream for this chapter, I could still feel a residual element of uneasiness lingering in my soul.

Reality check: I never knew an old lady with lime-green eyes, and I never lived in a village below a green and white cottage on a hill. I certainly never went up in flames in a house fire. The closest I ever came to a house fire was my mother telling me about how the family rooming house (where we lived prior to moving into my childhood home on Williams Street) caught fire when I was a toddler. She shared her story of how, while escaping the fire, she fell in the snow with me in her arms. My mother saved both of our lives, in a literal sense, that night. Had it not been for her actions on that fateful night, I might have perished alone in that huge green and white rooming house.

---

**“People within a community perpetuate a “common unity” of thoughts, experiences, ideas, dreams, or ambitions as a method of preserving the collective memories of their existence on earth.”**

---

The quote for this chapter appeared from out of nowhere many years after my twilight dream. I suspect a lifetime of well-meaning individuals attempting to provide me with sage advice about what my future had in store may have prompted it. Granted, much advice handed down from generation to generation is to provide the younger generation with objective guidance regarding what life obstacles to avoid. This practice of using known social history to forecast probable future outcomes provides our youth with an opportunity to avoid making the same mistakes of earlier societies or their parental guardians. Even in the most primitive societies there is always an elder charged with recording the history of their community. In other words, people within a community perpetuate a “common unity” of thoughts, experiences, ideas, dreams, or ambitions as a method of preserving the collective memories of their existence on earth. We pass on common unifying principles to offspring in hopes of insuring the survival of their culture.

What tomorrow has in store... (Continued)

We typically rely on these preserved historical chronologies to predict future outcomes. These past and recent experiential events provide society with credible, predictive evidence on how the future is likely to evolve. This pattern of using the past to predict the future is sufficient except in the rare instance when, through an apparent gift of divine providence, bestowed visionary knowledge gives a member of the community the ability to warn us of a need to depart from conventional wisdom. These geniuses or prophets of events to come provide us with a glimpse into a yet-to-be confirmed future.

In its most basic form, proven information gleaned from past or recent events is the basis for “good advice.” Experiences, not yet experienced, can’t be used to predict how to conduct our life in the present. This would seem to be common sense, but how often do we find ourselves making critical life decisions in the present based on what we plan will occur in the future? When X happens, I will do Y, and that will equal my desired outcome (XY). In this life algebra, the unknown variable X is the future. How many times have you heard someone state, “When I meet the right man/woman things will be better, but until then I don’t need to worry about saving money.” You could replace “meet the right man/woman” or “saving money” with thousands of other inserted phrases. We don’t know what we don’t know about the future, but many of us act as if we have full knowledge of expected events of tomorrows yet to come.

In our modern age, we no longer rely exclusively on a closed, unified community of people to guide our future life experiences. We can obtain random advice from multiple external sources. Why, in fact, with the flip of a remote control, we can select the source of the advice we want to saturate our consciousness. With a universe of choices, it becomes increasingly difficult to know what advice to use confidently to navigate life’s anticipated obstacles.

One rule of thumb I have provided to my children - always hit the mental pause button when someone attempts to provide you with sage advice. While on pause, ask yourself three questions: 1.) Why does this person want you to believe their advice? 2.) Is this advice based on verifiable past

or present experiences? 3.) Will the individual giving the advice receive any personal gain by you acting upon their advice? If the advice is based on the possibility of future events (e.g., if horse #7 wins the race you will become rich), be suspect. Like supplying nutritious food, only dispense advice if it improves the overall vitality of the consumer.

Homework Assignment: So much of our 24/7 news cycle consists of predictions of future outcomes provided by “expert commentators.” Let’s verify how precise our experts are at glimpsing into the future. Go to your local library or the archived internet files of your favorite newspaper, radio/television station, or social media site. Find a few expert opinion feeds from one year ago. Verify the precision of the media site in predicting the future we now live in. If your homework identifies a media site that accurately scores greater than 70% in their predictions, this is a reliable source of factual news.

Could you imagine a news channel with the tag line: “We don’t let facts get in the way of the reality we want you to believe?” Now that would be truth in advertising. Intentionally disguised as a legitimate source for information, entertainment news programming is contaminated with subliminal, unproven opinions, hearsay, political spin, and embellishments for ratings and it is frequently produced by persons with clandestine personal agendas.

On the other end of the information spectrum are those who some would classify as eccentric reporters of future events. Unlike their media counterparts, these individuals are difficult to identify because they seldom reveal themselves to their respective societies. These divine prophets of the future humbly reside in ordinary social situations. Because of their unrelenting curiosity about the world surrounding them, they retrieve brief glimpses of how the future is likely to unfold. Where others only see ordinary, daily occurrences, these social outliers simply make extraordinary

What tomorrow has in store...(Continued)

observations of existing social systems. These glimpses into the future can be sparked in the spirits of individuals who, because of personal or social challenges, lead society to a better future out of the necessity to change the status quo because we can no longer do the same old thing. A sudden, vivid dream of how life can improve ignites prophetic insights that become an awakened reality. There are no mortal experts on what precisely will occur in the near or distant future.

Life is certainly uncertain. Therefore, we each should dare to be more like those unconventional historical figures who provided humanity with a glimpse of things to come through the trifocal lens of their past, present, and future focused observations. What these contemporary prophets of change and pioneers of hope had in common was their ability to see an incomprehensible future just beyond the horizon of their era's conventional wisdom. No visionary who has seen the future could comfortably return to the present with a desire to rely only on the once unquestioned knowledge of the past. This discomfort is precisely what makes them appear to be misfits among their contemporaries.

Unlike Malcolm, not everyone who glimpses into the future falls victim to tragedy. He knocked on the old lady's green wooden door expecting to intervene, changing her future by sharing the details of his dream. Instead, he became an unsuspecting participant in her present day activity of destroying herself and all her memories. The future he had foreseen remained unchanged. Malcolm had faith in his ability to change someone else's future using unverified future facts presented to him in a vivid dream. If he had only also taken the time to focus his present observations on the weeds in the garden, the odor of rotten food in the house, the piles of unfinished clothing, or her absence from the market place. These observations would have provided him with additional important intuitive glimpses into the future regarding the desperate state of the lady who had occupied the once immaculate little cottage. Had he been less preoccupied recalling the past events of his twilight dream while looking out the window at his own house back down the hill, he might have remained present in the moment. Being present in the moment could have created a different future for both he and the old lady with the lime-green eyes.

Dreams are a byproduct of our brain's neurotransmitter regulation process. These functions collide with random collections of subconscious experiences activating and deactivating synaptic receptors within our cognitive command center during the rapid eye movement portion of our sleep cycles. In a rare instance, something erupts from this neurological chaos when a new idea for a grander future invades our conscious mind. It can make you sit straight up in bed with your biological "fight or flight" protocols sub-consciously awakened, only to discover you are safe from harm. During that early morn-ing hour, nothing has been disturbed in the room except possibly your future.

---

**“The future is not promised, nor is it something to be feared.  
Do not be disturbed from your slumber by the arrival of the future.  
Be joyful for yet another day of life.  
Be grateful for the opportunity to increase your experiential knowledge.  
Do not fear the future. Have faith in the many blessings waiting there for you.”**

---