

# Thanatology – NEW Interview with Cole Imperi + Tips for Going Through It Ologies Podcast August 16, 2022

Oh hey, it's your neighbor who doesn't realize that you can hear him talking to his plants... his beautiful, sweet, strong plants who are growing so fast, Alie Ward, back with a full-lengther. This was supposed to be a mini... Surprise! To me and to you, it's a full-lengther. First off, start with the Thanatology Encore about death and dying that we just posted last week. There's a link in the show notes because this guest is a life changer, she is a death changer, and that encore episode has all the info you need to start, plus a bunch of 2022 updates and other goodies.

And also, just thank you everyone for the sweet notes and the sweet reviews. I always read them, every single week, like this one from SteffniG who wrote:

*Alie, you're not alone. After hearing you mention you lost your father very recently, I felt compelled to reach out and give you a long-distance hug from here on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. I lost my father three years ago and so I can understand the grief and sadness you must be experiencing. I'm so sorry for all the new moments you now live without being able to share with him. But please take heart, he will always be within you and please keep that head up and trust that soon things will get easier, no matter how dark it seems. My heart is with you and you're not alone.*

Thank you, SteffniG. So, please dear listener, know that you're not alone either... I'm in it, SteffniG is in it, we're all going to be in it at one point, so you're never alone with this stuff.

But okay, this follow-up to Thanatology. A little background... After convincing Cole to meet me in a hotel, at night, on a weeknight too, in 2017, we parted ways, but we kept in touch and now she and her husband Victor, and their two beagles live in LA, we see each other very often and it is wonderful. It's also particularly wonderful if you're going through one of the hardest times of your life.

So, the day that my dad passed away, we happened to be back in LA for a few days. We had been up north for months at his bedside, through brain surgeries, through hospice, and he seemed like he was getting a little stronger, his hospice nurse said he might hang on for a few more months. So, we went back down to LA for a few days to just reset and to gather some things, and we were about to have dinner with some really dear friends and officiate their marriage on paper for health insurance reasons. Jarrett was going to officiate over dinner and then I got the call from my sister, Celeste. It was really surreal, it's a moment I will never be able to forget. I just started hysterically crying, as one does, and then we canceled the wedding dinner, as one does, they were very understanding.

But earlier that day, Jarrett and I had rented a motorcycle to ride across town to the dinner because we thought, maybe it'll be a little fun. So, right after I found out that my dad passed, I figured he would love that vicariousness, as he always used to say. So, between fits of bawling, I got on the back of this motorcycle that we rented, and we drove around Griffith Park as the sun started to set, just weeping into Jarrett's back. And Cole and Victor came over, they brought dinner, and we ate outside as the sky turned orange and purple, and I immediately went to take a picture to send my dad... Hmm, the first of many times that's happened since.

But between his passing and his funeral, I rushed up north to see my family, helped with the funeral planning and all the business that one has to attend to. And then I came back down to LA for a couple days before the funeral and Cole and Victor and Jarrett and I played some pickleball and got some hot dogs and some wine and then we just pulled up an LA street corner to catch up since the last episode. So, this was recorded on a street corner after my dad had passed away but before the funeral. And it's just an updated interview with Cole, talking a lot about grief and the process, what she's been up to. And after the break is a collection of tips that you, and Cole, and books have given me that I've used and that are really helping. So, here is an update with author, teacher, founder of the School of American Thanatology, dear friend and thanatologist, Cole Imperi.

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**Alie:** Cole Imperi, let's see your levels.

**Cole:** Testing.

**Alie:** I know a little bit better how to use my own recording device, and yeah, the cords don't cost \$4 each. Okay, Cole Imperi, pronouns?

**Cole:** She/her.

**Alie:** Wonderful.

**Cole:** Thank you.

**Alie:** I'm Alie Ward, I host a podcast called *Ologies*. Cole, here we are! We're on a street corner in northeast Los Angeles, where you now live.

**Cole:** Yes, that's my home now.

**Alie:** When did you move?

**Cole:** I arrived March 3rd [*Alie squeals*] and I found that I loved it.

**Alie:** And now you live in LA, like two or three miles away from me.

**Cole:** Yes.

**Alie:** Five years... four-and-a-half years after we recorded the initial episode in a Hampton Inn.

**Cole:** In Cincinnati, Ohio. [*both laugh*]

**Alie:** Tell me what else has been going on with you.

**Cole:** Well, let's see. Since I first met you in 2017, shortly thereafter I got a fellowship, the Curtis Gates Lloyd Fellowship through the Lloyd Library and I was researching where plants intersect with death. And then I ended up writing some curriculum about thanatology for several colleges. And then the pandemic hit, and I ended up starting a school called the School of American Thanatology, and I now have students in 21 countries across 12 time zones that are all people from let's see... 18 is the youngest, and my oldest student is 78.

**Alie:** Oh wow!

**Cole:** Just interested in death, dying, grief, and loss, globally. So, it's like, such a gift. And then I got a book deal.

**Alie:** Hell yeah!

**Cole:** And I'm trying to finish my first book. It's called *A Guide to Your Grief*, and it's for 10 to 14-year-olds, however, adult grieving brains, this will be good for as well.

**Aside:** She's also starting to write that book on shadow loss that I mentioned in the updated encore and she's repped by WME in case you're a publisher and want to get in line to give her a book deal. And she just finished writing her first book, *A Guide to Your Grief*, via Kids Can Press and it's not out yet, but I got a chance to peer-review it and it is great. She literally just finished it a few days ago. So, when can we get our grubby mitts on it in a bookstore?

**Cole:** I think next year or the year after, I don't know. *[laughs]* I should know, but I don't.

**Alie:** Watch this space.

**Cole:** Yeah. And then there's a show on Netflix called *The Future Of* which just came out and I'm in the episode called, "Life After Death." And then I'm just living in LA, I'm just living the LA life. Moved from Kentucky to Los Angeles; it's quite a difference.

**Alie:** Just upending your whole life for the better and playing a lot of pickleball. We just played.

**Cole:** Yes. Well actually, I want to say this, your wedding was really the actual catalyst that made this happen because I had never been to LA, really, before your wedding and I had prejudices about it. *[Alie laughs]* I envisioned just this dirty, concrete-laden, urban place and it's just such a beautiful city. So, it was within a few weeks after we got home from your wedding, we were like, "Oh I think we need to move." And then less than a year later we did it.

**Alie:** I remember you were like, "Can I call you? I have some news for you." And I was like, yeah, what's up? And this was last August, you're like, "You know, Victor and I really reflected on our lives after your wedding" and I was like, "If you fucking people get divorced, I will kill you both *[Cole laughs]* and make you hang out in the afterlife together." And you were like, "And we've decided to move to LA." It was such a bait and switch of the best variety. I was like, "*[huge gasp]* Did we ruin something?" And then I was like, "Nooo, this is the best!"

And now, so you moved here March 3rd, I found out March 8th that my dad's cancer had spread to his lungs and later his brain. So, you moved here just in time to see me through the worst mental health crisis of my life.

**Cole:** So, in a way, it was just great timing. Sometimes it works out.

**Alie:** It was good timing for me, I don't know if it's great timing for you. But you've been here a ton for me, and I've mentioned this in the secrets at the ends of the episodes, but you've sent me books, you have sent me daisy chains.

**Aside:** So, daisy chains are little beaded necklaces that she makes in honor of the daisy, which is a thanobotanical symbol of grief and I've been wearing it for months.

**Alie:** You've checked in with me and I feel very, very lucky that I've had someone, one of the best people on Earth for this, literally, at my side. The day that my dad died you came over with Victor and fried chicken. Jarrett explained to me later that you guys were talking about how grieving people need salt and fat and I was like, "How do they know that?!"

**Cole:** *[laughs]* Listen, when you're grieving, your body is very depleted. You need salt.

**Alie:** Yeah, we ate fried chicken and watched the sunset. And I went to take a picture to send to my dad, forgetting that he had died that day, which is apparently common. How common is that? When you lose someone to think of like, "Oh, I've got to tell them this. I've got to text them this."?

**Cole:** I don't think it necessarily ever completely goes away. Because you're going to continue to see stuff and you're going to continue to be like, "Oh my god, my dad, he would love to see this." You'll get better at being like, he *would* love to see this, but I mean, you never... when someone dies, the relationship doesn't stop. You're going to continue to have a relationship with your dad.

**Alie:** What does that mean exactly? Because someone kind of warned me, not warned me of that, but like in a good way, told me that the anticipatory grief can be worse than the grief-grief if it's prolonged illness, and that your relationship will continue to change and evolve. I'm only a week out so I'm like, what the fuck does that mean?

**Cole:** Yeah. So, if you want the name of the scientific theory, it's called the Continuing Bonds Theory. And then just colloquially, when people say your relationship continues, it's because you, yourself, Alie, you're going to continue to develop and grow and have new experiences, and all of those new experiences you have will be informed to some degree, some more than others, based off of your dad. Even thinking about hitting age milestones... like, when your dad turned 60, you probably remember that. One day you're going to turn 60 [*two knocks, "Knock on wood."*] and you're going to remember when your dad turned 60 and you're going to be approaching that milestone and your memory of him, from the perspective of being the same age as him, which you cannot do now. So, that's a really simple way of putting it.

Also, as time goes by, you're going to find more depth and meaning to a lot of the experiences you've had with your dad and that can be a wonderful joy, it can be a bittersweet joy. And sometimes, those moments of discovery result in crying because it's overwhelming and it's beautiful. But that's kind of what people mean and it's a really good question to ask people too. It's really important to check in on your friends and to not be afraid to ask, "How is your grief?" I like to phrase it like, "How is your grief today?" Instead of being like, "You've had a dead dad for a week now, how are you?" [*Alie laughs*] Do you know what I mean? You can say it in a nicer way! [*laughs*] But maybe for some people, that's a better way to ask.

**Aside:** I have to say, so many of you listeners, and friends, and family have just been wonderfully supportive. But the funniest response I got to this just tremendous loss in my life was this text that just said, "I heard your dad died?!" And it was just something about the use of the interrobang at the end of it, like, "I heard your dad died?!" [*laughs*] It's just like, so inappropriate and it made me laugh so hard. And my friend for like 30 years, Tully, did not intend that to be comedy even though he's very funny, but it was just so him to be like, "Heard your dad died?!" And I just laughed so hard. So, I don't know, is there a stage of grief where things suck so bad that it's almost funny? Oh, speaking of...

**Alie:** What about the stages of grief? Because it was Elizabeth Kübler-Ross right, who started that theory but, from what I understand it's not linear, like, "you go through one and then you get to two, and then you get..." It's all over the place, right?

**Cole:** Yeah, I'm so glad you asked about that. So, I serve on the Advisory Council for the Elizabeth Kübler-Ross Foundation which is in multiple countries around the world. So, Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, she was like the original American thanatologist although she was Swiss. Her Stages of Dying Theory, she actually said herself that it was written about people who were dying, the dying, and their experience as they coped with that. It was *not* written about grievers, you know, people who are going to continue to live.

And it's the most commonly miscited theory and I, okay... let me tell you. One of my worst sides comes out when I see people post on Instagram, "The stages of grief by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross are a joke." I'm like, "NOOO!!! She didn't say that! [*Alie laughs*] They're not linear! These five things happen!" And I just... that's when I have to put the phone down, I'm like, do not be this person that is like, commenting on randos.

But yeah, so that theory, the five stages, you encounter all of those and they're not linear, they're not one after the other, which you've probably experienced that. You've probably had some days where you're like, "Oh yeah, this is acceptance," but then the next day you're like, "There has been nothing accepted."

**Alie:** Yeah, there has been anger, there has been sadness. And I did like it better when I thought they were stacked up and I'd just knock 'em down, you know? Be like, sweet. But knowing that they'll just erupt like in fissures of just hot lava of not-great emotions is terrifying and, you know... You've given me so much advice going through this that I cannot imagine not having gotten. Is there anything that is, like, a kit of advice you would want to give people to be better prepared for when the death tsunami hits?

**Cole:** Yeah. So, I think the first thing I always like to tell people and I say it because I mean it, is that you have everything that you need inside of you, you have it. Humans have been saying goodbye to loved ones since day one. This is, to some extent, built into all of us.

Sometimes when we get the news that someone we love is going to die or that we ourselves are going to die, we can sometimes react by being like, "I'm going to educate my way out of this, out of the feelings. I'm going to read every book and do all this." And it's important to have the experience, there's experience and education. You've got to read some things, you've got to learn some things, but you also have to experience it, and that's really important too. And while loss is one of the most difficult things to being a human, it's also one of the most important things to really experience.

After a loss, a flourish always follows a falter. And so many times, when we lose someone, or when you experience a shadow loss, which is the death of *something* not *someone*, we falter in life; you miss deadlines, you have to cancel stuff, you're not able to nurture friendships, you just feel very ripped out of your own life and like you don't even have a say. And so, we falter. It's normal to feel really worried about, "How am I going to get back into my life? Stuff is gone, I've missed opportunities." But a flourish always follows a falter, it just takes time. And that is a human process. Because that's another thing when you're going through this, there are days where you're just like, "Is it ever going to get better? Am I going to really get out of this? Am I going to have a day where I don't think about it?" Those are rough.

**Alie:** And there are days, or moments, or hours, or whatever where I'm like, "I'm doing okay. I'm doing surprisingly okay." For example, right now, I'm not crying. That's amazing. I'm not picturing the most terrible moments of hospice, you know? And I'm like, "Is this okay that I'm okay? Is this okay denial or numbness, or is this acceptance?" If I'm okay, is that a dishonor to the person I loved so much, if I'm doing all right, if I'm handling it okay? And also, I'm like, if I'm handling it okay today, does that mean tomorrow is going to be a shitshow and I'm going to break down sobbing and want to throw my phone out the window of a moving car, you know?

**Cole:** This is a great segue to the second most [*Alie laughs*] misrepresented, mis-said, misexplained aspect of grief. So, grief is not an emotion.

**Alie:** What? Really?!

**Cole:** No! You cannot feel grief. You are grieving. Grieving is a response to loss and that response is made of symptoms in six different categories. Everybody favors certain categories more than others, and then every time you experience a loss, you will favor those categories differently. Those categories are spiritual, social, physical, cognitive, behavioral, and... I can't think about it, hold on. This is in my book that I, like, just wrote [*laughs*] so I just cited everything...

**Alie:** This is where asides come in.

**Aside:** I looked this up in the review copy of her book that I got, and she writes, "Grief is not a feeling, it's a process. The symptoms of grief response can be grouped into six categories: cognitive, behavioral, emotional, physical, social, and spiritual." So, we were missing... emotional. Just so hilariously hidden in plain sight, of course, emotional.

**Cole:** Anyway. So, physical symptoms: dry lips that you just cannot manage or get...

**Alie:** [*to Jarrett*] Jarrett, she said dry lips are part of grief!

**Cole:** Yes! That can be a physical manifestation.

**Alie:** I've been asking this poor man for lip balm hourly and he's like, "I don't have any in my fanny pack."

**Cole:** Also, bloating and just abdominal stuff. And it's totally possible for... this is why some people just don't cry. This is also a source of a lot of family conflict because I've seen siblings where two of the three siblings are crying and one is not and the other two siblings gang up on the sibling that's not crying and they're like, "Didn't you love Mom? Why are you not crying?" Oh, emotional! That's the other category.

**Alie:** Oh! There you go.

**Cole:** Duh. So emotional, not everyone is emotional in their grief response, sometimes people are more behavioral or cognitive, like forgetting things or, like, we just played pickleball and you could have missed a shot, maybe it's because of alterations in your cognitive state right now... because you're frickin' grieving.

**Alie:** Sure, I played worse than last time so...

**Cole:** But yeah, so that's what grief actually is. And I think it can be really helpful to know that it's not just an emotion, it's a whole-body experience and that's why it can be really overwhelming to go through, because everything can be affected. But that's normal. It's a response to loss and it is as unique as your own thumbprint, and you'll never have the same grief. In the future when you lose people, it will not probably look exactly like how it is today because you'll be a different person in the future.

**Alie:** Yeah, oof! What about stifling it? It always comes out a different crack, right?

**Cole:** Mm-hm, yeah.

**Alie:** So, just roll with it?

**Cole:** This is like my favorite advice too, to keep your grief moving. Every day it'll need something different. Some days you need to take it for a walk, some days you need to take it for a nice bath, some days you need to take it out to the hillside to cry and look at the sunset, sometimes you need to take it out for dinner with friends. And a good way that the grieving brain, I think can understand – this is not scientific, this is just me – is to ask yourself, what

does my grief need today? What can I do with my grief today? Because you want to keep it moving. I think a good example is like, if you... Do you compost stuff or save food scraps?

**Alie:** I have compost before. I've kept a moldy canister on my counter, yes.

**Cole:** Yeah! So, if you leave stuff in there and it doesn't get moved, it will rot and it will not be good. And that's a lot like grief, you've got to keep it moving, you've got to give it air, you've got to give it sunlight, you've got to take it for some walks and keep it cooking. Otherwise, it won't transform so that you can flourish again in the future.

The other thing that might be helpful is, clinically, if you're a grief counselor or a therapist, how do we assess if somebody may need additional intervention? Kind of the loose rule of thumb, excluding things like self-harm is, anything kind of within the first 6 months after a major loss, a big death or a shadow loss, is normal, basically. It's fair game. It's when your life is so significantly impacted that you cannot live your life after that 6-month period, that might be when some additional interventive strategies might make sense. But kind of, if it's within 6 months, you're not broken, you're just grieving.

**Alie:** You're just going to be a little bit of a shitshow.

**Cole:** Yeah, messy.

**Alie:** Yeah. What about... we talked about this earlier, what about the anger component? That's the stage or the facet of grief that freaks me out the most.

**Aside:** So, a friend of mine was in the middle of a kitchen remodel when she learned that she lost her dad, rather suddenly, and she flew home to be with family and I remember her saying weeks later back in LA, she had a meltdown over the width of a cabinet and realized later that that was just grief coming out sideways. I experienced this myself when my dad was still alive. A few things that should have just rolled right off me felt devastating and infuriating and I just had to leave and cool down... just confounded by my own brain. I just wanted to exile myself.

**Alie:** How do you deal with that one? Because that can be destructive, you know?

**Cole:** Yeah. So, anger is helpful in that it lets you know when there's a problem. So, anytime that you have an eruption, that's time to be like, "Woah, what is really wrong?" Sometimes it can be helpful to ask, is it my inner child that's upset or is it my adult self that's upset? Because sometimes with loss... for example, when your dad is dying, you're saying goodbye to your 8-year-old self's Daddy at the same time as your adult self. And so, sometimes you can have little funny triggers that show up. Also, because you end up being around family and stuff at end of life in ways that maybe you haven't been in a really long time. And it's just... triggerfest.

The other thing with anger that I'll say that relates more specifically to people who have been socialized as women, we're often taught that anger is not feminine, that anger is not okay if you've been socialized this way. Often, it is harder for women to deal with anger than it is for men when it comes to anger in general, but with grief, because it's like being socialized that it's something to be ashamed of, that it's not a good quality to have. But it is a quality we all have, and it speaks up when we need help.

**Alie:** [*engine growls*] Ooo, Harley, got a little wave... What about when supporting someone who is going through this... So, I lost my dad, my mom lost her husband, Jarrett lost someone who has been in his life for years, but also, his wife lost her dad. When it comes to knowing

someone who is going through this, either anticipatory grief or straight-up grief, what are some good ways to support them?

**Cole:** That's a great question and it can also be kind of tricky. When you're in the role of supporting, there's always boundaries to be aware of and you don't want to overstep. I thought about this with you because you have a big friend network here and people that have known you longer than I certainly have, and I had an awareness around, is this too much? I don't want to be this freak from Kentucky that's like, "Oh my god, is somebody dying? This is my time to shine." *[Alie laughs]* Do you know what I mean? But I'm hyperaware of that just in general, I think I did okay.

**Alie:** You were amazing.

**Cole:** I think I maybe didn't overstep.

**Alie:** That's hilarious.

**Cole:** But just having that awareness around your closeness to the griever, to the situation, is just a good thing to check on yourself with. I think one of the easiest things for people to do is to just be willing to send a text message. But I think it's good to send a text that says, "You don't need to respond, but I just want to let you know that I'm thinking of you." That kind of thing, I think that most often is received well. There are certainly people that would be like, "That sounds like my nightmare," but you know your friends and your family best.

**Aside:** Cole shared some stats from Penn State professor, sociologist, and demographer Dr. Ashton Verdery.

**Cole:** He and his team did some research with losses from COVID-19 specifically, big deaths. And they found that for every death from COVID-19, there are nine immediate grievers to that one COVID death. So, if there's been a million deaths by COVID, then there's 9 million people actively grieving those deaths.

**Alie:** And that's just in the US.

**Cole:** That's just in the US and that doesn't include shadow losses. Do you know people have... You know, with COVID, you've lost jobs, you've lost your ability to work anymore, there's been millions more shadow losses than big deaths because of COVID. So, I think a way that I now live my life, having spent so much of it in thanatology, is I really just try to treat everybody like they're grieving. Even when I go to the coffee shop, my assumption is that they're grieving, and I think that also helps you navigate family situations where you discover just how different you are. It's really hard to not be loving to someone that's grieving even if you are very much not the same person. And I think that's just kind of good advice for anybody. Because if you're treating everyone like they're grieving, you're going to be acting from your own best self.

**Aside:** So, my dad was put on hospice on a rainy Friday afternoon in late May and it was one of the worst days of my life. My sister Janelle had to break the news that his oncologist had called it and the medical warfare in his body was to stop, cease fire, and the farewell was to commence. And the next morning, you know, as Jarrett and I rushed around the house just weeping and packing our bags to make the seven-hour drive to be bedside with my family, I heard a knock at the door, and it was Cole and Victor.

They had arrived with a little package before we got on the road, some handmade daisy chain necklaces, some quick hugs and advice, and a dozen black and lilac buttons that Cole had designed that say: I'm grieving. Be kind. Be gentle. And as I record this three months



later, I have that button on a belt loop of my pants, I wear it all the time still. And Cole is right, it's a good angle to approach any interaction during these very weird times, to be honest.

**Alie:** Any other advice you'd give to someone who is about to go through this, or is anticipating a big loss, or has been through one?

**Cole:** Yeah, for anyone who is about to embark on this or even just has at some point, one of the things we know from research is that you have better outcomes for yourself, because you've got to take care of yourself, because when you take care of yourself, you're taking care of everyone around you. You're less likely to have complications with your grieving process if you have something in your life that is meaningful to you, and that you know what that is. For some people it's maybe the ritual of making really good coffee every morning, the sounds and... that's your church, so to speak. For other people it is religion, that's meaningful for them. But a lot of people, especially in the United States, and as we've seen a decrease in religiosity, a lot of people don't have things that they're like, "This is where I find meaning."

**Aside:** So where do we find meaning? A lot of places, starting outside.

**Cole:** Plants are a good place to find that because plants are not offensive. Any given plant is not attached to a specific religion or a specific political group so it has this wonderful opportunity to be something that you can find meaning in that can maybe support and carry you through.

Whatever it is, I think identifying what is meaningful to you about life, where do you find meaning, where do you find connection, where do you find purpose? That's what you need to hold onto in some way as best you can through the grieving process, because it will be there for you on the other side. It's easier said than done.

**Aside:** Cole started making these daisy chain necklaces after her beloved companion, a dwarf beagle named Ruby, passed away at the age of 16. With each necklace, she includes a sheet of paper about them, and in it she writes:

*Ruby, my beloved beagle, was like my child. She was by my side for 16 years. The daisy became a meaningful symbol as I navigated my life after loss. Anyone who loses a pet can understand how hard that loss can be. Who else shares our bed, the couch, bathroom time, meals? The absence of a pet is often felt more strongly than the absence of a person because we often share more physical space with a pet throughout each day and week than we do with most of the humans in our lives. As I moved through life after loss, these daisy chains allowed me to connect with grief and keep my grief moving. No matter your loss, I hope the daisy becomes meaningful for you too. Daisies are sturdy and they remind us that so too are we.*

And eventually, Cole was able to grieve Ruby and was ready to welcome a new beagle in her life and she got a call that there happened to be one available through a beagle rescue, which is pretty rare, and it happened to be another dwarf beagle, and the name happened to be... Daisy. I'll just let you bawl your face off about that, I'll let myself bawl my face off about that. [sniffles] When she told me that I was like, "Ahh nothing is real, everything is a simulation, it's beautiful."

Okay, so Cole had let people in her life and online know that Ruby had passed and invited anyone who wanted to light a candle to illuminate Ruby's path over the rainbow bridge. And

that sense of community really helped her a lot. She told me about it and then it really helped me too.

**Alie:** Having people who maybe knew you from afar, like you know... hashtag and light a candle for her, meant a lot.

**Cole:** Yes, it did.

**Alie:** Because of that and you giving me that advice as a way to carry me through it like, a critter pic for Grandpod... that first 48 hours seeing those and seeing how he was alive in the world and in people's minds...

**Cole:** How did that feel for you?

**Alie:** Amazing. Helped so much and I didn't feel so alone, and I knew that there were... I knew how meaningful his life was to so many people who he would never meet but how his ideas carry on. So, those are pieces of advice, the reason I wanted to do this minisode was these invaluable pieces of advice that I never would have gotten if I hadn't found you on social media and made you hang out with me in Cincinnati, but those things were really, really meaningful.

**Cole:** And that meaning knits you to your people, closer. You have these other connection points and that's also something that we see clinically helps people move through the process of grief, is when they have social support. And honestly, people can say no, but something as simple as those Instagram posts, that is medicine, that is grief medicine, it really truly is. I mean, it made all the difference for me when I lost my puppy dog and for you with your dad. So, that's just a nudge to anyone listening that you can do that, that's a way that you can support others, through this. Share the pictures, share the stories, take that time to do that because it's not a burden and it's really nice to see when you're sad.

**Alie:** I know, it helped so much, it keeps helping. And also, obviously, just the notion of giving yourself grace and giving others grace is... Knowing that I'm going to go into this and I'm not going to be outperforming myself, I'm not necessarily going to be writing a book during this time, my laundry is clean and unfolded on my couch right now and that is fine. But it's really... I think, hopefully I will come out the other side of this having some perspective on what's important in life, taking care of myself, enjoying life while I am on this side of the grass, as my dad would say.

So, any last pieces of advice or any books that you would recommend other than your own that we have to patiently wait for to be released?

**Cole:** I think the last thing I would just say is... you know what you need, you know what you need. You just have to sometimes listen a little harder. And you have everything that you need already.

**Alie:** Oof, I hope. I keep thinking of myself like a werewolf, [Cole laughs] lock it in a basement, but people are much more understanding than I thought.

**Cole:** M-hm! It's nice to see, isn't it? Because you're that way to other people.

**Alie:** I hope.

**Cole:** Sometimes grief, going through it, it shows you what you mean to other people, it shows you who is there for you. And that is also a really intense part of the experience, is seeing who shows up for you. And I mean... it's messy, it's a messy process. Perfect does not equal good

and you cannot strive for perfection because it's just messy, you can't control it and you never know what you're going to get.

**Alie:** And you can tell instantly who in your life has lost someone because they are the ones who are not afraid to send you a text being like, "This fucking sucks, but you're going to be okay." And there are people who have come out of the woodwork, where I'm like, "I would not expect you to be in my phone right now or in my DMs right now, or emailing me, or sending flowers." And the compassion I feel like you gain from it and the perspective you gain, if nothing else... I am excited to help other people who haven't been through this, come through it.

**Cole:** Yes, because you've been there now.

**Alie:** Yeah, that's something in my toolbelt I didn't have before and I feel like that's something... Oh, I was going to try and make this without crying but... *[voice breaks. Alie continues through her tears]* you know, that is a gift that my dad gave me, and his dying is... I'll be better at helping other people which is probably what he would have wanted.

**Cole:** It's true. And it can be really healing to be on the other side of this and helping somebody else through it.

**Alie:** I think so, I hope so. I've just got to clean myself up a little first. *[little chuckle]*

**Cole:** But you're not through it yet. We're not going to speed this up, you're going to take your time, be present.

**Alie:** I know, I know... I'm like, "I read a Wikipedia page, why am I crying still?" No, but I just thank you so much. You and Victor and Jarrett, we're all sitting here on the corner of Westdale and Avenue 46 in northeast LA. You three, this four, have been so helpful and yeah, there's just so many times when you guys have literally been there for me in my worst moments, so I'm really, really glad that I found you on Instagram and that I made you be friends with me. *[laughs]*

**Cole:** Well, I'm glad too and thank you for letting me be a part of your life and a part of your journey and being a part of this really *[Cole starts to cry]* big thing in your life.

**Alie:** I'm going to hug you.

**Cole:** It's a really special part of friendship... *[muffled voices as they hug]* I'm so sorry you lost your dad.

**Alie:** *[crying]* Shit happens. *[laughs]*

**Cole:** I would like to say thank you to all the Ologites because since that Thanatology episode aired in October of 2017, I, most days, get messages from listeners on my Instagram. To this day, I had two this morning from people who listened to the episode and either just want to tell me something or I don't know. And I do think I do a pretty good job of responding to most people, but I just want to say that I really appreciate that and I find meaning in that. I find meaning in that and it's certainly something I never foresaw. And now *Ologies* is one of the biggest, baddest podcasts in the freakin' universe. *[Alie laughs]*

**Alie:** Who knew that people would want to listen about lizard dicks and death?

**Cole:** Yup, they do. People are weird. People are weird. *[both laugh]*

**Alie:** I love you. Thank you for being here.

**Cole:** Thank you for having me.

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Cole Imperi. Just, if you want to take a minute to applaud... Be safe if you're driving but just... Cole Imperi. You can find her on social media at the links in the show notes, her website is linked as well. Google her, befriend her socially medially. Check out the school she founded, the School of American Thanatology which offers education in thanatology, and death work, and in thanobotany which is another term that she coined to describe the way that plants are used in death, and dying, and grieving. And a donation for this episode will go to them and you can learn more at AmericanThanatology.com which will be linked in the show notes. So, thank you to Cole and thank you to sponsors for allowing us to make that donation.

[Ad Break]

Okay, so for the second half of the episode, here is advice that I would give myself in the past, or you if you're afraid of someone dying, or going through it, or trying to support someone through it. I'm just going to try and do this all in one take, we're going to see how this goes. I have very, very bare-boned notes, we're just going to- okay, here we go. In no order at all...

First off, there's a thing called anticipatory grief I did not know about until I was in it, and I realized that I had been kind of experiencing it for a decade or so since my dad was diagnosed. But if you are scared of someone dying, if you are going through the process with someone, look up anticipatory grief. You'll be like, "Ohhh. Thaaat." And I will tell you, there were moments in the anticipatory grief phase that were worse than after my dad passed because I had to grapple with every single moment and how meaningful was it, and how much do I get up into my dad's space and smother him versus letting him just be at peace on his iPad. Also, the grief of seeing someone you love in a lot of pain and seeing them scared. Anyway, anticipatory grief, get into it.

I will also say that at the time that my dad was diagnosed with cancer, I remember I mourned and grieved that day as though that were his last, not knowing that he would have nine and a half years after his diagnosis, after a two-year prognosis. There were so many ups and downs, there's so many ups and downs with all of our lives. All of us just take each day, day by day, no matter what crisis is happening around you. Take each moment, moment by moment, you don't know what tomorrow is going to have, if you are having a good day, have a good day. You will confront each crisis as it comes up and just live in the moment, that's all that you can deal with.

Handkerchiefs not Kleenex, people. Kleenexes, you gotta throw them away, sometimes they rip, sometimes they leave white particles all over your mustache... handkerchiefs, heroes. Bandanas were my best friend; I always had a couple of clean ones around and you toss them in the wash. They're more absorbent, and they're more fun to honk your schnoz into. Handkerchiefs, not Kleenex. Kleenex, love you, you're definitely here for things that I want to mop up and throw away, but when you've got to sop up some tears and garden variety snot, handkerchiefs are great.

Grief counselors. Need one? Get one. I really do use the BetterHelp service that I advertise, and I got some solid advice and perspective. Grief counselors might be available through your work, through your health insurance, through your university, through community programs, and hospice often have bereavement and grief counseling for family members. So, look into it, super helpful.

If you can work remotely and someone is sick, ask people you work with, can you work remotely and be there? I am so lucky, so lucky, that this is my job because I was able to take my laptop and my editor, who is legally married to me, and go up and do this job from my sister's dining room table and from her garage. So lucky. If it's possible, the time that you spend with someone in hospice is the most valuable time I feel like you can spend with them. *[Alie's voice starts to break.*

*She pauses*] The number of days I got to spend with my dad, and also just being there for my mom and being around my sisters...

You know, when you see your family for the holidays, like let's say you celebrate Christmas, you might see them for two days around that holiday. And this was like having four months of that and the time that we got to spend together and the memories that we made are something that help me every single day, knowing that I got to spend that time there and if it's possible to look into bereavement leave or look into working remotely, ask. There's no harm in asking and it is something that you will never, ever regret.

Of course, this can be very individual, and it depends on your relationship. If it'll cause more harm to you, or you have a bad or abusive relationship with someone, then obviously you need to make decisions that are best for you. Also, I want to acknowledge that my family was fortunate that this wasn't a sudden loss, that we had a heads up to take some of these actions and to really process it.

One piece of advice that so many people gave me that was so helpful was: take video. Obviously, I got a lot of pictures of my Pop, got a lot of pictures of my family. But video, oh boy, comes in clutch when you are missing someone and you want to hear their voice and their mannerisms, love a video, that's helpful. I also voice recorded some of his stories, but that's advice that a lot of people gave me that I'm so happy to have had.

Also, if you want to get your mind around what is hospice, what is dying, what's the medical process of it? There's a FRONTLINE documentary called *Being Mortal* that was on PBS and my friend Cara Santa Maria – who has a podcast called *Talk Nerdy*, she's awesome and she's studying existential psychology, she's about to get her PhD in that – she recommended this documentary *Being Mortal*, it is so great at getting some perspective and understanding how many families go through this, how many families, when a death isn't sudden, how to prepare for it. I feel like if you have some time, you are one of the lucky ones. And so, *Being Mortal*, it's a FRONTLINE documentary. I thought that FRONTLINE was the same as *Dateline*, those are different programs. FRONTLINE is PBS, *Dateline* is like... I think like, true crime. But FRONTLINE doc, great, *Being Mortal*.

Also, Cole sent me a series of books, *The End of Life Guideline* series, I'll link these on my website. It's a compilation by Barbara Karnes who is an RN and they're a series of, I think, five very slim, wonderfully written booklets on what to expect if you are dying, what emotions are going to come up, what to prepare for, how to handle it, if someone you love is dying, how to read the signs in hospice of what to expect physically to happen. It helped so much in terms of looking for signs of how my dad was doing, how he was progressing.

One thing that helped so much in those books is the knowledge that some people want to die alone. We always think that dying alone is the sign that you have lived life wrong and that's not true. Some people prefer to pass away with no one else in the room and they might hang on until they are alone. Just like you might be able to use the toilet with the door open, someone else might be like, "I need to go home to poo if I'm at work," some people might feel that way. Dying, I suppose, is somewhat similar. If you're a private person, you might want to go privately.

So, some people spend their whole life thinking, "I was with my mother at her bedside, or my husband at their bedside, and as soon as I got up to go get a sandwich, they passed away and I missed it, and I disappointed them, and I let them down." That is *not* that random. Some people don't want to go with people around and they want to either spare people or they just feel watched.

So, my dad, we were around him 24/7. He had a bell that he would jingle in the night when he needed to get up to use the bathroom and Jarrett would race up out of bed, go help my dad to the bathroom at all hours of the night. We were there; anything he wanted, any meal he wanted, and it

was an honor to do that. But my dad passed away the day that my sister had to go to the office, my other sister had COVID and couldn't be around for a while, after me and Jarrett took a week off to go back to LA to get some more stuff and just kind of reset, and when my mom was in the other room taking a phone call. My mom was away for 7 minutes calling his hospice nurse just to check on some things, that is when he slipped away in his sleep. And Larry, that's how he wanted to go. So, if that has been your experience or if anyone you know is dealing with that kind of guilt or feelings, that is not that random.

I'll also say, during a grieving period or pre-grieving, get a hobby that's tactile, if you can. I started collecting little rocks from the gravel driveway when we would walk the dog and then I would come home and put them in a color order... it was just fun. Just something with your hands you can do that's not on your phone that just connects you to anything. Beadwork, maybe make some daisy chains, I started doing that a little bit and it's really nice and grounding and gets you out of your phone and out of your head.

Also, just know that you're going to be a little bit stressed and know when to step away and take care of yourself. As they say, you can't pour from an empty cup. If you need to take a minute to go outside and meditate, if you need to go watch the sunset at night, if you need to make sure that you're washing your hair, things like that. Take care of yourself, you will be better able to show up and help other people when you're not worn down and burned out.

I did something to just engage my senses when my dad was in hospice, I bought these tiny perfume samples, just because that little spritz, maybe before I went to bed or something, or just if I wanted to sniff them, was something that brought me pleasure that was \$24 for several perfume samples that will last me for months and I just wanted to sniff nice things. So, anything that brings you a little bit of happiness, you'll be able to carry that forward to the people that you're taking care of. Or, if you're grieving, anything that is just a little treat.

And know that you're just doing your best. Parents with infants are playing it by ear and they're doing their best too. And if you're caring for someone who is dying or if you're grieving someone, you're just doing your best at any given moment and there is no perfect. Just showing up and loving someone and doing your best is great.

Don't marry an asshole. If you have a feeling that you're about to marry an asshole, maybe think twice about it. It turned out that having a nice, generous, caring person who understood how important it is to show up for people and love people through the hard times, turned out that was a good decision.

Tell your friends that you might need more check-ins. Sometimes friends don't want to bother you if they think you're going through some crisis stuff and if you give them a heads up that you're like, "I might need you just to check in," they'll be like, "Great!" And a lot of them will do that. But sometimes people just don't know what to do so they're just like, "I'm going to leave you alone." And sometimes you're like, [*weepy voice*] why isn't anyone checking in on me? So, just tell them, "Hey, can you check in? Send me some pictures of your pets or something."

When you're going through this, whether you have someone in your life who has just passed away or who might, some friends are going to suck at this. They're going to be bad at it because they haven't been through it and [*laughs*] I had friends who would call me, and they'd immediately start crying. I'd be having an okay day, I'd be going to the pharmacy to pick up some meds for my dad and be like, "Okay, I'm just taking it day-by-day. He wants mac and cheese tonight, great, going to pick that up." And then I'd have a friend call and be like, [*weepy voice*] "How are you doing?" And they'd just start bawling and crying about what would happen if a beloved parent died and then I'd be

consoling them. And you know what, some friends are just not going to be that good at it, because they haven't been through it. Love them anyway and maybe just let them know what you're capable of talking about at the moment. But it's endearing and it's sweet, and know that once you're through this, once you're through a loss that's pretty big to you, you will be one of the friends who doesn't suck because you'll start to understand.

I had friends that showed up out of the woodwork, that I didn't expect would be so supportive who were just checking in and just knew what it was like, and you'll be one of those. So, if you're going through a loss, if you're grieving, think of it like a software update. You know how they suck, and you have to go offline for a while and whenever your phone or your computer gets updated, you're like, "Augh, I can't even function with this right now." And afterward, things will be different, and they'll take some getting used to but it's a software update that you will be able to show up for other people in a way that you just couldn't before.

Also, if anyone in your life, whether they have a diagnosis that's terminal or not, let's all ask each other about funeral arrangements, okay? Let's write that down, let's start a Google Doc and share it with our loved ones. Write it on a notepad, write it on a whiteboard, update it daily if you want. But make some funeral arrangements. Do you want to be buried? Do you want to be cremated? What do you want to be wearing? Is there anyone you don't want invited? If you make a plan for your funeral, your loved ones who are devastated after you pass won't have to make decisions and that is such a service for them.

We asked my dad right after hospice started what he wanted, and he was amazingly specific. He was in the Air Force, he wanted a military funeral, he wanted the rifle volley salute, he wanted Taps played, and because he was a morse code operator in the Air Force, he wanted morse code that spelled out, "CQ CQ, this is Sergeant Ward signing off." And what a beautiful fucking thing to tell your family that you want. How specific! We were able to get that done, we were able to play it at his military funeral, and it was such a gift to us that we knew that we were doing right by him. So, even if you are going to live 100 more years, write out some funeral arrangements because the people who love you will be like, "Thank you so much."

Also heads up, did you know that if you have a military funeral, you get a bugler and you get a rifle volley, like a boom-boom-boom. But there's a shortage of buglers and so a lot of times at military funerals they have a "ceremonial bugle" which is a fake bugle or a real bugle, I'm not sure, but it has a speaker in the horn, and they just press a button and it played recorded Taps... there's not enough buglers! But there are nonprofit organizations like Buglers Across America and there are volunteer honor guards that if you say, "Hey, my loved one wanted a military funeral, can you perform funeral honors?" If they're available, they will show up. And shout out to Steve Mercer at the Service Veterans of Northern California Volunteer Honor Guard, they were able to come out, make sure that my dad was honored in the way that he wanted. They had a live bugler; they did a rifle volley salute which was so loud but really wonderful.

So, if you've been looking for a place to volunteer, and you're not sure where to go and you like uniforms and funerals, find a local honor guard. If you can play the bugle or you've been wanting to learn, hook up with Buglers Across America and honor guards, that might be just the volunteer work that's right for you and it means a lot to some families.

Get a will, get a will and trust. I did ask Cole if she's gotten once since our 2017 interview and she has not, and neither have I. So, this is a reminder [*dog barks*] ... pardon me, that's my neighbor's dog... that's a reminder to us and everyone, put together a will and trust or else half of it goes into probate and also your relatives have to deal with all that.

Also, once someone has passed, Cole gave me this advice which was so wonderful: find a symbol that was meaningful to that person, like thanobotanical, a certain flower or fruit or vegetable that meant a lot and put that within the funerary ceremony and arrangements. Every time you see it, you will think on it again. Actually, this was accidental, but I had a tomato plant growing and I hate tomatoes so much, hate them, hate them, hate them. If they're cooked, I'll eat them. But raw, get the fuck out of here, I don't want to look at you. And I had this tomato plant sprout out of nowhere and I spent a picture to my dad in the couple of days that we were down in LA, and he was like, "Mmm, I'd love some of those," and I was like, "Gross, you can have them." Anyway, he died. I ended up sun drying them and then I put one in the pocket of his suit at his funeral.

My dad had an open casket funeral, I was very, *very*, very, very freaked out about that. I was dreading that, to be honest. I wasn't prepared for it. It ended up being wonderful, it was nice to say goodbye and I kissed his hand and I put a note in his pocket, each of my sisters and my mom did... so don't be scared of it. Cole and Victor told me right before we recorded this, that humans have seen their deceased loved ones through time. There would always be a viewing before a burial typically, and it's something that helps with the closure, and it was helpful for me.

Also, if you come up with something, a symbol or something, a visual symbol that means something to your family members, what we did is we got pins for all of us to wear. For my dad, the symbol that meant a lot to us was bridges. So, before the funeral we designed the prayer card that they give out at funerals; it's like a picture and maybe a passage on the back. We designed it so that there'd be an inch of space on the bottom. And there's someone on Etsy I found named Jim Clift who has a pin shop and has tons of pins, anything imaginable, he's got a pin for it, and you can order in bulk. We ordered 100 pins of little gold bridges that meant a lot to us, and we popped them on the prayer card and when we were handing out the prayer cards, everyone got to put a pin on their lapel and I've given some to friends and it's really wonderful to show up and see a friend who is wearing it and for me to wear it too and carry that symbol around. We put it on the prayer card because bridges meant a lot to my dad, so we put a passage on the back. The passage was:

*The builder lifted his old gray head;  
"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,  
"There followed after me today  
A youth whose feet must pass this way.  
This stream that has been a joy to me,  
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.  
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;  
Good friend, I'm building the bridge for him.*

That was from a poem called "The Bridge Builder" which was written about 100 years ago by a chap named Will Allen Dromgoole, who was actually not a chap but a lady, with a pen name. My sister Janelle found that passage and it's just perfect. So, we put that on the back of the prayer card with a bridge pin. So, having a symbol of someone really helps you, gives you something to hang onto and to think about.

We also made a memory book with a bunch of passages from people who loved my dad that all wrote in their favorite memories. I kind of wanted to do this while he was still alive, honestly, it's a good birthday gift for someone celebrating a birthday. Just have people write in their favorite memories and make pictures and put their passages in and someone can really see while they're



still alive how appreciated they are. I made a Google Form for people to fill out with their name, three adjectives that described that person, which was my brother-in-law Steve's idea, which was great, and then, a memory of them. And I used that Google Form, and I used a graphic designer I found on Fiverr who put it into a book and got it printed. And we actually buried my dad with one of those books and it's something for all of us to have and a memento to give out just to share how loved he was.

Another thing, during hospice, my dad loved, we all loved, and it's a great way to connect people is... they're a sponsor of the show and that's how I found out about them, they're called Aura Frames. A bunch of people who are all logged in can update pictures to this frame, this digital frame. You can update it anytime, we literally brought it to my dad's bedside in the hospital after he had brain surgery, it was by his chair all through hospice. And Aura actually was really awesome and they sent me a few after my dad passed away because I told them how much it meant to him to be able to see those pictures and they sent them for my family. And if you're now in the market for one, [AuraFrames.com](http://AuraFrames.com), code: Ologies, because not going to steer you away from a discount.

Also, if someone is in the hospital, you can bring a blanket, typically to the hospital. That's really comforting. And when my dad passed away, the funeral home that we used took my dad away with his blanket and that was really lovely to know that he was making the next leg of the journey with something that was really comforting to him.

Another tip is, you know, someone's spouse or partner is going through a lot and just understand that their moods may be up and down too and to make sure that they're supported too. I think a lot of times our focus is on the person who is sick, but their spouse or partner is about to lose someone really important. [*dog barks*] I'm really sorry about the dog barking, there's really nothing I can do so... he's just saying hi. Anyway...

Also, funeral homes. I didn't know that a lot of funeral homes are owned by the same big corporation, there are some that are privately owned. We had a great one, Green Valley in Rescue, California, were amazing to us. We thought that we would have to go in there and get upsold on a bunch of bells and whistles on a casket and stuff and they were just very straight and to the point, they were so comforting and comfortable so ask around maybe ahead of time about mortuaries in your area and who people like.

One person that came out of the woodwork was Julie Lesnik who was in the Eating Bugs episode and just checked in with me, she lost her dad to cancer and then two years later, lost her mom to COVID and she was just like, "Use this as a chance to say no to everything. Say no to stuff for as long as you need to, say no." And Julie, that is great advice.

And also, a grief support group is a great idea. Again, hospice services will have support groups, sometimes local hospitals will, there might be local groups that meet at, like, the basement of a church or something, kind of like AA but a grief support group. There's something called The Dinner Party that just started up, I think it's [TheDinnerParty.org](http://TheDinnerParty.org) where you can join a grief support group. Your insurance plan might have those grief support groups.

When it comes to the eulogy and obituary, those are hard to write. My dad wrote a lot of people's obituaries; in my family, he was the go-to for that. So, we were like, "Well, shit dude, you're the one that writes these." My sister wrote the eulogy, and I wrote the obituary, and it's really tough. I asked Jarrett for some notes, some opinions on it. No matter what, tell the person who wrote it that it's amazing... no matter what, even if it's garbage. Say, "It's the best writing, it's the best obituary I've ever read," then give notes. I was really struggling writing my dad's and I was like, "Jarrett, I'm really stuck here, I'm stuck." And he was like, "Yeah, reading it I can tell you're struggling, it's more

stilted than you would normally write it.” And I was just like [weeps] and I just had a mental breakdown at the criticism even though I asked for notes. So, it ended up taking me a long time. Do you guys want to hear my dad’s obit?

Just kidding. I tried to read it and I started sobbing within the first sentence or two and then I tried to muster through. You know what I’m going to do? I’m just going to put a link to it, you can read it online. You don’t have to send our family flowers, we’re good there, but if you’d like to know more about my dad and his life, I’ll link it in the show notes. He was called Pete by his family as a nickname and it ends, “We wish Pete safe passage through the golden gates and into the grand ol’ everything. We’ll miss you, MC88. As you used to say: write if you get work.” That was an old-timey thing people would say to those who left for the West. And so, every morning my dad would say that he was having his coffee and to write if we got work, no matter how many jobs we had, it was just his sign-off and to send critter pics and tales of vicariousness. Every morning he would say that. So, I try to live that and have adventures and enjoy it, hence the motorcycle ride the night that died and last week, Jarrett and I fucked off and went to Disneyland for the day because we hadn’t been in years and we figured, “Let’s go on a rollercoaster.”

Can I tell you a secret? Here’s my secret. While my dad was in hospice, he needed a haircut and when I was cleaning up all the trimmings, I saved a few locks of hair, I don’t know why, maybe to make Victorian mourning jewelry? I don’t know. But he was buried and not cremated, and I thought, maybe it would be a good way to kind of see the world, and so when we went to Disneyland, I put a hair on the lawn near the flowers at the entrance. Disney, I’m so sorry, it was literally one hair... okay, it was probably like, three. I know people dump straight-up ashes all the time at the Haunted Mansion, let’s not do that. But you know, I had a lock of hair, I just think it’s kind of fun to think a little part of my Pop is in the welcome area, just seeing happy faces come in. We’re not even a big Disney family but it was just like, this seems like a fun spot.

And you know, I like to think that a fungus probably broke the hair down and fed a plant those nutrients, and then a bug ate the plant juice, and then a bird ate the bug, and now maybe a part of my Pop is perched on the top of Thunder Mountain Railroad, just preening its feathers. I don’t know.

My point is, we’re all just a bunch of Legos... and what a shame to glue a Lego sculpture in place. The beauty is that molecules, and atoms, and Legos can become so many things. So, I guess cherish what you are right now and have some adventures while you can. You know, for yourself, for vicariousness, and for me.

So, this is kind of a bittersweet conclusion to the era of encores. Thank you for being here with us, with my family, with an awkwardly earnest internet Dad.

Also, thank you Erin Talbert, Shannon Feltus, and Boni Dutch for adminning the *Ologies* Podcast [Facebook group](#). Thank you, Kelly R. Dwyer, for maintaining the webpage. Susan Hale also updates it and does so much more. There’s going to be more links up at [AlieWard.com/Ologies/Thano2022](#). Thank you, Noel Dilworth, for scheduling and so much more. Thank you, Emily White of The Wordary, makes our professional transcripts, Caleb Patton helps bleep them; those are up for free at [AlieWard.com/Ologies/Extras](#) or at the link in the show notes. We have kid-friendly, all ages, shortened episodes called *Smologies* in the feed, you can download for family road trips, there’s more at [AlieWard.com/Smologies](#).

Thank you, Mercedes Maitland and Zeke Rodrigues Thomas of Mindjam Media for working so hard on those. Nick Thorburn of the band Islands made the theme music. And hugest thank you ever to lead editor, main squeeze, and someone that was by my side every moment of this, by my dad’s side

for the toughest days, physically helping him out of bed, and who my dad called his guardian angel, Jarrett Sleeper, who also happens to be legally married to me and is a truly magical, rainbow being.

As you go about your days, just remember that nothing is permanent, not the sun, not the moon, not anyone or anything that's ever lived. So, the best we can do is just live a life of love and have an easy exit. And if you get those, you're pretty lucky. Love you lots, berbye.

*Transcribed by Aveline Malek at TheWordary.com*

### **Links to things we discussed:**

Cole Imperi's [website](#)

Follow Cole on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [TikTok](#)

A donation was made to [The School of American Thanatology](#)

Follow The School of American Thanatology on [Instagram](#)

[Cole's writing on Shadowloss](#)

[Cole's TEDx Talk on Shadowloss](#)

[Continuing Bonds Theory by Dennis Klass – scientific paper for sourcing](#)

[Dr. Ashton Verdery's work on 9 mourners: 1 Covid death](#)

[Cole's post about that research](#)

[Lawrence Ward, a.k.a.'s Grandpod's Obituary](#)

[Documentary "Being Mortal"](#)

[Barbara Karnes End of Life Guidelines Series](#)

[Really great pins made by Jim Clift](#)

Digital frames: [Auraframes.com](#) (up to \$100 off with code OLOGIES)

["Healing After Loss: Daily Meditations For Working Through Grief"](#) by Martha Whitmore Hickman

[The Dinner Party – grief group for Millennials and Gen-Zers](#)

Shout outs to: [Green Valley Mortuary](#), [Bugles Across America](#) & [Service Veterans of Northern California Volunteer Honor Guard](#)

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