

On the day that April died, my wife Lucy and I went to see a movie in the evening. The movie is called the 'The Great Escaper.' You may have seen it.

In the summer of 2014, an 89 year old World War II veteran, Bernard Jordan, played by Michael Caine, escapes from his care home to attend the 70th anniversary commemoration of the D-Day landings in Normandy.

He goes with the blessing of his wife of 70 years, Rene (played by the late Glenda Jackson), who remains at home in England. When news of Bernard's trip leaks out, the media jump onto the story, and *The Daily Mail* dubs him 'The Great Escaper'.

At one point in this warm and poignant story, Bernie asks Rene, 'Are you all right?'

'No, I am not,' she replies, but with a smile. 'I'm bloomin' old.'

The movie gently explores the dignity of growing old, and especially the privilege of growing old with the one you love. From the very beginning, we see husband and wife, each armed with a walking stick, managing their life together in the two small rooms that have become their home.

In this quiet film, the main characters live what at first might seem like small lives, but they do so with expansive beauty and large, generous hearts.

There is also profound grief, as in one moving scene Bernie is reconciled with a group of German veterans, in the very place he once fought them. Though their individual stories remain untold, they are powerfully communicated in the men's faces, and in their tears, both of joy, and of sorrow.

At the end of the movie, I found myself quietly sobbing. I was mourning my friend April.

I wept for Ken, and Wendy and Adam, and for their great loss. For the loss of all who knew her.

I wept for your loss and mine; for the loss of the loving kindness that flowed through April's life, day after day, week after week, year after year; for the loss of that spiritual gift of love that April received from God the Father and poured out on you and me; the love communicated so humbly and succinctly in her habitual greeting: 'And how are you?' 'And the family, how are they?'

I wept, especially for the end of Ken and April's beautiful, big-hearted life together. Like a pair of love birds, sitting side by side on a branch, the bond of love, the Holy Spirit of God's love, enfolded them, their beloved Wendy and Adam, their beloved friends and family members.

I wept, too, out of blessed relief, knowing that April's suffering and struggle had ended: 'Are you all right?' 'No, I am not. I'm bloomin' old.'

The bible says,

'There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens. A time to be born, and a time to die'.

On Wednesday two weeks ago, April's life in this world passed over to eternal life with God in the next.

On Wednesday two weeks ago, April made her great escape.

Into the kingdom of God.

God has wiped every tear from her eye.

Her death is no more.

Her mourning and crying and pain are no more.

For her, everything old, has become new.

The kingdom of God that awaits all who, like April, follow in the way of God's love.

'Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable; it keeps no record of wrongs; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things...And now faith, hope, and love remain, these three, and the greatest of these is love.