

Singular Remembrances

10/27/30 - 08/31/06

Janet Kuypers

cc&d September '06 supplement

writings about the pending passing of

Lucille Ann Kuypers

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Death Sentence

06/08/06 & 06/09/06

the verdict has just been brought in
the defense lawyers seemed to have a magnificent case
but the evidence against her was overwhelming

after appeals, her sentence was finally set
but because of her “good behavior”
when they gave her the death sentence

she had the right to decide when her death would come.
Not if she'd die, not how she'd die,
those aren't her choices

but this court thought they would be nice
and at least let her decide how quickly
she wanted to go

and you know, they set it all up in court
everyone there was wearing their lab coats,
looking very professional

and everyone at the court thought she was
the nicest woman possible
but, we all thought that outside of the court too

and you know, they could be nice to her there
but she's been handed a death sentence
without anything ever being her fault

she's not guilty, of whatever you think, she's not guilty

so giving her the right to decide when to die
is not a gift everyone is committing a crime
by allowing this abomination

and you can call yourselves a court
but I know it is like my mother has been tortured

in her Lithuanian gulag concentration camp

post World War II
and now you give her the right to decide when to die
how good of you

so now we, like death sentence protesters,
want to fight against this sentence
want to protest, want to make change

but we know we're pounding our little fists
at closed and dead-bolted doors
and we doubt anyone can hear our pleas

so thank you, whoever the Hell you are
for giving my mother the right
to decide when to die

even though the rest of us aren't ready
to decide is she should die
at least now, lucky for us, she chooses

that the torture in her concentration camp
can finally stop, even if freeing herself
means her death

If She's There

06/08/06

when I was on the phone with her yesterday
mom said she was going to go back home,
across the country

and I told her that I'll visit her
maybe in July, after she gets there
and she replies

If I'm there

and you know, under normal circumstances
she could say that because, who knows,
they might go to Tunica

to gamble for a weekend or something
but no, if she might be out of town
she'd say so

so just hearing her say "if I'm there"
was just one of the infinite number of ways
it hits home

if she's there, she says

I know I'm planning to see her because she's dying
I know our lives are turned upside-down
because she's dying

but every little thing said now, no matter
how innocuous, is like another
nail in her coffin

and I can't pull those nail out
I would if I could, I'd scrape my fingers raw
I'd bleed a river

but I can't get my fingertips
under those nail heads
and I have to sit here

and let time tick by,
until the inevitable
while the tears continue
to cry a river

tick, tock, tick, tock

I'm Tired

06/18/06

I'm tired
she says to me

and I'm getting used to hearing that now

and I know she's older
and I know that she doesn't have the energy
she used to

I never tried to tax her before
to make her do too much
because my mother was older

and

and after the first round of chemo
she was in remission
and I went to visit her for weeks
and she still woke up at five am every day
and she ran errands in the morning
and she started to slow cooking her her foods
and she did her laundry
and by noon
she was getting tired

good thing that's when the soap operas started
then she could sit back and watch tee vee

because she read the newspaper before eight am
and she took care of her work for the day
before noon

so yes, after the chemo
during her recovery
she'd get tired
but everyone understood that

she just went through so many rounds of chemo
for her leukemia
it'll take forever to fully recover
from the radiation
even though she's in remission

but she's a strong lady
just give her some time
she'll get over this hurdle too

and then she started feeling tired all the time
and then feverish
and she went to the doctor
and they said they were wrong
she wasn't in remission
how silly of them, to miss that

so how about a hospice?
because all hope is lost now

that's what they told her
and she went to dad
and he said
let's go back right now
to the good hospital
and they'll take care of her again
and really make everything better this time

and that's the first time
I started hearing from mom
that she really just didn't want
to be in the hospital any more

and I'd hear my sister say
that she said the bed was really uncomfortable

stop complaining, mom
this will make everything better
you said so

and after the second round of the chemo
don't worry, it's a different chemical this time
so she wouldn't lose her hair
which is now coming back curly
just as she wanted
but after the second round of the chemo
they said it wasn't working this time
she wasn't in remission
so

so she had two options

and I'm trying to figure out right now
who hurts more from her decision
her or us

but I hear it now more than ever from her
that she's tired
but that's to be expected
her platelets are low
and she'll need to get more blood in a day or two
and her body keeps telling her
with terrifying diligence
that she should be tired

she's trying to heal herself now
you know, because the chemicals can't do it
and I ask her after noon how she's doing
and she said she's tired
but then she explains
that she did three loads of laundry this morning
and she took a shower
justifying her being tired to me

and I come to visit her
and she just took a shower after waking up
but she didn't get a chance to take a nap yesterday
so even though it's morning
she falls asleep on the couch in the morning
while I visit

so I just have to keep telling myself
that she's tired for a reason
she's fighting the hardest battle of her entire life
and

and she'll eventually lose

that's hard for me to say, you know
because we come from a hearty stock
she shouldn't eventually lose
she shouldn't

and neither should we

Fifteen Minutes

06/27/06

we never talked much
and now that I'm grown up
I don't know what to say

and when I'd visit in Florida
it's still our relative distance,
our relative quiet

I'd usually work on my laptop
either on the porch
or in the kitchen

I'd try to help with food
keep asking what you need from me
as I clean up the pans and dishes

but you'd always say
when you work indoors
that you like to sit outside

for only fifteen minutes a day
and when you'd go outside
I'd join you

and we'd sit on the plastic
and metal chairs
in the end of your driveway

maybe talk to each other for a while
maybe you'd just tilt your head back
and soak in the sun

and I'd try to do the same
but every once in a while
I'd turn to see you there

eyes closed, resting in the sun
and just seeing you there
would make me feel better

Her Blood Is Evaporating

06/23/06

she had to go to the doctors today
they called me in the morning,
because they knew the doctors would take forever

so she went to the doctors today
to get blood
she apparently needed a few pints

so I even asked after the fact:
she didn't cut herself, she's not bleeding
why does she need more blood?

and I couldn't get an answer
I know the cancer's made her weak now,
but it's not like her blood is evaporating

all I know is than when she needs blood
she feels very tired, lethargic
and she has more energy with more blood

so I wonder: is the cancer actually
destroying her blood so she needs more?
and will she have to do this until she dies?

Wither Away

06/25/06

saw my mother today
am getting used to seeing her sleeping

called hours before I came over
“sure, we should be here,” my sister said
“she’s napping now”
so she should be awake when I got there

and they had game shows on
one called Lingo, I think
and mom’s eyes were opening
and closing
over and over again

she should be feeling better now, I think
she should be one the road
to getting home
and feeling more at peace with her life

I gestured to say good bye today
told mom that I didn’t know if she’d be leaving
to go back home before this weekend
so this is the last chance I might see her

but I could visit her at home
if that’s okay with her

and she said
“I don’t want you to me me wither away”
and I said,
“mom,
we want to see you,
we love you”
and I kissed her arm
and her forehead

wither away, she says
even if I see her for weeks
months
years
lying on the couch
falling in and out of sleep
my memories of her will not wither away
the things she has given me
will not wither away
and my love for her will not wither away

and I did my best to not cry

it won’t
I promise

Every Minute I Can Get

06/28/06

drove seventy-seven miles
to see my mother for twenty-seven minutes

we couldn't stay long
but I wanted to see her once
on her last day in town
before she dies

it was twenty-one weeks
since I have been to her home
which was ten weeks
since she was in the hospital
for six weeks
in her first round of chemo

I drove fifty-five miles to the hospital
during both of her rounds of chemo

and now that she stopped the failing treatment
two round of chemo was enough
for my mom to know

so after she's been out of the hospital
for thirty-three days

and she leaves tomorrow
I don't know, maybe eight am
less than sixteen hours from now

but she's leaving for home
so she can relax before she dies

I can't guess a number
on how long she'll live
I can only tell you the numbers
of her red blood cell
and white blood cell counts

details about the hemoglobin
I could tell you her platelets are up

but they're only numbers
but now that she's leaving,
that's all I have left

so she leaves tomorrow
one thousand, three hundred
seventy-six miles,
six blocks

away from me

so call me selfish
but I'll settle
for seventy-seven miles
one more time
even if it is to only see her
for twenty-seven minutes

I'll take every minute I can get

The Last Time He Sees Her Alive

06/27/06

“thank you for your wonderful daughter”
are some of the words John said to her
because if they leave soon to go back home
it might be the last time he sees her alive

and she said
“I’m glad she has you
you two are a great pair”

and when I first heard that
all I could think
was that she was glad I had you to lean on
as she is dying

and I know that’s not what she said
and I’m sure that’s probably not what she meant
but that sticks in my head anyway

because I know it comes up at the most
inopportune times, and I start crying
or at least I try to stop myself
and if John sees that I need it,

he lets me collapse in his arms

and I don’t know how many times I’ll do this
I don’t know how long this pain
of impending death will continue

so thank you for creating me
whether or not it was for john
because I don’t know how I could lose you
if I didn’t have him to help me survive

Rings Like Gravestones

07/05/06

I like to have nice rings on my fingers
I don't have much, but I like gemstones
on my rings, I don't bother
with big earrings
or expensive necklaces
I think they're too much
but I like rings

and it makes me feel bad, in a way
that my mother gave me a few of her rings
knowing she was going to die
and not wanting her children to argue
over who gets what

so I've got these rings I like to wear
but now I know for a fact
that on each of my middle fingers
whenever I go out in public
I'll be wearing rings my mother gave me

not even once she gave me before
but ones she gave
knowing she would die soon

but I wear these rings
it's not like I have a choice in the matter anymore
and I know that no one thinks anything
of the rings I'm wearing

so I become the only one
treating these rings live gravestones
when no one has even died yet

She's Going Home

06/28/06

I've cried about it
over and over again

it's like I'm almost
getting used to the idea

I see her every weekend
so I can see her
as much as I can
before she leaves
to go across the country
back to her home
so she can die

and I've tried to learn
about what's killing her
if the chemo doesn't work
I hear of other
more radical treatments
we could look into
but I know
she doesn't want
any more treatment
she doesn't want
to be in the hospital
any longer

you see,
she's decided
that she's ready to die

and the rest of us
have to catch up to her

to understand it
to be ready for it
to accept it

but I don't know
if that means
I'll stop crying

just heard today
from my sister's house
where mom is
gaining her strength
before she can
make the trip home

that she's leaving
by this weekend

too quickly
for me to be able
to see her
one more time

and I know, I know
I'd visit her now
and she would be tired
and she'd barely move
and when I'd call
they'd tell me
to not talk too long
because they don't want me
to make her too tired

and I know it's been trying
Christ, I know it's harder for her
but it's been hard to see her
like this
but at least this way
I was able to
see her

which is more
than I have now

because she's going home

and I know, I know
she's not dead
but she's going there to die
and when she's there
I can't see her

tired or not
when she goes back
she's that much closer
to death for me

I know she wants to be there
at her home
with her clothes
and her kitchen
and the chair
she watches tee vee in
in the den
at her computer
where she plays her games
and checks her email
I know she want to be there
for the billions of plants
she's got growing
around her house
I swear, she could shove
a dead stick in the ground
and it would grow,
I don't know how she does it
she brings life to everything

isn't that funny
she brings life to everything
the sweetest woman in the world
and now she's going home
to die

I know it's better for her
I keep agreeing with her

her friends
and neighbors
are there
she has people to talk to
the weather is better there for her

she doesn't want
to be a guest
in someone else's house
like she has been
through recovery
from her multiple rounds
of failing chemo treatment

she doesn't want
the hospitals any more
she wants to be home
it's better for her there
I know this

I have to keep telling myself that
I know it's true, she's happier there
I have to keep telling myself that

they have to make sure
she's healthy enough
for her trip
across the country
back to her home
so she's been recuperating
so she can go home
and fall apart in peace

my brain has to keep
reminding my soul
that she'll be happier there
but my soul says
that her going there
just puts her
one step closer
to being gone
forever

Pain Is Weakness/Pain Is A Crutch

07/27/06

Pain is a crutch
is on a t-shirt I own

marines wore that t-shirt
in my brother-in-law's division

says something about strength,
determination

and when the first round of chemo
didn't get my mother's leukemia
into remission
when they told my mother
about hospice care
she traveled across the country
for a better hospital
and her second round of chemo

says something about strength,
determination

and when rounds of chemo
didn't work
she decided to forgo
any addition experimental treatments

so I reminded her
of the strength of her father
for when he had cancer
and the doctors said
he had six months to live

he lived for six years

###

you know, I heard that a sage said
"pain is weakness leaving the body"

and maybe all my mother wants now
is for the pain to leave her now,
leave her in peace for good

but I keep remembering
that we come from a long line of fighters

and although pain may be weakness
although pain may be a crutch
well, when there's enough pain
maybe we can use it all
as a pair of crutches
to help us get through anything

This is What You Leave Me

07/24/06

i stare at myself in the mirror
at eleven fifteen at night
and think of how you're too good to die

you're the good one
you're not the one that's supposed to be dying
you're supposed to be the strong one
you're supposed to be the one
that's supposed to hold us together
that's supposed to hold me together
you're the one

i'm sobbing like a child now
i can't hold myself together now
and you're not supposed to do this to me
how dare you

i know people lose loved ones
but this is too young for me
i know i'm not the only one to go through this
but you didn't teach me anything about this

nobody teaches anyone about this

i hate the world for this
and i stare at the mirror
seeing myself sobbing like a child

well

well, you never saw me like this
when i grew up anyway

so i guess now is the time for firsts

but i see myself in the mirror
sobbing like a child for you
and i think
how silly of me
i shouldn't cry like this

but i see myself in the mirror
i'm an adult
i know better
and think that this reflection doesn't look like you
i look more like dad
dark hair, dark eyes
wrinkles from a furrowed brow and a hard life

when you look at photos
they say i look like you
but right now in this mirror
i look distraught
not the way you are

i see the pain in my face
but it's not your face
it's not your hurt
it's not your anger
it's not anything from you
but this is what you leave me

Really Physically Heal

08/01/06

I'm an X Files junkie
still, years after the series finale
and I just recently watched
one of my favorite episodes
written and directed by Gillian Anderson
where she meets with a woman
affiliated with The American Taoist Healing Center
even though Scully is a medical doctor
and a scientist

she had to ask about a friend who was ill
you see, had had heart problems
and this man, this medical doctor and teacher
analyzed his symptoms
and admitted himself to the hospital

where shortly after he was admitted
he almost died, but was saved

well, Scully asked this woman
is her friend could be dying
from a more serious condition

that something in his soul might not be settled

and this woman that worked with the Taoist Healing Center
told Scully that she used to be a physicist,
that she put in eight hour work weeks
and that she was successful
and all that time she thought that she was happy
but she had only cut herself off
from the rest of the world
and she was dying inside
she was in a relationship with another woman
but she couldn't tell anyone about it
for fear of their reactions

and eventually she found out
she had breast cancer

and although the cancer is bad,
this woman said it was the cancer
that got her attention
where she then saw her destructive life she led
and she realized the field had little meaning to her

and after seeing a healer
who taught her to let go of her shame
and being at peace
well, that was when her cancer went into remission

and everyone looks for answers to problems
to be packaged in a nice little box
with a little bow on top
that can just make everything better
but it takes a lifetime of understanding
to be able to not let illness effect you that way

and I've seen this episode before
but seeing it now, in these circumstances
knowing that my mother was dying form cancer
and there was nothing I could do about it
well, hearing this fictional woman say these words
made me almost think, almost start to panic:
maybe my mother had lived parts of her life
that she did not like,
that she did not want
but she did them because she was married
to the man who ran the construction business
and she had a role to play

and I know she loves her husband
and I know she loves her children
but I really started thinking
that maybe there are things
unsettled in her psyche
that she needs to make better
and then she may be able
to really physically heal

I told my husband about this X Files episode
he remembered it vaguely,
seeing it once or twice in the past
and I explained the story to him again
and I relived those lines again
and I know I've heard those lines before
but I was never able to put them to practice
so I told my husband what I thought,
maybe there was something mom
had to settle with in her life,
in her soul
and he looked at my doe eyes and said no, Janet, no
he said I'm sure she doesn't feel anything like that

so I tried to think of another X Files episode
where Fox Mulder found out
his mother died
and after finding out she committed suicide
he went to her home, looked around
and said her home looked staged,
the FBI agent in him said
she couldn't really have killed herself
there has to be another explanation
and Scully had to tell him
that she really killed herself,
there's nothing more to it than that
and he just have to let go

maybe I'm just grasping at straws
because she's still fighting the cancer
and waiting to die
but I want to be that crazy one
exhausting every source
investigating every option
Hell, I'll take an idea from a tv show
I'll take anything I can get

My Memorials To You

08/17/06

I see the ring you've given me
when you were ready to die

I have no choice now,
whenever I go out
I wear this ring on my middle finger
with this big blue topaz stone
I wear it like a badge of honor
I wear it like it's your tombstone
I wear it like I'm some sort of martyr

but I also see the ring I got from you long ago

it's a ring from dad of an ankh
with a small diamond in the center
signifying everlasting life
and mean to signify
his everlasting love for you

I've had that ankh ring
for I don't know how many years
I even remember once wearing it
when I was in California
meeting with Joe's religious parents
and I tried to make the right impression
but after the visit
Joe told me that he's sure they noticed
the pagan symbol on my finger

and I was furious, I tried to explain
that ring was a symbol
of my father's everlasting love
for my mother
but I don't think he cared
and I'm sure his parents didn't care

and looking back,
I'm sure people always
carry all their baggage around with them
and think whatever they want to think

###

it's funny,
I don't wear that ankh ring so much now
mostly because I'm afraid
that I'll get that loop on top of the ankh
or that point at the bottom of the ankh
caught on something, anything
and maybe break the ring

I don't know,
I guess it's funny
how differently
I can treat
my memorials to you

Mother's Day Flowers Forever

09/10/06 #1

when I live far away from my mother
you'd think the generic thing to do
for Mother's Day
is to send her flowers
you know, from flowers dot com, or ftd or something

and I thought
my mother sees flowering plants
all around her house
year round

and flowers die

so I saw silk flowers at the store
in a clear glass vase
with clear epoxy
to look like water
so it looks like the silk flowers
are in water
and they'll stay perfectly still
in their little vase

so I did this on two years
with both my mother
and my husband's mother
and now
whenever I got to either house
I always feel good
when I see my flowers
we got them for Mother's day

you know, because flowers die
and they kept these flowers from us

and now I'm back at my mother's house
helping clean up

having to sort all of her extra make-up
from bins under the bathroom sink
and being there to help my father
with the collection of the ashes,
the death certificates
trying to keep a few mementos
of my mother
after she passed

and I walk into their master bedroom now
to fix dad's bed for him
and I see the red flowers
in the epoxy-filled vase
and then I walk out to the porch
and I see the purple and blue flowers
in the epoxy-filled vase
and

and I don't know, at least
my Mother's Day flowers lasted

Keeping Christmas Ornaments

09/10/06 #2

I know I'm a pack rat
and I keep a lot of things sometimes
but a part of me has always felt bad
because mom and dad,
when my other brothers and sisters were little
they helped them to make Christmas ornaments
from silk spun balls in different colors
my brothers and sisters added pins
with beads through them
into these silk spun ornaments
and they made pretty patterns
and they looked very nice on the tree

and a part of me has always felt bad
that I never had anything like that
that they never did anything like that with me

but I was sifting through
mom's Christmas decorations tonight
wanted to see some of those
silk spun ornaments
she kept these thirty, forty years
and I noticed an additional box
of Christmas memorabilia in the back
I looked inside this box
and saw it filled with needlework
first I saw colored yard
designing an image of a candle
and I realized I made this
I continued looking
and saw an ornament in yarn
of a candy cane
and then I saw my lettering in yarn
in cut out patterns
saying "noel" and the like
I even saw an ivory fabric ornament
tied on the top
with beads sprinkled and glued on the bottom

and no, they aren't as pretty
as those silk-spun ornaments
but I couldn't believe
that my mother
kept these Christmas ornaments
and trinkets I made
when I was little

if I ever felt unloved in my life
I have to remember these ornaments
she kept of mine
and shed tears for a different reason

this isn't fair
I was going to start
being a punk girl now,

dying the bottom of my hair
bright red

and hey, I'm supposed to
go off any marry
one of my closest friends
in a few months
so I'm supposed to officiate a wedding
and celebrate with them,
and be able to party
and laugh

and then you have to throw this curve ball at me

this isn't fair
this isn't right
this is supposed to be a time to celebrate
to fly in the face of everything
and stick your tongue out
and say, so what, I can have fun

but

this isn't fair of you, God

why do you make me work so hard
why do you change everything
at the last minute

we've worked to stop this
we've done everything we could
we've done our damndest to stop this
we've done our damndest to stop you

stop flexing your muscles
stop proving us wrong

I've tried to figure you out
and you're not playing fair

this isn't fair

06/05/06

###

what does your God do
when you feel like you have it all

I've learned that God doesn't kill you
it just drops you
and says,
you've had it all figured out before
what do you do now?

well, you're killing her
and leaving me wondering

how to pick up the pieces
and how to fly in the face of everything
despite everything

Listening to the Cancer Ads

06/18/06

every time I listen to the radio
and hear an ad for cancer research
(granted, it's usually for tumors)
well, now I listen actively

now, I know she had cancer before
breast cancer, cervical cancer
and after the surgery and after the chemo
she got a clean bill of health
and now she's got leukemia
cancer in the blood, not in a tumor
so there's no one spot to attack

but every time I hear a cancer ad
my ears perk up, like a Pavlovian dog
it's like someone's just rang a bell
and it makes me listen attentively

I know it doesn't make a difference
I think she was at one of the best hospitals
but I hear about these research places
and wonder if there are slivers of hope

but as I said, I know it's irrelevant
she's already gone through two types of chemo
and I know she's decided to stop the treatment
so I know there's no point in new therapy

but I still can't help it
I still am forced to respond to these ads
like some sort of stupid Pavlovian dog
I hear these ads that are supposed to mean

nothing to me

still, I listen

We're Your Children

07/01/06

I know on the last day you were tired
you're tired all the time, I'm getting used to that
but I know it wasn't because you were busy packing
my sister was taking care of that for you
I think it was because
the nurse came so late
and had to take your blood
to make sure you were okay
and I know you had to go to the hospital
to receive more platelets

 you know, to make sure you were stocked up
 for your car drive back home
and sitting and waiting at the hospital
would take anything out of anyone
and you know, you probably didn't eat much
while you were at the hospital for so long

 I know you don't eat much any more to begin with
 but still, you have to be able to eat something
but I think
added on to all of that
you were tired by the end of the day
because everyone was coming to see you
to say good bye to you
on your last day here
before you went across the country back home
where you wanted to be when you died

I know it was probably inconvenient of all of us
to want to see you on your last day in town
I didn't think I'd be able to make it in to see you anyways
but I was able to drive so for a few minutes
just so I could see you once more again

I try to not tax you with my visits
and I'm sure all of us feel the same way
and I know we make you tired
probably just be being there for you

but I hope you don't mind
we're your children
forgive us for wanting to see you
before you go off to die

This Is What It's Reduced To Now

08/30/06

I make phone calls every week
my sister calls me occasionally to tell me news
but now that my mother is dying
and she's so far away
this is what it's reduced to now

I call
and dad answers

he always answers now
it used to be that either mom would answer
or no one would be home
and the answering machine would pick up

but now he answers
and it's almost pointless to ask
if mom can talk
because usually she's asleep

but now she can't talk
because she has to take pills, you see
pills to keep her functioning
as long as we can
before the cancer in her blood kills her

so she gets blood and platelets
whenever she gets to the hospital now
usually once a week
but she's also taking pills
but the potassium pills are so large
she needs so much
that it upsets her stomach to swallow them

well, a pill apparently went down sideways
and in her weakened state
the large pill injured her throat
so she has been unable to eat for over a week

dad explained to me over the phone once
that they gave her a liquid
to slosh around in her mouth
to make her numb
so that she can take her medication

I've been making phone calls
and this is what it's reduced to now
being over a thousand miles away
and hearing bit by bit
about her deterioration

apparently not so she could eat
but so she could take her medication

not that it matters to her,
but just so you know
it's killing me too

###

Your Soul is Shaking

08/29/06

can you imagine a water glass
filled with crystal clear water
and

I don't know what an earthquake feels like
but imagine something you have no control over
starting to shake everything around you
and

and everything just starts shaking
and the water in that glass is rippling

and it's starting to splash in its glass
and you want to hold on to that damn glass
to make the water stay in place
but you're shaking with that glass
and

you don't want anything to fall apart
you see everything around
unexpectedly start shaking
like everything's about to tear in half
and

you watch the rippling of the water
and you realize
that your soul is shaking like that too

The Messenger

08/31/06

It's strange,
I've never been close to dad

and he called me
from across the country
minutes after mom died

since I work at home,
he told me I was the only child
he was calling
so it's my job
to tell the brothers and sisters

they're off to work now
scramble to leave them messages somewhere
call cell phones
act calm
break the news to everyone

it's my job to be the calm one
that's what I have to do

I have a flight to see mom and dad tomorrow
I guess I'll only be seeing dad now

left messages for my sisters,
the teachers at their schools

got through to one brother
broke the news to him
while he was standing
in eight inches of water
doing concrete work at his job

left a message with my oldest brother
he called back shortly afterward

I told him the news
he started to break up immediately
then told me
“I have to hang up the phone now”

oldest sister called back
I told her the news
she just couldn't believe it
mom was doing so well the day before
this doesn't make sense

then she realized
what I had to be going through
that I had to be the messenger
that I had to be rational
and tell everyone that their mother just died

she's my mother, too

asked me if there was anything
I needed
I couldn't think of any words

I'm the messenger
and I couldn't think of any words

Death and a Diamond Ring

08/31/06

saw my sisters
when we were shopping
for a larger diamond
to replace the original stone
in my engagement ring

we kept the original diamond
my husband's great great
grandmother's diamond
in her wedding ring

put it into a necklace
it's really quite pretty

well, as I was saying
we bought a new larger diamond
for my engagement ring
and my husband was saying
he'd get re-
engaged to me
on the seventh
eight months before our wedding anniversary

well, we had all these romantic plans

and then I got a phone call
from my father
saying to come to visit quickly
because mom doesn't have much time left

I arranged the flight
and my husband pushed forward
his plans to ask my hand in marriage again

the ring looks really pretty

but my sister said that it's uncanny
"do you remember the big diamond ring mom has,"
she said
yes, I do
"dad got that for mom for their twenty-fifth
wedding anniversary"
I didn't realize that
"and her mom died
right around then"
she told me that her mother's funeral
was on their twenty-fifth
wedding anniversary
and she said it's strange
that I'm getting a larger diamond
and mom is fighting for her life right now

well, I've got my ring
and my mother just died
and isn't it ironic
how history can repeat itself

Final Rally

08/31/06

last night my sister called me
after we all heard
about how mom couldn't stand up
and it looked like she was going to die very soon
well, last night my sister called me
and told me she just talked to dad
and heard that mom was feeling better
that she uses the walker
to get her medication at night
she's still able to use the washroom
and she even had champagne with blackberries

she was feeling better
she even asked for wine coolers

and my sister and I laughed
I said, "She shouldn't be drinking alcohol"
and she said, "I don't care if the blackberries
are covered in alcohol, it's food"
and we were thrilled she was eating something again
and we thought she'd be able to hold on
for a little longer now

###

when I heard the news
about my mother's passing,
what, an hour and five minutes ago
and it was my job
to tell my brothers and sisters

I thought for a minute
and wondered if I should tell them
at the beginning of their work day
because the news will destroy their day
and there's nothing they can do
while they're at work

and then I flashed back
to when my grandmother died
you see, I was in school
and was due home on Saturday
and my family decided not to tell me
that my grandmother was sick
because there was nothing I could do

well, when I heard
that they held off on telling me
I told them I could have come home sooner
I could have seen her
before she died

so I knew I had to call everyone
I wouldn't want them to feel
the way they made me feel

even though I was only giving them grieving news
they needed to know,
the just did

so I called to people
talked to my brother

he told me of how he brought grandma home
from the hospital
and she sounded great
she was acting happy
and he thought,
this has to be all of her energy
and that she was going to die soon

and she did

and he described it as like her last rally
her last chance to be happy,
to live

###

when I heard last night
that mom was drinking champagne with blackberries
I told my husband
that we should buy some blackberries
and celebrate mom feeling better

the champagne is chilling, but
we never got the blackberries last night

we had no idea
mom would be celebrating
with blackberries in her champagne
in her final rally

so I've got this bottle of champagne
in my refrigerator
and no blackberries

they are my favorite fruit, you know

but I've got this bottle of champagne
in my refrigerator
and no blackberries

and I don't know what to celebrate anymore

Seven Ten, Seven Twenty

08/31/06

received a phone call today
“this is Hazel in Naples
your dad can’t talk right now”

it was probably around seven twenty
Central Standard Time
and she told me
my mother died
about ten minutes ago

dad got on the phone
said I’m the only child he called

my husband watches me
as I listen to the news

my mother has died
and my father is falling apart
a thousand miles away

I
I tell him I’m sorry
I don’t know what else to say

I rested my hands
on the arm rests of my desk chair
everything suddenly felt very heavy

I didn’t want to lift my hands,
my fingers

it’s almost as if
after I heard
I’m too numb to cry

I’ve been crying enough before she left
and the tears will come later

trust me

children churches & daddies



the **UN**religious,
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Internet ccandd96@scars.tv > <http://scars.tv>

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