Journey

Janet Kuypers cc&d 2015 chapbook for a feature 3/28/15 at "Sisters on a Journey" live in a Hype Park historic Quaker House in Chicago with poetry about her mother, scarsu017821794-

Cry For Me

she never liked to see her daughter cry it would make her cry too

"you go in there, talk to her" she would say to another daughter

i remember once crying at my father and running upstairs to my bedroom

i was laying on my bed in the dark my sister tried to come in i told her to leave me alone

then my mother knocked and i couldn't tell her to go away

she came in, sat on the bed started crying "you see, i always turn into a mess"

but it was nice to see you cry for me

from Story Telling

My mom had breast cancer and the three girls flew to visit her and mom felt bad that she couldn't make our trip better because she just found out she had cervical cancer too

but we couldn't have come at a better time

so she had procedures she had surgeries and the cancer was gone she was in the clear

so for a decade she went to the doctor and they found no cancer in her and all seemed well she had beaten a killer

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a decade after her bouts with cancer she went back to the doctor, had a fever, felt tired and they said it's funny, you've got all the symptoms and most women who have had as much cancer in their history as you've had well, it seems you now have leukemia ###

now, this leukemia is a tricky thing cancer of the blood versus cancer of an organ it was easier when you could just remove an organ and leave it at that but this was cancer in her blood and the cancer crept into her bone marrow and they had to periodically drill into her hip bone for a bone marrow biopsy to see if there was any cancer in her bone marrow

must be a fun job, to drill into an angel's hip bone

It Hurts in the Bones (parts)

I didn't realize how much pain she was in

she looked like her neck hurt, her back hurt so I'd ask if I could rub her neck or back

and she'd say no,

then she'd say that wouldn't help

that it hurts down in the bones

and we read this is one of the stages of this disease

and I don't know what it feels like to hurt in your bones something deeper than deep muscle pain I I can't imagine it I can't imagine what it feels like

I think my mom wouldn't let on about how much pain she was in When the doctors told mom she had six months to a year with this disease I said to mom, your father (our grandfather) had cancer and the doctors said he had six months to live. how long did he live? and mom replied, six years. so I said we Bakutis are strong folk and she can be okay if she fights

but I think mom remembered the agony of the last weeks of her father's life, and I think mom was in so much pain that she made a decision tight then and there that she didn't want that pain deep down in her bones any more and decided to let her enemy win.

we keep saying to people that it's better if she's not suffering any more

it kills us inside but we don't want her to feel that pain anymore and we keep telling everyone that this is for the best.

Your Soul is Shaking

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

Listening to the Cancer Ads

Journey ' ~~-- 6 hattere weth poetry about her

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

from This Is What It's Reduced To Now

I make phone calls because now that my mother is dying and so far away this is what it's reduced to now

I call and dad answers

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

and the potassium pills are so large that they upset her stomach to swallow them

a pill apparently went down sideways, injured her throat so she has been unable to eat for over a week

now they gave her a liquid to slosh around in her mouth to make her numb so she can take her medication

not eat, but take her medication

###

this is what it's reduced to now, hearing bit by bit of her deterioration

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

Final Rally parts 1 and 3

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

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my brother described it as like her last rally her last chance to be happy, to live

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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

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

The Messenger

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

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

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

so I 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

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



I was in the minivan, dad's new car, driven only 930 miles dad driving, sister in the front seat me and brother in the back seats my husband behind me in the far back seat I waited so we could go to my mother's services she didn't want that well, they weren't services but dad thought the kids would want to see my mother before she was cremated so there we were, the family in ties in black dresses sitting and waiting in our little hearse to drive us to Fuller Funeral Home

for our final visit

we were in the car my husband was in the far back seat and he knew I was sad he sensed I was crying while the hearse took us to the funeral parlour and he reached his hand forward to take my hand to touch my shoulder, to something and I couldn't see his face but his hand was a grave consolation as our hearse rolled on to our chance to say farewell

I was trying not to cry in the ride in the hearse to the funeral parlour

### Јонгнеу

I've been a good Marine I've been trained to not cry but I couldn't help the tears at that point and I did my best to stifle them so no one would consider my sniffling and no one would question my faltering emotions

once we arrived, I think we were all afraid to go into that room to see her

well, I can't speak for anyone else I know I was afraid afraid of what I'd see afraid of

afraid of I don't know what afraid of the finality of it all

just afraid

so, I'm the littlest one

of course I let everyone else go in before me they're supposed to want to see her more

that's what I hear

and we walked in and there were many seats and you could see her face, asleep, peeking out of the coffin in the distance and we all just instinctively sat down dad finally walked to her and knelt before her coffin we watched him watch her pray for her talk to her I don't know what he was communicating with her he was with her and we all wanted that with her one more time knelt one sister went next, cried then a brother then another brother and I watched a procession of family members all older than me all seemingly more important all with more history with her than me and and my husband asked if I wanted him to go with me when I walked up to see my mother and I thought, no, I need to do this on my own

I finally walked up to her knelt before her, looked at her in the dress she wore to my wedding and thought she looked so beautiful she looked so peaceful

she looked like she was sleeping

and I hadn't seen her that peaceful in a long time every time I came to visit her since the disease started she always looked tired when she was awake otherwise she was asleep and looked fitful in her rest

## Јонгнеу

I looked at her eyebrows they were penciled in very nicely and I looked down at her nails and they were long, very nicely painted and the earrings we picked for her to wear were so dainty and so lovely and she looked so peaceful

and that's all I could keep thinking that she looked so well rested that she was just taking a good nap and she would be just fine

she had to be ### I looked at my mother one last time these coming thoughts would be my final words to her face this would be the last time I saw her

make it good, girl you're the one with the words tell her what you mean in fifty words or less that's how these services go, right?

so I told her that I loved her and I told her that I hope that I carry on any of her kindness because that's they way she'll live on because the world is filled with people who aren't nice who aren't kind and losing her makes the world a worse place people have told me that I am kind that I am nice and I only hope I can do you justice that I can somehow make this world a better place like you did

I only hope that I can do the world justice because the world needs you now, mom and you had to leave us

so what do we do now

before I left her that first time I started to run my hands along my chest into a cross because I wanted all of the spirits to know that you are there and that you are to be welcomed because you are blessed even if it's only from the likes of me

A Little Angel Inside

it seems strange, that on the day the towers fell five years ago where every television station and newspaper is praising our resolve for all of the death

that has been forced upon us well, it seems strange that this is the day the death certificates became available from Fuller Funeral Home and this is the day we pick up my mother's ashes

seems eerily strange

my sister is holding some ashes to be made into a diamond from mom so they came to us with a small container for her and a larger cardboard box of all of mom

and Kristina from Fuller Funeral Home even handed me a small maroon bag tied tightly shut and she whispered to me, "these are your mother's earrings"

I knew the dress we chose for her the dress she wore to my wedding would be burned with her in her cremation but it never occurred to me that the earring would survive

and here they are, in a little velour bag for me like how people try to keep something from the fall of the World Trade centers who lived through that horrendous day well, I think, maybe this is what I'll keep

if anyone argues about them I'll say, I lost her dress from my wedding for the cremation so these earrings are a gift to me now sorry

I know, they're clip-on earrings and they're not real diamonds but they are three pretty little stones today, tomorrow and forever and they look so dainty and delicate and they're a good way for me to remember her

when we left Fuller Funeral Home today dad carried the paperwork, the death certificates and I carried mom with us in her little containers and I think I held that little red bag like there was a little angel inside and I had to be delicate to make sure nothing happened to it because I was it's keeper now I'll treat it well and treasure it always I promise

the end of Story Telling

and now I sit and write this story and my father is sleeping in front of the tv in his lounge chair next to me he says it's more comfortable there to fall asleep and I'm listening to his breathing while he sleeps and I hear him panting every thirty seconds while he sleeps like he's having nightmares about it all still

and as I tell this story there's still a panic in the air even while we sleep

extinct on planet earth

saw a slew of books for sale recently of species now extinct on planet earth

some books were massive volumes, like large catalogs categorizing the now dead

and I heard a statistic a while ago saying a species goes extinct every 90 seconds

I mean, these books can't be up to date when so much in our world is dying so quickly

ninety nine percent of all species that have ever lived on earth are now gone

when I think of the death that precedes us, when I think of the death we see around us

I wonder, when a loved one dies do they become a name that will be forgotten

maybe listed in a catalog like all these long gone extinct species

I think of my mother

and I wonder, will all that is left of that life,

will it all be reduced to a line of type in small print, cataloged by genome

maybe there's a word or two, beyond a name but it's just a few words is this all that is left

old school and high-tech monuments

Johrney «««de Park feature with poetry about her

People stop to tell me they are sorry about my mom.

One woman hugged me and said, "they always take the good ones" —

because you'd think she had gone through enough in her life for crimes she didn't commit, so... Yeah, they always take the good ones. It *is* unfair. It's completely wrong. Someone has to be held accountable.

She was one of the good ones, and I hate you for taking her this way — I don't care who you are, you, who leaves me here to write until my fountain pen runs dry.

It becomes a mantra. Record her stories. Record her praises.

I will sit at my computer, slam my hands, my fingers against that keyboard because there has to be a record.

I'll share stories. I'll write volumes. Book after book with traces of her will infiltrate libraries and online book stores.

# Јонгнеу

I'll stand at every mountain peak, sing her praises, I'll give people copies of these words because as I said, there has to be a record.

And when the pens are gone, I'll prick my skin, spill my blood into words onto pages *that is what these words mean.* When my computer is obsolete, when the Internet is dead, I'll ram mallet to stone to chisel these words, create monuments to you.

You wanna see a record? Just know that civilizations aeons from now will see these testaments from salvaged libraries and carved from stone, and live for these words. Trust me.

## ###

We live in a world where everything speeds by in six second increments. The world says our youth has Attention Deficit Disorder because we cram a billion things down their throats instantaneously with every groundbreaking gadget to get all that info that much faster. ...So wait a minute, why worry so much about the word when sometimes the message brings the meaning? Then fine, time to get high tech. Let's start wit ha haiku, and make it a six second vine.

her existence makes trees take root, flowers bloom, so nature's beautiful.

Things are beautiful when you speak the truth, and hey, that could be a twitter poem post too... I'll put these writings in web pages, make them free downloadable PDF files, post them on Facebook. I'll go old school and print them in a magazine and a collection book too ... I'll use every resource at my disposal to blanket this planet with these words. Because as I said, there has to be a record. When a life that beautiful comes and goes, the world needs to stand up at attention and pay their respects.

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