

Spring Forward

It's hard to believe you are dying as a woman calls out to remind you to use your seat to turn your horse across the arena. The rhythm, the height, and the subtleties of communication with a horse just prove I am immensely present. It is difficult to fathom what a doctor saw in mid January to sentence me to three more months of life. I even allowed myself to see visions of hail and lions before the ides of March. And on the 16th I asked Rikki how many days should pass before I began to smell as if I was past my expiration date.

I wake to the sounds of sparrows. Sunshine and good deeds fill my calendar. I finish my evening chores to the chorus of peepers. Why then do I turn to tears and wine to dull the ache of the passage of time? It is rushing like the brook in the woods behind the north pasture. I am fervently trying to slow it, dam it, pool it, collect these precious memories flowing right by me, but I get tumbled like a stone. And I weep all over again.

We are all dying. Or, at least that is what the therapist told me when she heard my prognosis. And I want to retort something witty and harsh, but really, I just discovered that unless you have seen dying, you don't get it. If anyone got hit by that proverbial bus as often as people comment, we would have to drive through a foot of chum on every city street. How many therapists would it take to wash the unfortunate off their hybrid SUVs?

Which reminds me that the idea of forfeit is impossible as I watch my husband hunch over his chair to envelope my grandmother's chilly hand in both of his. She and I have been in an unfortunate race to the finish for almost 6 years now. Sadly, after my mom passed, we both pray she wins. It appears God is listening. I swoop in cheerfully meeting, delivering, explaining, consoling, arguing, feeding, fixing. And the two hour drive home is creepily quiet, like a movie where the volume has been removed so the viewer can focus on the impending accident. Only there isn't any, because I am dying in another way.

I breathe fully. I smell sweetness. I sucker-punch Jake when he's not looking, knowing that he is too big to retaliate now. Libby convinced me to shop, I convinced her to exercise. Rikki and laugh at the onset of most every argument. I sleep deeply.

I should tell Erin and Cy that I often dream of the sounds of their children. Saxophones weeping, rocks kerplunking, sneakers slapping, and eleven more trips to feed the neigh neighs. How will they know the reason I touch their faces every time I am leaving their house? How I try to memorize the cadence of their voices? That the beauty of being "Italian by love" is indeed enough to cement families?

Living alongside of Death is exhausting. I never know if I am supposed to ignore Him, or set a place at the table. My life is rich and full and fun and honest and if it just cut to black their would be but little grief. The plans and the future and the decisions are what make me crazy. And He just laughs when I start to Google statistics or finances or retirement communities. Like the therapist, I want to deliver a sassy punch line, or an insightful epitaph. But fear wont allow it.

Depression was beginning to win. Until I started this essay. Then I remembered that the book saved my life. And that the reader understands. And the toxins need to be expelled. So I vomit on this page and hope that the dryness on my face is a sign of the next month's calm. Because it takes a village and I am fortunate enough to have social media