

What If I Die Now?

Category: The Middle of the Night

written by Christine Marete | October 29, 2016

The mood was grim in our house on this night, as it always was when my mother was at her sickest. My mother was suffering at the hands of what I know now to be systemic rheumatoid arthritis: the pain was clearly eating up her soul and body alike.

I looked at her as I helped with her evening pills, hoping they would bring some magic to lift the cloud hanging above us. I looked at her hands, so deformed by this monster of a disease, and I feared I might cry in front of her. I knew she wouldn't like this at all but I couldn't shake the voice of her saying that she thought she would die tonight. Or did she say "wished"? I was twelve years old at the time and the meaning was probably lost to me. She did in fact catch the teary look on my face, and truly like a mother she knew what was on my mind. "What if I die now, would it be so bad?" she asked. I mumbled something to the effect that this was not happening but of course evaded the real question.

My mother died some ten years after this late-night incident, after a long, desperate struggle with poorly controlled pain. She has been dead nine years to this date.

The events of many a night unfolded in a similar manner with even more unanswered questions, but this day remains with me. Many a night I look up at the ceiling and can't help but wonder if I did say the right thing. Many a night I mourn what this represents to me as pain that was poorly controlled, driving one woman and many others out there to such depths of despair. Many a night I think of these things as I arrive to care for my patients and do right by them, whenever the opportunity arises.

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