

Urury



Begun Dec. 6 1998. Lasqueti Island

This is a work of non-fiction; any resemblance to persons living or dead is purely intentional. An Obituary.

I'm not borrowing from Albert Camus when I mention my mother's eminent death. My mother has logged 97 years and will not reach the millenium. She may not last out this year. I have logged 65 years, and unless something most untoward happens my mother will die before I do. And, as they say, I am not the picture of health.

I have not seen Charline since the end of September. She has planned to come here for Christmas this year; in fact we have been more or less planning this for more than a year. However Charline has recently said she did not want my mother to die alone; so this may interfere with our plans. Buggerall.

Mother is located in a franchised nursing home. Her physical health has been precarious for some time; and her mental health is something unfathomable. She has literally no short term memory. She will get out of bed, work her way to the nurse's station, requesting to be put to bed. She will get up to go to the toilet, and often falls on her way. The indignity of it all. Mother, the private dignified person, would be appalled. She has never learned to use the call button; and most likely would not receive a response in any case (for some time). Nursing homes are understaffed, and judging from the size of many of its workers, disproportionately larger, there is a great motivation problem. Charline tells me they are being good to her. With a name like Good Samaratan!

Mother will barely eat a mouthful, and is alive mostly from the fortified drinks that feeding specialists will give to non-eaters. We have all decided against feeding tubes. Mother cannot walk without the use of a walker, and only for very short distances, for the lack of strength and balance. For perhaps 20 hours of the day she is curled up in her bed. Very short periods of time are spent in a wheel chair (on the good days when she might consent to be wheeled into the dining room for a mouthful and a fortified drink).

Old Age, when it reaches this impasse, is a most depressing sight to view. The heart beats away against all



reason. Life does not need to be sentient in order to continue on. This of course doesn't say much for life. It does say something about morality and the lucrative profit to be made in the Nursing Home business. The outfit that cares for her operates 240 such facilities scattered across the country (U S of A).

Because life does appear to stubbornly persist, we feel it is not our right to interfere. Would we feel better if we could interfere? Charline and I say 'Shoot me!' to each other, when it looks like we are in such a state, but we know we wouldn't.

It would not help me to know how old people are cared for in other countries, or other situations in this country where one cannot make it to the Nursing Home.

When mother fell in her apartment at age 95, breaking three ribs, the bell had knelled its first of many "Fall Down You May, Get Up You Must" pedal points. The first intermediate stage found her living with us (me) for two months while the ribs healed, and while we decided what to do next. Mother at this time was almost unbearable to live with. Besides being in constant need of some kind of attention, her attitude was foul. She would lie abed, declaring she wanted to die, refusing to eat. She could not be left unattended for any period of time. Eventually the decision was made, with only her minimal consent, to locate in an assisted living facility. I was relieved, and knew instinctively that I would never be the caregiver for my mother again. For me a most thankless task. When my mother was raising me as an infant and wiping my ass, there was much more reward for my mother. Being a mother is more rewarding than looking after someone who openly resents everything you do for them. I don't remember resenting my mother.

I can only imagine my mother's thinking or feeling process. I imagine when she found herself dependent upon others she realized she had lost a freedom she valued highly, and a sense of privacy, which also she valued highly. She no longer had any control over her own destiny in her own cubicle. She lost her ability to make a good impression. There was little of her that was allowed the freedom to create the illusion of a circumspect, orderly and decently led existence. She could no longer be proud of her self-sufficiency. After mother's



back surgery at 88, and being discharged from the hospital, she required further pain management and physical therapy (rehabilitation) at a local nursing home, which drew from her an acute response: ‘pest house’). Charline helped her a great deal in those last years after the back surgery. Often it was a bit of help Charline had performed ‘for your own good’, for mother, which sometimes provoked strong resentments and sometimes unpredictable reactions, which would greatly annoy both Charline and I. She needed to be reminded rather firmly that Charline was doing these things only for her and no body else. So there.

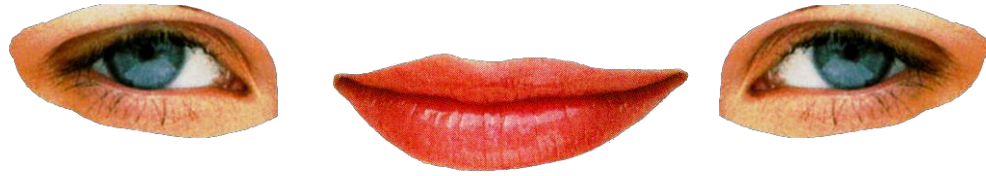
There was no doubt that her mind was deteriorating, that her strength and balance were diminishing; that her whole being was fading into something she could not control nor would choose for herself.

After a series of falls, probably brought on by mini-strokes, mother eventually broke a hip, which ended her in the same hospital once again, and more rehabilitation in another nursing home throughinwhich she became relocated and a permanent resident, spending down her ‘little’ capital and living long enough to require Medicaid. At \$3,600.00/ month little capital takes on a new meaning.

Each time mother would end in the hospital, our family physician felt it was the end. But mother would not refuse to stop breathing, even though observing her in the hospital, I was inclined to agree with the physician. Her most recent fall in the nursing home resulted in blindness; perhaps a hematoma pressing on the optic nerve. She struck her head. Will she live long enough to see again? she seems to recognize Charline’s voice. She holds onto Charline with all her strength. When she couldn’t see, at first she thought she was caught in a snow storm; it frightened her.

For surviving so long in the manner she has, she should be allowed to live for ever and given back her brain so she can go on working crossword puzzles, watching and listening to game and quiz shows, and watching golf and bowling, until someone drops the inevitable bomb. Or the proverbial shoe. Don’t tell me that isn’t a life.

I think I am a compassionate person. I will do many things for other people out of a genuine desire to be



helpful. However I find it very difficult to relate to demanding and unreasonable people. I do not require gratitude; perhaps recognition is sufficient. We all do certain things without being self-conscious about them. There is a certain secret joy that occurs through the act of doing something for others without being asked. I seldom felt this way with mother.

This extension of oneself often becomes complicated by the other's reluctance or inability to receive something that they feel isn't going to do them a damned bit of good; i.e. e.g., if one wants to be left alone to die, and one brings in the violins, he or she is interfering.

Yes! the old lady is interfering with our plans; her last statement; we are the ones she can affect; nobody else anywhere in the world is affected by whatever happens to mother. Her annuity will stop coming; her social security will stop coming; her trust account from her sister will stop coming. That's about it. Nobody else cares. She doesn't even care. But if she were alert to the consequences of her condition, that it was preventing Charline and I from being together, she would exhibit a concern for our welfare.

I believe I have such little time remaining myself that this prolongation has cost me dearly, in terms of the importance of an experience for which I have been waiting for ten years, and which Charline and I have dreamed. Caput!!

December 11, 1998. Mother Died Today. Not literarily.

So now, don't you feel selfish, you asshole? God damned ambivalence in this life.

One feels many things, without stretching the limits of non-fiction. The violins didn't help. Earlier they got a rise out of her; she could see the humor of it all. But that was two years ago. Despite her apparent memory problems, mother was pretty sharp almost to the end; she always knew when someone was patronizing her. She had a high resistance to friendly persuasion and/or reasonable arguments concerning what she should, or should not, do. She had earned the right to know what she wanted. And what she had in her old age is not what she wanted.

Charline is a wonderfully compassionate person, who was unwilling to cast some fatalistic spell over her own reasoning. She was determined not to let mother die



alone. They were never real friends, but mother tolerated her as much as she did anyone. And Charline was always willing to be there for her (for almost 30 years). Charline respected her and admired her willingness to live with little, and give always some of the little she had. Mother was an example of sensible living, one who was always making moves for a healthful existence. She was not a controlling person, she was not an insecure person. All in all she received little enough from others; but at the same time she was oddly resistant and reserved with others, never inviting warm emotional contact. She chose her company very selectively and could detect phoniness a mile away.

I was never close to mother. For this I can offer only a plausible explanation. It was father who commanded the center stage. Essentially mother did not exist. But of course this is not fair to her. My emotions were not linked to my mother. They were linked to father almost entirely.

My brother feels mother abandoned him to the nuns. I don't feel this way, but for a period of our lives there was no mother, and no father, only nuns. One makes some kind of adjustment emotionally when this kind of experience occurs.

I know mother always felt badly about that time in our lives; she never seemed to forgive herself. I don't suppose my brother or I made it easy to 'forgive and forget', that is, my brother always made it an issue in our discussions, and pretty much ignored her in his adult life. To me it did not seem to be any cause for rejection of mother. It just happened.

Many things happen.

Did I love my mother? What is love? Did Charline love my mother? I believe she did. Charline is an amazingly human person. Grace was my mother. Charline was raised in a family where there was, in her words, a lot of love. 'Mother' meant something very special, even though she was dominated by her mother. My mother would be someone special. Charline wanted to be close to my mother for her own reasons, and was as close to her as perhaps anyone in her later life. I believe mother had a special fondness and trust in Charline.

Question Is: Would I have allowed my mother to die alone? I cannot honestly answer the question.

I haven't stopped thinking of mother, and her end. Some



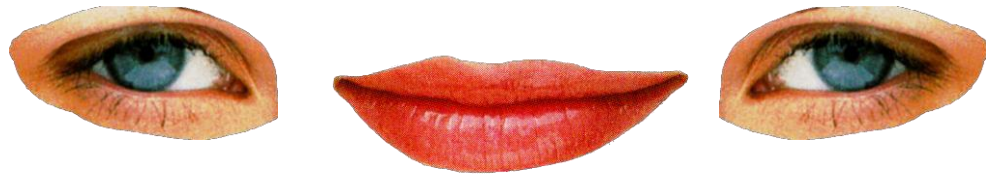
end. A life in the traces, dying not like Jack London's Dave, but as some programmed thing that wouldn't let go; and something left by the wayside; in the dying warehouse; useless.

In our home we have her ashes in a black box. In the other home, where I am now, there is a blown-up image of her, aged 96, taken from a photograph in the nursing home two years ago at Xmas time. She is looking intently (you can see her eyes) through her glasses at the person (me) taking the photograph. She is looking at her son; she is putting forth her best self in her expression. Even when she was younger, as a teenager for example, she always acted a little, before the camera. A little bit of cuteness and coyness. But all that reserve. She lived for 97 years, but held much of it in reserve. There was no good reason to let much of herself go.

It is more important for me to say these few things than to tell you she came from a family of twelve siblings, seven sisters and four brothers, that she outlived them all; after her marriage, mostly apart from them. Her father died at 42, when she was three. Her mother died when I was four. She spent a lot of her youth helping her mother. She worked at the nearby GE factory. She married when she was 30 years old, and bore me when she was 32 years old, and my brother when she was 34 years old. She worked in two institutions for the mentally defective as a practical nurse. She worked in a Junior College as a practical nurse. She put up with my father and his aberrations, travesties, belittlings, and philanderings for 37 years. When she retired at 67 from the Junior College, she left my father **FOREVER**. She is survived by my brother and I, by seven grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

In addition to the blown-up photograph of my mother I have hanging above the photo her simple stitched embroidery of flowers and grasses with some whimsical bugs. The pattern was printed on a piece of linen, stretched on a canvas frame. Even so, it is a cheerie colorful thing to see. There are three lady bugs and one flying bee. I don't know if they were part of the pattern. But maybe it was the bugs that got her to do the rest of the more or less elaborate sewing. However, it's something you might see in a county fair, along with a lot of other county fair offerings, not paying it much attention. Something you

Urary



might pick up at the Goodwill or the Sally Ann for a dollar. Talk about child labor. But it was mother's art work.



If you are wondering what the smiling eyes are doing in the headings of these pages, you might wonder if I am not being a little whimsical and coy like my mother. They are not the eyes of my mother, or any one I know in particular. As a matter of fact the eye is only one eye that has been inverted. The two eyes are placed upon the page separately. The lips are from the same person placed upon the page separately. The features are intended to convey a friendly presence looking benignly and not unfavorably on all that transpires. I have also printed some blank pages with only these headings, and with the lips inverted for alternating pages.

There he goes again with his irrelevancies. Don't be too sure about that. Most of life is irrelevant. Mother's ending, dying and death were irrelevant to her life.

This is a continuation of the story of how we relate to the aged.

This is a work of non-fiction; any resemblance to persons living or dead is purely intentional. It is not An Obituary, although the application of the term to what you are about to read may apply.

This part of the tale again involves that wonderful person you met in the first half of this narrative; Charline. It will involve other individuals as well.



Charline went to a hospital to visit an elderly friend, almost eighty, who was hospitalized after other friends of the elderly person had detected a change in her behavior. It was suspected and later learned the elderly person had ‘suffered a stroke’. The elderly person deserves her own identity, so I will give it to her here. She is known as Trouser.

We have known Trouser for 22 years, and consider her our friend; more friend than anything else. If I fail to capitalize Trouser (Trouser) in this text it does not mean I am relegating Trouser to one leg of a pair of trousers. I imagine the plural of Trousers indicates the two legs associated with trousers rather than a pair of trousers (two pairs of trousers [Trousers] anybody? Help!). Bear with me, there will not be much humor found in this tale; rancor perhaps. But I am insuppressible when it comes to wisecracking, even when trying to relate serious matters.

Trouser, to me, has always been a private and reserved person. I also knew her husband of some forty years who had left this life eleven years earlier. He was known as John. Trouser was wholly committed to John as a partner and as the person who brought her to what she often referred as “the end of the road”. When John departed, Trouser was bereft in so many ways, but continued on silently, trying to maintain what they had accomplished at the end of the road. For a long time she was very subdued, somehow never fully recovering emotionally and spiritually. Eventually, through attrition, she could not maintain what had been started at the end of the road, choosing instead to leave rather than watch it deteriorate further because she could no longer persevere. And besides, living at ‘the end of the road’ meant living without most of the conveniences we have come to expect in the western world, a hardship for someone without much energy or skills to solve the mechanical difficulties that would arise. Trouser would seldom call upon her friends to help her in any way.

When she moved away, it wasn’t that far away that we did not see her fairly often and speak with her on the telephone. In her new circumstances she led a quiet reserved life as before, regaining some of her old self, and not under pressure to preserve something beyond her means. Her new quarters located on back street on five



acres was equipped minimally with some of the conveniences we expect in a western world household. She seemed satisfied. She had had offers from her son who lived in a Huge City to come to live permanently with him and his family, which she declined for many reasons, some clear and some not so clear. Being a very family oriented person, her refusal was not a lightly considered matter.

Her back street life might have continued in its own western world way, in its minimal private independent self-sufficiency.

But 'fate' intervened.

'Fate is a cruel taskmaster'.

Trouser was not completely devastated by the apparent stroke. But she was incapacitated in some small ways and in ways that initially would make her return to her private quarters difficult. Trouser had not lost any of awareness or any of her personality. 'Trouser was still Trouser', what one longtime friend who had traveled many miles to visit her characterized, 'but just less of her'. We had also visited her, finding her slow, without much energy, and in a wheel chair. But from the very first awareness of her predicament, she wanted to return to her own private place on this planet.

But there were others, whom at the outset we shall describe as 'well-meaning', or 'well-intentioned', who began to take over her life. Some of these were 'friends'. Some were members of her own family. We were not amongst the same category of the well-intentioned. We wanted what Trouser wanted. Trouser wanted out of the hospital, feeling she could recover much better in her own space.

All the 'well-intentioned' were in league to make sure Trouser was fit to return. She was moved within the hospital from a bed in a ward to a bed in the rehabilitation part of the hospital. There she was evaluated on a weekly basis. The next step was intended by the 'well-intentioned' to be a nursing home facility where she could be more rigorously readied or prepared for a return to her own quarters. Followed again by a fancy get-yourself-ready halfway-to-home quarters where you could practice daily living.

We were not privy to the details of this schedule devised by the 'well-intentioned' which included her family members.

On the day of Charline's second visit of Trouser in the



rehab ward of the hospital, Charline found herself bringing the patient 'home'. Trouser wanted out; the hospital rehab felt it did all it could do for her. Since it was Trouser's will to leave, after some paperwork she was released in the care of Charline.

Then 'the roof fell in'. Not literally of course. A metaphor.

The legion of the 'well-intentioned' 'hit the roof' with such an impact that it fell, still speaking metaphorically.

Charline was marooned within her indiscretion.

Remember what I wrote about Charline not wanting to let my mother die alone. What does that tell you about Charline? Enough said.

The well-intentioned friends were furious, and the family was P.O.ed. All those well-intentioned thought they had Trouser on track, so much on track in fact, that they could almost forget about her, and the well-intentioned could get on with their own lives.

Well, 'fate' had intervened again. Trouser had found someone to do her bidding. Charline.

The roof not only fell but the shit still remains on the walls after hitting the fan; its almost like the fallout after a nuclear explosion; only in this case brought about by a somewhat helpless old lady. Helpless in the sense that nobody was helping her to get WHAT SHE WANTED. The well-intentioned were getting what they wanted.

Of course, many of you are familiar with these altercations between and amongst the well-intentioned and the doers in this life, especially as regards what to do with the old folks.

What to do with old folks is symptomatic of a host of social ills; ills engendered by too much and too many. No really useful purpose is being served by anyone of us, but here we are, all 7,000,000,000 of us; just out of the womb, just about to croak, with a lot of in betweens. What is a social ill? A social ill is an unresolved human problem. Not a problem of what to do with too many dogs or cats, but almost. Drugs, drunk driving, youth shooting up the place; gee, lots of others promoting and trading in violence; celebrities becoming assholes; and what to do with old folk, like problem children or social misfits (social retards), or miscreants; or the stupid, lame, and blind. And what to do about broken marriages and dismembered families. The Human Condition assails us.



When you have an old folk on your hands who has fallen by the wayside, but continues to breath, your humanity is usually suddenly called upon to do something, especially if that person is a family member, a loved one, or even a friend. Many of us are caught in these circumstances mid-stride; that is, we are going somewhere in our own lives. We have bought plane tickets to Shangri-La, we were putting a new roof on the house, or we were planning to watch the last episode of some TV epic; and maybe we had just sat down after a hard day, and were about to kick off our shoes when the phone rang. And some of us have just had a Bad Day already in the stock market or with the price of gold.

‘Life isn’t fair’, I have heard it said. (**Buggerall**).

We each respond differently. As family members we might have already arranged things by acquiring the power of attorney, or having obtained a medical directive from the older family member.

Many even have arranged for the disposal of the remains of what had been a family member. Life goes on.

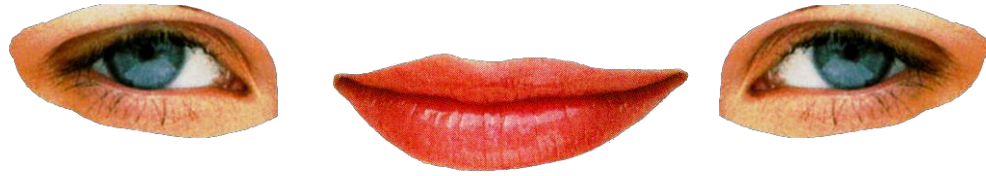
Thing is, what do we do with our sense of obligation, our common humanity, our guilt, our being inconvenienced; can we play that last hole of golf before we have to do anything?

Well, with Trouser some things were in place before hand, like the power of attorney, and perhaps the medical directive that says if I’m a vegetable, don’t keep me going on life support.

When Trouser lost control of her body; that is, when something went wrong, and sensed by a friend, who eventually became one of the well-intentioned, she was rushed off to the hospital.

A stroke, which greatly enfeebled her, but did not destroy her. What to do? Those with the power over her life had decided to follow the warehouse approach; I call it the warehouse approach. You turn over the ‘victim’ to the social services available to deal with old folks in trouble. Without their consent. Without their consent.

Intrinsically there is nothing wrong with the warehouse approach, especially if one is ill-equipped to deal with a fallen victim. And especially if one is very busy in their own life, and cannot deal with the victim, loved one, mother. It’s a very plausible solution for the decision maker. Again,



without the consent of the victim.

Well, the victim is in no position to make any decisions. Falling down deprives you of your freedom; the well-intentioned take over.

Oh! Yes, the well-intentioned pay lip service to the notion that all individuals, regardless of their incapacities, should be allowed their own choice in how they are disposed, handled, abandoned, or even warehoused, or not warehoused. But the well-intentioned cannot deal with the appearance of things, the appearance of not having done all they could in human terms, even though they do all they can in what they view as practical terms. Very often these very same well-intentioned turn into, for the lack of a better expression, Assholes.

They meddle in ones life for your/her own good. They become wise counselors, full of hand-wringing plausibilities.

Then there are the others, advocates of the victim. Some might even be considered bleeding hearts; impractical, irresponsible meddlers.

“If she wants to die on her front door step, dragging on a fag, who are we to interfere?”

Some of this contingent are viewed as suckers, easily manipulated by the victim.

Others are completely indifferent. “Everybody has to go sometime.”

The first line of defense, the hospital, claimed it had done all it could, within its stated purpose and function, to help Trouser. And Trouser wanted out. Charline, again, one of the caring contingent, who responded to Trouser’s request for deliverance, happened to be present when the hospital was making its declaration, and when the clarion echo of Trouser’s sentiments were resonating within Charline, decided to whisk her away to where Trouser wanted most to be. Alone. But Charline, the famous; have I not already made her famous for what she might do with her human capacities, did not leave her alone. She stood by while Trouser stumbled around in her aloneness.

Many of the well-intentioned asked “Who the fuck does she think she is?” “What’s she gonna do if Trouser falls?” “Is she gonna stay with Trouser forever?” “Sucker!” But not all. Others supported Charline for doing what they imagined they would have done. Perhaps in their own experience they knew of others who had been warehoused against their will;



or perhaps their sympathies were impractical resolutions to a modern dilemma of what to do with the old folks. For some reason or other we humans have a very difficult time putting our money where our mouf is. Only Jesus Christ possessed the magic to raise people from the dead. His job was easy; the rest of us have to stick it out, that is, live with our decisions. Many of us want to become involved; only later, not today.

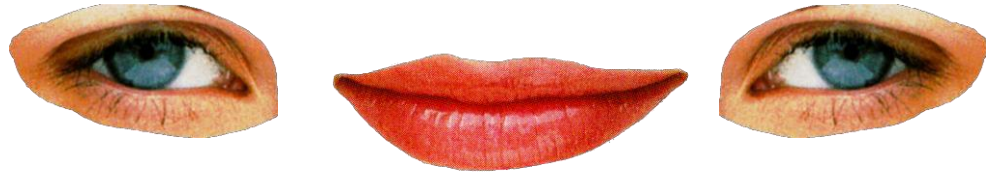
Then others who wavered in their commitment thought it would be best if Trouser was left alone, because Trouser wanted to be left alone. If she wants to left alone then I really don't have to get involved, I don't have to answer to my own compulsions to do the human thing; I can sit right where I am, and leave Trouser alone because that is what Trouser wants; I support her in her wish to be alone. I'll visit her when I get around to it, when it is more convenient.

Old folk, social ill.

You already know how I operate. When I visited Trouser while Charline was still in attendance, I observed Trouser's laborious plodding, her brain devising things for her laggard body to do. It appeared to me that someone should be close by. Perhaps the hospital could do nothing for her; perhaps a nursing home could do nothing for her; perhaps the fancy halfway warehouse with others looking after her would have been an OK alternative. It was clear that the only person who could help Trouser was Trouser.

Her body had to 'heal'. Trouser's body had to relearn many simple tasks. In some ways it was like watching a toddler learning to walk, to get the hang of it. But toddlers are little pieces of rubber; when they can't get it right, and fall, they bounce right back up, perhaps bawling; frustrated. Of course, Trouser would not bounce, so she could 'ill-afford' to fall. The toddler might sustain a bump on the noggin once in a while, but Trouser could not so sustain; more than likely she would be rushed to the hospital to languish further in her horrible aged predicament.

I know I can do nothing but commiserate, as I did with my mother. I could do only so much with my mother. Society is willing to do only so much with all the abandoned old people. They are on their way out, dragging their parts after them. There is nothing we can offer to uphold a quality of life. Charline talks of a 'quality of life'. She and I tramped the



halls of nursing homes and halfway houses. They mostly smell of disinfectant and urination. Their linoleum squared floors are polished, their hallways wide with rails; their walls covered with scenes depicting Elysia, the ceilings, some beaverboard tiling; all this drab fare painted in a lackluster institutional coloration, emphasizing what we feel, from the minute we are born, in all the institutions we have entered. Schools, colleges, hospitals, court houses, even churches; and even the ticky-tacky of our mass-produced homes, perhaps metaphorically identified as jails.

Yes!, "Quality of life". Where a person moves around in their own comfort zones, with all the things in place, all the memories and set-pieces that might bore someone else to-death. I know I have to go soon, although I cannot dwell upon the subject. I keep at it, building, gardening, watching the orchard grow, writing; staring at the sea; my wallpaper, the sea; always changing, moving, harboring its mysterious properties to attract and charm. I hope that when I go the 'quality' will be there; I will be sitting surrounded by my wallpaper, the sights and sounds will close over me; and though dead and gone, I will imagine I am there forever.

Let no man, let no well-intentioned, let no bureaucrat interfere. Let me live long enough to read those sealed journals of Sylvia Plath. I know that is a lot to ask. That's ten more years. I would be eighty years old. Sylvia would have been eighty years old in 2013.

In the meantime I often fritter what little time remains. I even persist in annoying others with righteousness. Often one's dealings with others bring on fits of righteousness. Often these others are made of diminished character; they will only go so far in honoring their commitments, their bargains, their deals with their fellow man. So one does battle with those of diminished character. One stupidly persists on his side of the argument, wasting away the valuable hours. Intoxicated with humanity. Possessed; the brain muddled, while the wallpaper scintillates before one's very eyes.

Yes!, my mother and Trouser. Feeble old folks; there, with the grace of You Know Who, will go I. Let me go with all my dignity. Do not bring me low with your intentions to do well by me, to make sure I am not an inconvenience to the rest of you. If I am to become just another one who will pass



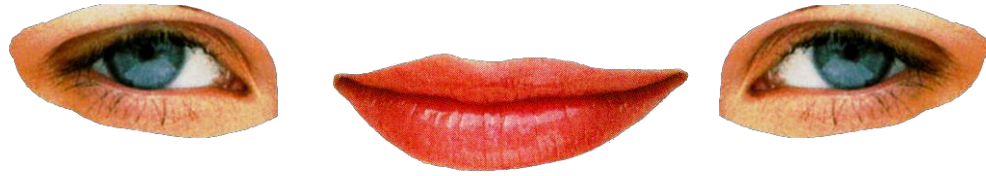
on in an indifferent Universe, into an indifferent Eternity, let me suffer with the indifference on my own terms; allow me the displeasure of your feigned concern. Perhaps I imagine your indifference; it may even be simpler than that; you may not even be aware enough to become indifferent; a blessing!?

Me, I am not so indifferent, as this will attest. But I can do only so much, I will do only so much; anything beyond involves too much of me that takes away from what I am. I am, I am. How else to say it? A surfeit of meness sitting in his wallpaper, being what it is that life has installed and instilled in me. Charline admonishes I should not apologize, although that is what I feel inclined to do.

The perorations, the appeals to my humanity began when I was a toddler, admonishing me to think of the other person, the other person being sometimes my mother, or my brother, certainly my father. Very often me was neglected entirely with my concern for others, but not for very long. I would sneak away into myself when I could, not to be dislodged by any peroration or appeal. However, after a youth spent with such admonitions, I became a cripple, limping along with my barely disguised humanity. Because I thought of myself as a human, I wanted what humans get as humans. I wanted humanity. And when I don't do the humanity thing, I feel I ought to apologize for my selfishness. A cripple apologizing for his limp; my corrupted humanity.

I know you are wondering whether this Charline person is as 'goodie' as she seems. Let me put it this way. If you were in need, she would be there. Does she have her faults? Yeah!, when the well-intentioned misunderstand her and undermine her, when they belittle her, when they attack her, or do not even want to speak to her, then she has to listen to me repeating after Herman: "By how much more pains ye take to please the world, by how much the more shall ye ever go thankless." Then she feels better. She's not only well-intentioned, she is a good kid, a doer, no advance press about her concern, just in there getting muddy while the roof caves in. If I want to stay just stuck to my wallpaper she will see to it that I do.

As I write, the tale is incomplete. Trouser must survive in order to vindicate herself and Charline. It would be sad if the well-intentioned were vindicated; some might even



consider hauling Charline into court for interfering; for assuming a risk not within her prerogatives. A punishable indiscretion, like negligent homicide. Of course, that is a stretch. But these days, you never know about the reach of litigious righteousness.

And even after that had passed, would we be any closer to the humane, truly humane, solution to the aged? Could we drop everything we were doing to serve those who are about to leave?

Often we breath a sigh of relief when they make their exit. They, and we, have lingered in a limbo between life and death. Somehow this becomes an endurance test for our humanity. And when they do pass on, a great weight is lifted.

I did what I did, and I do what I do. Do these define the limits of my humanity? Have I set the standard of concern for those that would foolishly feel they had to deal with the burden of my exit?

Charline knows her own mother's exit will be a test of her humanity. I believe if I am still around for that occasion, I would be without a wife, so preoccupied and dedicated would she be. She denies this of course, and regards the prospect with some dread. But, if we know Charline by her deeds, we know where she will be. Already her mother feels comfortable knowing that Charline would do everything she could to honor her parents wishes; to live and die at home. Charline's grandmother died in her own mother's home. A deed done. Living and dying at home requires a great deal if the exit is a prolonged and lingering affair.

Charline almost bitterly asked, "Who will be there to look after me?" She already suspects I will be long gone, a fact that saddens me; alone, alone, alone. But one never knows; hopefully she would find another as companion. All idle conjecture of course.

There is no humanity bank, or love bank, where one can deposit humanity or love, albeit, as surety against the future. There is only the other kind of bank, where all that one is or was, is converted into a medium of exchange, but which cannot procure either humanity or love.

As you can readily observe, non-fiction sometimes reads like fiction. To further elaborate on this quandary,

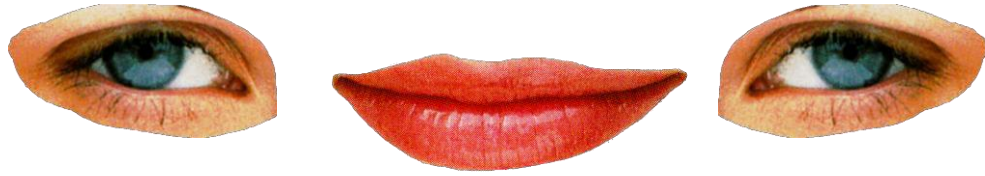


allow me to reveal the inner workings of a logic peculiar to bureaucracies.

It has been opined by those operating the hospital in which Trouser found herself that the first three months following a stroke are critical in terms of the success of a recovery; recovery being non-specified. Laying around in those first three months would be inadvisable. Of course, from the beginning Trouser felt that being in her own home would speed up any recovery. After three weeks in the hospital the hospital staff decided it could not do anything more for Trouser. That meant that part of her recovery was terminated. OK Doakay Hospital, I'm outta here. As mentioned the next part of the recovery was intended to take place in the warehouse; instead Trouser skipped that part.

It has also been opined that an individual living in their home is a much better situation for the individual, and the state. The bureaucracies are greatly relieved when the individual ceases to be a burden to the state, all philosophies and opinions aside. BUT, once you have broken the thread, getting any service from the state is, well, what is it really, a kind of waste of time, regardless of the prevailing philosophies. Once you have broken the thread you have assumed responsibility for yourself. Even though the first three months are critical, don't count on the bureaucracies to make sure that you receive what it is to optimize your recovery. If physical therapy seems advisable, you had better make sure you stay plugged in, because if you request it from your home, where everybody agrees you ought to be, you might have to wait several weeks. Well, that does not fit in with the master plan for optimizing recovery. The state does not object to the individual hiring private physical therapists. The state wants to get rid of you so that it does not have to serve you. Even though the state benefits in terms of cost and in terms of bed space by having you located in the home, and even though it arguably speeds recovery for the individual to be there, the state has washed its hands of pursuing the effectiveness of assisting or implementing recovery. The state inadvertently, perhaps unwillingly, looks after vegetables that do not have any chance of recovery, while those with the better chance of recovery are left to their own recognizance, without the support of the state.

Urary



What I write here has been classed as non-fiction because it really happens, whereas it sounds like fiction because all the sense of logical progression is ignored.

Last Entry May 11 2005: I woke this morning realizing I could have and should have been kinder to my mother. I walk by her photograph everyday without looking at it, just like I lived in the same town seldom visiting her. I visited her more in the nursing home which wasn't very often. And she died in the nursing home while her son was off tending his soul and being creative.

Charline is the really thoughtful and kind person who was there.

