



Volume 15
Issue 1
2019

Advance Directives / Narcan

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Advance Directives

If the situation should arise in which there is no reasonable expectation of my recovery,
you've asked that I provide instructions.

In the event that I am incapacitated, you've said it would be prudent of me to spell out
to a designated representative exactly what can and can't be done to my body.

Furthermore, it has been suggested by other reasonable people to consider such things when I
am of sound mind and body so that I can die with dignity, since dying with dignity is all any of us can ask and since we can't ask not to die.

If the situation should arise when I am unable to make my own healthcare decisions—
unlike now when I smell onions frying and the curry leaves mingle perfectly with the goat and I've just seen the wood duck claim the box I hung in the cedar swamp and I can't stop smiling at the twang of the banjo and I feel randy for the first time since winter began—unlike now when life-sustaining measures are less brutal.



In the event that my heart is so diseased that it falls into a renegade rhythm, pulsing and pumping
indiscriminately while my abandoned kidneys scream
and my hands and toes purple in quiet protest,
perhaps I don't want reasonable people to mount my chest like bushwhackers crashing the forest, smash my ribs and slam my heart silly back into this world.

If the situation should arise that I can't breathe and I open my mouth as wide as I can and suck and
heave the air with all my strength, but still can't usher enough of it into my lungs, am I thinking of dignity?

It is in accordance with my convictions and beliefs that I have loved someone well for fifty years
and my heart warms like a cat in the sun when I see him. The tap dancer so in love with the gentle rhythm of her own clicks can't imagine her body imploding from a tumor.

I request that my health care agent make decisions in accordance with my wishes, knowing also that
I've wasted my life until now, and while I lie dying I see the softest snowfall for the first time and ask that you disregard anything previously uttered by my sound mind and body.



Narcan

It's like a fantasy, a fierce
correction of the stars:

superhero on the scene,
grabs morphine by the scruff,

yanks the milk-mouthed
from their glut of ecstasy.

It's straightforward
as prayer, humble

as a wish. What else
on earth can do this?

The chemical crane—
deus ex machina—

that lifts soldiers
good as gone,

turns their limp bodies over
onto dry sand,

fixes their eyes
back into the sun.

I can see her blue lips whiten,
her glistening skin dry,

her caved chest arches,
and her mouth springs open,
strains like a chick for breath,
her breast a heaving bellows.



And then that softening
of her face,

a gentle tic
around her lip.

I believe.
But so must she
accept

the burden
of pure gift.

Andrea Lee Fry published her first collection of poems, *The Bottle Diggers*, in May 2017 (Turning Point Press). She is a nurse practitioner at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.
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