Advance Directives / Narcan

Andrea Lee Fry

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.

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