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February Essay

The Best Dance Ever

Hospice. A recurrence of cancer. Metastasized nine years later to the brain and my adult daughter and I were caring for my wife in our home.

Discovered the cancer after a fall from a bike where she broke an orbital bone and after the MRI the nurse looked me in the eye and said in a serious voice, twice, “You need to see a doctor,” without telling me what was on the x-ray.

The hospital back home called us to set up an appointment. There, we walked into a room with a doctor and four others in lab coats. I guessed later that they were there in case we broke down. Two for each of us. He hands an x-ray of my wife’s brain to us and it is mostly white. That was the cancer. About all my wife and I could say was, “Wow.” We both saw it from a place of curiosity and spiritually; how did this happen?

Susan cared deeply about the injustices in the world. Before the fall she had talked about walking across America as a peace pilgrim. She had been on staff for the Hunger Project and had an infinity for mothers and new-borns as a doula. Near the end, having lost sight in one eye, I remember her sitting cross-legged on the couch and with heart-breaking sobs asked why children died in this world. It is my belief that she couldn’t stand it anymore and wanted to leave the planet to assist from the spiritual world.

Radiation was started while my wife continued with life, taking long walks and journaling. Given six months, she lived for seven. The last two weeks she was bedridden.

My daughter and I both had been trained in basic nursing / bedside skills. I controlled the IV drip and didn’t want my wife to suffer. My daughter preferred a smaller dosage to support my wife in being more conscious.

I would swing and lift her into a sitting position on the edge of the bed, then grabbing under the arms, stand her up and hold her while my daughter cleaned and changed the diaper. I said, "What a wonderful dance," and she would say, "The best dance ever."

A couple of days before she passed she sat bolt straight up and expressed in a strong voice displeasure with me over old scars. The rest of hospice time we expressed our deep love for each other, cried and laughed together, and reminisced. We were complete, having said it all.

Friends came over to say goodbye. The day she passed I had just taken a shower when I was urgently called into her room. I missed her last breath by a minute. I guess she wanted it that way.

That night I had just gotten into bed when I saw a bright, silver dollar size star-light streak from left to right at the foot of the bed. I was amazed and then smiled, acknowledging the thin curtain between here and there.