Thursday Memo – November 15, 2018

Recently the 4th Med Moth was held at the medical school - a project run by medical students and in the same vein as The Moth, people read or recite from memory, stories, poems, songs, raps, etc. Joanna Glanz, UMMS Class of 2019 recited the poem below capturing the last moments with her grandmother. I think it is so important for us to process those we have lost by talking, writing, drawing etc - both family/friends as well as patients. Joanna has captured this well.

You can respond to Joanna at Joanna.Glanz@umassmed.edu or to the listserv directly. Enjoy.

On her last day
She wore her new black bathing suit
It was late July
Her favorite time
She looked out at the ocean
Her favorite place
Her hair, a bob of bleach blonde
A color she’d owned for over 30 years
Styled to perfection weekly at the beauty parlor
Her skin spotted with memories of summers past
Aruba, the Cape, Nantasket beach
Her blue eyes hidden behind sunglasses pink and glittery
Looking like a prop from Grease
For let’s not forget, she was always the star of the show
Her great-granddaughters playing inside
One granddaughter next to her
Her family, her greatest accomplishment
The most beautiful, brilliant, perfect
And don’t you dare challenge that
Her zest, her spunk
Always contagious they said
But, lately
She could not do, she could not go
A caged animal
The casinos, the golf, the parties
That part of her life was over
But she could not let go
Who was she without these things?
Yet, she had this
This view
This love
And she had lived
Oh, she had lived
She always got what she wanted
They would say
In life
In death

We sat together on the back porch
Granddaughter and grandmother
Overlooking sand and sea
Boats pass by
The uniform of orange lifejackets punctuating the blue background
The sun warm, glorious
We bask together
We hear my aunt in the kitchen
My grandfather snoring on the couch
A dog barks on the beach
My almost doctor, she smiles
I’m so happy to see you
It’s been so long, she adds
The omnipresent Jewish guilt
How are you feeling? I ask
Oh, you know, she says
Not the best, she means
I’ll be singing in a new show
She changes the subject
The theme is wonderful
Look up the words for me would you?
We sing together
I see trees of green, red roses too
I see them bloom for me and you
And I think to myself what a wonderful world
We’re quiet for a moment
Nana? I say
There’s no response
I shake her
She drools
Call 9-1-1, I scream
Everybody comes out
We help her to the ground
Start CPR says the first responder on the phone
They look at me, the almost doctor
I hesitate
From the edge of the garden, a girl emerges
Like a mermaid, she’s dripping from the ocean
*I’m a nurse,* she says, *I heard someone call*
The mermaid starts CPR
She awakens in the ambulance
Only to yell, *why didn’t you let me die?*
They tell her she needs a stent
They can transfer her to Boston
*No more,* she says, *I’m done*
When she arrests later that afternoon
The nurse looks at my dad, my aunt
*She made her wishes clear*
They nod as they let her go