

Apoptosis

Apoptosis, or programmed cell death, is a slow process, like watching your mother sleep in a bed on the 7th floor of Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital after she got the first IV dose of the Phase I oncology study drug, an alkylating agent, a class of drugs the nurse, Nancy, said she had responded well to in the past, except for the delay in getting her into the study to the point where it hurt her to drink water, but my mom, being from "that generation," didn't want to "bother the doctor."

"This is why they have pagers," I tell my mom—it's the weekend and she's got pain, "Oh it's about a two," and though the pain scale is usually based from 0 to 10, my mother has told me previously that her scale only goes up to 5, and even then she low-balls it. So they take her from Tylenol 3 (which won't even do much for post-op pain on extracted molars) to a Fentanyl patch; which, if we look at in a military sense, is like going from a hand pistol to a hand-held bazooka.

It's a slow process, like a plant slowly dying of thirst, like a boxer going into the 15th round, his punches getting slower until finally, after one punch, he fades into a stupor.

It's a slow and gradual process; her wrists were always skinny, but now even more so. She pauses as

she gets up out of the bed and later she squats with her hands to the floor as she waits for the elevator and again she kneels like that on the first floor, waiting with me for my father to pull up to the entrance and whisk us off.

It's wet out and it reminds me of fall; of leaves falling to the ground.

For a moment up there on the floor, it was so quiet, before we left. It reminded me of when we were young, and our parents would come pick my sister and me up from our grandparent's house. It was an arrangement my parents had. They would go out for the evening, alone, leaving us with our grandmother for a partial sleepover. There was something very sleepy and quiet about it; we were awakened and taken home in our pajamas; our parents would carry us in their arms, out our grandmother's side porch to their car. We were half asleep and so very tired, but we knew we were almost home.