

## AM I DYING?

A friend has died. Grief greets me with the terrifying finality of the loss.

I soon become impervious to the magnitude of the occasion. I am grateful it is not me. Guilt washes over me, is that normal, this sense of relief? Selfish perhaps?

My life is one of arrogant conquest, joy from my successes, despair over my failings. But, why do I feel like this, such a deep, dark sadness gripping me, when the sudden realisation that my three score years and ten have long since passed.

Will I ever taste the sweet delights of intimacy again? The soft, warm flesh of a lover, lips tingling with desire. Never to be felt again?

My mortality has become reality and is screaming at me to stop this downward spiral. I send a bleak cry to the Universe calling for an extension of life, to experience the bliss, that is living. I beg the God I despise to repair me, so that I may feel life with all the verve of my youth again.

He has not listened.

The grief I feel has no compassion, and so one sinks into an abyss of inevitability and depression. Incontinence becomes my best friend, my failing hormones are in a death roll. Memory is a wondrous asset, until you lose it.

Why am I tied to this chair all day?

I grimly try to remember my youth, the loves I have known, the sweet encounters that bookmark my life.

Who were they again?

A nurse is in my room "sit up, you must eat John". Who is John? The spoon is coming toward me, she pushes the mush into my mouth, it is the colour of putty and tastes like pre-school porridge. I gag. My brain is screaming for her to stop, but my words will not come out. She continues the process.

I slump into my chair.

A visitor is in my room. Who is this person who is looking at me with a weak, sympathetic smile? Nervous, uneasy.

Please go away, I don't know you.

How long will this torture last? (Infinity is a word I would have used). My body is a twisted, pain racked caricature of itself. I cannot speak. The grief I once felt has been washed from my memory. So why am I here?

I am being sedated.

I need water, but they won't give me any. Food has ceased coming. My powerful heart seems not to want to give in.

More sedation.

I don't want to go, I scream at them wordlessly. They will not listen.

I descend into a vortex, sinking, falling, swirling into oblivion.

Am I dead yet?