

November 10, 1992. Had a serious reaction to a sliver of Demerol-Nov. 6, I think. Was to have a root canal at 9:30 a.m. but Ron insisted that I sit at Dr. Reynolds' office to take this trial Demerol in case there is a problem. That was at 8:30 a.m., and it is my belief that we came home at 5 p.m. or 6 p.m. with Dr. Reynolds' help. I'm writing what I can recall; this time I'm crawling back, still going to St. Patrick's Hospital Emergency Room every day for IV, can't eat, can't drink, still vomiting, still very, very sick. Dear God, is this ever going to end? I made a poem, sort of, it's called:

Ode to Demerol

I saw the light that beacons but
Didn't want to go. I heard my grandson's frantic voice, "My Tutu
Please don't go. We have to run and jump, you see, when I come to
Your house. My Tutu I can't see you if you go to heaven now." And
So I turned myself around, I fought that peaceful light. It's not
Time to go just yet, it's time to stand and fight.

Sometimes, staying is the harder choice. This time the pain was so intense my body felt consumed with fire, God it burned. My head burned and I kept hearing screaming over and over and over. How can I tell you how it felt? It is a slow, torturous, dreamlike happening. I'm trapped in this body, wracked with horrible pain. It's like a thousand centipedes biting me all over and someone is lighting a match and setting me on fire. Every inch of me screams, my head burns, there is no relief, no escape, and I am trapped. There are voices, but nothing matters, it's like I'm in a tunnel and the voices are far away, yet I can hear screaming and I try hard to stay focused but I am drowning in pain and a part of me begs God to make it stop, just make the horrible pain stop. My mind searches for a safe voice, I need to feel safe, I cannot. I want them to put me in cold water, why don't they put me in cold water? Then it gets better and there are voices, and I think it's Dr. Reynolds, I don't know, I don't care, I just want peace. But, it begins again, the pain, the pain, the burning pain, someone is screaming, someone is screaming, help her, why doesn't someone help her? My God, make it stop, make the pain stop.

I don't recall anymore, but at some point I realized I couldn't move my hands and there are people, actually more like blurs with voices . . . I'm so tired, sleep, sleep. Later, I don't know when, my first thoughts are that I'm tied down, and why does Ron look so pale? I hear Dr. Reynolds talking, I think he's asking if I'm better. I feel so sick, he looks concerned, must be my imagination, he's always so calm.

Later, I still don't know when, my nurses Sharon and Debbie came to see me, and I asked what happened and did I dream that someone was screaming, and was I tied down? They said I was screaming and yes, Dr. Reynolds tied my hands so I couldn't hurt myself. They said I'd had a severe drug reaction to Demerol. I saw the bottle of pills on the nightstand and motioned for them to take it away. I saw a "trac kit" [tracheotomy kit] as well, thank God they didn't use it, I feel so sick, drained, frightened . . . another time where I am asking myself, is this the day I will die? And the vomiting begins.

November 14, 1992. I'm still vomiting, still going to St. Patrick's Hospital for IV every day, still need that root canal, God help me! I can't go through this many more times, I can't keep reliving, is this the day I'm going to die. I don't know how long I can keep fighting . . . today they couldn't do the IV, my veins are collapsing, every time they try to place the IV my veins kept bursting. ER tried everything. What am I going to do?

November 15, 1992. This is numbing and humbling and puts me into quiet reflection. There comes a point when control is totally lost and I feel nothing: I am neither aware nor unaware. I am just sort of there in my body, watching what is happening, seeing that person lost in pain but the part watching feels nothing. It is that part that yearns to walk away to that gentle light but it cannot. To separate would be to lose, and losing is not an option I will consider.

November 16, 1992. Dr. Reynolds says that if I can't keep liquids down I will have to go to the ER and have an IV line cut in. My veins are still collapsed from the high doses of prednisone I am on. We are trying Gatorade, broth, Jell-O, any liquids. If I vomit it up we go again and again, whatever it takes. Dear Lord, if this is to be my destiny, help me to walk it.

I feel so angry, so resentful, so scattered, so overwhelmed. How I hate the woman who started this. How I hate the stupidity of the Public Health Service and the county system that caused this to happen to me. I am so frightened, yet I don't fear death. Instead, I fear a medical system that so far has tempted fate at my body's expense. I would not wish this horror on my worst enemy.