

New Year's Eve Surgery



by
Margaret Dubay Mikus, Ph.D.

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From a Poetic Journal

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(previous version was *Halloween Surgery*)



Snow Flower

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12/8/98

Risk

It's a risk
to wake up every morning

and see
if you fall short

or stand tall,
grow an inch or a foot,

see what seeds may land
and take root,

your heart cracked open
like a walnut.

It's a risk
to get up every morning,

leave the land of dreams
and begin again,

leave the land of dreams and dreaming,
stride on solid ground,

learn and teach,
grow and glow...

then throw out all you know
and begin again.

It's a risk.

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Acknowledgments

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In Common

For three of four sisters
cancer as companion, as teacher:
three breasts, one blood.

Something in the water, the food,
some genetic flaw,
suppression of immune defenses,

some unlucky, unlikely exposure
to radon or poison or medication,
hormonal imbalance or divine choice?

Whatever the cause and effect
or none, there it is for
two of the remaining three sisters.

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7/22/06

Trusting

The relationship of a woman
to her chosen surgeon
is a simple and complex one,
both more and less intimate than husband.

He (usually he) will enter her body,
see her in ways no one else will
and fix what is amiss—
the specific reason for this relationship.

It is what? Both practical and mystical,
short-term with long-term consequence.
Profound trust to ask someone—
even well-trained and experienced—
to act thus on her behalf.

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2/1/07

Poetry as Healer

And you might say,
how can poetry heal,
it is not a pill I take
into my body?

And I would respond thus
from my heart, the source of poetry:
poetry is word spoken
which is vibration
which is energy
and the body which is matter
is energy very slowed down,

so poetry is energy
into the body which is energy
so energy heals energy.

Of course the frequency of vibration
of the words is important. There are
words that tear down, as you know.

And, as has been graphically shown with
the crystals of Emoto, there are words
which health can be built upon.

These words from the heart
with healing intent,
these are the words that heal,
there is no doubt.

Try them out.

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2/27/07

Thinking of Beate

Sometimes art heals
by soothing, sometimes
by lancing the boil, or
by opening the eyes
to fresh possibilities.

Sometimes it is closing a door
to a room filled with stale air,
sometimes a scream
from a dark bottomless pit,
sometimes presenting
wonder on a silver platter.

Sometimes art compels to look,
sometimes can barely look;
the healing can be subtle
or heart pounding,

one moment resounding
over the ages.
All I am telling you is this:
there is no doubt art heals.

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7/13/07 Fri

For Carly (and me) Remembering

It is normal
to be numb
and to want to be numb
under the current circumstances
to keep some semblance of function.

I would just gently remind:
we are healers, you and I,
and we know a lot of healers,
and we know a lot about healing,
and not to get drawn into

darkness and fear
and fear-based decisions.
To take the time and space
to hear the sweet inner voices,
feel the loving presence,

prepare for miracles...
as defined here.
Remember who you are,
dear sweet one,
release what is only illusion.

It is normal
under the current circumstances
to sob and scream and pray
and plead and want to be done with "it."
Remember this is temporary,

the means to an end for us,
perhaps an upper level initiation/
trial by fire/rite of passage/vision quest/
forty days wandering in the desert
from which we will return cleansed

to our tribe, with the clarity,
insight, compassion,
guidance and vision
essential for survival and growth of all navigating

these rocky transition times of transformation.

I do not know why these hard things happen
(the above is as good an explanation as any):
we are here to serve and to heal.

I do know we are not left alone hanging,
dangling off the cliff, though it may feel that way.

All we need is here—
inside and out—
not to seek and search,
but delivered right to us.
I trust all is well.

I trust all is well.

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8/31/07

Ms. Potato Head TM

Eyes, nose, mouth—
blue, straight, lipsticked and pursed.

Fashion shoes or athletic,
hands be-ringed or plain,

hats of all silly description,
some kind of necklace or bow or scarf.

And the breasts in mostly matching sets—
try on one type then another—

laughing at the ludicrous imitation
of the very real possibility

of removal
and reconstruction...

whatever that means.

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9/21/07

Breastless

I am not my breasts
however scarred yet luscious,
but to walk around breastless
in this breast-obsessed culture,
to be unbowed by misfortune,
that is true courage.

Long past the age
of being a looker,
I remember the sometimes
welcome glances;
when walking with my daughter
I feel them again—for her.

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10/11/07

Anticipatory Loss

There is only so much
I can do ahead of time to prepare
for a loss that is still theoretical—
not real, not actual
flat chest, two long scars in the mirror.

Tears have been shed,
slow leaks or buckets depending,
but still until that day
when I choose to look
or awaken from surgery colder,

I will not know how I feel.
Some things help: to talk
into a trained compassionate ear,
a witness with kind tender advice
about femininity—lacy soft camisoles perhaps.

Humor sometimes: Mrs. Potato Head™
with replaceable breasts or scars.
The playful theatrical idea of having
multiple breasts sets in varied sizes,
small things to reclaim, not the physical loss,

but emotional, to heal on all levels,
to be whole and joyful, no matter.
Not all at once necessarily,
but a flower unfolding, a butterfly emerging
from the cocoon, where what was once

is broken down and what is now
flies free and fearless.

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10/17/07

How you Look at It or Depending on the Frame

It's a good thing
I don't walk with my breasts
or eat or write or blow my nose.

They are just there
for show, for pleasure,
visible sign of womanhood.

Their most practical function,
making milk, feeding babies,
is done and I am grateful for that.

I am not saying it is not a big loss,
only that I will still walk and bike and eat
and breathe and dance and write and talk and sing.

I will watch in awe at beautiful sunsets and
notice the length of an ant's shadow in the evening,
how a bumble bee bends a whirling butterfly.

I will still laugh and cry and blow bubbles,
and plan those water color pictures
I still intend to paint someday.

I will love and grow and heal
and still keep on living.
That is the choice as I see it laid out.

And I am grateful, yet again,
for the chance to choose.

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10/24/07

Instructions to the Body Prior to Surgery

Yield to the scalpel whether laser or blade,
limit leaks of precious fluids,
let nerves that are cut be soothed,
relax into the induced-sleep state of healing.

Heart beats strong in a steady rhythm,
blood pressure calm,
breath relaxed and easy,
all organ systems functioning smoothly.

From the giant pharmacy of drugs
for which you have instructions,
make all those that in your wisdom
are needed to optimally heal.

Release what is to be taken
for the highest good.
Protect what is to remain
for future days stretching out long before me.

Allow melding with mind, emotion and spirit
in service of healing.

Be hopeful, be kind to all concerned.
Know I trust.
Know I love you.
Know I am most grateful.

And to the cells that are leaving,
a blessing for long service,
both individually and together
speak well for me.

Be hopeful, be kind to all concerned.
Know I trust.
Know I love you.
Know I am most grateful.

11/2/07

Woman Prepares for Necessary Major Surgeries

...Last Minute Postponement
Due to Concerns about Her Heart

Legs shaved
armpits shaved
chin plucked
toenails clipped
fingernails filed
clothes washed
bills paid
house straightened
plants watered
food purchased
remedies replenished
calendar cleared
appointments rescheduled
poems written
friends notified
family prepared
conscious breathing

records collected
research done
reassurances received and given
medical geneticists consulted
oncologist consulted
surgeons chosen
questions answered
alternatives considered
decisions made
date set
husband takes off work
sister-in-law flies in from Texas
prayers and bubbles requested
help received
poems chosen
chapbook assembled
conscious breathing

blood-work done
EKG taken
training finished
energy balanced
massage received
psychotherapist listens
healing resources mustered
panic attacks managed
conscious breathing
stress reduced
clear liquid diet
colon cleanse
poignant good bye to breasts
grieving begun
talk to Mom at last minute
talk to sisters long into the nights
talks with husband holding tight
conscious breathing
healing instructions to the body read out loud
mind calmed
emotions soothed
prayers prayed
Divine invoked
love flying all over the place

all for...what?
Reprieve?
Reschedule?
Restore what was lost?
Let it go...
What was not to be...
Not on that day anyway.

Trust the rope to climb out with.
The word of the day is fearless.

Imagine something much easier.

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12/3/07

Breast Size?

Double Amazons.
Will be able to shoot
as well from either side.

Have you heard of
those warrior women—
myth or real

who can tell?
Not martyrs
that much is known.

Not victims,
but a choice to
be powerful and strong.

Did any say
no thanks, I'd rather not?
I don't think so.

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From Inside Looking Out, Winter
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