

Diana died at the age of 64, having lived many years with Multiple Sclerosis. These words are placed here with the permission of her husband, a psychoanalyst, who spoke them at her funeral. They were married 33 years.

This is a moment that I have thought about many times. I thought about it because of the terrible paradox that something that I absolutely dreaded was the same thing that I had to hope for. It was unthinkable that I should die first and leave Diana behind.

I realize that that sounds like a terrible responsibility, but I have to tell you that it is *wonderful* to be able to be of so much value to someone you truly love.

In the last few days I have received many kind phone calls and notes of condolence. Amongst them there were some that said "I'm sorry for your loss" and added, "and for your long ordeal" or "Diana's terrible struggle."

Trust me, it was not an ordeal. The word that I would move closer to is "joy," but that's a word for a greeting card.

We had fun!

Any of you who knew Diana well can understand that. She wasn't depressed or depressing. She cared about people and she laughed easily. I used to say to her that we had the perfect recipe for a successful marriage. I made jokes and she laughed. And she had the harder job.

Diana was proof that the pain and pleasure we get from life can be relatively independent of the hardships it throws at us.

If "struggle" means effort, then yes there was effort, but often that effort brought us the most meaningful times together, just with the little things.

On Saturday and Sunday mornings I would give her her pills, use the catheter to get her urine, give her her breakfast, brush her teeth—she rinsed her own face with a wet washcloth—give her a bed bath, change the dressing on a small decubitus she had on her back for many years, and, I hesitate to say this in this setting, put on gloves to see if she had any feces. She used to say, "What would your mother think if she knew you had to do all this?" She may have been right, Perhaps my mother would have worried about it.

But we had fun.

We were talking and joking the whole time. We had little ongoing jokes about it. "Starting the second rinse cycle."

There were many shared jokes. She had a reconstructed bladder that allowed us to take urine from her by putting a small catheter into a stoma, an opening, on her abdomen and we did it every few hours when she felt the need. At bedtime, she would say, “Are you going to do the final catheter?” And one day I said to her, “final catheter” sounds awfully dramatic. We began to imagine it being announced by Alistaire Cooke (with a slightly British accent) “And now. The Final Catheter.”

For various neurological reasons, she was unable to hold and read a book and we got into the habit of my reading to her every night before we went to sleep, a chapter a night depending upon the size of the chapters. We started with Harry Potter because she was curious about it, and went on to Tolkien, Dickens, Jane Austen, the Bronte’s, Hardy, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Dumas. It was great for me, because I never would have read or re-read those books at this stage of my life. And it was fun reading to her because she got so involved with the characters. She’d tell me, “I was thinking about such and such today.” She said, “Elizabeth Bennett is my hero.” That was after she confronted Mr. Darcy. She was worried about the Count of Monte Cristo, always asking, “Will he be happy?” If she didn’t know a word, she insisted that I look it up in a battered old dictionary with loose pages—if we ever had a word above “ac....” the pages would have been missing—that I kept at the side of the bed. There were passages in *Anthony Adverse* in which I think we read more dictionary than book.

This past spring and summer, from around April or May to mid August, was perhaps the best time of our lives. She was feeling the glow of Obama’s presidency. Diana had imagined Obama as president years ago. On Sunday, she saw him on Meet the Press. Afterwards, she said, “I’m so proud of him” as if he was her personal protégé. She’d laugh at that. Of course, she meant she was proud to have him as her president.

She also was healthier. For some time she’d had a series of urinary tract infections caused by kidney and bladder stones, and those had been removed by April or May. She used to prompt me to tell people the story of her bladder stones, So I’ll tell you. When the surgeon came out to the waiting room with the three bladder stones in a glass jar, the other people in the waiting room—waiting for other people who were having surgery—were fascinated by the size of the stones. They looked like good sized plum pits.

She also had a more comfortable wheelchair, designed for her by the people at the wheelchair clinic at New York Hospital. It allowed her to recline so that her neck didn’t hurt on long outings.

And we began to go out more. She called them “jaunts.” Sometimes we’d just go for a walk, but we also went to the movies. She loved *Yoo Hoo Mrs. Goldberg* and *Julie and Julia*. After the movies, she ask me to stop at Big Daddy’s on Second Avenue where she’d have a grilled Swiss on rye with a strawberry shake and I’d have a tuna sandwich and a ginger ale. We went there enough that one of the waitresses asked if we were having the same as last time. We also were beginning to stop at the little

tables outside the Blue Moon Café where we'd share a grilled chicken dish and margaritas. Hers were frozen and fruity and she drank a lot of water with it.

I took her to the Museum of Natural History and the Planetarium one day. She was blown away by the planetarium. She said she'd never seen one before, which I find hard to believe. That's why it was so easy to do things for her. She took so much pleasure.

We took the 79th Street bus to the museum. I was awkward getting the chair onto and off the lift. When we got off at the museum, the bus driver, who was very nice, said, "I'll see you on the way back." Hours later, when we got on the bus, it was the same bus driver. We were lucky.

She always said that, that we were lucky to have each other, lucky to have Ann [her caregiver], blessed with Abigail. Her face lit up whenever she saw Abby. I consider myself incredibly fortunate to have been able to be part of a true life romance, something you might think of for someone who looks more like Carey Grant.

In recent months she would say to me, "Have I told you how much I love you?" Or, she'd look at me expressively with her beautiful blue eyes and say, "I love you so much!" And believe me, *I felt loved*. And believe me, my response was heartfelt. She also used to say, "Why do you love me? I'm such a lump." But she was the most loveable person I have ever met. I'm so glad that on Sunday, the last time I saw her, she was wearing an aquamarine top and I told her she looked beautiful. She smiled.

Diana was a romantic. She loved old romantic movies, the weepier the better, and she had a childlike ability to be totally involved even if she'd seen it many times before. One Sunday afternoon, this was years ago, I came into the bedroom and she was all excited and happy. She said to me, "Richard is back." I'm going through my head thinking of all the Richard's we know and who went away and might be back and how did she come upon this information at 5:30 on a Sunday afternoon when we hadn't gotten a phone call.

It was Richard the Lionhearted. She was watching *Robin Hood*.

One of her favorites, from before I knew her, was *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*, about a woman who is haunted, then befriended, then loved by the ghost of a crusty sea captain. I think it was Rex Harrison. At some point, he decided that he had to let her live her life and have her loves amongst the living and he allowed her to forget him completely. But at the end of the film, she was an old woman finishing her milk in the eveing. She simply closed her eyes and slumped her head and allowed the glass to fall to the floor. Then the captain came in and took her hand, and she got up, a young woman again, and they walked, danced, down the stairs and out of the house.

Wait for me!

Until I'm old and wizened.

I don't know the exact definition of "wizened" but I'll look it up later.

I'll close my eyes and let go of the glass and you'll walk in—I knew you when you could walk. You'll take my hand and we'll go out onto 79th Street for a jaunt.

I love you so much!