

28 Days From Nirvana

By George Kayer

My condition is so rare, on the North American continent less than 3,400 people are stricken by it. The population of this continent: home to Canada, Mexico and the U.S.A. is estimated at half a billion people. Through government reports, we know it's found in only 36 areas in the United States. The mortality rate is 40% to 93% depending on a state's resources and its government's willingness to aggressively combat this rare condition.

Regardless the name of your illness or circumstances it's the common threads called loss and helplessness I wish to explore with you. Loss of life, loss of control, loss of ability to make basic decisions about ones life or, ones death – I'll reveal my condition at the end. This is my abstract, true story about a real, sacred space on life's path. A place many souls are required to visit; few live to express the extraordinary emotions and thoughts permeating its environment. I've named this place: 28 Days From Nirvana. Many of us have experienced the loss of an associate, an adoring pet, a confidant, perhaps a loved one. Loss is most always a kaleidoscope of blue-gray experiences Depending on how close to you your-loss you may have visited their hospice before their passing; sprinkling the hours with maudlin memories, a dash of morbid or inspirational humor, a farewell prayer? Or maybe your loss came suddenly. In such cases your experiences include; consoling, grieving, providing assistance within the social unit of the deceased. Ah, but when loss is the loss of your life, your candle is forced to burn upside down. American culture hardly expounds on issues concerning ones own death. It's not like there's a listing in Miss Manners or on football.com. Knowing your own death is imminent this year or this month is as personal and real as loss becomes. Oddly enough, having had both experiences, I found watching the dying is more disquieting than personally experiencing deaths inevitableness – once I was willing to let go. I can imagine the disappointment incurred by those who resist death but not those convinced one of the hell realms is their destiny. My father wasn't well known to me. One experience we shared, be it genetic or coincidence, we both tangled with moderate chest pains prior to a major heart attack. I'd just past downtown Oklahoma City on my way to Las Vegas. Having difficulty getting breath of air, I remembered a Veterans Hospital sign a few exits back on Interstate 40. I whipped a u-turn and found the emergency entrance: the good doctors prevented my certain death. I promised myself I'd be emotionally and spiritually prepared: next time. It doesn't make any difference where my father was during his attack, in 1958, people didn't generally survive heart attacks. He wasn't one of the exceptions.

Six months ago, I found myself facing another premature death. Once again, My survivor mode energized, my team of specialists research all options and hope prevails – I write my will. That part of me which considers itself in unity with our Creator is ready to obey the celestial call, to return to spirit. It's that self righteous side of me that considers itself separate from you and our Creator, thus causing my distortion and conflict. This part of me is addicted to flesh and its sense pleasures. This part of me desires to live life in Hi-def fast forward; to travel, visit people whom I know and family. To be in photos taken by ones children; not photo shopped in. To barbeque; to move and groove, and drive with the top down one last time. Unfortunately, my condition leaves me confined to this facility; to my sterile – vile space with its matter-of-fact staff. What quality of life is possible in this, my soul's season of solitariness.

This afternoon, without invitation or warning, I was escorted to the conference room. Seated, I spy mostly strangers, suits and a priest: that's never good. Hmm, I request the priest to leave, he does so. Some suit reads my prognosis and states: "In all likelihood you have 28 days to live". Hope can be so damn deceptive. You never know your hope is false-hope until to late. No time now to create a legacy or right the wrongs. Remission and cancer-free aren't applicable; I still have all my hair.

As we left the conference room, I'm the only one unaware of my next destination. I simply followed the person in front of me: now encircled by an entourage. A woman captured my attention, introduced herself as assistant something Carrillo: "I'll be coordinating and directing all activities until your death. Whatever you need, I'll do my best to get it to you promptly." I assumed the entourage was hers and was taken by surprise; the standard detached, matter of fact attitude was missing, replaced by genuine kindness resonating clearly in everyone's voices. Carrillo continued: "Things will get pretty crazy from here on, are you going to want to speak to the press? All of them will be calling you." Carrillo paused for my reply. I could only shake my head in indecision- she continued: "We had a fellow in your same condition a few months ago, maybe you saw it on the local news. Mr. Burke's team of specialists came up with a temporary cure. He has asked to speak with you: I scheduled a conference call for you at 3pm. Would you like to speak with him?" "yes". "Will you have any out-of-state visitors?" -another pause-"I can coordinate their visit schedule and brief them on contact with the press for you." "I'll have to get back to you on that, a few minutes ago I had a lifetime to live." We continue walking thru doors and long corridors. Carrillo says: "I notice you have a D.N.R. (Do Not Revive) in your file, do you wish to modify that at this time?" "no." Holding some papers in front of me Carrillo says: "Here are some forms, I need you to fill these out this evening I'll pick them up tomorrow." My hand took the forms. And here we are, your new room is ready. Your personal effects are

being brought over; your directly monitored by our staff at this station (pointing to a desk) 24 hours. If you need anything they can't provide, have them call me." "Alright, thank you." "Oh! I'll see you in about 41 minutes for your conference call with Mr. Burke." I was deposited without further adulation in my new room. The entourage exited with Carrillo: their collective sense of urgency remained.

Wee, nothing like having your reality rearranged and being the last one to know about it. I sat on the edge of my new bed anticipating some minutes for reflection, only to be distracted. Through the transparent front of my new room, a mere 20 feet away sat the exigent desk with its monitors, charts & logbooks. Where have all these looky loos come from? My reflection begins. Of all the places I've been on the North American continent I wind up here, in a fishbowl coffin. It is said by men wise: "There is no success like failure to learn by." Yea, if that's true, I'm a friggin' valedictorian. My old team of doctors and lawyers now impotent, my soul's future depends on strange abstracts like Grace and miracles; empirical and tangible are useless in this place. I glanced down at the forms still in my hand, the first subject header read:

Disposition Of Remains: Release To Family – Phone # Notify Mortuary – Phone # Other, List Contact Info:
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The forms floated to the floor.

Well, all those years of mediation I've practiced, this is the place where I find out if that Buddha stuff really works. 28 Days From Nirvana: I struck a pose, Ommmm

Lost in the comfort of my tan lounge chair overlooking the pacific ocean – in meditation; like a thunder clap, all emotions known to me, powerful, towering emotions all seeking simultaneous acknowledgment. First in my mind, then my tear ducts and speechless voice.

Lately I'd ignored emotions that hadn't agreed with hope but hope just snuck out the back door. Sitting with these strangers that precede death I found them to be old Kodachrome; I remembered them from 1993 in Oklahoma City: peace and clarity returned. Upon opening my eyes I saw not the exigent desk but a hive of activity. Unknown moments later, Carrillo steps out of the blur directly into my gaze and says: "Are you ready for your call with Mr. Burke?"

Off we go, entourage and I.

I'm interested in this Mr. Burke, perhaps he possesses a few answers to the 88 questions I'd been holding back.

"Hello George, may we call you George?"

"Yes, of course."

"Wonderful, I'm Michael Burke, also here with me are various specialist in our office: Robin Konrad, Jennifer Garcia and Jasmine Teter. We are specialist in your condition, its what we work on every day and we'd like to work with you to save your life. If you agree to accept our services, your previous team is standing by to email your files to us. Also, some of us, undetermined as yet, will come see you tomorrow to have some papers signed: At this point, every hour is critical to your survival."

Our first priority and major obstacle is to convince the Supreme Court to stay your execution which is scheduled to occur in 28 days.
End

Authors Note:

Carrillo is: Associate Deputy Warden Carrillo, ASPC – Eyman

Michael Burke, Robin Konrad, Jennifer Garcia, Jasmine Teter are with the Capital Habeas Unit, Federal Public Defenders Office Phoenix, AZ.

Nirvana: Sanskrit, means "Extinction", of the illusion of separation.

Source: Sacred Language Glossary of Earth: Kayer & Bernauer 2004.

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About the author: on October 30, 2007 the Supreme Court of AZ issued a Warrant of Execution for Mr. Kayer. He was transferred to the unit's "death watch cell" and remained there until Nov. 8, 1:30pm. Although a stay was issued on Nov. 5, 11:36am it is unclear why Mr. Kayer remained on death watch three days and two hours after his stay. George Kayer and Gitta Bernauer authored Sacred Language Glossary of Earth, 2004 Amazon.com. Mr. Kayer is a freelance writer, artist and creator of DISSE

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