

Bed & Bored #002

[Bed & Bored #002 is produced by Laurie Kunkel (5359 Nicole; White Lake, MI 48383; 248/742-9118 (for area code 702 denizens: 702/258-4539) with varying assistance from our--my--beloved children, Typographical Error, Esmerelda, and Reepicheep: Typo, thanks for riding herd on your younger sibs and giving Mom a sanity break; Esmeralda, thank you for NOT eating the money tree; and Reep, thanks for allowing Mom at least half of her meals, and to all three of you, thank you for NOT killing Mom or Dad, despite trying really hard. May this trend continue on. I'd like to thank Karen Belcher, Ed Garea, Stephen Herte, Dave Skolnick, and ShelVY Vick for reassuring me that this is useable and kitten gray, not charcoal black. I'd also like to thank ShelVY for the illo on the last page. All--well, some--of the typos are made by me, and our--my--boys. Personal pronouns and verbs are a problem for me right now; thinking as an individual isn't coming to me easily.]

Dateline: 30 September 2011; White Lake, MI

Okay, I admit that this is not a usual ish for me (of course, what IS a usual ish for me?), mostly because life went to hell in a handbasket, and the perpetrator of this morass is not here for me to pulverize.

I started journaling, again, on 1 September. I decided to commemorate the anniversary of regaining my memory to try to piece together the missing eightish months of my life in 2010. Bill promised to help, as did Kacey, Juan, Em, and Soph.

Speaking of my 4YO beginning writer, she's standing here waiting for me to finish my "finger exercises," so she can work on her novel. She's decided that while Uncle Bill taught her that stories have a beginning, middle, and end, since she's 4 to his 61, that maybe her story only has a beginning. However, she has given me permission to reprint anything from her Fun with Butterflies chapter that I want to. The first excerpt is here:

*****Fun With Butterflies*****

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Apparently, Uncle Bill didn't explain about spelling...but she's still young.

What I did discover, though, and what really helps, is how many people I have checking on me and caring about me, even as I don't care about myself that much right now. So, this will--hopefully--be the most depressing ish that I write, since (please dear Ghu), this issue is the closest to the event.

To get something in for this mailing, I decided to do what I do best: edit my journal maunderings and daily check-ins with people on and since 01 September 2011.

It is also without illos [well, was until ShelVy tossed me a graphic], mostly because the thought of going through Bill's notebooks right now is more than I can bear. I'm also finding mailing comments a no go at this point, as we were playing with Dragon on his Mac, and we did mailing comments using Dragon. So, going through his Mac right now, is not something I can do.

All of this, then, is a forewarning, but, as Bill and I would tease, forewarned is forearmed, and four-armed is half an octopus, and who wants that? Anyway, here's the month of September in a semblance of order, which means I've gone through 600 emails and notes to sort through what has been happening, and straightening out my journal. I do admit that I need to sort through this information for myself more than anything because I'm not sure where/how I got here from the 4th. So, I'm taking full and absolute advantage of **B&B** being a perzine.

Thursday, 01 September: Okay, this time last year, I basically woke up and removed the gauze from my eyes and brain and began living again. While not diagnosed as such, I think, in a lot of respects, I was generally catatonic. Bill was pulling out what hair he wasn't shaving off his head. He was truly upset when I stopped talking or responding to any stimuli. He truly decided I was mentally checked out when he purposely poured a classic Coke ::shudder:: into my drink bottle instead of Pepsi and I didn't blink an eye--figuratively or literally.

I know, given all my infections and the gangrenous gallbladder, that recovering all my memories from Christmas 2009 to September 2010, is unlikely. After a quick chat

with our former marriage counselor, Bill thinks that I'm mentally prepared to revisit the past; but he's hiding something, I just have to put on my deerstalker hat and figure out what it is. Based on his behavior, I'm not going to be happy with him when I figure out what he did.

Friday, 02 September: An interesting discussion today as a result of a result of Bill's PPV movie request: what is my favorite movie genre? I will sit through anything that any member of the casts of Walker, Texas Ranger, Criminal Minds, and CSI: Miami are in, but to say I have a category? For the last 21 years, my favorite genre is, according to Bill, "Anything That Sends My Loving Husband Screaming From The Room/House/Theater." Our friends laugh as, nine times out of ten, going to the movies went something like this:

B: "Hon, I'd really like to go see a show. Is there anything playing that you'd like to see?"

L: "I wouldn't mind seeing X."

B: "Great! I'll go see when and where it's on!" [Checks paper...]

B: "Awesome! Your movie is playing at [insert time] at [insert theater name here] and mine starts at [insert time] at the same complex, and, since mine is XX minutes shorter, save me a seat."

L: "Okay, and you're going to see what again?"

We started this routine to everyone's bemusement after he took me (well, I drove, but he paid...this was before the 1991 Christmas Eve car accident and my move from my parents' house to his on Christmas Day) to see a horror movie. I was so upset at the end of it, that--when he realized how badly I was shaking and crying--he took me back to the cineplex and found a screwball comedy that he didn't want to see, but thought would soothe my nerves, and he plied me with enough sugar to make me go into a sugar-coma.

He also, when we got back to his house, called my folks to tell them that I was really tired and he didn't think I should drive the 20 minutes across town and, since I was already asleep on the couch, he only planned on waking me up long enough to get me to eat dinner, and then he was going to send me up to get a proper night's sleep while he slept on the couch. Since my head was on his lap, and I was wide awake on a sugar-high, I just looked at him. When he hung up, he looked down at my quirked eyebrow and said, "Moms find me very reassuring." He laughed when I said you mean like being reassured about the absences of sharks, and not knowing

about pirañas? Although, to be fair, he was a perfect gentleman that evening, though he hated to admit it.

Charlene, when he talked to her the next day, was amused and marked it on her mental calendar that as of that date I went from being a friend to a girlfriend. She was also amused that he called her for nursing advice, as he was determined to make me well before I left the house; given that it was my semi-annual bug, that even my mom bitched about, I decided--when my fever broke--that, if nothing else, he cared about me, and that was enough, as I had basically given up on that happening. He was amused by my habit of always keeping an overnight bag in my car, but was glad I did, since it came in handy.

So, do I have a favorite movie genre? I like musicals, family movies, detective movies, and probably more if I spend actual time trying to figure it out. Bill says we'll figure it out, even if watching treacle kills him off.

Saturday, 03 September: Just another rainy Saturday. But, it is a good time to think, since the weekend still means relaxing. Plus, since Bill's with Kacey, Juan, and the munchkins at the pool, shutting off the TV is a rare option.

It's our night to fix a family dinner...hmm. Oh, wait, the kids can go through the KFC drive-in. Time to call Himself and let him know.

::LOL:: Yeah, Bill doesn't like kids. Right. The big softie. He's curled up in the whirlpool, with his eyes closed, with the girls calling:

"Uncle Bill, look at me!"

"No, Soph, I'm older, he has to look at ME first!"

"But I called him first, Em, so he HAS to look at me first."

"Ladies, you are 24-inches apart, and the pool is clear, I can see you both at the same time." [says the man wearing prescription sunglasses in the indoor pool, so the girls won't see that his eyes are closed].

SPLASH!! Waits till he hears one head surface, pops open an eyelid to see Soph is still swimming underwater, but isn't in distress, closes his eye, waits, hears Soph break water, and says: "That was WONDERFUL! I bet you can't do it again!" And thus goes his afternoon; usually, he wouldn't know if they did a triple backflip or a cannonball, but, either way, it was wonderful.

I, meanwhile, seem to be torn between fully embracing life as I know it and being in the moment, and picking at scabs on my psyche. Why am I still so stuck on losing Dad? August 4th was the 14th anniversary of his death, and I'm finding myself really bothered by Dad's death and my response to it.

I pulled an email I sent to our friend, Dave, on 04 August, reprinted here, mostly because I didn't want to reconstruct the discussion: "Dave, Be patient with me today; my wit may not be as sharp as usual. Today is the 14th anniversary of my Dad's death, and it's hitting me really hard this year. I've never missed him so much and yet felt him so near. I know I'm not making sense. Just thank you."

Fortunately, Dave's sense of humor is fully intact: "You never need to worry about me not having patience. As I mentioned, I'm glad to help. I know how illness can make you isolated from the rest of the world. I am fortunate to have Elise as you are to have Bill.

"I can only imagine how difficult it must be to lose a parent and reflect on the loss after several years.

"It's so bizarre that I've never met Bill or Ed in person yet I feel like I know them as dear, longtime friends as well as you and Ed's late wife, Kat."

Maybe my concern is Bill-related. His depression is almost palpable; I have to get him out of here, but then, I've known that since mid-August. He is really frightening me; but I don't see a lot of options until I get him to Vegas around the 14th. Watching Bill fighting to stay afloat, I'm feeling that if I relax, he'll go under and that would kill both of us psychologically, and given our discussion earlier, maybe physically.

Ed's in my camp--along with many others--but, hopefully Bill will never know. Since he is, mostly, good-naturedly annoyed when Charlene and I, or Annie and I, or Rachael and I "conspire against [him]," he'd be really gobsmacked to know that a dozen of us are conspiring on the Vegas excursion. Ed's encouraging me to be proactive, but how much more proactive can I be? I mean, the whole thing imploded when Bill added me into his suicidal thoughts; since he's said I am the only thing keeping him here, and, under the laws of logic, I'd have to be dead, for him to successfully suicide. When I asked if he plans to murder me while I lay sleeping, I received an enigmatic "wouldn't it be best in your sleep?" At that point, I decided further questioning could, and likely would, be dangerous to my mental and possibly physical well-being.

Hmmm, in rereading that paragraph, I'm realizing that Bill deserves a lot of credit for picking females who can play nice with others. Or maybe it's we who deserve the credit. Or a combination thereof. I'll have to get his thoughts on that one. Maybe after the Vegas trip.

Maybe withdrawing from the field of battle, and sending him to the pool with the kids was a good idea. Can I keep myself sane and Bill alive until the 15th? I think so. I'm watching him scribble notes on the post-it notes for the kids of things to know. We are catching a break with Autumnal Equinox being on the 23rd this year, rather than the 21st/22nd, since Bill's leaving on the 14/15th and coming back on the 21st. The kids will be taking care of me while he is in Vegas. He opted out of the doc appointment and noted that he had to be here for my semi-annual bug. Okay...given how out of it I'll be during the bug, if I don't find a way out of Bill's depression, that could be a very bad spell.

Well, the pool, girls, and KFC seem to have pulled him to the outer edge of his long dark teatime of the soul. Soph's first day of Kindergarten is a half-day, so Bill told her that she could make lunch for all four adults (major concession: Bill despises Peanut Butter and Jelly, but for Soph, he'll help her make it and eat it with zest). He also, with a confirming nod from me, reminded her that Tuesday is, in addition to being the first day of Kindergarten, a Special Dispensation Day. That totally got Soph hyped up as she started thinking of ways to spend the figurative shiny gold pass Bill was holding over her head.

We had started Dispensation Days with Crystal. She got a DD a month: a free pass to violate the rules, as long as it didn't physically or psychologically damage oneself, anyone, or anything, else. There were also Special Dispensation Days which we could conjure out of the air, and had the special cachet of it being given the opportunity to commit a teasingly-friendly bad act.

When Em turned 5, Bill decided she deserved to start on DDs. So, every year after cake and presents, Bill brings out my portable altar, already dressed for the evening, lights the candle, and, with the birthday girl in my lap, explains to/reminds her that "with great power there must also come--great responsibility!" And that, on this her fifth birthday, she was being given great power: a chance each month to do something so horribly rude, that only by pulling out the DD card, would she have our intervention.

Prior to this, Em (and Soph until this October) had only been given SDDs, which thrilled them to no end. We also reaffirm our promises to be good listeners and, when they tell us secrets, Kacey and Juan would only be told if the secret involved a misdemeanor or felony. When I raised my eyebrow at him, he changed it to doing something very wrong that hurts yourself or someone/something else.

Soph is happy again; she was so ready to go to school by herself, that--when she learned the first day of school was a half-day, and parents had to bring the child to school and stay there until dismissal--she threw a grade-A fit. So she now has an Uncle Bill SDD to stick out her tongue at Kacey after recess.

Sunday, 04 September, 12:15AM: Poor Bill. Something's playing hell with his stomach. He's groggily heading back to our bathroom to be sick. I called to him to just crash in there, and not sleep on the couch tonight. Based on the bang in the bedroom, he's literally taking my advice.

6AM: Damn. I can't get Bill to answer me; he was sick at least 5 times last night (that I'm aware of), my little table (with the phone, computer, iPad, med box, and a LOT more) tipped over--I was able to get the iPad through a combination of pulling the cord until I could reach the iPad with the reacher and then nudging it with the reacher until I could reach it. I can't take most of my medicine, and I'm scared.

12:43PM: Still no response from Bill, and I can't lean over far enough to see into the bedroom to see if he's still sleeping. I don't know if I should be pleased he's sleeping, pissed off that he's sleeping, or just downright scared. So, time to email Charlene, and get her to call Kacey and Juan, because I can't text from the iPad.

Rats. Kacey and Juan are a good half hour away. This is bad.

At 2:24PM, Kathi--my mom's housemate--is here, but without a key, so she can't get in. We're both yelling at him, and she's trying to crawl through the window.

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The White Lake PD sergeant, who had been across the street watching Kathi climb through the window, came over when the initial 911 call was made. He missed the "suspected dead body by person or persons unknown" thinking that I had either fallen again--yes, our address is much too well-known by the White Lake Emergency Department. When I first got sick and was falling at least once a day, WLPD was dispatched to the house with WLFd, and a domestic violence case was opened. It was quietly closed when I made a call to my friend from Kindergarten, who is now an Oakland County Sheriff's Department (OCSD) Deputy, and explained what was going on, he pulled in a favor from WLPD--or that I was reporting a burglary in progress. He put out a call for rescue, and well...

It somehow seems appropriate that the EMTs who came to the house had heard the address and didn't catch the phrase "death confirmation," and came into with the flexible mat they use to get me back into bed after I fall out. The look on their faces when they came in and saw me in bed and pale was priceless. The confused look turned to concern when they went in, confirmed that the person or persons unknown was not a likely scenario, and called the Medical Examiner's office, which dispatched an Investigator. Quincy, M.E., the man was not, but he confirmed to his satisfaction that my wheelchair was in the hallway, about 30-feet from my bed, still folded up, and examined my hands and legs to confirm the lack of carpet burns, fibers, and bruising. And then dutifully released Bill back to me without an autopsy--Thank Ghu, because I suspect a fox screen would have had me back under suspicion.

Charlene was sitting on her email waiting for word from me, and, when Kathi received permission to clean up the stuff that had been on the floor around my bed from the fur monsters, the first thing she did was to hand me the phone. Yes, I was sitting in the yellow crime scene tape, since, fairly enough, the mess of my overturned table could have looked like a fight.

I looked at the phone with loathing and disgust, since I was really unsure about the state of my nerves. Of course, I'm not sure why I'm blaming the phone for anything. The sergeant called the funeral home of my choice, and stood standing by me, as I sat there trying to figure out who to call first. The obvious answer--Charlene, who, Great Ghoddess love her, relieved me of the task I dreaded most--calling Bill's siblings. She agreed to call Stephanie, Stuart, and Cookie after she pulled herself together.

Charlene knows when I am very punchy and need sleep, or I am really ill--depending on how disastrous my mistakes are--as my coherency flies out the window. In fact, she was the first to know something was wrong with me beyond that I was falling a lot, as I sent her a windshield that she had needed ASAP, and I did it, and Bill (supposedly) read it and sent it to Charlene. Charlene called to find out which of us was on drugs, WILLIAM! Bill asked what he had done, and Charlene asked who had done the glass. Bill replied that I had, but that I had said it wasn't making sense to me, and would he please go over it? Charlene started laughing and said, "Let me guess...you decided if Laur couldn't make sense out of a car, you certainly wouldn't, so why look at what she had?" Bill reluctantly acknowledged that premise's possibility. Charlene told him to open the document NOW, so that he knew why he was taking me to the doctor, while Charlene edited my fingers from being on the SDFG keys instead of ASDF.

So, in knowing me so well, she knew that calling the Kunkel clan with this news wasn't on my Top 10, Top 100, or Top 1,000,000 list. Of course, it wasn't on her's either, but she knew I had a lot of other calls to make. So, my nerves were soothed enough, between talking with both Charlene and Greg, that we could tackle the remaining calls.

The next call, since I was hoping that it would lead to my making fewer calls, was to Arnie and Joyce. I know they knew something was wrong, as I told them I needed both of them on phones and sitting down as I could only do this once.

I was wrong. I couldn't do it in a smooth swoop, and when I hung up with them, I was still eyeing the phone suspiciously.

Of course, the phone then rang. Charlene had called Bill's middle sister, Stephanie, first (which made sense, since Bill's next oldest sibling is still in a nursing home/rehabilitation center). I picked up the phone, and did what comes naturally: I apologized. For not knowing sooner, for forever ruining Labor Day weekend, for not being able to tell her myself, and, essentially, for my still breathing.

Unfortunately, Stephanie caught me in the gut with her plaintive, "How could you let this happen?" Uh, well, at that point, I told her to hold on, and handed her off to the WLPD sergeant to talk with because I couldn't. The sergeant moved into the master bedroom, where Bill still was. He talked to Stephanie for about five minutes, then came back out. He handed me the phone, and said, "Good luck, and I'll just go

back in and sit with your husband." I remember that part clearly because Kathi was trying very hard to not laugh; she then came over and whispered, "Stephanie is a character, right? Because after talking with her, he would rather be by a silent Bill rather than have you shove the phone at him? I have to meet her!" Sorry, Kathi, but I'm not sure that will happen.

I know I made more calls, to get the word spread, and, true to instinct, I had reached out to the correctly linked people who could save me time and calls.

As I sat waiting for the funeral home to arrive, I thought a lot about how wrong five of us had been. Bill had jokingly put together a Health Index including me, three of our online friends, and himself. Bill, given his HBP and restless limbs, and Dave, who, in 2004, had been diagnosed with cervical dystonia, were battling it out for Spots #1 and #2 as most healthy; Karen was in the #3 spot; while Ed, who had been hit by a car in 2007, and I were battling to be in the least healthy #4 and #5 spots. In one of those eerie moments, I realized that something/someone screwed up because Death started at the top instead of the bottom, and as Bill would comment that, if he had to choose between losing me or The Phantom, well, he would miss Ed. I knew Death always gets the last laugh, but I wasn't ready for the laugh today.

I'm also now convinced that everyone I truly love will die on the fourth of a month; so I can now predict with 90% accuracy on which day my mom will not die.

The funeral home is here. The plan is that they will, as Bill referred to it, tag and bag him, and bring him out past my bed. They had taken off his chain, bracelet, and wedding ring, and given them to me. As they worked with (on?) Bill, I numbly put his wedding ring on his chain and put his chain around my neck. I admit that those steps actually brought a degree of realness of the situation. I mean, and this is a wrong thought, but out of sight, I was able to tell myself he was at the store, or at Kacey and Juan's, or a million other places than sitting dead in the bathroom.

A quick conference call had been conducted while Bill was out one day, with Bill's youngest siblings--Stu and Cookie (co-exec of his will)--and Charlene, and we were all in agreement: his desire of science donation so we wouldn't have to pay for cremation was NOT happening. Had his stated reason (giving med students the chance to explore the body of an old drug addict was slightly) been more altruistic, he would have had a better chance, but all of us had said to at least one other member of our merry band of four that donation was really not going to happen.

Juan just came flying through the door and perched on the bed behind me. He then pulled out a Pepsi from his backpack, while scanning the living room with one eye and watching the cops with the other. As he hugged me, he whispered, "I'll throw myself on any hand grenades." I smiled, shakily, and relaxed against him. He sagged in relief, still rubbing my back, and noted that I seemed tense. He received a quirked eyebrow in response, and shot me a grin. Where are my tears?

Oh, shit. Why is my mother here? She's supposed to be camping. How did she learn...oh, right, Kathi was on her cell phone. Well, that was Kathi's second mistake of the day. (First was coming over...) OTOH, well, a good friend knows where the bodies are buried; a great friend helps you hide/find them. That made her laugh, while my mom asked if I was going to ever grow up. Oops, I didn't realize I voiced that thought. I just keep typing, and well, I think if I stop, things are really going to be bad. Well, worse. Can things be worse? No, IF I ask that, things WILL get worse.

Speaking of tense, Juan's fingers are pinching a nerve in my shoulder. The sergeant noticed and nudged Juan. Juan released my shoulders and started rubbing the indentations in my shoulders. When the funeral home director asked for a picture ID, Juan got up, grabbed up Bill's backpack from the living room, and brought it to me. I shakily opened it, pulled out his wallet, and, in trying to open it, dropped it twice. Juan, who had picked up the wallet twice, didn't hand it back to me on the last time, but sighed, opened the wallet, and found Bill's post-it note with "11/19/11: J. Edgar and Joe's CS? Nail plywood sheet on stairs with brackets? Ask Juan!" attached to Bill's Michigan pedestrian license.

Well, it is nice to know Bill had started thinking about an outing for our 16th wedding anniversary, but his ramp idea would have been, at best, crippling. Juan handed over the ID, and looked back at me and correctly read my thoughts: "Don't worry, Aunt Laurie, I would have asked him what he wanted a sheet of plywood and brackets for, and vetoed the ramp. You being in the hospital was never a good time for Uncle Bill." He then read the amusement on my face, and thought over what he had said. "Oh, and it was never a good time for you, either!"

The WLPD sergeant is getting ready to leave. Interesting...he asked the youngest person in the room if everything was all right. Well, my answer would have been "No! Bill's gone and my mom's here. Nothing will ever be right again," so, well, asking Juan was probably a better idea. Juan's answer made the sergeant take a second

look at our tableau: "She [squeezing my upper arms] will be, even if it means you coming back out and hauling me to Jackson State." The sergeant looked at our tableau again, and then looked at Juan and motioned his head to the bedroom. Juan got up from the bed and peeled my right fingers from his wrist. Odd, I didn't realize I had hold of Juan; he leaned over, kissed the top of my head and said, "I'll be right back, just keep typing, Aunt Laurie."

Typing, yes that is what I've been doing. Typing is a good thing. Typing is solid and concrete. Typing is real, but this can't be real. Can Bill really be gone? If he is, why can't I cry? I can feel the tears welling up, but they won't come out. Why?

Odd. Juan is back, and he's rubbing my shoulder again, perched, again, on the bed behind me. I probably should ask what's going on, but right now I'll settle for the oblivion of typing. Typing is good.

Wait, why is my mom carrying a suitcase? Uh...why is she asking someone about sheets. Wait, she's asking me. Sheets for our bed...linen closet in the bathroom, maybe? (I mean, I know where I put them in January 2010, but September 2011? With Bill NOT putting things away, or rather putting them away where he thought best in spite of my labeling every cabinet, shelf, and drawer in the house BEFORE I got sick, so I had a 60/40 chance of him putting away things correctly? But now? Good freaking question.)

Oh, my ghod. Bill departed this morning, and I'm gaining my mother...okay, maybe I should have gone with Bill's murder-suicide plan. It would be a lot less painful.

Oh, wait. Here comes my kid brother. Jimmy's staying here, too? Okay, slumber party, I guess. Wait, he hugging me and telling me he's sorry, and I'm trying to determine if he means about Bill or that mom's here, or both. Oh, he read what I typed, and his whispered answer was both, but right now, he'll go 75/25 on it being mom/Bill. He then saw my grin, and said that's what he was looking for.

Of course, mom came out of the bedroom, to see me both typing and smiling and snapped at me to remember that I just lost Bill. No, I didn't. I know where Bill is, so he's not lost. And, writing is how I deal with trauma. How does she not know that and Juan and Jimmy do? I mean, yeah, after September 01, 2010, I switched from a pen to the iPad, but writing is writing, even if it's typing, right? I find myself staring uncomprehendingly at mom's "I'll be here for us 24/7, until we can make plans for

the future." Okay, why did my stomach drop to the floor? This isn't good. In fact, it's horrible. She started to take the iPad away, and Juan stopped her and told her to not take it away as it was the only thing keeping me sane and safe. Juan continued rubbing my back and telling me it was going to be okay. What is? Life, well, no. The Universe, maybe. And Everything? Not bloody likely. So, restart my dark teatime of the soul. This just is bad, horrible, no good, very bad day, week, month, life. Why is Juan saying good night? No, people can't leave me here with my mom. Things are now really bad.

Mom just made me laugh; she stated that Juan is the more responsible of the dynamic duo of Juan and Kacey. Really? What the hell is she basing that on? He's a 25YO young man who is just starting to be responsible for more than himself.

::sigh:: This isn't good. My thoughts are not on cleaning the house. Should they be? Oh, duh. When I'm upset, I write and doodle. When mom's upset, she goes from being a closet martyr to being an open martyr. Bill left HER a mess in a mess? Excuse me? What the hell? Who was married to him? Why is she here again? Oh, wait, her mouth is moving, so, I'd better pay attention.

Oh dear...maternal lecture on how to express grief properly interrupted by my mom's best--well, longest--friend, Lorraine. Her oldest son, Tom, and I were in Kindergarten together and were fast friends within five minutes, after I punched him in the stomach for calling me fat. I was, but he didn't need to remind me. Lorraine correctly read the mood in the room, when mom asked that Lorraine stay with me while she went to the store to buy sheets. How'd we get back on sheets for ghod's sake? Lorraine is watching my finger fly on the iPad keyboard and she noted my silence and came over and sat on the bed. I grabbed the iPad, thinking she was going to take it away, but Lorraine laughed and told me to keep writing, as I'd feel better eventually.

Mom asked her to keep an eye on me and see if she could take the iPad away from me. Did I suddenly become 4? Why do I need someone to keep an eye on me? Lorraine told mom that I have always turned inward when I'm upset for as long as she's known us, which is, OMG, 40 years; yup, ever since I was five and went to the Principal's Office with Tommy on the first day of Kindergarten, seven minutes into class starting. She reminded mom that Mr. Killian had talked with both of us, and that, when our moms' showed up to pick up the new best friends at the end of the

day, Mr. K had told both moms that he expected great things of us. I figure he's half right, as Tom is doing well.

Monday, 05 September: Okay, I screwed up big time. It is in my nature to apologize. Bill found my incessant apologizing frustratingly annoying. Unfortunately, Stephanie found my apology a sign of guilt in Bill's death. Well, yeah, I feel guilty. If I wasn't stuck in this damn bed, I might have been able to get him help.

Granted, it might not have helped; on average, only 5-10% of people who receive CPR survive. (WebMD Medical News. "Real CPR isn't everything it seems to be." Retrieved 2007-06-13.)

Charlene told Stephanie that I had nothing to do with Bill's death, and that I apologized was hardly surprising, since she had already channeled Bill twice to tell me that if I apologized to her again, she'd smack me in the back of the head. She also noted that she didn't understand why he would threaten to smack me in the head if I apologized again until now. She received an email from me where I said we had things to go over on Thursday. She emailed me back asking what, in particular; I replied: "Nothing important; I just wanted to be able to say that you and I had some things to go over so I could get rid of my mom and breathe for a bit, without you looking gobsmacked.

"I'm feeling very suffocated at the moment, but I managed to pick a fight with her and drive her into going home for tonight so I can just be and cry, read, cry, think about Bill, cry, yell at Bill, cry, breathe and cry.

"You know the routine...you've been doing it, I think. "

Dave is having his own fun..."Reading all the tributes to Bill online--and there are a lot of them--there were so many people who admired him and considered him a trailblazer. When did he lose all his hair? He always drew himself with long hair, but I saw one picture from 2002 in which he didn't have much. Is Stu Murdoch's bodyguard? If so, he could take your mom out with a death stare or some Vulcan hold."

I just got off the phone with Chris, who's working on a piece for Wired.com. He noted that he's worried about getting it right, I told him that he would. That, rightly or wrongly, Bill was glad that Chris and some of the other journalists plucked his

feathers and flew. I told Chris, who was rather gobsmacked about this, that I wanted this to be the best--and worst--piece he ever had to write. He said he got it. I even had him laughing by the end with some of the off-the-record stuff.

I seem to be able to be strong for others; but, truly, I just want to be with Bill. Bill was my God-given solace, and I truly do not know what I will do without him. I'm lost and lonely.

Charlene noted that we do have things to discuss regarding work, and we need to figure out what I can do, but for now, it isn't an issue. For now, her concern is just getting me through the next few days. I will be better after I commit matricide. Until then, I am perfecting the fine art of being an obliviot.

Well, maybe not as much of an obliviot as I thought. I was told today by my mom, that we'd have to sell the mobile and put down two of the kids and move me into her dining room. This, coming 36 hours after Bill's death, sent me over the edge. I picked a fight with her and threw her out for the night.

::sigh:: The bitterest tears shed over graves are for words left unsaid and deeds left undone. (Harriet Beecher Stowe)

Tuesday, 06 September: First Day of school; Soph, with Juan and Kacey in tow, will be here about 12:15PM. Getting mom to go home may have been a good thing. I actually got five hours of sleep and got to cry and cuddle the kids until they squirmed out of my grasp.

::sigh:: I had to tell Annie via email about Bill. I so didn't want to tell her over email, but I turned Bill's backpack inside-out and couldn't find a phone number for her...only the email address that I already had. She was in shock, and amazed that I told her so quickly. I just felt bad that she hadn't checked her Yahoo account until she was at work. ::sigh::

Stuart is trying to keep my humor up. He called while my little (37, to my 46) brother was here and my mom was not. Stu told me that our word of the day was calm. I said, "No, the word of the day is Matricide." Stu started laughing, as did I. My kid brother stuck his head up over the back of the couch and asked, "What's Matricide?"

Stu stopped laughing, and said, in shades of Bill, "Get out the dictionary, Jimmy, and stop listening to my discussion with your sister."

Jimmy replied, "No, really, what does it mean?"

Stu and I both started started to laugh again, and we both replied, simultaneously, "the act of killing one's mother." Jimmy snorted, and announced he was going out to smoke a cigarette, and check in with his wife. Stu and I were laughing again by the time Jimmy slammed the door.

Stu said he really didn't want to come to Michigan to post bond for me. He would, but he didn't want to.

I wish I had five more minutes with Bill so I could ask him to let me cry without feeling like I was letting him down. I've spent most of today in tears, which he has drilled into me that he didn't want. I've been trying so hard to make as many of his wishes happen, and I can't stop crying today. What is wrong with me? Why can't I make this desire come true for him?

Wednesday, 07 September: Just heard a horrifying statistic: one of every ten children in the Detroit Public School system (approx. 84,000 students last year) misses 100 out of 180 days. Is it me, or is that number inordinately high?

Okay, I had to ask Charlene a really stupid question: did she remember how Bill handled my being sick last year? My mom said he dealt with it better than I am currently dealing with Bill's death. I didn't think it was a fair comparison. But then, I'm also working on 2 hours of sleep...scary that I slept better without her here.

Charlene's response was sort of a non-answer, which made it an even more interesting answer: "Well, generally anyone would deal with someone being sick better than with someone being dead. Duh. I think you're dealing with this very well. What is with your mom? Tell your mom to hit the bricks."

Reep is still crying piteously; part of me is amused, since he keeps waking up my mom who wants to know why I can't get him to settle down. (Seriously? Really? Can you EVER get a cat to do something he doesn't want to do?) Ever since we got Reep, he has always crawled into the deepest cabinet he can the second he heard her step on the porch; Bill and I would laugh since he was our early warning system. When

Reep would venture out today to retrieve food and water, he kept giving me a pointed look and then looked toward my mom, and then back to me, as if to ask: Isn't she EVER going home?

Of course, right now, I'm trying to get Reep to go back to sleep. My mom woke me out of a nightmare, so I could wake Reep out of his.

This quote hit me as reflecting Bill: "Nothing is so strong as gentleness. Nothing so gentle as real strength." Saint Francis de Sales, French saint & bishop of Geneva (1567-1622). With me being so sick, he tried hard to be strong, but his real strength came out in his fierce desire to make sure I was safe and secure from people who would be hazardous to my mental, emotional, or physical well-being.

When I was well, we had Kacey, Juan, and the girls over for dinner twice a week. Usually for a family sit-down meal on Tuesday/Wednesday and, IF Bill could hijack the plans, Saturday's dinner was pizza. Actually, he didn't hijack the plans...Kacey and I usually let the guys plot, but it was funny to see what ploy(s) they would resort to.

I really am not feeling strong right now; I've spent the last hour in tears. I know Bill would be disappointed in me right now, and that makes me want to cry more.

Wow, when Chris called me this morning at 4:30 to read his piece to me, he told me I was right. He said he thought Bill was guiding him and that it was the strongest piece he's ever written, but that he had to write it for the worst reason.

Vince also wrote his first press release in at least two decades. He noted that I could have had Bill write the press release, then I wouldn't have had to edit the release at 3:30AM.

Mom wasn't happy when Chris' call came in, despite the phone only ringing for a half ring. Our--Bill's and my--theory was that when Dad died in '97, she went through a self-discovery process and while she didn't like who she WAS, few people--except Marilyn--like who she now IS.

Mom keeps telling me that now that Bill is gone, I have to stand alone and on my own. When I pointed out that I CAN'T stand, she told me not to be a dumb ass. I'm sitting in the dark, quietly crying so I don't wake her, wondering why it couldn't

have been me instead, as I think Bill would have been handling this better than I am.

There is a reason Jimmy is fleeing the state at the end of the month. Mom informed him his timing couldn't be worse. He looked at me helplessly, and I sighed, picked up the phone so I could call 911, if needed, and told mom that when Jimmy and Cara made their plans, they weren't planning on Bill dying.

She glared at me and said none of us had planned on it and not to be an ass (I'm getting called that a LOT lately) and that she will need help with the burden of taking care of me. And therein is the difference between my mom and Juan and Kacey: my mom sees me as a burden and responsibility (her words); Juan and Kacey see me as a cherished commitment (their words).

Is it any wonder I don't want to move into my mom's house? (Even setting aside the idea of putting down the boys.)

Thursday, 08 September: Well, I made it through tonight. It wasn't the easiest time, but I think, considering, that it went well. Of the two dozen plus people here, I was amused that at least one-third (not including the five juveniles--three boys, 14, 9, and 5; and two girls, 8.5 and 4.75) were under 29. I know my mom was surprised to hear all of the "kids" call me Aunt Laurie and watched them as they all hugged me and said how sorry they were about Uncle Bill and asked how X, Y, and Z was regarding my health, PT, and OT.

Charlene was bemused as she knew about our "extended" family, but in the four days mom's been here, she only knew about Kacey and Juan, so she was gobsmacked.

Stephanie, Stu, and Cookie were pleasantly surprised, but Stu started laughing when Soph came up to him and asked if Stu was Uncle Bill's big brother. Stu told her that he was Bill's baby brother. Soph wrinkled her brow and said but you're bigger than Uncle Bill. Stu grinned and said yes, but that Bill was older. Sophia looked at him and said you don't look like Uncle Bill, and he noted that she doesn't look like her older sister. Soph thought for a minute, then nodded and said yep, you're Uncle Bill's brother cause you know everything like he did. Which got Stu laughing.

(We also discovered that the four youngest kids formed crushes on each other today, so that will be fun to watch.)

It was also funny to watch Charlene and Stu come to full-alert whenever Steph came near me. Charlene was also watching carefully to make sure I wasn't more upset by my mom. She was amused in watching her, after watching Jimmy come over and give me a huge hug (so huge, that when he was getting ready to leave and he and Stu were searching for his phone, and Stu handed him the house phone and told him to call the phone. The three of us heard the ringing coming from by my bed, and, Stu--true detective that he was officially and is in spirit--said, garbage can, it fell out of your right pocket when you hugged Laurie. Jimmy looked in the can, pulled out his phone, and told Stu, damn, you are GOOD.) she came over and give me the first hug she has given me since she came back on Sunday. Charlene came over a few minutes later, gave me a hug, and commented sotte-vocce, she really does have a working heart, or as Bill always said, she can put on a damn good act. That got both of us laughing and that was a very good thing. Stu reminded me that, even with Bill's death, I'm still his nice little sister. Cookie looked at him and said she's our little sister. Stu grinned and said yes, but she's my NICE little sister. Cookie (his only biological little sister) smacked him in the back of the head and said what's THAT supposed to mean? Charlene was laughing, and said, Cook, you were a NYPD chief, figure it out!

In the great scheme of things, the best sign of the synchronicity of the women who had been in Bill's life, three of us found and emailed/called the other within five minutes of each other with the song, "Broken."

Friday, 09 September: My mom is nuts, plain and simple. She took an interestingly frightening trip down memory lane this morning, and I'm not sure what I didn't need to know, but I now have a bunch of unsavory thoughts to sort through at some point. Part of me is appalled and trying to figure out why she felt she had to do this, and part of me is amused that she had to get in her martyrness.

I'm still pondering the better option of Matricide versus suicide: I was told that due to my intransigence in not wanting to put down two of our children (the boys!) and move into her dining room, that a competency hearing may have to be held so she can assume guardianship over me.

Uh, not a chance on this earth! I spoke to some of our friends in Vegas when mom deigned to leave me, after Charlene arrived, and she quickly read my unhappiness level. Before mom would leave, though, she asked me to dial Juan's cell number for,

which I did. She told Juan that he needed to come down around noon; he noted he would be at work, but that Kacey would be here. I dunno what's going on.

To say that some of our--my--Vegas friends aren't happy or surprised is rather startling, since I talked to four of HER friends, and they are on my side. It's frightening that I spoke with a friend of ours, who is an Episcopal priest, who noted that, BEFORE today's threat, watching the interplay between my mom and me, between my mom and Bill, and among the three of us was never entertaining, but was an interesting psychological experiment that blew-up after my dad died.

This will be an unarmed battle of wits in court. Oh, I will be well-armed, just with wit and sardonic humor instead of an actual weapon. I'll also have a lot of people in court.

Charlene called me from the Cleveland airport and asked how things were going. I just started laughing. She said, "I'll bite, what did your mother do now?" I replied, "That depends. Do the words, 'competency hearing' mean anything to you?" (Since she has conservatorship over her brother, I knew it would.) Charlene was quiet for a minute, then said, "This cannot be happening." I noted that I don't know if it is an idle threat or not, but I am getting locked and loaded for a bear hunt. Charlene said to keep her in the loop, and if I am served, she will be here as fast as possible with targets, err, support. She was amused that the deadbolt is being changed this weekend.

Yes, mom is gone for the weekend. She had plans made that cannot be changed "just because Bill had to drop dead." Bill did his damndest to insulate me from my mother. I loved her reluctantly telling Kacey that she and Juan were in charge.

Kacey looked at her and replied, "Uh, no. Aunt Laurie is in charge, and we'll do everything she wants."

My mom said, puzzled, "that's what I said."

Kacey grinned and replied, "it might be what you MEANT, but it isn't what you SAID."

My mom just looked blank, then shook her head and said, "You're definitely Bill's friend." Kacey opened her mouth, and caught my expression and closed her mouth.

Mom is now sound asleep at her house; given that she told her partner that she is SOOO glad to be back in her own bed as our bed is just so uncomfortable that she hasn't been able to sleep ALL week. Gee, I wonder then, how she MISSED my suicide attempt. I guess she didn't hear me over her snores, oh, wait, she wasn't able to sleep on our Tempurpedic mattress, so she must have just had sinus trouble or something...

Or, if she did, she hasn't opted to say word one. Or ask me if I want to talk. Or anything.

Saturday, 10 September: Thank heavens, mom left yesterday. She is a big problem, but Jimmy pointed out to her that while I am as stubborn, difficult, and frustratingly annoying as I have ever been, I don't need a guardian and telling me that I did and that I had no common sense was a guarantee to push me over the edge and cause me to lash out at her. He told her that while she is concerned about me, she has to back off and let me fall and get hurt, before she can make it better.

He told me I need to be more patient and loving with/toward her as she is scared right now. I told him I understood that, but that I needed some breathing space. He acknowledged that, but said I have to understand that they don't know our friends that well, and maybe he and mom should have come out here more after I got out of the hospital. (You think?)

I am amused by the fact that even though mom couldn't sleep the WHOLE time she was here, she wasn't awake when the depression really overwhelmed me. Kacey unhappily took care of me, and moved all potential weapons out of my reach.. She said that she wasn't going to yell, but that for as much as people are missing Bill, I might be missed a little less by some, and more by others, but that I still have a lot to do and offer, even if my mom doesn't think so.

Juan is changing our--my--locks at the moment. Stu is really unhappy that my mom is being difficult and that he had to find out about mom's issues from Charlene. Really? He's surprised his big brother didn't confide in him? Oh, no, he's actually upset that I didn't confide in him sooner; which, truthfully, I never intended to confide in him about my mom's issues.

Sunday, 11 September: Today is quite a day for reflection. Can Bill have only been absent a week? I keep waiting for him to come in the door and say something. At least tears today will be less noticed.

Trust Bill to be in today's print edition of the New York Times. Kacey and Juan played "drive newspaper stands nuts by asking for a New York paper." They found five copies, and I knew she wanted three copies--one for herself, and one for the scrapbooks she's doing for each munchkin--and I wanted two copies, so, she had Juan call for permission to use my bank card to hold the papers. I was puzzled, but then I remembered that the Gray Lady was now \$6.00 a copy, so it was over our previously agreed upon \$25 limit. I do need to change the limit. Bill had given them freedom to go up to \$60, but that was because he knew his pin code, and, well, those numbers got lost in the detritus of my mind. I am amused by the "new rules" Stu instated. His take is classic Kunkel behavior/attitude: "Laur, I am sorry to hear about your mom's disappointing behavior. I was unaware of her stand, I just thought she was your standard difficult mom. I am glad your support team is around. I hope you are in contact with Medicaid, now that Bill is gone, you are eligible for better care. Keep me informed. I am back to work tomorrow and on the run, but do check in with email almost daily."

Hmm...better care than? Bill? Who, given his dislike for nursing, did a phenomenal job taking care of me for a year. Kacey? Who is a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and is what I would be lucky to get. My mom? ::shudder::

What constitutes "almost daily?" Every other day, every two days? Clarification is definitely required.

::sigh:: If Bill wasn't dead, I would have to kill him. While I was sick, I wrote our joint will, and my individual will. Bill had decided, and I agreed, that everything was to be sold, things paid off, and then, any remaining funds were to be split into 3 trusts: 6% to the care and maintaining of our furred children (one of whom keeps giving me a black eye; sending the little bitch to her grandmother might be poetic justice...hmm, have to ponder that one some more); and 47% each to Em and Soph to be given to them upon completion of a BA, or their 25th birthday.

He told me he had asked Charlene and Mercedes, our former office manager, to be co-administrators for the trusts. I was talking to Charlene about my Durable Power of Attorney and whether she was willing to take Bill's place for me. I also said I had

to rewrite my individual will and that I was putting the three trusts in that, and was she willing to be co-trustee still. Charlene was puzzled as, unfortunately, he did NOT tell her about the trusts or that she was the secondary person on my (and Bill's) DPoA, despite telling me that he had asked her. Charlene had no problems with being appointed, but she said to please let her know what other paperwork Bill squirreled away and assume he did not tell her.

I also think I discovered the secret that I mentioned on the first of September. I had a mental disconnect between Jimmy telling me about the surgery snafu and the papers in the file folder labeled Open Only in Case of Illness or Death. I set up the 4-part file after my dad died with Bill's original paperwork (birth certificate, social security card, his marriage and divorce certificates from Charlene, and our marriage certificate) bagged, tagged, and indexed on the left side and on the right his DNR, his Living Will, and our joint will and (finally) his will. The back two dividers had the same set up, except they hold my information. I was looking at Bill's DNR, and I suddenly felt like I had been punched in the gut by a ton of bricks: he had REMEMBERED the file folder and had pulled it out. (Actually, just knowing he remembered the file's existence was a shock.) The index said that I had four documents on the right side of the folder: my DNR, my Living Will, and our joint will and my will. My DNR is NOT in the folder. The bloody bastard shredded it; all of this could have been over for me on 21 July 2010. Yeah, it would have screwed up HIS birthday, but really? I trusted him to make a decision when I couldn't, and apparently, neither could he.

Monday, 12 September: Early in our relationship, Bill had introduced me to his philosophy of you pick your family once you turn 18 and move away from home. It was a philosophy, I quickly adopted as my own, and we always had people we could depend on around us. So, I have a lot of "family," whom I don't share blood with.

Stu, though, is still puzzled and hurt that neither Bill nor I told him about the situation with my mom. I told him that there wasn't any reason to tell him before, and that he has enough to deal with.

Yes, I am disappointed that my mom can be cold and stand-offish; but knowing she puts on the "Oh, I'm sacrificing X, Y, and/or Z for [Insert Name Here] and s/he doesn't appreciate anything I do!" I do at least know what she is doing. Sort of.

Kacey and Juan are content to take care of me, but they are both relieved to know that Charlene has their (and my) backs, since she is now the lead person on the Power of Attorney docs. Hmm, now that I'm thinking about it, I need to write Charlene about the PoAs, Living Will, and DNR, and make sure she knows she's now lead person. My mom, OTOH, will be very pissed off that she is NOT on either the Medical or Durable Power of Attorneys. But, it is to be hoped that those won't be necessary for a while. Charlene was not pleased about my suicide attempt and was even less pleased that my mom was here during it and she did nothing. Charlene did notice and wasn't happy, but she hasn't had the chance to talk to me about it yet.

Tuesday, 13 September: Tuesdays and I still aren't on speaking terms.

Well, maybe I can be on speaking terms with Tuesday. I just got a recorded call from Humana; while it is four minutes and 13 seconds I won't get back, the recording was interesting, since it asked how my diabetes treatment plan was going. The problem with the query is that I am not now nor have I ever been a diabetic. Something Bill fought since I became sick, since apparently being overweight = High Blood Pressure (HBP), high Cholesterol, and diabetes. Bill was super annoyed by the doctors who STILL haven't a clue what's wrong with me. When I first got sick and they ran my BP, Cholesterol levels, and a diabetes test, and said: These tests MUST be wrong. If anything, my BP is way too low and my bad Cholesterol number was 88, and the doctor was totally knocked for a loop that I wasn't a diabetic. Bill was extremely pissed that they wouldn't believe him about all this and was totally upset when they insisted that the same tests be performed over and over.

On a lighter note, our youngest son just pulled a boner. He was up on the vanity in "their" bathroom and looked in the mirror. Instead, he attacked his reflection and bounced off the vanity. He then came out and attacked Typo, who trounced him back, until Reep cried out. Reep is now sulking in front of the fridge.

This is entertaining...time for a reality show break...

Reep spent the last few minutes chattering at the refrigerator, and, when it didn't open to reveal its treasures, he climbed up to the top of the cabinet and is sulking in true dramatic fashion.

I haven't talked to my mom since the Saturday blow-up; I did call and leave a message about the NY Times but I haven't heard anything back.

I'm just surprised at how tired I am. I keep falling asleep.

I admit I complained about my sleepiness and my mom to my now-three other people email loop, and Karen noted that "you probably didn't sleep much the whole time, so you need it. As far as not talking to your mom, it's probably best you only talk to her when absolutely necessary. Maybe she couldn't think of anything snarky to say about the Times, so that's why she didn't call back."

Wednesday, 14 September: The kids were busy last night: the rug in front of the couch looks like the mole men were seeking treasure. I know there was at least one meeting of the minds last night, as both Reep and Esme emerged shaking their heads and looking VERY dazed and confused.

Today, Em cut school, with the permission of her mom, Juan, and me (I was amused she called me for permission); she is having a wart removal procedure and she has a painful blister the size of a half-dollar on her hand. I told Em that we should put some Neosporin on it, and it wouldn't hurt so much. She eyed me carefully (which, considering I had just caused her to commit a potential federal felony [I couldn't remember our mailbox number, but thought it was either 8 or 13, but told her that if those weren't it, just see what box the key did fit. FWIW, I am box number 13] was quite fair), and was gobsmacked when Kacey told her that I had given her the same advice as the doc.

Soph, while waiting for the bus, saw fire trucks coming out of our street, and she made Kacey call me as she said that she had to know I was okay, if we wanted her to go to school. I know I have talk to her about her fire truck anxiety, but damned if I know what to explain to her yet.

::snort:: I've been listening to a key in the lock for a minute, and since Kacey and Paige are at their respective homes and Juan is at work, I assume it is my mom. Kacey is on her way down, but is commenting, did your mom think the rules changed because Uncle Bill died? She saw mom and Marilyn as they were our street. Kacey and I were bemused, as were the WLPD officers sitting in their marked car across the street. One came over to let Kacey know about the attempted break-in; he said that they had been watching my mom, and had she tried forcing the lock, they would have investigated, since the word has spread among the officers in this patrol area that I am otherwise abled and that Bill is no longer here, and to keep an eye on my house. Sometimes I do love a small town.

Karen and I were emailing each other at the time, and she was relieved at my escape: "Wow! Sounds like you got that deadbolt changed just in the nick of time!! I suspect your mom saw this as her chance to ambush you & try to bully you into doing whatever it is she wants from you today. I'm glad Kacey saw her & is coming to give support. I take it she was required to call before coming over before? And now she thinks she can do what she wants, under the excuse of 'being worried.' Maybe you should change the rest of the locks too."

Yes, she was required to call before coming over. Bill made the point clear in Vegas, when we looked out the window and saw her there. He told me to stay put, removed his shirt and shorts, and grabbing the towel from my hair, wrapped it around him. He then dumped my glass of water over his head, and headed for the stairs. He opened the sliding glass door, still clutching the towel, and as I spied on him using a mirror on the landing, said, "I'm sorry to greet you like this, but I didn't know you were coming over."

Mom was flustered, and when Bill was seemingly going to drop the towel, she vacated promptly. We rarely got drop-in visits after that.

Yes, we do need to rekey the back door, but if she pries open the screen door, I'll be on the phone to 911, since I did not know anyone was coming over, and gee, I would NOT have expected my own mother of attempting to break in, when all she had to do was call me first, officer...

Karen was laughing, and wrote back, "Quick thinking by Bill, LOL!" He was impressed with himself. The problem with dropping in has lots to do with me and less to do with his paraphernalia. The shrink I was seeing in Vegas noted how tense I was just over discussing her visits and Bill noted that I am more tense when she dropped in versus when I had preparation time. So the rule became that everyone needed to give me fifteen minutes warning, unless they had a standing appointment time. For example, I knew our office manager, Mercedes, would come to the house M-F at 9AM, and I was fine with that since I knew she was coming every weekday. Bill and I have both tried to explain it to her, but to no avail.

I called Kathi to warn her to keep her head down because mom was going to be on the warpath. And I was correct, she was and is on the warpath, crying to Marilyn

that she didn't know what she had done but give the best part of her life to two very ungrateful children.

Karen was curious as to how I was being ungrateful, and, since Kathi had told me about mom's hysteria with Marilyn, I actually knew the answer: I'm ungrateful as I changed the locks and am depending on two people in their 20s who aren't blood. She never agreed with Bill's philosophy on family. Mom's philosophy is that IF you have nothing to hide, then you have no need for a head's-up phone call. She decided that the shrink was nuts about my need of a warning. She told both Bill and me that everyone in her family had a "mi casa" open door policy. Bill looked at her and said, "Well, I guess we're not family because Laurie needs a warning, and she will have it. I don't like disagreeing with you (boy, was THAT a lie!) but I am taking care of Laurie and she is taking care of me, and we can't do that if you continue to show up without calling."

The doctor ordered another ultrasound, which makes me wonder what was or wasn't on the ultrasounds done two weeks ago. Kacey knew I was concerned, so she started teasing me (Hear that? Your mom is wrong. You DO have a heart!) to get me to relax. Still waiting to hear about the original tests, let alone the one done today.

Thursday, 15 September: One of the WLPD officers came over to check on me today and make sure I was doing okay. He came in (I had had Kacey leave the door unlocked while she ran home to get her mailbox key and get both of our mail and then we were going to have lunch) and then as he was telling me that Tommy had put a 365-day welfare check on me. Sometimes I do love a small town.

Unlike my mom, the officer came to the window and asked permission to come in, which I granted. He wanted to make sure that I knew about the "crime wave" (<http://whitelake.patch.com/articles/4-cars-set-on-fire-in-cedarbrook-police-suspect-arson>) and had a phone in reach. As we were talking, I started to take a drink of soda from my bottle, and realized it was empty, so I set it back down. He asked what I was drinking, and, after my reply, he picked up the bottle and filled it for me. Kacey came in, stopped dead in her tracks and said "I can't leave you alone for four minutes?" The officer told us both to have a good day, and we replied, "and be careful out there!" He gave us a salute and went out the door. Yes, a small town can sometimes be fun.

The officer noted my Alfred Hitchcock magazines, Laurie R. King books, and a paused Criminal Minds on the television, and said if I have any insights on the car arsons and burglaries, let him know.

::snort:: I'm not the only one having a difficult day today. The Community Network folks called to confirm Bill's doctor appointment for tomorrow; I explained that he had passed away on the 4th, and wouldn't be keeping the appointment. The woman blurted out: "Are you sure?"

I replied, "That he passed away or that he won't be there tomorrow?"

She said, "Both!" Then she said, "I'm sorry. I should have said I'm sorry to hear about this and is there anything we can do to help?"

Meanwhile I'm going to have to start inflicting pain on myself to stay awake. This sleeping stuff is getting ridiculous, but it feels so good to sleep that that's what I want to do. It's making me feel silly, but Kacey said I'll stay awake when my body is ready to and not until.

Hmm. This isn't good. Someone just tried for two minutes to unlock my door, and didn't succeed. Since I received NO calls, and no one at my window, I can only postulate that it was my mom or Marilyn. So the door will now be locked even if Kacey is gone for five minutes. I have no clue as to why mom thinks the rules have changed.

Friday, 16 September: My little Kindergartener is well pleased with my "hisical hairipee" as, for the first time since getting my iPad, I am using my finger to type as opposed to my knuckle. She cleared me this morning before school, saying that Uncle Bill would be proud of both of us. I hugged her and agreed whole-heartedly.

I have to say, though, that if he were here in front of me, I would slice him with acerbic, razor-sharp wit. The doofus changed the passwords on our Credit Union e-statement page and on our Comcast account, and, apparently, decided that I was a security threat since he did not give me the new passwords.

Wow...scary how much better my control is with fingertips rather than knuckles...

Saturday, 17 September: In an interesting turn of affairs, Kacey and I were making a grocery list and Juan and the little ones came in. That gave me time to ask how the girls enjoyed the 2-hour free fair one of the shopping centers was holding. Emilie helped finish the grocery list (scarily she knew how to spell "chocolate" but not "water"...I don't want to think about that one too much, beyond Juan getting smacked by both Kacey and me after he said "typical female!"). Kacey and Juan finished decorating outside for the fall and started putting away the stuff outside that won't survive a Michigan winter. Kace was always amused that I decorated for the seasons, pulling out the cauldrons, turkeys, Santas, hearts, clovers, bunnies, and flags as appropriate, but she said that when I was so sick, and heaven only knows that Bill didn't decorate, that when she was putting out my generic fall stuff, it made her look for more generic seasonal items for her collection.

::sigh:: just caught Reep drinking out of a fountain on the counter as he's investigating all the items Kacey put on the counter--including the money tree and aloe vera plant Bill didn't kill, as opposed to the 14 plants he did kill--and he's digging through the cat grass container looking for the newly planted seeds.

BTW, has anyone else heard of the "Waffle House Index" (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424053111904716604576542460736605364.html>)? I find this concept EXTREMELY frightening.

I had long told Bill that our children would kill us; he laughingly agreed, given how many times Beatnik caused me to take a header down the stairs in our house on Spyglass in Vegas and how many times Punk tried to send Bill out the windows of the same house.

The gruesome threesome we--I--currently have are--mostly--more subtle, but still diabolical. They may not have killed Bill, but I am apparently still a target, to-wit: today, Reep attempted murder by Ding Dong. Yes, I know it SOUNDS ridiculous, but here is what happened:

I had taped and was rewatching Bowling for Columbine, and fell asleep at the 1:19 mark. Kacey woke me up about 45 minutes later for lunch. She apologized for not being able to stay with me, but she had to supervise the placement of the tarp on their roof. I assured her that I would be fine, and noted that both boys were sleeping on the bed with me, and that Reep was very curious about the pizza rolls I was having for lunch. Typo was quietly lying still, but Reep was in full "get the food

away from Mom" mode. He was chewing every bite I took, keeping pace with me. When I put the bowl down on the rolling table, there were two itty-bitty pieces of pepperoni in the bottom of the bowl. Reep eyed me carefully as I was playing with the Ding Dong wrapper (when did Hostess stop wrapping them in foil anyway?), and went to the bowl, and lapped up both pieces, despite my cautioning that he really wouldn't like it. Given his then licking the bowl clean, he was quite pleased that he had FINALLY been allowed to eat pizza, and decided that Mom is an idiot about what he will or won't like.

Which brings me to dessert: the Ding Dong. Bill had, long, long ago, given up on my eating a Ding Dong without disassembling it. First I peel off the chocolate coating, getting it as free of cake as possible: then I split the cake, the better to lick out the cream. Then the cake is eaten, then the coating. So, Typo is on the outside of my left leg, and Reep has resumed his spot between my knees. I had finished consuming the cream in the one half of the cake, and had put it on my plate, so I could tackle the other half. A morsel of cake broke free and rolled across the plate, where Reep promptly speared it with a nail and popped it into his mouth. The look of delight that spread over his face caused me to grin, but when he saw me break off a piece of cake, and put it in my mouth and not his, the crestfallen expression caused me to break into laughter, which is never a good idea when chewing up something.

I started coughing, and the boys were both trying to get into my lap--Typo with fear in his eyes, and Reep with a Ding Dong desire. As I was trying to dislodge the cake, I'm also trying not to laugh, as I could see the headlines: Ding Dong Death, Death by Ding Dong, Snack Cakes Hazardous to Health, Cat Sentenced for Murder (well, okay, under Revised Michigan Statutes, that won't happen, since they didn't hold the dog that shot his owner in the leg) and so on, let alone the potential autopsy information. I finally dislodged the cake, and let go with my pent-up laughter. Reep was hugely disappointed that he didn't get more Ding Dong, while Typo scolded me for causing fear and nap interruption.

Kacey came back down roughly three-quarters of an hour later, and was appalled (and amused) by what happened, and said next time that I'm to call her, so she can come down and do the Heimlich maneuver. She told me to just push buttons on the phone, and she'll know that coming down here at fastest speed possible is needed.

I think what frightened me when I saw/heard about the Waffle House Index on Jon Stewart's show was that it was actually a real thing. I was fine with it being from a

writer's imagination, but knowing that the Director of FEMA is using the Waffle House as a secondary source of information about a region was just a tad scary. It made him/FEMA more real, or to misquote Obi-Wan: "[It's] more machine than man."

True, at least now I have a clue about how to judge things. Their food isn't bad--at least, the two meals I had there and the five meals Bill had were, by all reports, hardy and hearty fare. Of course, that Bill got Jimmy to take him there three times actually tells me that their food is good, since Jimmy, among all of his jobs, spends time as the head chef at restaurants, until he gets bored doing it, and goes back to maintenance.

I have decided that cats are more difficult to wrangle than kids. Reep is on my shit list so deep, he's going to be a long time digging out. He climbed on my rolling table and ignored two requests to get down. The third time, I used his full name (Reepicheep Henry Kunkel) and grabbed the Alton Brown dinosaur spray bottle, and, rather than spraying him with water I did a growly roar, and apparently scared the beejeebers out him as he went one way and the table (and cable box remote) went the other, into the living room. I spent 15 minutes playing "lasso the remote" with the bed controller when Kacey came in, took one look and said, "what did Reep do now?"

I was teasing Emilie today, after she told me of her "how to make mom go gray faster" campaign, and said "Em, you know I love you dearly, right?" She nodded, and curled up with me on the bed. I continued, "Uncle Bill told me that you had an evilly malicious streak that, as your uncle, he felt he needed to nurture. I must say, though, that I'm not sure how to nurture it, as you seem to be doing a bang-up job on your own." Em gave me a hard hug, and told me that those were the nicest words she had heard all day.

I did ask Kacey about the streak in Em, and she sighed and said she hadn't figured out what to do about it yet, but, that so far, she only seemed to be directing her energy toward kids who pick on her and her sperm donor, err, biological father. I didn't confide to her that Em was targeting her this weekend.

Soph was also amusing tonight during our family dinner. She almost called me "Nana," which, since Kacey's mom is sixth on the list of her favorite people, did cause me to quirk my eyebrow at her. She caught herself in mid-syllables, and saved herself, and was quite put out by Kacey's and my laughter. She told us her list of

favorite people: Kacey and me (the top spot depends on who she is with and/or what she wants), Juan/Bill, Em, and then Nana (and yes, heaven help us, she told her grandmother that she was her sixth favorite person). Kacey heard about it for a week. Kacey's response: talk to your granddaughter, not me!

When Kacey's mom told Soph that, with Bill gone, she moved up to the number five spot, Soph contradicted her, with "No, Uncle Bill's spirit is holding his space, so, you're still number six." Kacey was trying so hard to keep a straight face, and later noted that she--we--had to talk to Miss Soph, and for me to figure out what to say to her.

I told Kacey that, off the top of my head, the best approach was to point out to Soph that no one likes to come in at last place and that she really hurt her Nana's feelings. Juan's relieved that he and Bill took turns at the numbers three and four spots, while Em was surprised that she was Soph's number five pick, since Soph was number eight on her list. (The top four were the same, followed by her current teacher, last year's teacher, her theater teacher, and after Soph, her grandmother. Em is just old enough to spare her grandmother's feelings by lying through her teeth, unlike Soph, who believes that truth IS a terrible swift sword, and she's willing to slice-and-dice as needed.)

Sunday, 18 September: I know Tuesdays were usually the bane of my existence, but in the last two weeks, Sunday is running a pretty close second. Kacey still thought it was funny that I rated higher than her mom on both lists. One day, grandma offered to take the girls for ice cream and then to her house. The girls turned to Kacey, confused, since she had given them permission to stay with us. They turned down grandma's offer, and, at that point, Bill and I became grandma's sworn enemy. She thinks we let the girls get away with murder, but Kacey pointed out that they go to the Time Out stool limit and no further. Did/Do Bill and I let them explore how far they could push before giving them cues that they were pushing a line? Yes, but as I pointed out to Kacey, with age comes patience.

Reep managed to move the remote again, this time down to the foot of the bed, where he then laid atop it, and presented a "What, Me Worry?" face to the world. Lively...yeah that's a good word for it.

Monday, 19 September: I got hit with nausea and the limited light (think "I Love a Rainy Night") microwaving my eyes have successfully given way to a major migraine.

When did I know it wouldn't be pretty? When Reep let out a squeak and he--and my head--went running for a dark corner.

(I knew I was in Trouble when the road delays were brought up on the local Fox network and they said that there was "water on Telegraph [old US 23], North of Warren." Really, no shit? Gee, I hope you mean other than from the RAIN that's been falling since 11PM. Well, they did; five minutes later they announced that a water main had "apparently malfunctioned, spewing inches of water across the roadway." I want to know more about the "apparent malfunction" since there is a lake on the highway, the surrounding areas have no water, and, well, golly, what caused the damn spew?)

Hmm...my news pondering is longer than my health update. I am a scary creature.

Tuesday, 20 September: Today was not an easy day. The running joke with my dad and Bill was that I have never gotten the hang of Tuesdays. I inevitably get sick on Tuesdays--other than my semi-annual disasters, my first car accident was on Tuesday, and, well, Tuesdays just aren't good days. In a bit of irrational behavior, when I got sick last year, I made Bill promise me that he wouldn't die on a Tuesday. He was bemused, but agreed.

Of course, when my mom made the pronouncement/threat of coming over for 12 hours once a week, starting 4 October, Bill said it was likely that he would no longer be able to deal with Tuesdays. She actually asked me if Bill died to get out of Tuesdays. I admit I just looked at her and asked, "Paranoid much?" It was noted by Charlene that I didn't really answer the question; I responded that mom hadn't answered mine.

Anyway, today just sucked.

Wednesday, 21 September: I emailed a former college professor of mine with the news about Bill. Since he had met Bill, and answered questions for a chart Bill was busily filling in about me, and wouldn't tell me about; he was sad to hear the news, but knows me well enough to know how to cheer me up. He's sending me copies of two of his books I don't have. Interestingly, Dr. S. asked if I was still coming to Holland (MI, not Amsterdam) in November as Bill had promised Dr. S., that we were coming. How Bill planned to get us there is now occupying my mind.

I am both bemused and appalled at the lengths Bill chose to go through to insulate me from my mom; he, unlike me, definitely anticipated disaster on that front. Since being threatened with a competency hearing, I am gingerly tentative with my mom, which Bill would be happy to see.

What is most difficult is that I am, once again, questioning myself. Bill and I met the September after my 24th birthday; for the last 21 years, he's served as my coach, cheerleader, and editor, and, as I look at doing my first writing without him, I'm not sure that I can. In fact, I'm almost certain I can't.

Thursday, 22 September: Our friend, Stephen, hadn't been heard from in awhile, and, as I was sorting through old emails to see where/when his last email filled with restaurant and movie reviews was, I said--aloud--"Hon, I'm picturing Stephen sitting on the cement outside a shut down restaurant waiting futility for it to open. Do you think he's okay?" The reactions from my audience were entertaining. Typo looked around for his dad, Reep looked around for the restaurant, and Esme just gave me a disdainful sniff.

In a lovely bit of synchronicity, I found this note in my email box from the subject himself: "After my lovely working/resting vacation last week, (and new restaurants as well) I will catch you all up on the latest, probably this weekend. I was taken aback by the sudden passing of Bill and thought a moment of silence (which turned into a week) was appropriate to honor his memory (even though we've never met). So be ready for a lengthy email."

For the last 27 years, I have gotten a bad bug on, or within one day of, both equinoxes. Among the major migraine, bloody noses, and general achiness, I woke up this morning at 6AM running a temp of 102, which given that my temp averages 96.5 (according to Himself's notes), was cause for concern, but as Bill had put in his notes to not freak me out with hospitalization until my temp hit 104.7, Kacey started working on breaking my fever. It continued rising until it finally broke at 104.1. It only took 14 hours to break, which is actually a speed record for me.

I also had two people tell me what is scaring me about this month's cars, and it's dumb, but understandable: It's the first writing I'm doing without Bill. In giving it thought, and knowing that while both people met Bill, it's me they know best, I think they are correct.

Friday, 23 September: Happy first day of fall...I'm going back to sleep now.

Saturday, 24 September: I'm still sleeping...Well, when I'm not playing the iPad app, **Fish Tales**.

Sunday, 25 September: This is going to sound asinine [and the 2012 Camry is still screwing with my head; the LUGGAGE DOOR (really, that is the name given to what I grew up with as the trunk lid, but now has a stupid piece of glass in it so it's a "door.") Yeah...and the last step (#13, according to the master instructions, but #29 at this point will easily take me to step #50, WHEN (IF) I can get the damn things untabled, so it might be causing this bit of idiocy)]: how do you determine a favorite genre of movie?

Bill had started on Labor Day weekend the task of determining my favorite genre of movies. His exact words, on Friday (03 September) night: "We'll figure out your favorite genre if it kills me." Hmm, I guess I DID kill him. Okay, never mind...maybe I just need ideas to figure out how to determine a favorite genre.

Today is the first day that I've seen the girls since Thursday. Soph got me good today. Em, Soph, and I were watching Juan and Kacey doing outside stuff, and Soph was playing with the iPad, when she asked a question that had me on the floor. She asked, in her 4YO wisdom if, when I die, she can have the iPad.

Em whirled around and said, "You want Aunt Laurie to die and not be here anymore like Uncle Bill? That's a horrible idea, Soph!"

I reminded Em that at age 4, logic doesn't always play a part in thought.

Em said, "I want an iPad too, but I want you to be here when my kids graduate from high school."

I admit I asked if SHE planned to graduate before having kids, and was told yes. I also pointed out that it is probable that I'll be looking for a new iPad in 18 months, and I could probably be persuaded to let the old iPad go down to their house.

When Kacey came in, oblivious to all of this, Soph announced that I would probably give them the iPad when I die in 18 months. Em smacked her head, while I just

laughed. Kacey, confused, asked if Soph had gotten a memo from God about my impending demise. Soph just looked at Kacey and said to not be silly.

Monday, 26 September: Okay, it's raining, I'm hurting, and I sent 127 minutes on the phone trying to fix the Netbook because Ford Motorcraft (there is a reason GM employees refer to Ford as the Fix Or Repair Daily vehicle) crashed me 5 times.

So, REALLY not a good day.

While I am on my cell with Ford tech, my landline rings. It's my mom. So while the Ford tech was doing what he could, I take the call.

Mom: "Danny called. A mobile in YOUR park caught on fire because of the Wii. If I unplug it from the wall, will I have to reprogram anything?" [BTW, it's Danny's park, too, so, uh, why make it sound like it's my fault?]

Me: [Thinking that there were sirens in the park on Saturday morning, but nothing last night...] No, you won't have to repro--

Mom: "Okay on my way to the doctor's, so I have to go."

Me: Okay, let me know how the doc went. [Still waiting on the doctor report...]

Mom: "I will. Bye."

Kacey then came in, and I asked her about the fire. Turns out it happened to her friend's next door neighbor, at 2AM on Saturday. And it was indeed a Wii fire, as the male of the household set it on fire with a blowtorch, as he thought suing Nintendo would be a way out of his financial problems. Of course, first he borrowed the blowtorch from Kacey's friends on Friday afternoon and told them his plan. He also asked if he could store some stuff in their shed. They said no, but have fun.

So, when the fire occurred, they told the WLFD, who told the WLPD, who looked in their unlocked shed and found some of the neighbors' hidden items. The neighbor is currently in Oakland County Jail, awaiting his arson/attempted murder charges (idiot forgot to wake up wife and kids BEFORE doing the blowtorch scenario).

So, I call back my mom.

Me: Hey, I just talked to Kacey, who is friends with the guy's neighbors. Just an FYI, yes the Wii caught fire...

Mom: "Then it is being unplugged, NOW."

Me: because the guy took a blowtorch to it.

Mom: "Oh. So, it wasn't electrical?"

Me: No, not electrical. Kerosene, but not electrical.

Mom: "So, I can leave the Wii plugged in?"

Me: Yes, you can.

Mom: "Okay, bye." [click]

My only thought: If she thinks I'm incompetent, why is she getting my opinion on this? Well, okay, two thoughts: she KNOWS Danny is an idiot, so why is she listening to him?

Back to the Toyota Camry... Charlene called as I was starting to write this email, to tell me that I was way punchy and needed sleep. She had read over the front and luggage doors of the Camry, and said that she put in a call to Toyota Corporate and that the luggage door really didn't have glass, and that I really should get some sleep before I do the rear door and sliding roof door (or what Americans would call a Sun Roof). She's probably right, given that sentence. But, she did reassure me that the car was shaping up nicely, and that I really can do this without Bill. I'm still not sure about that.

Got a wonderful package in the mail today. Dr. Schakel, one of my favorite former professors, sent me copies of two of his books (one from 2005 and one from 2008; still trying to figure out how I missed them) that he knew I didn't have. I was even more amused when I looked at the packaging: he had paid for and ordered the books; slit the envelope open; signed them and included a separate note; put them back in the padded publisher's envelope; put that bundle in a new envelope; addressed it; then charged it to the department for postage at the mailroom.

When I wrote him to tell him they had arrived, and my detective work above, he laughed and told me I was half correct: he had had one of the books at hand. He has always liked my detective work, especially when I figured out who was breaking into the different professors' offices, and, inadvertently caught the thief while I was covering Dr. S's office door with wrapping paper for his birthday. (I had to cover his door, since I had hung a laminated poster he had wanted, but hadn't had time to buy, on his office door. Made sense to me at the time.) Campus police wasn't sure which of us to arrest; when Dr. S arrived at the department, he told the Campus Police that the one to hold would be the one inside the office whose door was covered with wrapping paper, since it was his office, and he wasn't behind the wrapping paper.

Tuesday, 27 September: I've decided that Tuesdays no longer exist in my world. And Sunday will be the next to go.

Wednesday, 28 September: Kacey went to the CU to deposit Bill's freelance check for me this morning and, had she not done drive-thru, would have literally ran into my mom in the reception area. The woman Bill and I usually dealt/deal with (Lauri Kleinhoffer; B: "What's with females your age in the Midwest being named some variant of Lawrence?") was waiting for the envelope to come through, since I had given her a head's-up that Kacey was coming by with a deposit.

Lauri knew when Kacey was trying to do the transaction, as the drive-thru teller brought Lauri the envelope. Mom saw enough of the envelope to see my handwriting and said, "oh, Laurie must have been unclear with Kacey, I'm sure she meant to give me the check to deposit into my and Bill's account."

Lauri looked down at the envelope, and said, "No, Laurie's exact words were: 'Kacey is bringing you an envelope for deposit into Bill's and my account.'"

My mom was totally flummoxed by the reply and decided to dig in a little deeper. "You do know that she isn't really related to my daughter, right?"

Lauri nodded, and continued working.

Thursday, 29 September: Okay, now that the last of Bill's big checks arrived and is deposited, it's time for a serious thought. Shall I pay the lot rent for a year, to

ensure my continue semi-independence until my mind and emotions have a chance to breathe? Well, there's a silly question.

Okay, truly an odd day.

I wrote a check for \$7200 for the rent for a year, including an existing credit of \$365.60, figuring that to be a little over a year's rent (actually, it's enough for 16 months, plus I'll have a little over \$150.00 in credit, unless the lot rent goes up, but then it should be at least 14 months, plus a nice credit). Kacey took it down to the office, and Carrie took it, without really looking at it. Kacey waited and then said: "Carrie, since the check I just gave you is for Aunt Laurie's rent for a year, I really need a receipt."

Carrie started, and then picked up the stamped For Deposit Only check, and stared at it. She then turned to the office door behind her, and asked, "Tracy, do we accept rent for a year?"

"If the account isn't delinquent, I guess maybe we can. Has anyone ever paid for a year before?"

"Not that I know of... suppose the check isn't good?"

Kacey said, "Look, if there's a problem, you'll know about it pretty quickly. And, since I know it is good, you'll know you have the rent paid on the lot for a year, but I just want a receipt for Aunt Laurie."

Carrie then said, "Wait, why didn't Bill bring down the check, Kacey?"

Kacey looked at her and said, "Really? I told you that he passed away when I brought down their rent check on the 4th, and you waived the late fee, because he died in the early morning hours of the 4th, and Aunt Laurie can't bring it down."

"Oh, yes, I remember now...he was an older man?" Kacey laughed and said, "Well, he was 61, and normally dressed in a blue, black, or red t-shirt with jeans, backpack, hat, and shades."

"Oh, right, and Laurie's an older woman with shoulder length brown hair?"

"Well, she's only 45, so, I'm not sure that she's considered 'older'?"

"Oh. Well, I listed this as 12 months rent, but it might not be, so, tell her that she'll need to have rent money by October 2012."

"Yeah, I'll make sure she knows. I'm sure she'll get right on that."

Kacey gave me the two page receipt, and said I'd need rent money in October, but that it was more likely that I'd need it for January 2013, if our calculations were correct. ::sigh::

I realize that Bill and I have gotten way to good at med-speak. For those of you following along from home, OA is osteo-arthritis, and RA is rheumatoid arthritis.

Fibromyalgia is a disorder characterized by widespread musculoskeletal pain accompanied by fatigue, sleep, memory and mood issues. Researchers believe that fibromyalgia amplifies painful sensations by affecting the way your brain processes pain signals. Symptoms sometimes begin after a physical trauma, surgery, infection or significant psychological stress. In other cases, symptoms gradually accumulate over time with no single triggering event. Women are much more likely to develop fibromyalgia than are men. Many people who have fibromyalgia also have tension headaches, anxiety, depression, [TMJ disorders, and IBS]. While there is no cure for fibromyalgia, a variety of medications can help control symptoms. Exercise, relaxation and stress-reduction measures also may help.

We--I--don't know what triggered mine, though Bill pointed out that the Fibromyalgia started after he proposed (We didn't get an official diagnosis until late February, and he proposed on Valentine's Day. Of course, I had had the blood draw done at the end of January, so, I had no clue about the proposal, but I was not dealing well with Alex in our house.) His response: what could THAT have done? Uh, yeah. Try again, William.

However, none of those items caused the physical issues I'm currently dealing with. I mean, I'm glad I don't have my hands curled up in fists or the bottom of my feet parallel to the ceiling any more, but with winter coming, my body is in total agony.

Dr. Idiot--er, Hung--came today. I checked that it was them (doc and CNA) and told them to come in, and they didn't. I called Kacey, who was quite entertained, as she

shoved the dogs in their cages and headed down, as the dynamic medical duo pondered the door. I opened the window and called for them to please come in. So, naturally, they came down to the back door, to try that door. I sent them back to the front, and told them to push. As they were fumbling with the door, Kacey entered the driveway and watched as the Duo made their way in. Kacey said she was coming in anyway, since this was going to be entertaining.

And good grief, WAS this entertaining. Dr. Hung showed me the ultrasound results: the Carotid Doppler Ultrasonography revealed no evidence of any plaque formation, flow abnormalities, velocity changes, nor turbulent flow within the region (the right ICA/CCA ratio is 1.4 and the left is 0.5) and normal vertebral flow is seen, so the impression is that this is a normal carotid doppler (okay, I'm a tad concerned that the right ratio is almost 3x the left...that just seems wrong to me...); the Bilateral Lower Extremity Arterial Doppler shows all waveforms to be triphasic in nature with no evidence of any flow abnormalities or velocity changes are suggested (the right ankle brachial index is 0.97 and the left is 0.96) so the impression is a normal Bilateral Lower Extremity Arterial Doppler; and, finally Bilateral Lower Extremity Venous Doppler revealed normal Doppler images and the veins are fully compressible without evidence of intimal defect so the impression is no evidence of deep venous thrombosis.

Of course, I have no clue what most of that means, besides that the blood is flowing through my legs and that Carotid arteries are fine [which I knew, since my LDL (bad) cholesterol count is low normal--should be in the 160-190 mg/dL, and mine, when I was in the hospital, was 100; and the HDL (good) cholesterol, for women, should be over 50 mg/dL, and mine was at 80.]

The blood panel concerns me, though. The T3 total is out of the Reference Range of 0.84-1.72 ng/mL, as mine was 0.59 ng/mL. Now, Drs. Marshall and Joslin had agreed and imparted to me that my T3 number is especially important when dealing with my hypothyroidism. Since my thyroid is already sluggish, having the T3 levels this low while taking medication, means the meds need to be raised.

The other item that concerned me was my red blood cell (RBC) indices. They are part of the complete blood count (CBC) test, and are used to help diagnose the cause of anemia, a condition in which there are too few red blood cells. The indices include: Average red blood cell size (MCV); hemoglobin amount per red blood cell (MCH); and

the amount of hemoglobin relative to the size of the cell (hemoglobin concentration) per red blood cell (MCHC).

My scores are all over the place: low, high, and in range. The RBC is out of the Reference Range of 4.03–5.46 10⁶/uL as mine was 3.95 10⁶/uL. The MCV is out of the Reference Range of 81.5–96.8 fL, as I scored a whopping 101.90; and the MCH is out of the Reference Range of 27.5–33.1 pg, and I scored a whopping 34.9 pg. Meanwhile, the MCHC was in range. (Okay, was that as tedious to read as it was to write?) Ellen, my RN liaison at Humana, was amused at the overages, but not happy about the deficits.

Fortunately, the CNA took my blood pressure, before Dr. H continued. My BP was "high" (100/60) since I was/am in pain, and the CNA took my BP on a fibromyalgia spot.

Ellen's normal good humor was semi-restored when I laughingly told her that Dr. Hung wanted to transfer me to Hospice, because Bill had passed away. Kacey had looked sharply at Dr. H and at me, and was relieved to see I was amused. Since hospice care is end-of-life care provided by health professionals and volunteers who give medical, psychological and spiritual support, I was concerned. The goal of the care is to help people who are dying have peace, comfort and dignity. The caregivers try to control pain and other symptoms so a person can remain as alert and comfortable as possible. Hospice programs also provide services to support a patient's family. Usually, a hospice patient is expected to live six months or less. Hospice care can take place at home, at a hospice center, in a hospital, or in a skilled nursing facility.

I reexamined the papers with all of the test results, and carefully did NOT look at Kace, and tossed out, "so Doc, I dealt with hospices in Vegas because of my dad. Which of these tests indicate--to you--that I'll be dead within six months?"

"Oh, no," she says, "Since Mr. K is deceased, he would want the best care for you, and that's hospice."

Uh, no. That would be a nursing home/rehab center, and, well, been there, done that, and didn't get a damn t-shirt. As I was just sat staring at her, she turned to Kacey, who just shrugged her shoulders, and said, "Aunt Laurie's an adult, and Uncle Bill

chose to carefully pick his battles. This is NOT a battle he would pick, and I'm following his guidance on this one."

Friday, 30 September: ::sigh:: Camry is done and I'm now looking at the SNAPS deadline. Since this deadline is the second issue, I'm befuddled. I like doing **Bed and Bored**, but I haven't gotten the feel of what I want **B&B** to be yet. I know I don't want it to be whiney, but Bill's not here to curb that propensity of mine. I suppose I could cheat, and reprint my journal. Although, I worry I'd be whining, since I'm sure I did plenty of THAT this month. I dunno. I have to think about that a bit.

Emilie snagged a copy of The Last Battle from the ES library, and is trying to wade through it, not having read the earlier six books, and lit on Dr. S.'s The Way Into Narnia in the fervent hope TLB would make more sense. She turned to Chapter 10, and started to read. After the first paragraph, she climbed onto the hospital bed, curled up on my lap, and asked if I thought she was too dumb to read Chronicles. I hugged her and said that she might want to start with TL, TW, TW, and that maybe we should read it together.

With the competency hearing threat, I've (mostly) pulled away from my birth family, and am balancing between our created family and Bill's youngest siblings. My break was easier to make, given that Jimmy opted to not call and say good-bye.

I've determined that I'm too much of a coward to succeed at suicide. Which actually just makes me more depressed. I miss Bill so much that I'm not sure what to do or why to be here without him.

As a bright spot, when I spoke with the Hospice intake woman today, she said I really didn't qualify. I told her that I suspected I didn't. She finally realized that she would have to ask me straight out: "So, do you have any idea why Dr. Hung wanted to send you into hospice?"

I did, actually, and replied, "Pain management."

Marge paused and then said, "You're kidding, right?"

I told her that I wasn't and that since I'm codeine sensitive, non-codeine medicine is apparently difficult to find. Since Dr. Hung is "researching options," (and HAS been researching since last month) I've been forced to rely on Aleve and ES Tylenol/

Tylenol PM--which is SO unhealthy it isn't funny, especially in the quantities I'm taking them for pain relief. I explained to her that from 1995-2010, I was on methadone for pain relief; however, while I was in the hospitals/rehab centers, they cut all the medication. Our--My--personal neurologist, Dr. Marshall, was writing the prescriptions I needed, and giving them to Bill on his monthly visits, as the hospitals/rehab centers would detox me from the pain meds, and even cut my Effexor XR from 225 mg to 75 mg, then call Bill to bitch that all I did was lie there and cry, and scream in pain when they would try to move me. Bill wasn't sympathetic. Unfortunately, the neurologist was given a choice by his wife: move with me to the State of Washington and keep all your money, or stay here, and keep half; he's now in Cascade.

Marge sighed and said that this was asinine; I agreed. She called Dr. Hung, and spoke with her coordinator, who said she was sorry that, as a heroin addict, if I wanted methadone, I needed to leave my house and score some on the street.

Marge called me back, and said, "You won't believe this, but--"

I cut her off and recited the coordinator's words (above) back to her.

Marge laughed, and then said, "I guess you will believe this; but, I am going to talk with our co-medical chief about you on Monday morning. I'm not able to promise anything, but let's see if we can get you a real doctor."

So, maybe, my Guardian Angel and Bill had a long talk.

As for my prognosis, well, good question. I likely need to see an orthitist, but until I can pull together the money for a ramp, that won't happen.

We had the money in the emergency money account that Bill opened (with my mom when I got sick, and then Karen got sick, and Bill was worried he'd have to fly to NY while I was sick), but, that money is now my mom's as I bought my freedom.

There was discussion of serial casting my feet, but until I get pain meds, that can't start. (Serial casting involves twisting my feet into a more correct position until I scream in pain, whereupon plaster will be applied and, when the pain recedes, the process will be done again. It won't be fun.)

I am doing exercises the physical therapist left, but I'm not doing them well since I'm, say it with me now, in pain!

My future was, in a sense, decided by Bill. He started with my mom, and explained he was writing his will and had some questions to ask. The first query--after introducing himself (to most of my family), and telling the person of their relationship to me--according to Juan, was are you aware of Laurie's current health issues? If the answer was no, he said he was sure I would love a card or note from them. If the answer was yes, then he asked if something--anything--were to happen to him, what should happen to me? He chalked up my family after 26 calls.

His 27th call was to Kacey and Juan. They promised Bill, when he asked them to witness his will, to help, care for, and remind me of how much I'm loved, if something happened to him, because he was concerned about me becoming like mom if something happened to him.

If I learned anything this month, it is how much Bill loved me. As much as I don't want to be here without him, I guess that isn't my choice to make, damn it all. I dunno if my dying first would have given him the 408 days he lived; I rather doubt it, actually. But, that isn't for me to guess either. I'm left with a ton of questions, but damn few answers.

Going off into the sunset...



But remember --
a beautiful sunset is but the precursor
of a beautiful tomorrow!

Rest In Peace, My Love...