

Resplendant in Death: Gifts from my Mother
by Corinne L. Casazza

In these turbulent times, many people are choosing to leave the planet. It's much more than the celebrities we hear about. Most of these people are a lot closer to home. I know. I lost my mother last year. And in losing her, I gained more of me.

My mom, Betty was diagnosed with uterine cancer four years ago. I had just relocated from Boston to Sedona, AZ. In the next few years, Betty had two major surgeries as well as chemo and radiation. It's worth it to note here that my sister and I have both called our mom "Betty" since we were kids.

Last November Betty watched as her own mother passed on. That same evening, Betty fell, breaking her ankle in two places. We'd find out later her back was fractured. She'd never sleep lying down again, the pain in her back demanding she sit up.

In April, she spent 10 days in the hospital. Blood clots were making treatment difficult. She needed to walk to get her blood flowing, but her ankle and back made movement nearly impossible. Shortly after returning home, she was rushed to the hospital with difficulty breathing. Her body had processed a clot; it had actually passed through her heart. The doctor was astounded. "Your mother has a very strong heart," she said. "This would've killed most people."

I was told Betty was being released from the hospital, but it didn't feel that way to me. It didn't feel as if she were coming home at all. I got on a plane. Had I not listened to my intuition and headed east right then, I wouldn't have been *with* her when she passed.

When I landed in Boston, my sister, Donna, told me to come directly to the hospital. Blood clots again. “Prepare yourself,” Donna warned. “She’s lost a lot of weight and she’s frail. She doesn’t look like herself. Don’t be afraid.”

I felt acid in my stomach and fear rising. What would she look like? How would I feel when I saw her?

When I arrived, my mother was sitting up watching the Bruins game. She looked small, shriveled; her once brilliant mane of red hair falling out. Her foot was an angry purple-black.

She told me her foot hurt, but she was happy to see me. I surprised myself by sitting at her bedside and taking her hand. She didn’t want to be alone. Donna and I slept by her bedside at night. We watched QVC, and talked about which gemstones we liked best. My mother loved jewelry and had traveled the world buying golden stone-encrusted treasures wherever she went. “The more bling, the better the ring,” we joked, pointing at the screen.

I was having a tough time being present. Shortly after I arrived, I couldn’t find my cell phone. I searched everywhere. I called my friends who picked me up from the airport – no phone. I’m addicted to my phone and felt lost without it. I had to let go of that. I knew it was a message from the Universe to be present. Once I surrendered to it being gone, the phone emerged from its hiding place under the passenger’s seat of my friend’s car.

Another issue was keeping me from being present. It was a few days before my birthday. I didn’t want to be in Boston on my birthday. I had plans with friends in Sedona that meant a lot to me.

The next day they told my mother there was nothing more they could do for her. She was very eloquent and emphatic telling the hospice nurses she only wanted medication to keep her comfortable, and no resuscitation. I remember feeling how brave she was, and left the room to cry. It didn't seem fair. One day she was going home and the next she was dying! Suddenly getting back to Sedona didn't seem so important.

Later that afternoon, the priest came to give her last rites. I've never been much of a Catholic, preferring spirituality to religion, but you can bet I prayed with the priest and my parents. Betty asked me to take her glasses off and I knew she'd never ask for them again. It wasn't much later that she was completely non-responsive.

Even after all this, I still wasn't present. I kept identifying my mother with the body in that bed, even though spiritually I knew better. I was agitated and just wished she'd stop breathing. It was so difficult to watch her deteriorate: I just wanted it to end.

I called a friend for some help. "What is the one thing that needs healing in your relationship with your mother?" she asked.

My answer was immediate, "She could never see who I am."

My friend said, "Her heart is so strong because she has so much unconditional love for you all. She's more in spirit than in body now and every time her heart beats, it's a gift for you from the other side. She's sending you love from the other side."

I felt the truth of this as the hair on my arms stood on end. My friend said that all my mother could see was the love and light that I am. The love and light of all of us. She was just watching us in wonder and wasn't quite ready to go yet.

These words comforted me. I returned to Betty's bedside and held her hand, but I still wasn't present. As I tried to sleep, fear welled up inside me. Panic. Shortness of

breath. I hadn't known what that fear was about. Now it was clear. I was afraid that if my mother died without seeing who I am, I'd never know myself.

Something shifted. Relief flooded my body. I knew this was an opportunity to see and feel more deeply into who I am. My friend's words had comforted me, and now I was buoyed. My mother was more in Spirit than in body and this was something to be celebrated. I knew she was not the form lying in that bed. I began breathing through my heart and crying tears of joy. I was finally present!

As I settled down, I could feel my mother. She was half in and half out of her body. Her Spirit filled the room. And the energy was jubilant. She was crossing over. I was resplendent in this truth and just sat with her in the energy.

At some point I realized that the energy had been there all along and I was just too wrapped up in my story to notice. That was my choice in the moment. And so what? I'm present now!

My mother's passing made me more aware that there is joy in every moment, and when we're not wrapped up in our agenda, we are free to enjoy it. Further, even though something may not look like a gift in the moment; it is! The Universe is always conspiring to bring us to our highest good. When we pay attention and are free of story, we can feel it.