

The Bruised Darkness Still Erupts

For Kathy Lee Kappmeir

Just as the doctors predicted upon her diagnosis,
she held out for two years in spite of her conviction that
holistic treatments and prayers to Hindu gods and goddesses
would heal the body that had betrayed her life of clean living.

Two arduous years, three 2-hour phone calls each week;
I listened, consoled, and tucked away my own unraveling life
because that's what was needed and she was my friend and I loved her.

I sat present as she wailed her resentment and jealousy of healthy people.
I bore witness to her endless pain...
the chemo that stole the long, wavy hair she did not previously know
was such a crucial component of her femininity,
the radiation that burned anus and vulva leaving her scarred and
naked as the child she was some 40 odd years before,
and the countless indignities of gas and vomit, and shit and piss.

She could not speak the last months on hospice
and I could not sit present, in silence, long-distance.

She died on my birthday.
I still do not know what meaning to make of that.
I tell myself it was her way of saying good-bye,
but a week from the anniversary of her release
it provides not one grain of solace.

I think I should be over it by now,
that grief should be complete and
appropriately tucked away into the murky caverns of history.
But the cave is cold and wet
and dark and
I feel the aching space she left behind
like a chasm deep into the bowels of suffering
called grief.

That bruised darkness still erupts,
leaking the tears I could not yield when she left me
being far too dry and brittle with my own exhaustion.

The bruised darkness still erupts, and
four years later,
I still do not know how to fully grieve the loss of my friend.