

STUDIO ART | SPRING 2019

# A Death in Chicago, 1972: Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and My Family

By Pat Arnow



AS SOON AS HE COULD, AT AGE 57,  
DAD RETIRED AND JOINED MOM FULL TIME  
IN HER POTTERY BUSINESS.



AT LAST HE WAS A HAPPY MAN.



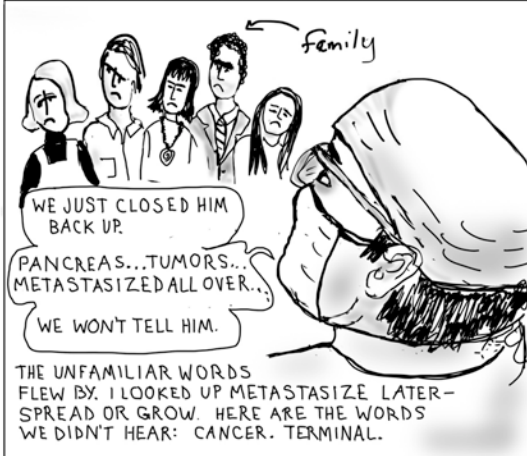
JUST A YEAR LATER



A MONTH MORE



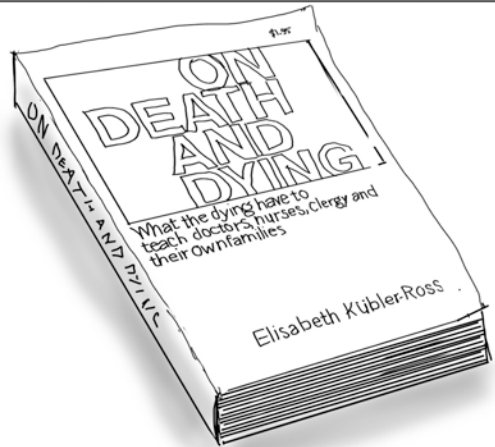
ANOTHER MONTH





MY ROOMMATE WAS A NURSE.  
ONE DAY SHE SAID,

YOU NEED  
TO READ THIS BOOK.



**"DEATH." "DYING."**

NO DOCTOR NOR ANYONE  
IN MY FAMILY-INCLUDING DAD-  
HAD SAID THOSE WORDS.

IT JUST WASN'T DISCUSSED, EVER.

THIS BOOK, PUBLISHED IN 1969,  
NOT LONG BEFORE MY FATHER  
BECAME ILL, WAS FILLED WITH  
INTERVIEWS WITH THE DYING.

IT STARTED WHAT WOULD BECOME  
THE HOSPICE MOVEMENT.

BUT WHEN IT CAME OUT,

**DOCTORS WEREN'T READY.**



MY FAMILY WAS READY.



THE PSYCHIATRIST/AUTHOR  
ELISABETH KÜBLER-ROSS,  
DESCRIBED  
FIVE STAGES OF DYING:

- DENIAL
- ANGER
- BARGAINING
- DEPRESSION
- ACCEPTANCE

IT MIGHT NOT BE  
THAT SIMPLE,  
BUT IT GAVE PEOPLE  
A WAY TO DEFINE  
WHAT WAS HAPPENING.

WE WERE NOT ALONE.



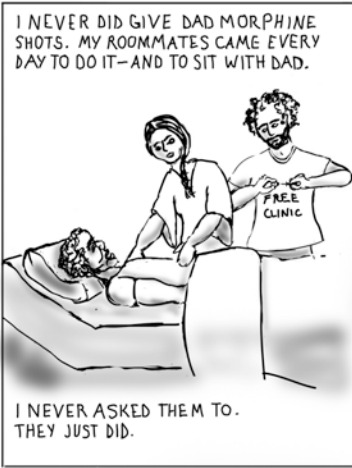












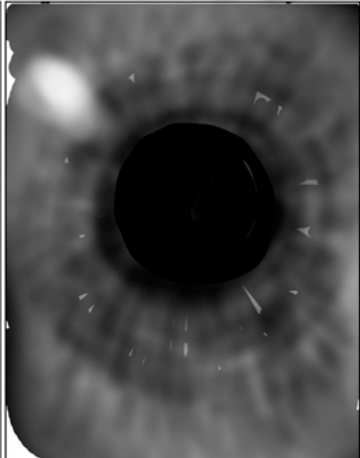
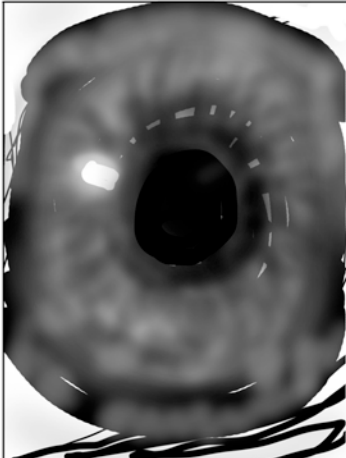
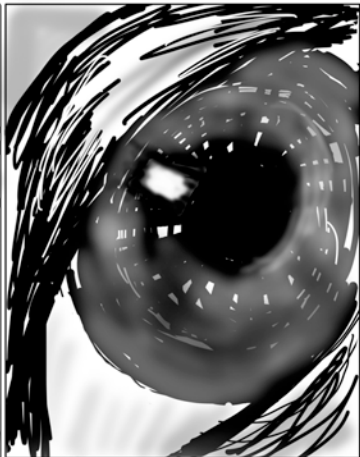
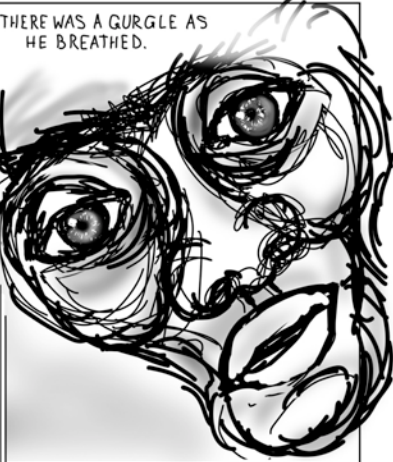
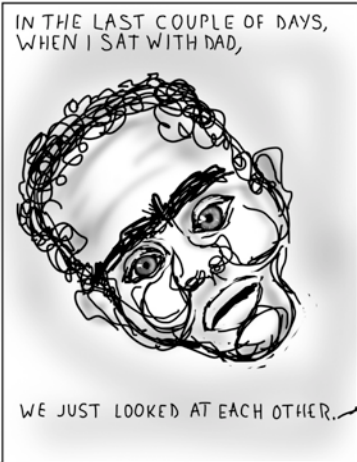
IN THE HOSPITAL THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NONE OF THAT—FAMILY AND FRIENDS COMPANIONABLY SITTING AROUND, TAKING TURNS IN THE SICKROOM. NOR WOULD THERE BE PEACE OR GOOD PAIN RELIEF FOR MY DAD.

DR. KÜBLER ROSS SENT A NURSE TO VISIT EVERY COUPLE OF DAYS. JANE KENNEDY, WARM AND DIRECT, HAD JUST COME OUT OF PRISON. AS A WAR PROTESTER, SHE HAD BROKEN INTO AND DESTROYED FILES AT DOW CHEMICAL, MANUFACTURER OF NAPALM. THAT WAS A TERRIBLE INCENDIARY WEAPON USED IN VIETNAM.

SHE PROVIDED HOSPICE CARE BEFORE MOST PEOPLE KNEW WHAT HOSPICE WAS.







AFTER TWO WEEKS AT HOME  
DAD PEACEFULLY  
STOPPED BREATHING.  
HE WAS 59

MOM WAS 51.  
SHE LIVED TO 92. AND NEVER GOT OVER HIM.  
IN HER LAST FEW DAYS, SHE OFTEN SAW DAD  
IN HER ROOM AT THE NURSING HOME  
HE LOOKED YOUNG AND HANDSOME IN HIS ARMY UNIFORM.

WHEN DAD DIED, I WAS 23  
AND HAD GROWN UP.  
DAD HAD TRUSTED ME.  
I HELPED HIM  
AND GAINED AN INEFFABLE SENSE OF THE SWEETNESS OF LIFE.

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Pat Arnow is a photographer, writer, and more lately, a cartoonist in New York. She often writes and draws stories about death. “Posey’s Plan: A Memoir of a Timely Death” is the story of a reclusive woman in a big high rise and a small, informal community that made it possible for her to choose her own end. Arnow presented “Posey’s Plan” at the Comics and Medicine conference in 2018. She also exhibited illustrations from it and spoke on a comics panel at Reimagining Death in New York—a death panel! With “A Death in Chicago, 1972,” she tells the story of her father’s dying, which involved Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, because it’s a personal story from a time of momentous change in the way we think about death.

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