

Buddha's Post

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By Frances Lynch

The whole thing is Buddha's fault. Buddha and some idiot, probably one of Joe's sisters, who posted from "Buddha's Teachings" on Facebook. The quote read: "The problem is: you think you have time." If you ask me, it should have read: "The problem is: you think." So now my husband Joe, who's twenty years older than I am, is busy getting depressed, thinking about time and death. This is really messing up what would normally be a stellar weekend. I don't mean to lack compassion, but there just isn't a solution to time being finite. My father died of cancer when he was the age I am now. I spent time with him. I know about time, what it is and what it isn't.

I don't know anything about Buddha, which is fine with me. I'm not religious, and I don't understand why other people are. Haven't they noticed the world is really screwed up? I don't post overly positive stuff on social media, either. I mostly think my bad attitude is evidence I am thinking clearly. Why do people like that sort of gooey, uplifting garbage? Who are they trying to convince? I get accused of being cynical, but I'm a pragmatist. The truth is that we all die in the end. Whenever I get pissed at anyone at work, I think: every hundred years, all new people. Of course, it takes another minute to realize that includes me, too.

Joe doesn't work anymore. He's retired and spends his days hiking, cycling, swimming, doing yoga and hanging out with his grandkids. They aren't technically my grandkids, but that doesn't matter. They hug me, tell me they love me, and call me by my first name. I don't care what they call me. Once, one of them asked, "Are you our grandmother?" I said that I could be if they wanted me to be. They all agreed they did, but they still call me by my first name. Kids are like that. They want to know where you stand on important issues, but they don't give lots of credence to titles.

This afternoon, because of Buddha, Joe wants to plan an around-the-world trip. I said I would go as long as camping isn't involved. Nature is wonderful, but I've worked hard all my life so I wouldn't have to sleep on the ground. I don't get how people do that for recreation. Joe and I have spent hours discussing various options for global travel. I'm exhausted from just talking about it. East. West. Iceland. Ireland. Thailand. New Zealand. Austria. Zambia. Joe and I have traveled a lot together. I like to travel, but not with this frenetic urgency Joe is laying on top of everything right now. The problem with traveling to solve your problems is that wherever you go, there you are. Traveling doesn't get you additional time. You get the time you get in this life. You can't get extra time by packing in more activities.

When my dad was sick, I'd drive him back and forth to radiation. Once, on the way home, he wanted to stop for groceries at the Piggly Wiggly. My sister and her kids were coming to visit and so we got a whole cartload of food. Ice cream, hot dogs, chocolate bars, cookies, marshmallows—all stuff my sister wouldn't want the kids to eat. When we got to the checkouts, there were long lines, except at the one on the end. My Dad pushed our cart into that lane.

I pointed up to the Piggly Wiggly "Express Only" sign hanging above our selected checkout location. My dad shrugged. He didn't have time to wait, and neither did the ice cream. I was pretty sure the other customers in the "nine items or less" lane were not going to see it that way. I glanced behind us to see three people, each with a handful of items. I asked God, even though I'm a non-believer, to please not let anyone say anything to my dad. I was desperate. I looked at my dad. He was moving slowly, piling our mound of groceries onto the tiny express lane conveyor belt. Surprisingly, no one said a word. It was then I realized God had nothing to do with it. No one was saying anything because my dad looked like a cancer patient who'd just come from radiation treatment, who didn't have time to waste waiting in the regular line. After all, if God was worth anything, my dad wouldn't have gotten cancer in the first place. It was at that point I learned what my dad already knew: never underestimate the collective wisdom of people in the Piggly Wiggly.

My dad never got to go on a round-the-world trip. I carefully fold up the map I had been looking at of Western Europe. Joe likes things kept neatly. I tuck the map inside the book on Iceland. The summer sun is beginning to set now outside our beautiful home, which is so comfortable and so us. Joe has gone out on the patio to water the potted plants. He is great at nurturing plants. He can bring anything back to life. I watch him outside through our French doors as he slowly unwinds the garden hose. He is tall, lean and graceful. He looks like a gazelle grazing on the

savannah as he nimbly moves from one potted plant to the other. Fuck Buddha, I think, and his social media teachings. I do have time. I have time right this second. I stand up, open the door, and step outside onto the patio. I walk toward Joe in the warm, fading sunlight.

I don't mean to lack compassion, but there just isn't a solution to time being finite. (<https://twitter.com/share?text=I+don%E2%80%99t+mean+to+lack+compassion%2C+but+there+just+isn%E2%80%99t+a+solution+to+time+being+finite.&via=flashficmag&related=flashficmag&url=https://flashfictionmagazine.com/blog/2017/10/25/buddhas-post/>)

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