

Writing prompt: Returning to the ...

Returning to the home of my youth is always an interesting experience. The formational memories from that place are set in stone, nonchanging. Once I moved away, essentially when I went off to college, any new memories made there were more as a visitor, dropping in from time to time ... to make new memories, for sure, but from a very different place along my life's journey. What no one really warns you of—and is there really any way to adequately prepare for it?—is the moment when you return and are now the child parenting the parent, who has now become like a child in many ways.

My dad is a retired engineer. And not just an engineer, but the engineer's engineer. One aspect of that personality type is needing to fix things. They're problem solvers extraordinaire. So what does someone like that do when diagnosed with incurable cancer? He opted for chemo to prolong his life by a few months, perhaps by a few years, but the quality of that life has diminished to sleeping most of the time. This is very frustrating to an engineer who has things to do and simply no energy to do them. "I'm dying! I'm not living! And I don't know what to do about it!" Ah ... there's the crux of the problem. He doesn't know what to do about it and for an engineer, that is perhaps a fate worse than death. And the daughter of that engineer doesn't know what to do about it either, except to shed a tear and comfort the parent-become-child. "Yeah, I know dad. It stinks. And I hate that you're going through this ..."