Memoir, Narrative NonFiction and a Smattering of Fiction

*The Blood of the Lamb* by Peter De Vries (2005) Fiction. The most poignant of all of De Vries’s novels, this is a thinly veiled fictional account of his young daughter’s death from cancer. [NHCPL]

*** The *End of Your Life Book Club* by Will Schwalbe (2012) The author and his mother spent many, many hours in waiting rooms as she was treated for cancer. They began, mostly to pass the time, to share what they were reading and swap their favorites. Touching and intellectually stimulating at the same time. For people who love to read. [NHCPL]

*Final Exam: A Surgeon’s Reflections on Mortality* by Pauline W. Chen (2007) A brilliant transplant surgeon brings compassion and narrative drama to the fearful reality that every doctor must face: the inevitability of mortality. [NHCPL]

*It Shouldn't Be This Way: The Failure of Long-Term Care* by Robert L. Kane, M.D. and Joan C. West (2005) Part memoir, part practical guide, part prescription for change, the authors recount the story of their mother’s long decline and share the lessons they learned along the way.

*** Last Lecture* by Randy Pausch (2008) A computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon was asked to give his “last lecture” shortly after he was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Here he reflects on what is really important in life. [NHCPL]

*The Long Goodbye* by Meghan O’Rourke (2011) O’Rourke’s story is one of a life gone off the rails, of how watching her mother’s illness – and separating from her husband – left her fundamentally altered. [NHCPL]

*The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold (2002) Fiction. “When we first meet Susie Salmon, she is already in heaven. As she looks down from this strange new place, she tells us, in the fresh and spirited voice of a fourteen-year-old girl, a tale that is both haunting and full of hope. [NHCPL]

*Making the Rounds with Oscar: the Extraordinary Gift of an Ordinary Cat* by David Dosa (2010) The story of a nursing home cat who instinctively knows when a patient is about to die. Heartfelt, inspiring, and full of humor and pathos, this book allows readers to take a walk into a world rarely seen from the outside, a world we often misunderstand. [NHCPL]

*** No More Words: A Journal of My Mother, Anne Morrow Lindbergh* by Reeve Lindbergh (2001) This is a tender tribute from a daughter to a mother, from one writer to another who was her model and mentor. A poignant work, rich with insight into life’s final stage. [NHCPL]

*Not Fade Away: A Short Life Well Lived* by Laurence Shames and Peter Barton (2003) Peter’s story addresses universal hopes and fears, and redefines the quietly heroic tasks of seeking clarity in the midst of pain, of breaking through to personal faith, and of achieving peace after bold and sincere questioning.

*Still Alice* by Lisa Genova (2009) Fiction. At once beautiful and terrifying, this novel describes a Harvard professor’s descent into early onset Alzheimer’s. [NHCPL]

*Swimming in a Sea of Death: A Son’s Memoir* by David Rieff (2008) Susan Sontag’s son chronicles the last nine months of her life in this intensely personal work that becomes a meditation on what it means to confront death in our culture. [NHCPL]

*** Too Soon to Say Goodbye* by Art Buchwald (2006) When the doctors told Art Buchwald that his kidneys were kaput, the humorist declined dialysis and checked himself into a Washington, D.C. hospice. This one is about accepting the inevitable and living life to the fullest with frankness, dignity, and humor. [NHCPL]

*Tuesdays With Morie* by Mitch Albom (1997) An old man, a young man, and life’s greatest lesson. Made into a TV movie. See also his *Five People You Meet in Heaven*. [NHCPL]

*When I Die* by Philip Gould (2013) Written during the last few months of his life, this memoir describes the journey the author took with his illness, leaving to readers what he calls his “lessons from the death zone.” [NHCPL]

*** A Widow’s Story* by Joyce Carol Oates (2011) On a February morning in 2008, Joyce drove her husband to the emergency room with pneumonia. They thought he’d be released in a day or two. But in less than a week he died from a virulent hospital-acquired infection, and Joyce was suddenly faced – totally unprepared – with the stunning reality of widowhood. [NHCPL]

*The Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion (2007) Didion’s husband died suddenly of a heart attack after visiting their daughter who was in a coma in the hospital. This memoir describes in unflinching detail the pain, fury, alienation, and disorientation that engrossed her during the first year of bereavement. [NHCPL]
*** Books I personally think are exceptional either in content or readability or both. Worth buying.

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