

## HEALED BY A GARDEN

While regular walks in our oak-pine woodlands woods satisfy my winter cravings for soul-calming communion with plant life, there's another place that I visit, year-round, in Boston. A bona-fide roof garden, it's as majestic in winter as in the three warmer seasons. Quiet respect is the only requirement for entry. You can find it on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor of Mass General Hospital's Yawkey Center, past a wall of photos and stories of people who have overcome cancer, through a glass door and up a ramp where a left turn leads to tranquility. The 'healing garden', created especially for cancer patients and their families, features a conservatory and a rooftop garden with a mind-blowing vista of the Boston skyline and the Charles River.

I stepped into that sunny realm of calm- silent and unoccupied -in late December. Looking over the guest book offering prayers and compliments to the garden, a recent entry caught my attention. It read:

“Lord, Please be with me because I'm fragil (sic).”

As I stood pondering this humble request, a young man-30's, 40's maybe- hustled up the ramp, pushed open a conservatory door and stepped without pause into the cold rooftop garden outside. He walked the complete loop in about 30 seconds and came back into the warmth. I heard him jam a hand into the stone urn that holds rounded white worry stones. His fingers raged through them making a sound like miniature thunder. I considered fleeing down the ramp, I who was not in need of healing. But I didn't move. nor did I turn to look at him.

The rumbling ceased. I'm sure I heard the faint hiss of a profanity as he passed by me once again and stepped into the frozen garden, stone in hand.

I wondered if cancer had just touched his life, tapping him from behind like a long boney finger that sends an icy silken net around and through him, pulling him back to a frozen core from every direction he pushes.

I left him alone then and returned to a seat in the hall. About five minutes later, he strolled calmly past me and disappeared into a doctor's waiting room.

I guess we all get what we need when we let the magic of a garden touch us.

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