

NIGHTINGALE SONGS

A forum for nurses to share their silent moments of reflection on their nursing.

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THE LAST THREE DAYS

I didn't know
it would be
her last three days with him...

His wife helping
with his care
at night, those last three days.

On the last night
I called her
she had already gone home---

"Mrs. Tow" I
gently said,
"It's Al-you'd better come."

Those last three days---
so glad I
gave them that time together.

Karen Talarico

BOUND TO TRUST

I put up fences - called them "limit setting"
He, as he was bound to do,
pushed hard against the fence
I, as I was bound to do,
tripped him up in the falling fence
A shove so powerful that
I faced the shame of my protective limits
He went on
I went on
We stayed in touch
One day I said Do you remember? I am sorry
He said I do remember. Thank you.

Savina Schoenhofer

A HEALER'S PRAYER OFFERED AT CHACO CANYON

Dear God of the Universe, I am here for a reason.

Let me live it.

Let my hands find their work,
encompass it,
actualize it.

Let my voice give meaning to my thoughts
so I can share them with others
and they will listen.

Let me choose life in a way that I can fulfill my mission
here and now.

Let me learn what I must learn,
understand what I need to understand,
speak what must be spoken.

Let me heal where I can heal
with my hands
and with my words
and with my living.

Amen.

Carol L.S. Simonson

IN TOUCH

I reached out for you
the only way I could--
unable to speak of what
was in my heart.
I hoped you would know
the feelings I had,
even though I hid them well.
I let you go
without ever being told
of my caring--
but could you feel it?
Did my love show?

Mary Gulbrandsen

TOGETHER FOR A MOMENT IN TIME

Sitting there serenely like a statue
 it was as if she had always been there motionless in time.
 A cold room, strange sad, and sweet faces
 one melting into another -- all seemed separate, yet all
 became one.
 I touched her -- she pulled away.

We spoke of simple things.
 Of our names and our claim to the place of our presence.
 It was rocky -- I wanted
 she wanted not.
 Or so I thought.

The rhythm of the day led into song
 and we rose to the occasion.
 Suddenly, filled with emotion and glistening eyes she
 embraced me.
 We were alone together for a moment in time.
 Her call, so elusive to me before, resonated in my being.
 She was free to me and I was free from myself to be.

She spoke of loneliness and emptiness
 Of darkness and solitude
 And anger.
 Every day was the same -- the same place, same table,
 same chairs.
 The sameness seemed to envelope her.
 Her essence seemed to be lost deep within her.
 But our talk and touch move it up and out. I knew her and
 she knew me.

And over the days that we talked, touched, played, and sat
 in silence; we entered a unique place together. We felt
 anger, isolation, sadness, warmth, and hope together.

It was with ambivalence that I said goodbye.
 As much as I wanted to leave, I wanted to stay.
 As I left the room though, I turned to see that she once
 again appeared like a statue sitting motionless in time.

Carol Bruce

ALONE

Alone
 Come and sit a spell
 The world goes by so quickly
 And I feel afraid

Barbara Sarbello

LAST RIGHTS

Tight faced, they found and cornered her at work.
 As quick as hammers pounding down a wall
 the words came hard and nailed that little quirk
 of honesty so fast she held the rail.

"Who were you to say he was a dying
 man, though he lay white, his lifethread thin.
 How were you to know the speed his flying
 heart would race away from bone and skin.

He was hopeless, yes, beneath that tent
 of filmy gauze, but who were you to say
 his fate was hinged in prayer--our magic spent.
 Who knows, he might have lived another day."

"He held my hands and asked the truth," she said.
 Then turned away to smooth the empty bed.

Tess Yelland/marino

STUNNED

Stunned
 The reddened eyes of grief,
 The poised manner,
 The stoic expressions
 Your grief is too new,
 The body is numb
 The mind stunned
 Life goes on all around you,
 Today you make many decisions
 Tomorrow you may lose that protection of numbness
 You will come to know the jagged edges of grief
 Please reach out and allow others to help
 May God be with you.

Linda Glynn

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THAT'S WHY I'M HERE

A newborn baby who only wants to be warm, dry,
and protected ("I'm helpless...").
THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.

A new mother who only wants her little one to
be warm, kept dry, and remain protected
("Are you sure he's okay?").
THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.

The teenager who needs reassurance that he'll
play football again; who is concerned
that his girlfriend's face will be pretty
again after her surgery
("Was the car accident my fault?").
THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.

The distinguished gentleman who is petrified
to continue his life style since his
heart attack ("I'm afraid of the pain").
THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.

The woman who questions her femininity after
her operation ("Am I still a woman?").
THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.

The lady down the hall who is dying of cancer
and is scared and lonely ("Please stay
and hold my hand awhile.").
THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.

The newly hired staff member who is not used
to the routine ("I'm afraid I'll make a
mistake and hurt a patient.").
THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.

They all need help in one way or another,
THIS IS NURSING...AND
THAT'S WHY I'M STAYING HERE.

Dave Mottern

VISITING HOURS ARE OVER!

I am alone.
My hands are restrained, I am on a breathing machine.
Why am I alone?
I cannot sleep.
My wife just left.

"VISITING HOURS ARE OVER" boomed the loud
speaker.

My wife was gently holding my hand and sleeping and so
was I, until the nurse came in and woke us, for my wife to
say "goodbye."
Can YOU tell me why?

It is day again.
My wife is at work today.
I am weary.
The nurses are trying to "wean me off the respirator."
I am afraid.

My wife is here.
The nurse remarks on how well I am weaning this evening.
I actually slept during the last wean as my wife stroked my
back and softly talked me to sleep.
I feel rested.

"VISITING HOURS ARE OVER" boomed the loud
speaker.

My eyes open wide.
My wife leaves.
They restrain my hands.
I am alone again.
I am afraid.

Can you PLEASE tell me why!
The nurse says I must rest.
I CANNOT SLEEP

Kay Rosenthal

FOR PETER

"I am a Holy Man" you said.
I, wishing to keep you in the land of rational and linear and pay the rent on timeness, chose not to respond
to that part of your declaring.
Yet, a truer way would have been to say, 'I believe all persons partake of what is holy. How might this fit with your
understanding of your world?'

Mary B. Christensen

MY SISTER

All my life I've known you...and yet I haven't.
 I'd catch glimpses of the real you behind the clouds
 as they'd billow around you, covering you, completely.
 And as you retreated into that world of pain
 I'd feel helpless to shield you from it or to call you back.
 And so I loved you as best I could.
 And always felt inadequate against the monsters who
 tormented you.
 ANGER...FEAR...PAIN...REJECTION...LONELINESS
 But then one day a miracle occurred!
 You found the way out of the darkness and into the light!
 And now before me stands the true you,
 the you I've always known was there
 but hidden from view.
 You shine with all your hopes and dreams come true
 for you had the courage to slay those monsters
 and put them to rest.
 And like a newborn child
 look upon life as a great adventure
 about to unfold.
 I know you are up to the challenge.
 They gave you wonderful gifts to use
 when the monsters rear their ugly heads.
 I've always known you,
 but now I see you as you really are,
 a gift from God...
 my sister,
 Emily.

Elizabeth Dodge

Editorial

Our explicit policy is to not restrict reproduction of Nightingale Songs by copyright or in any other way, although it is important authors and Nightingale Songs be acknowledged when poems are used. We are gratified to know freedom of our editorial policy fosters connections among nurses who create new ways to share our common love for nursing. During the weeks following distribution of each issue, we receive notes from many nurses, several new pieces for publication, and reports about the meaning of Nightingale Songs to nurses. Poems have been used as themes for Nurse Week events and have been reproduced on bookmarks and note cards. Some have been featured on colorful banners to celebrate nursing and issues are often used in classroom and professional presentations. Each issue quickly multiplies as nurses reproduce issues for distribution by mail or in pay envelopes.

We need your financial support for Nightingale Songs. Some readers think this publication is funded by wealthy editors, a Foundation or by the College of Nursing at Florida Atlantic University. None of these notions is true. Each issue of Nightingale Songs costs about \$350 to print and distribute. About \$100 is received in contributions following each publication with most contributions being \$10 or \$15. Savina Schoenhofer and I cover the rest of the cash expenses--about \$250 for each issue.

We print over 2000 copies of each issue and distribute hundreds of copies at professional meetings throughout the country. The growing mailing list of over 350 requires first class postage; international postage is more costly. Subscriptions have not been offered but contributors are assured copies of each issue. We are also glad to make copies of back issues available.

We invite your continuing responses to this forum and encourage your contributions to these pages. Please make checks for financial contributions payable to Marilyn Parker, the editor, so there will not be an added expense of a special account.

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