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

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

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

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 good-bye.
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

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

ALONE

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

*Barbara Sarbello*

---

**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...").  
THATS 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?")  
THATS 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?")  
THATS 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").
    THATS WHY I'M HERE.

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

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

    Dave Mottern

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**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 "good-bye."
    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
timeliness,
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