

NIGHTINGALE SONGS

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

September 1991

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The Tears of Agnes

Someone told me once
that I could get a job,
a job
be compensated
perhaps be taxed
on the income
from the very fact
that I can cry on cue

And people say to me
"Oh no, not again"
and so I've
learned
not to tax others
so I leave the room
so that I can cry
with or without
a cue

Sister Agnes Reinkemeyer
do you know of her?
she was a nurse
a dean in fact
who cried
with or without a cue
at faculty meetings
when things made her
I guess, sad.

Now a poem is like a walk
This one is a walk
down the path of the past
I never said good-bye to
Sister Agnes Reinkemeyer
she had left for Kenya
to work in
a mission
and to be killed

So today as we faced the
directions of this fragile
earth
and took our private journeys
Sister Agnes
you came to mind and I thought
and
I hoped that day was a
good day for you to
die.

Sister Agnes Reinkemeyer
one more thing I
would like to say in
this surprise visit to a
deeper consciousness,
people criticized you, were
cynical, thought you
manipulative because you cried
with or without a cue

You know that now
I guess, anyway
Perhaps you were praying
that morning for those
who misinterpreted
did not understand
when the robber in Kenya
interrupted your crying, maybe
on cue.

But we are uninterrupted
in time, we women
You came to me, I am
embarrassed by my tears
Anita cries, Anne cries
and perhaps others cry inside
these are tears
laced with feelings
for self, for others

I hope this is not too late
to say good-bye to you
to send to you my love and
respect
to say you are remembered
for your writings, your teaching
but for me, because you
let it go
with and without a
cue.

I'm surprised that crying
is not a nursing diagnosis
It kept Patricia Schroeder
from moving on
It indicates emotional instability
or a time to be
sent to your room; however
I celebrate in your tears
it frees us

The recognition of what is
pain or
joy
Without cue you showed us all
that you cared.

Patricia Munhall

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INTENSIVE CARE

Did you see nurse that you can know me -
 The part that is me, my mind and soul is in my eyes
 These tubes that are everywhere - that is not me.
 The one in my throat is the worst of all -
 Now my whole being, the essence of me I
 must reflect
 through my hands but they are tied down,
 movements
 of my head but did you realize that
 uncomfortable for me
 or through my eyes and you do not notice them -
 except once today during my bath.
 You speak to me and look at the tubes -
 Don't you know my thoughts are all over my face
 Don't you realize your thoughts are on your face -
 In your touch and your tone of voice.

I wrote a request on paper you said "I'll take care
 of it for you" your tone said "Why can't this
 woman
 Do anything for herself?"
 You positioned your hand to count my pulse but I
 Can't say you touched me - you wouldn't hold my
 hand that I may touch you.
 You walked in for the first time today with a grin
 on your face but your mouth is now tight and
 you grimaced a lot as you bathed me.
 Don't you see nurse that you can know me - I'm not
 a chart or tubes of medication, monitors or all
 the other things you look at so intensely - I'm
 more than that
 I'm scared - just look in my eyes.

Sheila Carr

TO BE AND BECOME

To be and become is an altered way of living
 Giving to give is to touch
 To be is to be with you
 Only you know what it is to be
 The way of life is to live
 Yet is it a mirror or is it truth

The reflection is staring us in the face (mirror)
 What do you see - is it the reflection of truth
 or lies
 Being and becoming is a way of life
 To respect one is to respect all
 Can you face yourself -
 or is it the face
 The face of a different man
 Can you open your heart
 Let the beauty come in

As the client/nurse reflect - see how the mirror
 looks back
 What do the images state
 what will it say
 To be inside
 To grow
 To allow one to be true

These images are there, but only you see them
 The client is there, and is asking
 The arms are out stretched -
 Will you be there to pick up the arms
 Or will they just dangle

Do we have a choice -
 The nurse is there to listen
 To allow the client to be themselves
 Whatever that may be

As the images come together, the shadow of the
 past, present, and future joins as one
 The client is able to see the beauty inside themselves
 And around them. Is that beauty for that person
 (Alone)

The nurse is offering and choosing,
 The harmony and holding - able to see that beauty -
 To reach - to hold -
 What ever that may be -
 The mind, body, and soul are one
 Will you become one -

Robin Glance

THANKS

She spoke of her personhood. This
 Colleague of mine.
 And challenged me to learn
 From her journey.

She has walked both sides of
 The bed my friend;
 As patient,
 As nurse,
 As mother,
 As wife.

She has cared for the ill,
 She has lived the ill,
 She has privileged the experience of both.

But the wisdom she speaks
 Is beyond all that.
 The essence of nursing she captures.

The needs the profession is
 Privileged to address
 Are likened to icebergs, she notes.
 The tip, the obvious broken part
 The rest, the challenge,
 The soul.

Bonnie Hesorick

STILL LIFE

Her hand twitched and as her palm brushed my
 finger, it grasped it in a ghostly pause before falling
 back toward her body.

I had death in my folded arms today. Not
 metaphorical death, or imagined, or brushed with.
 The real thing. A newborn girl who tripped on her
 lifeline sometime today.

The unit needed help and I am generally a helpful
 person, so I went without knowing what the story
 was. A quick delivery of a gray-haired young
 woman. So where's the problem that they need me
 of all things, a baby nurse? They needed someone to
 hold the baby in case the mother couldn't. It wasn't
 until they passed the little one to me that I knew
 why. "Here."

The mother fell asleep immediately after moving
 to her room. No one spoke. Amazing grace. She
 said she was so tired, she just had to...and she was

asleep. Wise body of hers to protect her so, I
 thought.

I held the baby in a pin-drop quiet room, alone,
 while waiting for her family. The little girl gestured
 to me (yes, I know, it's involuntary movement), and
 I knew she was still in there -
 barely - I could feel her, hear her. I can't, I can't -
 this just...

When the spirit fails, persons frequently turn to
 counting. In this room, the baby and I, there were
 1.7 women, one big and one very small, 1.6...,
 1.5... She weighed as much as other babies her size,
 ten fingers and ten toes, one mother,... 1.4.

Her color at first was the same as other babies of
 similar age and size and nature. Pink - very pink at
 first, was the cord that tight to do all this? Truly,
 the tie that binds. She was still in there, I knew it. I
 didn't know how or why, only that she still was...
 1.3.

The mother called out to me in the next room.
 She was calm and sleepy, rubbing her eyes. She had
 a dream, she said, just now. The baby was still
 hungry after nursing for what seemed like months,
 she said.

"Is she here?"

I laid the little girl in her arms, and the mother
 said,

"Yes, she's here still. I can feel her."

She smiled warmly at me, and then forgetting me
 thoroughly, she asked the baby,

"Are you still hungry - do you need a little bit
 more?"

She lifted her gown aside and put the baby on
 her right breast. One small infant arm nestled on the
 left. There was a brief movement behind one baby
 eyelid.

It was a perfect Madonna and Child. I've never
 witnessed better. I left the room, waiting... 1.2,...
 1.1.

"I think she's done now. You can hold her," the
 baby's mother called out,... 1.0.

Where does the baby go when she's not in the
 body anymore? Did she get enough?

The most profound nursing at the breast/soul.

T.M. Vezeau

Nursing

Formless, floating, a cloud of misty possibility within and without, You, me, us ... all of us ... But you and me connected, connecting, floating together, apart, creating together the fiber of our being. You tell me in so many ways who you are and how you are. We are in a moment and forever changed from the moment.

I am a staff nurse. You are wheeled in the door of the intensive care unit covered with white sheet... fear in your eyes... body not responding to your desired, needs, hopes. Will it ever? We work so quickly to get you into the giant iron house that will allow you to breathe. I am so busy, so afraid I will do the wrong thing. I don't belong here. I want to flee, be anywhere but here

Formless.
A void.
Waiting for the form.
Trying to force it be...
and nothing
but my fear.

Your eyes--panic, pleading, needing, questioning-- Stepping out of self and moving into the cloud, pulled by your pleading eyes, creating the form of healing, caring with you for a moment of days into weeks.

A husband, a mother, part of the mist brought into the light of our creating stolen moments illegal passing through the door into the healing space.

And one day, by allowing to be, the body, the whole, the healing space... You move a toe, and smile, and speech returns, and you are wheeled triumphant from the clanking world of technology and beeping and never-ending glaring fluorescent lights. And I hold your hand and share your joy as you settle into a new bed in a new place. And gradually we break apart, lose touch.

And months later, A lifetime of time and of moments. I am back into the daily, the beeping, rustling, bustling, hurrying, heart banging world.

And you walk in the door. I don't know you, upright, strong, radiant, come to share the joy of your becoming, of our creation.

And I know a golden cloud, warm and rosy haze of the joy of our connection.

We embrace, say the usual things we say, we all say, and move out into the pulse beat of our lives.

Carolyn Brown

From The Editors

Some readers have responded with financial support for future seasonal issues. We appreciate this assistance, and to avoid the expense of a special account, we ask that checks be made payable to: Marilyn E. Parker.

We invite your continuing responses to this forum and encourage your contributions to these pages.

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