ISOLATION PRECAUTIONS

I
Some drive you deep
unto the coils of your self
not because of your being,
not because of your soul,
but because
of what you might give them
in return.
One of them was here.
Lady in white was here.
She had hopes for you.
She had wishes for you
and she gave you time.
But she was half in, half out,
isolation precautions,
The sign told all,
the reason for masks and gowns,
and how you were
to be separated from them.

II
She wore boots over her shoes
so she won’t have to pass the
broken paths you’ve trod.
The mask covered her mouth
to silence her asking;
She already knows you.
The goggles over her eyes
to blur your suffering
for she understood your hurt.
The gowns were donned
to keep you from being too near
her immaculate body

There was no time, no hope,
no need for others to be close
The gloves covered her hands
so she did not have to touch
your sore,
after all your end was near.

III
I was here
but I wore the boots
so I can trace your footsteps,
to where you’ve been
so I too can partake of
your journeys past
and guide you to where
you’re going.
I wore the mask
so I can remember
that soothing sounds come
not only from my tongue
but also from my body
which shouts the louder.
I wore the cap on my head
to remember that you are human
as much as I am human.
I wore gloves
to remember that what touches you
are not my hands,
what touches you
is my soul.

Tomas M. Madayag
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 must 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,

NURSING - THE SEASONS OF MY LIFE

Nursing is the spring of my life - Each experience is fresh and new. There’s wonderment
Like flowers washed with morning dew.

Nursing is the summer of my life - A time to perfect all I know. There’s confidence
A world where I can grow.

Nursing is the autumn of my life - Ablaze with experience rich and glowing. There’s compassion
From richness of caring and knowing.

Nursing is the winter of my life - A tapestry, a mosaic of all I am. There’s challenge
To find the spring again.

Charlotte Dison

STUNNED

Stunned
The reddened eyes of grief
The poised manner,
The stoic expressions
Your grief is too new,
The body is numb
The mind is 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.

Lynda Glynn

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
**STEPHANIE**

Fragile as a china doll.
Who are you?
So innocent, so small.
You are not as well as before;
your blue eyes used to twinkle.
You used to smile, asking for more.
Who could blame you?
For have you ever known someone who is
there just for your own benefit?
You are precious, and I have been told,
"Don't get so emotionally involved."
But I am new at this.
Tears have been shed.
Does it ever get easier?
I wish I could give you
a home, sweet bliss.
But a nurse can't become a "rescuer,"
because it only hinders your progress.
What I want for you is a home,
true care, love and happiness.
A place to rest.

*Kimberly G. Taylor*

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**TOGETHER, WE BEGIN**

I entered your room, to meet you,
hoping to enter your world
to know you.

I am still new at this and certainly
must look as unsure as I feel . . .
but you do not seem to notice.

You are busy . . .
noticing yourself
and this situation
you find yourself in.

You look up, and I see in your eyes
a light of recognition.

You see me as someone who has
come to help you understand
and make sense of this "stroke"
of this thing that happened
to you.

So together we begin to get ready for the day.

As I comb your hair, you notice
a button
missing from your blouse,
and you are embarrassed.

I am sorry I didn't notice before,
so I adjust things
so no one will see,
and I realize this makes
you feel better.

I check your "tubes," your "sites."
your vital signs and I
wonder what you feel
and I ask you,
"What do you need?"

Your paralyzed face turns to me,
and cracks a smile.

You accept me
and I see that I
will be okay with this,
and that you are, too.

*Diane Zried*
CONSENT TO CARE

I was so enraptured by the beauty of this life that I had forgotten the pain.
I was in such awe of this exquisiteness of special tender moments that I had forgotten the suffering.

The darkest sky made herself known to me as I submitted myself to the inevitable.
How easily could these sterile spaces and sullen soul intrude upon my being?
Too easily.
For they have not come to know me for who I am but for who they desire me to be.
They probe and manipulate my body due to consent from myself but not from my soul.
I am to share with them what I know - what I hold in my heart.
But they are impermeable.
They smother me with care, yet leave me uncared for.
Perhaps tomorrow we will meet anew.

C. J.

THE LAST THREE DAYS

I didn’t know it would be her last three days with him . . .
His wife is 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

ANNE

She stood transfixed in disbelief
Her expression filled with fear
Wide eyes surveyed the tiny babe
As they filled up . . . and then a tear
Spilled down her cheek.
As I opened the isolette “You can touch her hand,” I said.
Hesitantly, very hesitantly
Her finger touched lightly . . .
A tiny hand grasped tightly
She smiled though
The Tears
Her name is “Anne” she said.

Carol Drozdowicz

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
LOVE IS A SMALL SPOON

I look at a tiny frame 93 years of age, (and much less in pounds) curled up in the same position as in the womb, and I wonder, dear Lord ... what goes through her mind?

She’s unable to speak, and so weak she can hardly move.

She DEPENDS
on those of us around her
to meet her needs.

She gets something to drink when I offer it,
something to eat when I feed her.

She gets turned when I turn her
bathed when I wash her.

Ah, yes, she DEPENDS, Lord,
on those of us around her.

She’s fortunate, this little lady, that those who tend to her needs really love her. I’ve been told she loves mashed potatoes and hates spinach ... and told definitely to use a small spoon, please!

This frail frame, almost lost in the bedsheets, will only be with us for a short while ... then she’ll be back at the nursing home with those who know about small spoons and mashed potatoes.

But I still wonder what goes through her mind! Does she pray? Does she talk to you, Lord? She’ll have to DEPEND on you, oh Lord, for You are around her more than anyone. I know she’ll do fine ... because You know all about mashed potatoes and small spoons, but more importantly,

You know how to nourish her and care for her, and give what she needs most!

All this reminds me dear Lord, of how I must DEPEND on YOU! for my likes and needs!

You feed me with your Eucharist and Your Scripture ... (much better than mashed potatoes).

I thank you Lord,
for feeding me when You choose ... and not giving me spinach too often.

I thank you Lord,
for allowing me just to be still ... curled up under the sheets when I need to rest ... and waiting for You to “move me.”

I thank you most of all Lord,
for that loving touch ... that knows the unique me so well, that knows how to feed me with a small spoon!

I am truly grateful ... Bless my 93 year old patient, Lord. Bless me ...

Patricia Carroll Oetting

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

DIVERSITY

Different customs, different times
People come from varying climes.
What’s important in their lives?
Sons and daughters, husbands and wives.
Ways of worship, foods they eat
Rest and hygiene are needs to meet,
How do I communicate?
A smile, a nod, a touch will state.
Though not the same as you or me,
We all share in our need to be.

Barbara Sorbello
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 desires, 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 to 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 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, reliant, come to share the joy of your becoming, of our creation.

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

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.
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Carolyn Brown

FLYING

Falcon, I was unfettered free to soar or with flick of wrist dip down to hover just above the earth’s green trees. I had to laugh at such excess epiphanies tumbling one upon the other. I had forgotten in my joy what I remembered as I lurch ungainly earthward.

What is this ghastly place? Why did you drag me here? Why have you bound me made of me a living corpse sentient yet immobilized a spellbound player in a hellish dream? You bastards! Won’t you understand me? HEAR ME!

Look at these battered struts my obstinate legs and arms that once responded automatically before I even had the idea lodged firmly in my mind. Falcon, I thought I was master strapped inside a wondrous snarling beast! I am strapped again but to a different breed of beast. Not master now . . . I’m held down, earthbound. Still my will endures I even laugh at times and I would tell you if I could already I am flying soon, very soon, I will soar.

Sanford Russell
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 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 the 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
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 along 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 moved 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