

Through a Hollow Tube

Category: Poems

written by Jan Jahner | July 29, 2011

Jan Jahner

She carries forward the bundle like a giant fish
vacant eyes above wood-smoked plaid bathrobe
hook me as we unwrap his blue stillness
words swim upstream,
I am swallowed by a wave, standing by admissions, heading out to sea.

I left mine on the rug by her sister, curled in cartoons.
Room Four has a gurney *and* a chair
Stained, nail-bitten fingers slide through silky dark hair
She starts again, how the cabin was cold, how she wrapped him up tight
how he should be hungry, mine holds her bottle now.

One year out from nursing school in Adrenaline Heights
with minimal scales, I sink to the ocean bottom
dark in boulders and rust.
She starts again, how the cabin was cold, how she wrapped him up tight
the coroner's number is taped by the phone, my knees ache from
crouching
She starts again, how the cabin was cold, how...
there's commotion in the hallway

She starts again, how the cabin was cold
My words a hollow tube to the surface, I have to keep breathing
The ER's filling up.

About the author:

Navigating emergency, hospice and palliative-care nursing for the last twenty-seven years has provided Jan Jahner with rich and rewarding relationships. She weaves spiritual care into encounters with patients, families and students at Ambercare Hospice of Santa Fe, and in March she completed a two-year chaplaincy program. In 2007 Jan received the Nursing Leadership Award from the National Hospice Foundation's Project on Death in America. "Along with expressive writing, I enjoy pretty much anything connected with the great outdoors, my children and my grandchildren."

About the poem:

"It was a quiet Saturday morning when the mother in this poem first arrived with her dead baby in her arms. Nothing in my nursing education or life experience had really prepared me to be present to, and supportive of, her grief. This was one of the encounters that led me to inquire into the critical role of spiritual care in the art and science of healing, no matter the healthcare setting."

Poetry editors:

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