

# Last Day

Category: Poems

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## A last day, and a last phone call...

It's my job to empty a plastic bag  
filled with meds both past and present  
and read out loud the labels of those we stopped,  
and explain why, and while we're on why  
why he needs oxygen at night, and the rescue inhaler.  
Between pills it's my job to ask in a generic way  
about life outside the clinic? He takes out his phone  
because his story needs a prop.  
His ex called yesterday, *Only one ex, one's enough,*

*no kids, that's another story, just kids then, just friends now,*  
*and she goes on and on, what if what if what if,*  
but after a while he has to do his business and promises to call back,  
but forgets until something suddenly reminds him to call.  
A half-second later, half the speed of premonition,  
his phone rings—her sister, or a niece, or a cousin,  
and not just to chat. Silence needs a moment to sink in.  
He snaps his fingers. *Just like that* is how.  
He shrugs. *Out of the blue* in case I wondered.  
He shows me the phone one more time to make sure,  
then goes back to building a tower of bottles to take home.  
I build a tower that stays here.  
Yes, it is strange how life works.  
I always owe someone a call.  
Maybe my job owes him a condolence note, or something?  
He may not remember, or decided to forget,

*Today's my last day.*

We give that a moment too.

He takes a long hit from his puffer.

He looks at me then through me, then a wheeze, then a sigh.

*You're my boy* he exhales, and that's it for goodbye.