

# Be Careful

Category: Bedside Manner, More Voices  
written by Anna Kenney | February 5, 2024

Though I hadn't been paged and had plenty to do as the hospital's palliative care attending physician on a busy weekend, I felt drawn to Harold's room. His daughter was outside, locked in a nurse's embrace, barely able to speak through her tears; her father had just taken his last breath.

"Don't go in there right now," she said to me. "My mom needs to be alone with my dad."

I sat nearby, pretending to work, not expecting the family to need me but hoping to be available to the kind nurse, who just days before had confessed to me that she'd never before cared for a patient on hospice in the hospital.

A few minutes went by and the daughter approached me. "You know," she said, "I think you could see if my mom needs anything. You can go in."

Curled around her husband in the narrow hospital bed, his wife invited me in. "Oh," she said, "I'm so glad you're here." Then she paused, looked up, and asked softly, "Do you have a partner?"

"Yes," I replied. "I have a husband."

"Be careful," she said. "If you work hard at it, you may end up really liking him—a lot."

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