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Of Time and Wounds

The calendar is not the only indication
Of time passed since you've gone;
Dogwoods, cherry trees and azaleas
Have budded, bloomed and gone green;
Weeds now lurk cheekily
Before your garage door.

Even I am changing.
Ripped apart,
I am putting myself back together,
But the jagged edges
Of this wound
Fit differently as the healing begins.

I'll never be who I was.
You were so much a part of that.
You'll always be part of my life,
But time inevitably changes the proportions
As new chapters are added.
The present always has priority.

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Our Last Date

It was dusk, and I stared glumly at cold rain falling onto steaming rooftop vents outside the clouded window of my husband's hospital room. I was feeling more than a little sorry for myself. Out there, it was a Friday night full of the promise of weekend diversions. In here, it was much like the night before, and the night before that—a waiting game.

Waiting to see if Doug would live or die. Waiting to see if he could overcome the terrible malaise that gripped his body and come home. Waiting to see if he would ever be able to move his arms and legs again.

Turning from the window, I found Doug awake. He had only been off the ventilator for a short time and wasn't able to talk. I had just come from work, having been away from him since late morning. It seemed as though there should be plenty of things to tell him, but patter about the office and traffic did not belong in this room, and he'd already heard endlessly that his family and friends were pulling hard for him.

So I held his hand and leaned on the side rail of his bed, getting my face as close to his as I could. We locked eyes and smiled, and words flowed silently between us, just as they had so many times over our 25 years of marriage. God, how I'd missed that!

The nurses had dimmed the lights in the ICU for the night, and though it was far from dark, the room had a nicer ambience than usual. Straightening up, I searched the channels on Doug's TV for something more suitable than CNN. Suddenly, there were Jake and Elwood sauntering into Aretha Franklin's eatery on their mission from God. "Hey, Doug." I said, "It's *The Blues Brothers*." Moments later, Aretha was belting out "R-E-S-P-E-C-T," and I was gyrating. Doug was doing the only thing he could, swinging his head from side to side in time to the music.

It was just a tiny moment, a vignette unnoticed by anyone but us two in the life of that ICU. But it is the sweetest memory I have of that time. Just days before his death at age 55, the spark that was "us" had flamed briefly to life.

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