

Locked in My Mind; Awash with Thought

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You are my anchor

You are all I can see

As the dark of confusion closes around me

Where is Adam, and Tina, and John, I can't see my children,
Do you know them?

I cannot remember my husband's name, but he was such a big part
of me. Did I have a husband? Were we once in love? Was there a
time that meant everything to me?

He can't be dead. You're hiding him. Why.

Music, I love dancing! You're smiling at me! You're holding my hands and laughing
along! Why can't I remember the lyrics, I know this song.

You tell me I'm home. I know I'm not HOME. Where are my children, where's Tina and
John?

It smells like antiseptic and sickness here. There are *beeping sounds*.
What do those mean should I take my roast out of the oven did you get my shoes off the
boat when I left? The lights stun my eyes when you force me awake Who are you why
did you wake me I'm scared and alone. A ship on my own

in the seas of confusion closing around me

Thank you for being here with me.

The ocean is beautiful today isn't it?

...

Have you seen Tina?

This poem is written for a woman who I worked with in a nursing home. She had advanced Alzheimer's and she was confused and sometimes violent. Names of her children have been changed to provide confidentiality.

This woman affected me more than any other dementia patient I have ever worked with. I have never seen such a discrepancy between a moment of clarity and the frazzled workings of the mind of someone with dementia. Her daughter came to visit and she recognized her instantly, but she still thought that the beeps going off around the facility were her oven going off which she could never reach. The sadness in her daughter's eyes was heartbreaking- you could tell that she loved the person her mother used to be.

What touched me the most were the moments that we had together. She would have moments where her irritability, impatience, and anger would rub off and she would genuinely ask me "how are you doing today dear," or "thank you so much for being here with me." I have to wonder how often she knows what is going on, and whether she is deeply affected by the dehumanizing care received in a nursing home.

I no longer have contact with that nursing home, but I often wonder whether she is still alive, tugging on the arm of her caregiver to keep walking. I also often wonder if she wants to be alive.

-Elizabeth Weld