

Poem

## Night Visiting

A wallowy wet night  
 they called me in.  
*'They want a doctor, only a doctor will do.'*  
 I take the back steps into the hospice,  
 tiptoe past the dark.  
*'The family are waiting.'*  
 I follow the nurse's translucent finger  
 pointing the way.  
*'I must see the patient first.'*  
 My voice tired, harsher than I'd hoped.

Supine, slither of moon caught in the net curtain  
 illuminates the beauty of skin.  
 A morbid game,  
 we count to ten between breaths.

Slipping from the room,  
 through treacle I walk  
 to the designated family room.  
 Séance like under the sickly glow  
 of an energy saving light bulb,  
 a chair awaits my all-knowing bottom.  
*'As a family we have decided - antibiotics, a blood transfusion,  
 there must be something you can do Doctor?'*

But what can I do?  
 Explain the biology of death,  
 the magician's hat run out of rabbits?  
*'Where we are from, our country, we never give up,  
 we pray always for a miracle.'*  
 Hope hangs in the air,  
 fragile golden thread.  
 I cannot compete with miracles.  
*'I'm sorry.'*

I watch them leave, heads bowed,  
 pad back to her room.  
 Standing, I examine the filament of the light bulb,  
 imagine the deep sulci of the brain.  
 I make to leave,  
 but on the last step,  
 something stops me -  
 singing,  
 from her room,  
 sweet gospel, all the way home.

**Dr Jennifer Strawson**

**Correspondence to** Dr Jennifer Strawson, ST5 London Deanery, Palliative Medicine, London, UK;  
 jennystrawson@yahoo.co.uk

**Competing interests** None.

**Provenance and peer review** Not commissioned; internally peer reviewed.



CrossMark

**To cite** Strawson J. *Med Humanit* 2017;**43**:e3.

Published Online First 28 October 2016

*Med Humanit* 2017;**43**:e3. doi:10.1136/medhum-2016-011036