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POETRY/FICTION

The last directive

The takeaway point of this poem is the emotional and difficult task that older adults face when asking a family member or loved one to become their proxy or power of attorney. If advance directives or power of attorney are not established before hand, the patient is subjected to extended life care or invasive treatments that are determined by medical staff and not by the patient's spouse or family members.

The Last Directive

The hard part of anything is starting it
The hardest part of the ending is saying it
Why are the things we are so content with, the hardest to say?
Times have changed, and I have something important to say
I hope these words don't put you in disarray.

Words . . .
Words, how I adore them
I need them as I need you now, more than ever.
They were there when I used to sing you to sleep
They were there every time I said I loved you
They were there when I said I was proud of you
And once again they will be here, waiting for you
They will be your allies, as they have been to me
Put your faith in the words I leave for you.

When my voice is silent, and these eyes can no longer see the view
What I have written down for you, will tell you what to do
No ventilator for me please
Ill get my last breath from the breeze
If I'm in pain, use a few meds to put me at ease
Keep it clean, keep it simple
You speak for me now; don't let the doctors get in the middle
When the time comes and I've reached life's peak
They will pass my crown to you, when I can't speak
These words will be hard to swallow
Where I go, you must not follow.

I've been around the block a few times, but this road is new
I wish I had all the answers, but that's why I have you
When my body begins to fade and my mind starts to slip away
Let my hair grow long and grey
I've used this body well
I even have the scars to prove it.
Life is hard
Worth the struggles and pain

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I put my trust in you
Don't let me fade in vain.

I know the things that I will ask of you would bring most to their knees
I know you will rise to the occasion.
I never taught you how to cower
I lost a part of my self
Turning these words into power
Use them to make it my finest hour
When they pull the plug, don't forget my hug.
I'm on the last chapter now, help me turn the page
Not a sound or a whisper, not even an applaud
If you must raise your glasses to me, do it in silence with a nod
No parades or prayers before the temples of our gods.
Tears of warmth will run ribbons down supple cheeks
The air will feel heavy, emotions will grow weak
Breath well, breath deep
Remember what I told you, still waters run deep.

There isn't much more to say
I know you will face immeasurable odds in my absence
Just know I will live my death like I lived my life
Long and free from a casket.

Wash my body in furious and gentle flames
Till nothing but ash remains
Mark no stone to bare my name
Let me join the Earth and the waves
Nothing left to claim
Commit me to the void with a glad heart
My life drew to an end
This was just the start.

I will not experience the hardships and grief I leave behind
But if you must mourn, let it subside
Tell those who ask how I lived
Not how I died.
You did the right thing
Look in the mirror
You have my eyes
It was never good-bye
I'll meet you on the other side.

—Stefan Resch

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