

A LAMENT, by Jan Skaggs

Grief steals in like fog this time—unexpected,
 curling around my soul,
 chilling my very bones,
 sneaking in through unsuspecting nostrils,
 infiltrating unsuspecting lungs that are just doing what lungs do—
 taking in air, one breath at a time.

Vision dims as hearing becomes acute—
 the beep of a respirator,
 the muffled sobs of a beloved wife,
 the silence of confused friends,
 the inadequacy of words in any language,
 questions spoken without answers.

It's happening...again...
 My heart breaks...again...

Cameron, Bianca, Steve, Alan, Marco...
 We mothers have joined a club that is far too large and growing.
 We stumble down this path of grief, not wanting to be on this
 journey at all.
 Kneeling and keening at gravesides, both fresh and overgrown.
 Nature has turned upside-down;
 The world has gone mad in brokenness.
 And where are You, O Lord of heaven and earth?
 You who are good and kind and in control?
 To have to bury a child is one thing—
 tragic, bewildering, disorienting, searing pain and smothered grief.

But this? To put into our hands—our frail, unknowing, uncomprehending,
 limited hands the decision over life and death?
 Clinical words hide compassion: “Discontinue life support?” How?
 To decide for death when familiar skin is warm to the touch, a
 strong heart is pumping, and the gentle appearance of
 sleep is precious?

Life and death are Your job! It is too much for us!
 Can't You make death clean, without involving us?
 It seems cruel—to force us to make decisions that will haunt
 until the day we breathe our last; cruel and horrific.
 Where is the grace in that? Where are You in that?

And yet, I stand...further down the path of grief than I ever conceived possible.

I stand as a living witness to Your severe mercies and disguised graces, for You, too, buried a beloved child.

You are still inscrutable; You are holy and wholly other.

You sometimes seem hidden and distant on the far side of the farthest galaxy,

And You scare me witless with Your power and Your right!

And yet, and yet...You are faithful, sovereign, good, and as close as my next breath.

You are the Good and True Shepherd tending all Your sheep, even the youngest,

even when I don't see how,

and the why is shrouded in mystery.

One day there will be no more tears—what a glorious thought!

You will make everything sad come untrue.

You will make everything ugly become beautiful.

You will make everything wrong come around right.

You have promised.

May it be soon, Lord Jesus. May it be soon!