
He was called Henri

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Catherine Finsterwald is voluntary helper accompanying dying patients.

He was called Henri. I arrived at 9 p. m. in his room at the University Hospital. His wife, their 2 children, teenagers as mine, are by his side. His partner, accepting the events with lucidity and despair, as well as the approaching death of her husband. The children, brave and lost. He, "in coma" as they told me. No movement, the mask of the death already there, the eyes rolled upwards. To leave him is not easy for them, there is a lot of emotion and their gestures show the tenderness they have for Henri. They leave, to be able to rest for a while, relieved to know that I am present, that I am there.

I take my place, little by little. Sitting on a chair, close to his bed, feet firmly placed on the ground, the back straight, breathing deeply and regularly ... The atmosphere in the room calms down. I approach Henry mentally and I feel him really present.

A kind of dialogue without words takes place between us, an exchange of energy, a flow difficult to qualify. The night goes on, nothing moves. Henri's eyes always the same, white, no movement perceptible. We resumed the exchange at several moments, then it goes away, far, in a place which belongs to him, and I feel that his presence is not there anymore, then he comes back.

That is what I felt, what was perceptible to me - in or by my body - but at the same time, am I not imagining all this? Is it not my thoughts only which delude me about a relationship which is not one? I stay there, with my questions. But after all, it is only what I feel that is important and "too bad" if it is based on nothing! I have something to give to Henri, some serenity, my quiet breathing, my acceptance. He has also something to tell me, that he is there; his presence transcends his body, there is a relation between us. The hours go by ...

In the morning, I am deeply moved at the moment to leave, and at his bedside, discreetly, without words, I tell him: "Thank you, courage for what will come, goodbye, I am happy to have met you ..."

And there, slowly, he lowers his eyelids, as to tell me (it is my interpretation!): "Thank you and see you again ..."

I go out of the room, completely startled, telling myself that – as often - I ask myself funny questions and that reality, once again, is richer than all that I imagine! What a great present Henri gave me ...