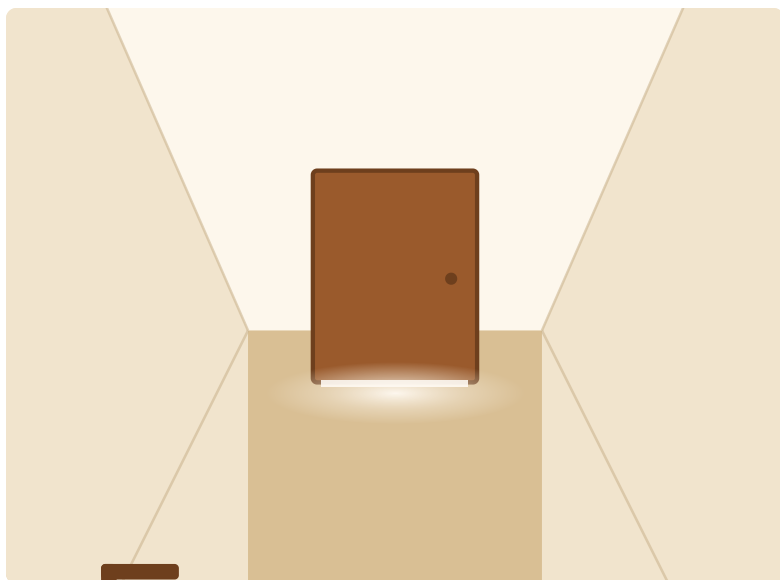




SPECIAL BOOK — GODLIVES

The Corridor

*A book for anyone waiting, without knowing
yet how this night will end*

Written by José Martínez · Powered by AI

DEDICATION

For a dear friend.

*You are going through something hard,
but there are angels all around you.*

*This is not a lesson or a piece of advice. It is a little
hope set down in writing, something to hold on to
during the longest hours — the small hours, the
ones in the corridor, the ones that stretch forever
when there is no one else awake near you.*

*I do not know how what you are living through
will end. Nobody knows yet, and I am not going to
pretend otherwise. But I do know this: you are not
going through this wait alone, even when it feels
that way. Some of those angels have names and
faces you know, and they are closer than you can
see from where you are.*

*This book is, above all, an embrace in the shape of
words.*

God loves you, and God is always there.



José.

"The Corridor"

A Special Book from Godlives

A book for anyone waiting, without knowing yet how this night will end.

Written by José Martínez · Powered by AI.

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Foreword

I know you are carrying a tiredness that weighs. You don't have to tell me, or explain anything: if you are reading this, chances are it is night, that you have spent hours in a chair that was never made for sleeping, and that your phone is your only company besides the machines beeping on the other side of a door.

This book is not like the others we have made. It is not a thirty-day guide, or a plan, or a formula for feeling better. It is five short stories and five ancient words, meant to be read one at a time, in whatever order you like, whenever you can — even half a page before your eyes close.

It will not tell you that everything is going to be fine. I don't know that, and pretending I do would be lying to you at the exact moment you most need someone to tell you the truth. It will not ask you to have enough faith for things to improve, either. That is not faith: it is a condition dressed up as comfort, and this book does not use it.

The only thing I will ask of you, if anything, is that you stay with me a while. Even if sleep takes you in the middle of a sentence. That counts too.

*With admiration for the strength you are showing, even if you
cannot feel it today,*



José Martínez

A Letter to the Reader

Before you go on, I want to tell you something that holds up this whole book.

There is a difference between optimism and hope. In hard moments, that difference matters more than anywhere else in the world.

Optimism says “everything is going to be fine” — a prediction, almost always with no real basis, that also demands you feel upbeat right now for it to count.

Hope says something different and more honest: “this could go any number of ways, and even so, today I stay, today I keep them company, today I am still here”. It is not a bet on the outcome. It is a decision to remain present while the outcome is still unknown.

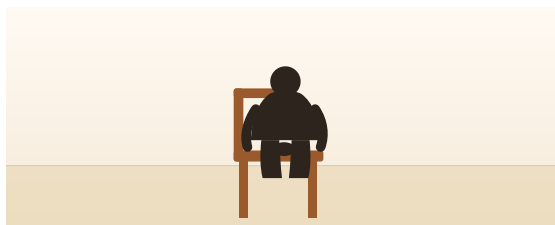
You are about to read five stories of real people who waited beside someone they loved, or who were waited for by someone who loved them, with no one guaranteeing how it would end. I am telling you now, so it doesn't catch you off guard halfway through: they do not all end the same way. Some will feel like relief. Others will not. None of them tells you how yours will end. None of them has that power, and no book should pretend it does.

Alongside each story you will find an ancient word — a psalm, a passage from a gospel, a letter — that someone, a long time ago, said or wrote while standing exactly where you are standing now: not knowing, waiting, afraid. None of those words promises you a cure. All of them offer something else, and I believe something more valuable for tonight: company.

BEFORE WE BEGIN

This book was written to keep you company in the waiting, not to solve it. It speaks of fear, of exhaustion, of the guilt that sometimes isn't confessed even in a whisper, and of what it feels like when someone we love is critically ill and we are still standing, not knowing for how much longer. If at any point in this reading you recognize in yourself an exhaustion that never lets up, or thoughts of not wanting to go on living yourself — this book is not enough, and it does not have to be. Seeking professional help (a psychologist, a doctor, emergency services or an emotional support line in your country) is not a lack of faith or of strength. It is exactly the kind of care this book wants for you.

Let's go, then. Slowly, and with permission to stop whenever you need to.



CHAPTER 1

The Threshold

Have you ever walked into a place knowing that, when you walked out, something in your life would no longer be the same — with no idea yet in what way? I am not talking about an ordinary bad feeling. I am talking about crossing a door — the door of a waiting room, of a long corridor — and sensing that something begins there that you can neither calculate nor control. Only walk through.

On March 31, 2014, Gabriel García Márquez was admitted to a hospital in Mexico City with pneumonia and an infection. He was 87 years old, and had been losing his memory for some time.

As his son Rodrigo tells it in the book he wrote years later about those days, his father was fully aware that he was slipping away — and that hurt him in a way no other pain did. When they admitted him, his wife Mercedes said to Rodrigo, plainly, without trying to sound stronger than she was: “We’re not getting out of this one.”

She did not say it to give up. She said it because, after more than fifty years together, she knew how to recognize a threshold as she crossed it. Nine days later he was discharged and taken home. He died there, in the small hours, surrounded by his wife and their two sons. Rodrigo waited seven years before he could tell it.

I am telling you this without dressing it up, and I want to be clear with you about one thing: this story is not a forecast of yours. I am not telling it to you because it ends the way you fear yours will end, or because that is “what usually happens”.

I am telling it to you because of something Mercedes did that night that I want you to look at closely: she said the truth she felt, without faking a hope she did not have, and even so she stayed. That “we’re not getting out of this one” was not the opposite of faith. It was, if you think about it, a very honest way of being present.

There is an ancient psalm, one of the shortest and most direct in all of Scripture, that begins in exactly that place: the threshold, not knowing what is on the other side.

“How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? Look on me and answer, LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death... But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.” (Psalm 13:1-5, NIV)

Notice something that is almost never mentioned when this psalm is quoted on its own: whoever wrote it asks “how long?” four times in a row, almost shouting, and the text does not correct him for it. It does not tell him “stop asking and trust”. It lets him ask the whole question, without rushing him.

And he also asks, without shame, for something very concrete: “Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death” (v.3) — that is, literally, asking God that someone not die. That is not corrected in the text either. Right there it is legitimate prayer.

And after the four questions and the request, the psalmist writes: “But I trust in your unfailing love.” Notice that the psalm never says how the story ends; there is no verse that says “and the Lord delivered him”.

It is not the happy ending. It is trust still fitting inside the unanswered question — the way Mercedes's “we're not getting out of this one” still fit inside a night in which she decided to stay.

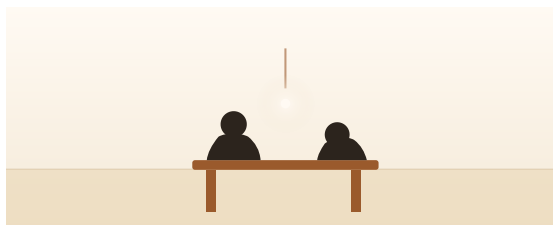
*I can ask “how long?” and still be here, at the threshold,
without needing the answer yet.*

THE WORD

Psalm 13:1-6 (NIV)

TO THINK ABOUT, UNHURRIED

- What is it you most need to say to God right now, even if it sounds like a complaint?
 - If you could ask for one concrete thing tonight, what would it be?
-



CHAPTER 2

The Vigil

Have you ever been asked for something that sounded small and turned out to be almost impossible — to stay awake, that's all, unable to fix anything that was happening on the other side of a door? If you have been through nights like that, you know that “staying” is not as simple as it sounds.

In March 2020, at the start of the pandemic, the British writer Michael Rosen became seriously ill with covid. He was admitted to the Whittington Hospital in London and put into an induced coma. He spent forty days asleep and more than six weeks in intensive care. His wife, Emma-Louise, was asked for her consent and warned that he might not wake up.

While Rosen was unconscious, unable to hear or know anything, the nurses on his ward left a notebook at the foot of his bed. And they wrote to him. They told him how the night had gone, they commented on the photos of his family they had put up nearby, they made him a playlist chosen for him. One nurse spent whole nights sitting beside him, talking to him, and at dawn she would leave the day's letter written down. Rosen, afterwards, when he could read it, said: "I can't explain how kind and beautiful it is." And to them: "Your profession saved my life."

Rosen did wake up, and he walked again. But I want you to hold on to this, more than to the happy ending: that notebook was not written knowing he would wake up. It was written for the day he might wake, if that day came. A group of people who barely knew him spoke for weeks to a man who could not hear them, and they left it in writing. That is, perhaps, the vigil in its purest form: doing something for someone who cannot know, yet, that you are doing it.

There is a much older scene that resembles this in a way that will hurt a little to recognize. The night before his arrest, Jesus took three of his own to a garden called Gethsemane. The text says he “began to be deeply distressed and troubled” — strong words, close to panic, not a quiet sadness — and he told them: “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch.”

He did not ask them to fix anything. He did not ask them to understand what was happening. He asked one single thing, small and concrete: that they stay awake.

“Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. ‘Abba, Father’, he said, ‘everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will’. Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. ‘Simon’, he said to Peter, ‘are you asleep? Couldn’t you keep watch for one hour?... The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak’.” (Mark 14:35-38, NIV)

The disciples fell asleep. Three times. And the text does not condemn them harshly for it: it simply states the fact, almost tenderly — the spirit is willing, the body cannot always follow. If you have gone days without really sleeping, if sleep took you in the chair at the exact moment you least wanted it to, I want you to know that neither Peter, nor James, nor John did any better than you that night. And none of the three lost, because of it, the love of the one they were watching over.

If you notice that coffee no longer holds your attention up, that you forget simple things, that you snap at something small in a way you don't recognize — that is not you failing as a companion. That is your body sending the bill for whole days of vigil.

Accepting a two-hour shift to sleep in another chair, eating something even without appetite, stepping outside for five minutes to look at the sky: none of it solves anything that is happening inside that room, but it holds you up so you can keep being there.

Staying, even if I doze off at times, is already a form of vigil that counts.

THE WORD

Mark 14:32-38 (NIV)

TO THINK ABOUT, UNHURRIED

- Have you felt guilty for needing to sleep, eat, or step out for a while? What would you say to another person who felt that way?
 - Who could take over for you, even for a couple of hours, so you can close your eyes?
-



CHAPTER 3

What to Ask For When You Don't Know What to Ask For

Have you ever prayed with all your strength for something concrete, and then felt the fear that if it did not happen it would be because your prayer wasn't enough? I want to talk to you about that, because it is probably one of the heaviest and least spoken fears of all the ones someone in your place carries.

Kate Bowler is a historian, a professor at Duke University, and she spent years of her career studying something very specific: the so-called “prosperity gospel”, the teaching that says God gives health and wealth to whoever has the right kind of faith, and that illness, then, would be a sort of exam you can fail. She wrote the academic book that best explains where that idea comes from and why it became so popular.

In 2015, at thirty-five, Bowler herself was diagnosed with stage four colon cancer. She was told it was very unlikely she would survive two years. She had a small son.

The woman who had spent years explaining why that theology hurts people suddenly found herself living it from a hospital bed: well-meaning people telling her “everything happens for a reason”, “God has a plan”, “everything is going to be fine” — the very phrases she already knew do not help, and whose sting she was now feeling in her own body.

She wrote a book about those months, and instead of a fake happy ending she learned to pray for what she could ask for: not an outcome nobody could guarantee, but strength for the day, company, not being alone in the scans.

Ten years after being given two, Kate Bowler is still alive, in remission. She still goes for check-ups. She is the first to say that this was not a prize for having had enough faith, nor proof that God loved her more than the woman in the next bed. It was, she says, what happened, and it does not have to explain itself in order to make sense.

There is a passage in a very old letter that says something similar, with an honesty rare in religious texts. Paul, who wrote a good part of the New Testament, says he carried a persistent suffering that is never precisely identified — “a thorn in my flesh” — and that he asked, three times, quite plainly, for it to be taken away.

“Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness’.” (2 Corinthians 12:8-9, NIV)

It was not taken away. And the text does not treat that as a failure of Paul's faith. It does not say “if he had prayed with more conviction, it would have been removed”. It says something different and, I think, more useful tonight: that there is an answer to prayer that is not “yes, exactly as you asked”, and that it does not mean you failed at anything.

If you have already prayed for the person you love to be healed, and asked again, and maybe asked a third time with your teeth clenched — I want you to know that this does not measure your faith. What measures it, if anything, is that you are still there, asking for what you can ask for: strength for the next minute, company for you both, peace for whatever comes, whatever it is.

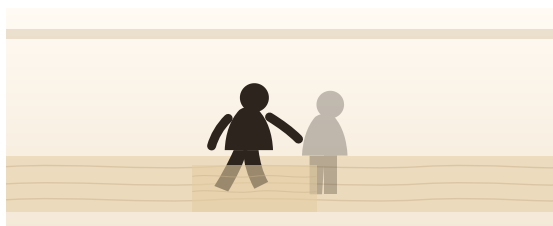
I can ask for what is mine to ask for, and leave in other hands what is not.

THE WORD

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (NIV)

TO THINK ABOUT, UNHURRIED

- If you stopped asking God for the exact outcome for a moment, what else could you ask for?
 - Has anyone ever said to you one of those phrases Bowler describes? What would have helped you more to hear instead?
-



CHAPTER 4

The Crossing

Has your mind ever run ahead on its own, without asking your permission, to imagine what the after would be like — even though the now had not ended yet? I don't mean that you want it. I mean that, in the middle of exhaustion, the head sometimes runs rehearsals nobody asked for: what the phone call would be like, who would be there, what you would say.

If that has happened to you, and afterwards you felt guilty for having thought it, I want to tell you something before we go on: it does not mean you are giving up on them. It means your mind, without being told to, is trying to protect you from a blow it does not yet know will land. It is not betrayal. It is a tired mind trying to survive.

Kees Veldboer had been driving an ambulance in Rotterdam for twenty years. One day in November 2006, he and his colleague were assigned a transfer that dragged on for hours: taking a terminally ill patient, Mario Stefanutto, from one hospital to another. Instead of leaving him waiting on a stretcher in a corridor, Kees asked him whether he wanted to do something in the meantime. He took him to the harbour, and they managed to get him onto a tour boat so he could see the port of Rotterdam one last time.

Kees saw what that meant to a man who was dying, and drew a simple conclusion: "It's that simple: a couple of phone calls, an old ambulance, and you can make someone happy by granting their last wish." Months later he founded an organization that, with volunteer ambulances, takes terminally ill people free of charge wherever they want to go one last time: the sea, a stadium, the house where they grew up. In fourteen years they granted more than sixteen thousand wishes.

Mario Stefanutto died after that outing. That has to be said too, without hiding it: the trip to the harbour did not change the outcome. And I want you to notice something, because it is exactly what this book needs you to see: both things are true at the same time. He saw the harbour one last time, and he died. Neither cancels the other. Going with him into the crossing was not a bet that he would survive. It was, simply, not leaving him alone on the way.

Years later, Kees himself died suddenly, of cardiac arrest, without any warning. That same day his foundation announced that every wish he already had scheduled would be granted all the same. The one who accompanied others left without being accompanied, and what he had built went on accompanying others.

There is an ancient promise, spoken to a whole people who had lost their land and did not know whether they would ever see it again, that looks a great deal like what Kees did with his ambulance:

“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.” (Isaiah 43:1-2, NIV)

Look closely at what it says and at what it does not say. It does not say “you will not pass through the waters”. It takes the crossing for granted: “when you pass through”. It does not promise to spare you the hard passage. It promises something else: that you do not cross it alone.

That is exactly what Kees gave Mario that afternoon at the harbour. And it is, perhaps, the only thing you can guarantee today to the person you love: not that the crossing will not hurt, but that they will not cross it alone.

And here I want to tell you one more thing, as clearly as I can: nothing that happens after this will measure how much you loved them.

If at some point your mind runs ahead and imagines what you do not want to imagine, or if one day, when all of this is over — however it ends — you ask yourself whether you did enough, I want you to keep this sentence: you already loved them with everything you had, here, in this corridor, today, with your exhaustion and your fear and the hours you have gone without sleep. That already counts. It is already complete. Whatever happens.

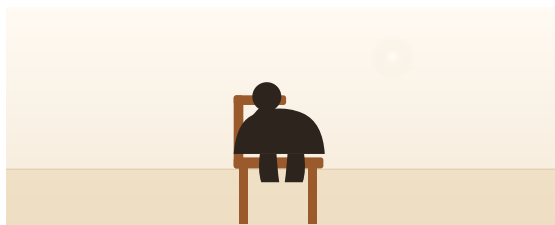
I can go with them into the crossing, without being able to prevent it, and that is already enough.

THE WORD

Isaiah 43:1-3 (NIV)

TO THINK ABOUT, UNHURRIED

- If your mind has ever run ahead to imagine the after, can you treat it more gently the next time it does?
 - What does “going with someone into the crossing” mean for you today, concretely?
-



CHAPTER 5

The Keeper Who Does Not Sleep

Have you ever spoken to someone who could not answer you, without knowing whether they were really listening? And, if that has happened to you, did you ever wonder whether it made any sense to keep doing it?

Martin Pistorius was twelve years old when, in South Africa, he began to lose his speech, the control of his body and eye contact. The doctors never fully confirmed what was happening to him, and they told his parents to take him home and wait for him to die. He did not die. He was left, as the doctors believed, in a vegetative state. His father, Rodney, got up at five in the morning to dress him; his parents set an alarm every two hours, all night long, to turn him so he would not develop bedsores. For years.

Here is the fact almost nobody gets right, and that I want to correct carefully: it is not true that Martin spent twelve years in a coma, as the story goes around. What really happened is harder still. Between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, while everyone around him believed there was nobody inside, Martin began to wake up. By around nineteen he was fully conscious — and completely unable to signal it. He heard everything. He understood everything. And he could not move a single muscle to say so.

There was a moment, in the middle of those years, when his mother, exhausted beyond what a body should have to bear, looked at him and said: “I hope you die.” He heard her.

And I want you to know how that ended, because it matters: years later, when he could finally communicate through a computer, the first thing he did with that story was not to hold it against her. He understood her. He said that every time she looked at him she saw a cruel parody of the healthy son she had loved, and that this, while still being a sentence that hurts, did not make her a bad mother. It made her an exhausted mother, broken, with no manual at all for what she was living through.

IF WHAT YOU HAVE JUST READ SOUNDS TOO MUCH LIKE
WHAT YOU FEEL

This chapter names thoughts that many people, in your same situation, have had and never dared to say out loud: wishing this would end, imagining the funeral, feeling relief, needing to get away from the room. Feeling this does not mean you are a poor companion, or a bad believer. But if on top of this you have gone days without any respite, or thoughts have appeared of not wanting to go on yourself, please do not go through this in silence. Tell someone right now — a relative, a doctor, any trusted person close to you — and seek professional help: a psychologist, a doctor, emergency services or an emotional support line in your country. Asking for that help is not giving up. It is one of the bravest ways of continuing to hold up the person you love: by also taking care of you.

What saved Martin, in the end, was not a famous doctor or a new machine. It was Virna van der Walt, an aromatherapist at the day centre where he was cared for, who noticed that his eyes responded to what she was saying, and who would not stop insisting until he was properly assessed. Today Martin works, is married, and has a son. And he still says the same thing about those years when nobody knew he could hear: that talking to him, even when no one believed it did any good, was real. It counted.

There is a psalm, sung by pilgrims who walked long distances, that says something I want you to take from this last chapter, because it is, perhaps, the permission you most need today:

“He will not let your foot slip — he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep... The LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.” (Psalm 121:3-4,8, NIV)

The keeper this psalm describes does not tire. You do. And that difference is precisely the gift of the psalm: it does not have to be you keeping watch twenty-four hours without rest, because the watching that holds up the person you love does not depend on you also giving up sleep. You can sleep for a while. You can go out and eat. You can close your eyes tonight without that being abandonment. There is a vigil greater than yours holding this up, and you can, at last, lean on it.

And if tonight you speak to her, even if she is sedated, even if she does not answer, even if you do not know whether she hears you — I want you to know that she does not have to answer for what you say to be said, and to be real. It counts for her, if she hears you in some way we cannot measure. And it counts, above all, for you, who need to say it.

She does not have to answer me for what I say to her to be said.

THE WORD

Psalm 121:1-8 (NIV)

TO THINK ABOUT, UNHURRIED

- Is there something you would like to say to them today, even if you cannot know whether they hear you?
 - Who could you let “keep watch” for a while so that you can rest, even for a moment?
-

One Step: Five Minutes, One Hand, Three Breaths

Come, sit with me a moment before you go on. I am not going to ask you for a long task or a deep reflection. Only this, if you can, today:

- 1 If you can, take the hand of the person you love — or bring yours close to theirs on the sheet, if you cannot touch them yet.
- 2 Breathe slowly three times, without rushing. It does not have to feel solemn or special.
- 3 Say, under your breath or only inside, a sentence that begins like this: “Today I loved her when...” and finish it with something concrete from today — I spoke to her even though she didn't answer, I held her hand for half an hour, I stayed instead of leaving, I cried in the corridor and walked back in.

It is not to make you feel better or to “earn” some peace of mind. It is to put on record, even if only for yourself, that today you did do something real, even if the whole day felt as though you had done nothing. It changes no prognosis. It changes one single thing, smaller and more certain: that today you did not stop being present, even when inside you felt there was nothing left of you.

AND IF AT SOME POINT THE FEAR OR THE EXHAUSTION
OVERWHELMS YOU IN A WAY YOU CAN NO LONGER HOLD
ALONE

— if you have gone days without really sleeping, if you feel you are disconnecting from yourself, if the thought of losing her overwhelms you completely — talk to someone on the team caring for her (social work, chaplaincy, a psychologist) or to a person you trust. Asking for that support is neither weakness nor a lack of faith. It is part of taking care of you so you can go on taking care of her.

Something to Say to Them

This is not a script. It is a shape for you to put your own words inside. You can read it out loud to them, whisper it in their ear, or simply think it while you hold their hand. There is no correct version, and you can repeat it as many times as you need, different every day.



[their name], it's me. I am here, beside you. I have your hand.

I want you to know [here you put it in: a concrete memory, something you are grateful to them for, something that person once did for you — something real, yours, not a generic phrase].

You do not have to do anything for me now. You do not have to answer me.

I only want you to know that I am here, with you, and that I love you.

Whatever happens, you are not without company.

TO FILL IN THE MIDDLE, WITH NO SINGLE OBLIGATORY FORM

- It can be a small, physical memory: a smell, a meal they used to make for you, a song, their hands.
 - It can be a simple, direct thank-you: “thank you for...”, with no need to sum up a whole life.
 - It can be something from the present, not a farewell: you do not have to say goodbye, or ask them to stay, or to fight. It is enough to tell them they are accompanied right now.
 - If the words do not come, it is fine to stay with only “I am here. I love you.” That is enough too.
-

SPACE FOR YOUR WORDS

It is probably the most useful thing in this whole book. Keep it close. Come back to it when you need it, as many times as it takes.

Closing Words

I want to end with a blessing for you, whatever night you are going through when you read this.

May the Eternal, the Creator, the One whom so many different voices have called by so many names, give you company at this threshold, without demanding an answer to the question “how long?” before you are ready to ask it. May God let you keep watch without guilt, as with those who watched in Gethsemane, even when the body fails you at times and you need to close your eyes for a while. May God hold you, as happened with Paul, with a grace that is sufficient, even if what you asked for three times was not granted the way you asked for it. May God go with you into the crossing, as was once promised to a whole people, not sparing you the passage but going with you inside it. And may God, like the keeper who never sleeps, hold the person you love tonight with a watching greater than yours, so that you, at last, can rest a little without that being abandonment.

I do not know how your story is going to end. No one who is honest with you could tell you. But I can tell you this: staying here, today, with all your exhaustion and all your fear, is already complete love. Whatever this night brings.

A Prayer

TO PRAY SLOWLY, OUT LOUD IF YOU CAN

The hand I don't know is listening



*Eternal One,
it is three in the morning and I do not know whether
the person I love most will see the day,
and I have not come to ask you to promise me that,
because I would rather not lie to myself.*

*I bring the whole fear, without dressing it up as faith:
the fear of losing her, the sleepless hours,
the longing for sleep that I hardly dare to have.*

*I am not asking you to heal her in exchange for my
faith,
or to measure my love by how long I last awake in
this chair.*

*I ask you to be here, with me, in this corridor,
to hold up what I can no longer hold alone tonight,
and to give me strength only for the next minute —
not for all the ones still to come.*

*And if tonight I must close my eyes and rest a
moment,
may it not feel like betrayal: may it be the human
way of being able to keep loving her tomorrow.*

***And remind me of this, even if I forget it
before dawn:
staying here is already complete love,
whatever this night brings.***

Before You Close This Book

We have walked together through five stories: a son who stayed with his father until the small hours in which he died; a group of nurses who wrote for weeks to a man who could not hear them, and who woke up; a scholar who was given two years to live and who is still alive, ten years later; an ambulance driver who gave a dying man one last trip around the harbour, and who died not long after having seen it; and a man cared for day and night by his parents for years, who spent that time hearing everything without being able to say a single word, until someone, at last, noticed.

They do not all end the same way. I told you at the beginning and I want to repeat it now, as we close: none of these stories tells you how yours will end. What all five do show you, from different angles, is that it is possible to accompany someone — afraid, exhausted, not knowing, even wishing at some moment that all of this would just be over — and that this accompanying already counts, whatever news arrives afterwards.

***A question for these days, not necessarily for today:**
of everything you have done for the person you love since
this wait began, what is the smallest thing that makes you
proudest?*

You do not have to answer it now. Just take it with you, along with the rest of this book, to the chair, to the corridor, to whatever small hours come next.

With all my affection, thinking of you and of the one you are waiting for,

José.

Bibliography and Sources

Nothing you have read here is invented. Every ancient word and every story has its origin, and here it is, in case something moved you and you want to go to the source.

The scriptures

All quotations are taken from the **New International Version (NIV)**, © Biblica, Inc., checked against the official text, reading each passage in full and in its historical and literary context before quoting it.

- **Psalms 138:1-6** (the complete psalm) — the lament that does not yet know how it ends
- **Mark 14:32-42** (the full chapter read in context) — Gethsemane, the vigil beside the one who suffers
- **2 Corinthians 12:1-21** (chapter read in context, vv.7-10 quoted) — the thorn that was not removed
- **Isaiah 43:1-28** (chapter read in context, vv.1-3 quoted) — company inside the crossing, not the promise of avoiding it
- **Psalms 121:1-8** (the complete psalm) — the keeper who never sleeps

Following the theological review of its editorial team, this book chose not to use James 5:14-15 (“the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well”), Jeremiah 29:11 or Romans 8:28 as motivational support: at a moment like this, those three are the verses most likely to turn into a promise of healing that the text itself, read in full, does not offer. Neither does it allude to Jairus’s daughter (Mark 5) or to Lazarus (John 11): both accounts end in resurrection, and that ending, placed in front of someone awaiting a real one, can be read as an implicit promise that believing is enough for the person to get up. They were left out entirely on purpose.

The stories

Rodrigo García Barcha, on the last days of his father, Gabriel García Márquez, and of his mother, Mercedes Barcha.

Rodrigo García Barcha, A Farewell to Gabo and Mercedes, Literatura Random House, 2021.

Michael Rosen, on his hospitalization with covid-19 and the notebook kept by the nurses of the Whittington Hospital.

Michael Rosen, Many Different Kinds of Love: A Story of Life, Death and the NHS, Ebury Press, 2021; RCN Magazine (Royal College of Nursing), June 2022; Frontline (Chartered Society of Physiotherapy).

Kate Bowler, on her diagnosis and her critique of the prosperity gospel.

Kate Bowler, Everything Happens for a Reason: And Other Lies I've Loved, Random House, 2018; Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel, Oxford University Press, 2013; Duke Today, "Kate Bowler Is Made for Hope", November 2025.

Kees Veldboer and Mario Stefanutto, on the Stichting Ambulance Wens foundation.

The foundation's official history (ambulancewens.nl); Rijnmond and NOS, July 2021.

Martin Pistorius, with the necessary correction of the "twelve-year coma" myth.

Martin Pistorius, Ghost Boy, Simon & Schuster, 2011; NPR, Invisibilia, "Trapped In His Body For 12 Years, A Man Breaks Free", January 2015.

A necessary precision: he was not in a coma for twelve years, but in a vegetative state for about four years, and conscious without being able to communicate it for the rest of that time — something different, and harder.

An honest note

The contemporary stories in this book involve real people, told from widely documented facts checked against primary sources and reliable journalism before this edition. Deliberately, they do not all end the same way. That is not an oversight: it is precisely what this book needed to show about accompanying someone — that it counts, no matter how it ends.

END OF THE SPECIAL BOOK — THE CORRIDOR



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