



Speechless

By Nathan Hitzeman, MD

Yesterday, I talked to my heart's content.
With friends shopping,
My grandson getting married soon.
How I bragged about my spring roses!

And then the words stopped.
Like a lightbulb at its end,
A part of my brain went black.
They tell me my Broca's broken.

I find myself in this cold room,
In a bed for sick people.
I have always been well.
And am still well.
Except that my thoughts can no longer connect
With my tongue and mouth.

If only I could have lost one of those pesky organs -
A gallbladder, an appendix, a uterus.
Or even a limb - I have plenty of those!
But we are only given one voice.

I have become an alien on my own planet.
My ocean of words, once clear and deep,
Has all but evaporated.
The river of ideas, once flowing,
Now locked in a glacial crawl.

So slow to come, no one can bear to wait.
They finish my sentences for me.
Squeeze my hand.
Shower me with platitudes and sympathy.

How long can I stay like this?
The words like steam welling within me,
Nowhere to release.
They could drill into my skull for all I cared,
But that the words would come.

I am so tired of listening to my thoughts.
So I will just repeat one of the few phrases
My mouth still seems to speak.
"I-I-I don't know."
"I don't know. I-I don't know."

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