

# 6 O'Clock Exit Round

Hurry.  
Already the fifth day in a row  
Wife at the stove  
Anger simmering  
Stomach belching out punishments  
Sentence in absentia  
Hubby better come home

One collapse, two admissions  
Bed 16 has melena  
Banging commotion  
This is the golden hour  
for horse trading  
Faxes to the pharmacy and  
Ask CVM to takeover

She is new to this ward  
therefore silent  
Having waited too long, indignant  
Poison has spread to the bones  
After the disfiguring operation  
Esteem bruised, wounds undressed  
Half of a woman, she swore  
No more! – and ran  
the entire circumference of fear  
right up to the Edge of reason and over

This morning at 2am  
Darkness summoning, she awoke  
And could not find her feet  
Crawling with hands to the phone  
Wondering if it were all over  
The Invalid and her Bible  
Faith smashed against these wooden limbs  
A knot for a heart  
Ice in the throat  
Pain stiffening the body  
and resolve  
Like a crack of wire in a lightning rod

She speaks English  
For once, an informative patient  
Houseman's joy  
Careless needles, NBM  
IV decadron, and  
Who knows when the surgeons  
will come?

Grabbing his houseman bag, almost in a run  
Black is the sky, a curtain drawn  
Clapping his heels across the wax floor  
From a distance, the rolling thunders come ...

– 15 December 2005 ■



This poem was written by an SGH Registrar suffering insomnia after a coffee-cheesecake. It describes the real life experience of a patient with breast cancer and cord compression.