

# The Line Our Thread

Cynthia Troup

Last night I spoke about you to another friend,  
remembering our last phonecall, when you were too weak  
to hold the handset to your ear on the pillow  
and the blue nurse, as you called her,  
the home carer, pressed the speaker button so my voice  
could be heard stretched and floating  
on the bedsheet beside you.

My friend and I talked about how, once in a while, we can know  
absolutely when it's the last time, we can come to know  
when, for instance,  
the silk strands that tether the dying are lifting,  
and our loom with the dear one will soon be still.

The blue nurse, as you called her, omitted  
or forgot to switch off the speaker button, replace  
the handset in its black cradle. Perhaps  
because I didn't say goodbye, as such;  
I had said *thank you*, quietly,  
imagining January sunlight striped by shutters in your room,  
the sweep of the ceiling fan,  
Ollie the Labrador by the bedframe,  
scents of the flowers that filled the house  
distilled with magnolia blossoming outside. I knew  
there was a bunch of peonies in a tall glass, the verandah was dusty  
from the Queensland storms, that as your breathing  
had become inaudible the souging of palmtrees and the high-set house  
seemed calmer, deeper, in crescendo.

It was up to me to ring off from the phonecall, lose the line  
our thread, rest my handset in its silver cradle  
and keep talking, holding  
the peonies, embracing Ollie, blessing  
blue nurses and the wordless wisdom of the morphine drip.