

Virtuality

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We mourn the usual family meeting
dreading virtual ICU contact
as the most unnatural
of all remote encounters
haunted with concern
that the inaccessible dying
and the already broken
will be further distanced
by anguish and poor understanding
as awkward explanations
and parting words of love and regret
said within fragmented video frames
are marked by wavering sound
and minute pictures
thwarting genuine touch.

Briefly roused from fog to hear the voices
and see while muted by the tube
you stare at the disinfected tablet screen
and strain to listen above the ventilator's rhythm
and the unit's background beeps
while your scattered relatives
gather over devices
to forge the only possible connection
and their unforgettable faces and group chats rivet
chain links of affection
and the illusion of nearness
as simulated embraces somehow still console.

While proper tears flow freely
and smooth your furrowed brow
our anticipatory grief recedes
as we witness the reach of family
across artificial but wondrous technological bridges
grateful at least for the telechannel's
images and speech to breach the isolation.

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