

and nurse call button attached. The breeze filled the sheet like a sail. I huddled behind it, protected from the wind.

I felt my world crashing down. Perhaps Amy's touch released some long repressed psychological pain. I'd never felt that kind of warmth from a hand on my arm, heat radiating to my heart, calm overpowering my worries, rays of hope and comfort moving through my body. Or perhaps my melancholy was a weariness from the struggle to stay alive when there seemed to be so many forces, piling one on top of another, that were pounding me into the ground. I was exhausted. I just wanted someone to take care of me and lift me out of this hell. I didn't want to worry about the pills being right. I didn't want to worry what the next round of chemo would do to me or what would happen during the blood washing. I didn't want my arms to hurt any more and I was tired of having an IV pushed in my vein.

I cried for my children. I cried for my unborn grandchildren I might never see. I cried for my mother who wanted to help but didn't know how, my father who died 15 years before and only knew me as strong, my brother who I'd battled as a child but was now my friend. I cried for my friends who helped where they could. I cried for me. As I lay there, knees to my chest, wrapped in a blanket, huddling under my billowing sheet tent, I didn't know if I had the strength to continue.

It was past midnight now and I tucked my head in the hospital bed pillow to muffle my sobs so my roommates could not hear them. My arms ached from the blood washing treatments. The dose of chemotherapy was moving through me, killing silently. I had trouble breathing through my flu-clogged nose. All I wanted was for the pain and torture to end and to feel human again. Somewhere, somehow there must be a way to bring me back. I'd tried and failed, tried and failed, until there was so little left. The small pieces of me that remained cried out because I felt so alone and I didn't want to die that way. Amy's touch was a taste of what I longed for.