

# The Veterans

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They meet a last time to say goodbye.  
by the wing of the hospital  
reserved for survivors of wars.

My father ailing.

My uncle frail, wheezing.

by the seating area of a tin Horton's.

My father - ran away from home  
at seventeen to join the infantry  
to fight Hitler.

My uncle - part of the Kindertransport,  
he'd lost his mother and father  
in the holocaust.

They sat. My father in his wheelchair.

My uncle on his walker.

Our uncle's caregivers and partners at his side.

My wife and baby girl close.

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o The veterans reached for each other's hands  
and said nothing.

What could you say.

o As shrieked suddenly, decimating  
a London block.

o Parents poisoned in an Auschwitz gas chamber.

What could you say.

o They held each other's hands  
and gazed at one another.

o Their moments together.

o Poignant beyond words.

o They'd lived miraculous lives.

o My daughter, only ten months old,  
in her mother's arms,  
pulled closer to her grandfather  
and caressed his head, his cheek,  
his arm, his hand.

And then pointed upwards.

She did this once more.

Three months on you visited your uncle  
in his downtown apartment  
to say goodbye to him.

My wife my heart stood beside me.

I held my daughter.

And she caressed my uncle's white hair  
and his sunken cheek.

And then pointed upwards.

Did she know, living  
in many dimensions  
in the way children do,  
and we often stop doing,  
where the soul should go?

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Father. Uncle.

I see them over and over.

by my mind's eye.

by the hospital café.

Holding each other's hands.

Silent.

— B.W. Powe