

The ones. that come in talking

The ones that come in talking
stay with me longest. To hear
another human is to know them
differently than those who arrive
already silenced by illness or injury.

The ones that smile or even briefly
laugh, then are lost; they remind me
that the veil of control that I wear
all too well is flimsy.

The ones that say Help me, I'm not ready,
Call my girlfriend; the ones I rush to pull
back, the ones that say, I'm scared
I'm so cold, I'm so thirsty, they remind me
death is not always a peaceful exit.

The ones that come in talking
return to me sometimes in the night.
For to have not known that these
were their last words, and then
not to have saved their lives, leaves me
with no words.

—Andrea Austin, MD, MS-HPed, FACEP, CHSE

Dr. Austin (AQA, Uniformed University, 2015) is an Associate Professor
of Clinical Medicine at Florida State University. Her E-mail address is
andrea@andreaaustinmd.com.

Illustration by Sarah Riedmann

