

POETRY

At the window

Previously published at www.cmaj.ca

"ALS won't kill you, the loneliness will"
— Erin Brady Worsham

Clumsiness was the robin,
a harbinger hopping through the snow.
Always worn out and tired,
I just thought work was consuming,
sleep never quite enough.
Then lids of jars became recalcitrant,
even when already opened before.

After my disease had a name,
I became a teaching tool.
Lying still, new doctors
looking me over,
checking my reflexes,
or how I work to breathe.

Loneliness is the hardest part.
Air hisses in and out through
blue and white accordion tubing,
my body in its cradle,



warmed and humidified.
I learn a new rhythm, a dance
that has become my life, hereafter
marked by whoosh and chime and beep
of my dutiful machines.

Dying would be easy. Just
take my handmaiden away.
But I don't plan on leaving
anytime soon. These machines,
this body. My mind.
That's still me,
chasing after that bird,
through the melting snow.

Wynne Morrison MD MBE
Critical care
The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
Philadelphia, USA

DOI:10.1503/cmaj.101220