



Editor's Note: Jennifer Freed lives with her family in Central Mass, where she raises her children, works on writing and ceramic sculpture, and tutors refugees in English and life skills. The poem: "The night described in the poem was the first night of my husband's hospitalization upon being diagnosed with multiple, bilateral PE's. An earlier visit to the ER had left him only with a diagnosis of anemia. Suddenly, what was not so frightening, and could be treated with simple iron supplements, became a breathlessness that might at any moment have killed him. We are left with thankfulness to those who found and treated him."

MID-JULY, KIDS AND DOG AT MY PARENTS'

When I drive home through the dark
after the constant beeps and hallway bustle
of your bedside,
drive past the ending
of the summer concert in the park,
past the late-night couples on lit sidewalks,
drive through humid air to silent house
where I am alone,
not even the jingle of a collar, the wag and wiggle
waiting at the door,
I am thankful
for the unfamiliar solitude,
thankful for not having
to talk, to smile, to take care of anyone
else, not even
to walk a dog under the stars, or kiss
the soft cheek of a sleeping child.
I am thankful
and I fix myself some dinner in a kitchen still
clean as I left it,
and I can do anything I want.
I can eat two bowls of ice cream,
can play piano late
and loud,
can sing, or
scream.
I can do anything
but sleep.
I must, I know, for the sake of
tomorrow, when
I will wait again beside your rasping body,
but I cannot bring myself
to go upstairs.
I cannot bear to see our room.
I do not want,
I do not
want,
I do not want to lie alone
in our big bed.

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