

Edvard Munch, *Death in the Sickroom*, 1895



****First Question First****

What is *your* immediate reaction to this artwork?

Trust it. Write about it. Use the guide sheet for help.

Continue reading for another perspective and journal questions.

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A severing. The caretaker, a stranger to us, zips up the body bag. My mind screams, "I'll never see him again!" Then notes, "At least this bag is made from fabric. Those plastic ones feel so cold!" They move him onto the gurney. We open the front door and follow.

We slowly walk alongside as they wheel him to the white van. Where's the ceremonial hearse? This van feels almost offensive, denying this moment. The earth shattering, axis-shifting death of my Dad. Now death, it seems, has also been relegated to commodity, to be delivered without upset or attention. The van backs out onto the gravel road and climbs the hill out of view. My Dad's final ride through his beloved Iowa farmland.

I go off by myself, next to the barn, hear the wind loudly whipping, and let my broken heart wail. "Will the Circle be Unbroken" comes to mind. I understand more now. "Undertaker please drive slow."

Note: Munch's piece recalls the death of his sister Sophie in 1877, *sixteen years* prior to painting this work. The last moments with the dead body of our loved one can linger.

Q.) Do you replay those last moments when life left the body of your loved one? Try writing them out, feeling all that may arise.