

# Permission to Go

*by* John Riley

Now that the last incision has been sutured,  
the last blood stain washed away,  
the last dry pink pore salved, the last pill powdered,  
the last tumor appeased;  
now that the necessary implements acquired,  
the stainless steel femur, the bolted hip,  
the tubes, needles, sipping cup,  
all those accumulated instruments, and more,  
have been buried away in the box;  
now that the last brown shadow,  
(it clung like crumbs on a child's grimy lip)  
has been scrubbed from your face;  
now that I have no cause to stagger up the stairs,  
my eyes left empty, fat gray;  
I am granting you permission to go.

Now that I have at last dreamed  
that your shriveled black lungs  
filled, and emptied, and from empty filled again  
full of the flashing phosphorescence  
and the steady green eyes of the darting fish;  
now that I have seen you, by this motion of fill and empty,  
rise to float above the bed's shadow;  
I am granting you permission to go.

Now that I no longer sleep to see you,  
propelled by this motion that is not magic,  
speed away above the flat light;  
now that you will never again curve beyond the eye's hand  
toward what is there only by our demand it should be;  
now that all these things touched and all these things seen  
have been housed inside me,  
I am placing this plea before your new absence;  
I am requesting your permission to leave.

