



## **Acts of Kindness**

### Indomitable spirit

I visited a friend for the first time in her new digs: a retirement/nursing home. This friend and I have been orbiting each other for years in the dance that is life. We have connected deeply and intensely at intervals when life's events converge, and then the connection recedes a little until the next crossing of paths. She was instrumental in my gaining a work opportunity in my latest and last teaching position before my retirement from the classroom. Her good word brought me into a fold that nourished and grew me professionally for nigh on ten years. During the recent time of remote teaching, when my pillars crumbled and my esteem plummeted, she was there again assisting with resources— and many cups of tea!

She experienced a traumatic rare health event some months ago – a spinal aneurism. It left her paralysed from the waist down. It is still uncertain how permanent this loss will be. Because of her loss of mobility and independence, she has had to leave her family home, and after a series of short-term – and some deeply unsatisfactory – stays in hospitals, rehab facilities and aged care facilities, she has landed in her current place of residence.

I visited her, taking in my company, my thoughts and reading material. My intentions were solace, and continued friendship. She received me graciously and with loving gratitude. But what she also showed me was strength – mental strength – in abundance. Her routines, including daily physiotherapy, provide her with hope. She can see for herself the incremental difference in movement she has regained in her legs. Her prognosis is uncertain. Her resolution— to stand on her own— her steel.

In her situation, she has a great deal of time for reflection. In my company, the reflection encompassed our teaching careers, and the students and the families whose lives were entwined with ours. Our grown children and grandchildren also received the deeply satisfying call over that old friends conduct; we remarked on the milestones of their successes and empathised over their challenges.

We also spoke of the uncertainty of life, especially the suddenness of life-changing events such as the one she'd experienced. But we both knew of many of our friends and connections who had not made it to this present day. Both of us felt lucky to be here, to continue to live, to look forward to the next wave of experiences life would bring.

I know she will use her time of reflection well; she will see this situation through and cope with whatever is on the other side. Typically of her spirit, she made sure I saved the day for her next birthday, a major one. She prefaced it, with "If I'm still alive...I'd like to have a big party and invite everyone." We can't know what the future will bring and whether this event will go ahead. Of one thing I am sure, it won't be for want of trying.



I left her company, fortified for the day ahead, whatever it brings.