

The Unseen Power of Presence

He volunteered with a dying patient expecting to go through the five stages of grief at the first meeting. Instead she talked about hooking rugs: the needle, the thread, the cloth, the rhythmic movement of the hands. He tried other matters in conversation — she talked of hooking rugs.

On the next visit she spoke of the intricacies and hardships of ice-fishing that her husband had done before his death. Week after week, hooking rugs and ice-fishing. Angered, he said to friends, "I can't go on with this interminable hooking rugs and ice-fishing."

One day as they sat in the nursing home cafeteria, she going on, he bored and vexed with hooking rugs and ice-fishing, the room went silent; air turned a luminous shade of green, hooking rugs and ice fishing stopped. She leaned over and said, "I could not have done this without you," then on again with hooking rugs and ice-fishing.

Soon after she died. At the funeral relatives said to him, "Thank you, all she ever spoke about was you."