

Last Call

By

El Padre

**DARKNESS. INTERRUPTED BY A SLOWLY RISING SOUND.**

The puff and hiss of a VENTILATOR echoes relentlessly.

Muted pings are heard in the background, footsteps, a click and the ping stops.

Slightly louder is the arrhythmic sound of HEART MONITOR.

A phone rings then stops as a muffled and slightly breathless FEMALE voice is heard.

FEMALE (O.S.)  
C nineteen ward.

A MALE voice, cracked and dry responds.

MALE (O.S.)  
It's me again nurse, I'm sorry to  
be a pest.

NURSE (O.S.)  
It's ok Mr Fletcher, call as  
often as you want.

FLETCHER (O.S.)  
What about FaceTime? My grandson  
says you can do that.

NURSE (O.S.)  
I can take the iPad to her. She  
can't open her eyes, she won't  
see you but yes, that's something  
I can do.

FLETCHER (O.S.)  
But I can see her?

NURSE (O.S.)  
Yes. Are you sure this is what  
you want?

FLETCHER (O.S.)  
(sobbing)  
I think so. I need to see her one  
last time.

There's the weak sound of metal gently hitting metal.

NURSE (O.S.)  
I think she wants that too, she's  
tapping her wedding ring off the  
side on her bed.

The man starts crying.

FLETCHER (O.S.)  
Please, let me see her.

NURSE (O.S.)

Ask your grandson to call the code I gave him this morning. I'll be waiting. Don't be afraid of the machines around her, they're keeping her pain free.

FLETCHER (O.S.)

Thank you. I'll speak to you in a minute.

A click as the handset is placed on the receiver.

NURSE (O.S.)

Let's get you tidied up for your husband Mary, he'll be calling back in moment.

The bedsheets and pillows being adjusted make a dull rustling sound.

A low repetitive chime is quickly silenced.

NURSE (O.S.)

Hi Mr Fletcher, are you ready?

FLETCHER (O.S.)

I think so, I'm scared, I don't know what to say.

NURSE (O.S.)

Just look at her and the words will come, remind her of all the good things you've done together. I'll be here with Mary for as long as is needed.

The sound of Mr Fletcher clearing his throat.

FLETCHER (O.S.)

Mary? Mary my darling can you hear me?

The sound of metal on metal.

NURSE (O.S.)

Did you hear that Mr Fletcher? She's tapping her wedding ring again.

FLETCHER (O.S.)

I heard it, is she answering me?

NURSE (O.S.)

Yes, just talk away to her.

FLETCHER (O.S.)

Mary my most beautiful, beautiful wife, I love you so so much.

Fletcher is now sobbing as he speaks.

FLETCHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 I wish I was there with you my  
 darling, I wish I was lying in  
 that bed instead you were. I want  
 to hold you and kiss you just one  
 last time but I can't get in,  
 Elizabeth says I have to stay at  
 home, she's just like you,  
 stubborn and determined. You look  
 so tired, you're a fighter my  
 darling, but I think.....

Fletcher breaks down completely crying uncontrollably.

FLETCHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 .....I think this is your last  
 round.

The nurse can be heard crying in the background.

The hiss and puff of the ventilator decreases.

The heart monitor beep starts to slow.

FLETCHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 I don't what I'll do without you  
 my love, you're my best friend,  
 my darling, the only woman I've  
 ever needed or wanted in my life.  
 I love you so much my Mary.

A soft clink of metal on metal.

The ventilator stops.

The heart monitor emits a low steady tone.

FLETCHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Mary? MARY? No. No no no.  
 Elizabeth, ELIZABETH, she gone,  
 your mum's gone. Oh my darling,  
 she's away, she's gone.

NURSE (O.S.)  
 (crying)  
 I'm so sorry Mr Fletcher. She was  
 at peace at the end, her last  
 thought was obviously for you.

ELIZABETH'S voice is heard in between sniffs and the sound of  
 a handkerchief being rustled.

ELIZABETH (O.S.)  
 My dad's just left the room. What  
 needs to be done now? We've never  
 done this before.

NURSE (O.S.)

We'll take care your mum now,  
call back in an hour and we can  
go through what happens next, I'm  
so sorry for your loss.

ELIZABETH (O.S.)

Thanks for all you've done, I  
know my dad appreciates it and so  
do we all. I'll call back in an  
hour or so. Bye.

The chime of a FaceTime call being ended is followed by the  
sound of machinery being switched off.  
The rest is silence.

THE END.