

Three drawers

Carmel Armon, MD,
MHS

Address correspondence and
reprint requests to Dr. Carmel
Armon, Baystate Medical
Center, Division of Neurology
S4648, 759 Chestnut Street,
Springfield, MA 01199
carmel.armon@bhs.org

“They told me I could have three drawers. . .”
Irene’s voice trailed off.

Three drawers.

I had sent her to see nursing homes
Before she became too weak to care for herself.
“It’s better to check them out
While you’re still able to choose.”

It came down to leaving her life behind,
Except for three drawers.
This she could not do.

She would stay in her home,
Getting whatever help she could.

Yet she might fall when there was no help.
She might break a hip.
She might die.

Silence. The words unsaid:
Better than relinquishing life
Without embracing death.

That evening I could not let go.
Were three drawers the same as one small suitcase?
A big one might be too heavy to carry.
Big, small, what did it matter
If you were going to leave it behind.

And it was morning.

The lady on the phone was cheerful, helpful –
“They also get a quarter closet.”

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