A last poem from Susan

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Susan contributed a number of poems and drawings to previous issues of *Pain Research and Management*. She has now died. This is her last: a disturbing poem. Her chart contains many poems and drawings focussing on her longstanding pain of 30 years and, more recently, her grief on the loss of her daughter. Her pain was neuropathic and only moderately relieved despite drugs and nonpharmacological approaches. At the end, she developed a second intractable chronic

neuropathic pain. She found distraction in her art and, I believe, an emotional release. Despite our focus on the subjective and importance of the verbal narrative (in adults) with our chronic pain patients, the poem suggests a challenge here. Can we be more sensitive to nonverbal expressions in the arts of drawing, painting and poetry, or are some sufferings beyond our understanding?

The silent woman sits and breathes –
Do her unspoken words fall into the leaves
to be as lost as spilled wine?
Her unexpressed emotions-
Do they fly into the commotion of the wind
as it flows around her
Do they blow away from her busy mind?
Is she lost in thought?
Or just lost
in pain's unending bind.
If she tries to recover her spilled wine
surely it has turned into vinegar with time.
Only she knows - as silent as the ground
yet makes not a single sound.
The mystery of the silent woman
is as mysterious as pain itself.
Subject only to those who live in it's steel trap-
To feel and interpret it's rap rap rap !

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