

JUST A BIT AHEAD OF ME IN LINE

by Daniel J. Bressler, MD, FACP



ON AN AFTERNOON this past February, I was hurrying back from a committee meeting at Scripps Mercy Hospital to see patients. I had on my best professional persona: neatly combed hair, white coat, and a look on my face that told the world that I was on my way to some place important.

In the little lobby of my office building, I had a chance meeting with two elderly women who were holding hands as they waited for the elevator. When the arriving elevator chimed for us, I sprang into it and then, noticing the two women were struggling to follow me, held the door and made some small talk with them as they shuffled in. They found it necessary to apologize to me for the inconvenience of having to wait for them.

For some reason on that day, I felt inspired rather than frus-

trated with that brief delay. Somehow the words that came out of my mouth, in response to their apology, were "Don't worry. You're just a bit ahead of me in line." They laughed. I laughed. We somehow connected as a little tribe of interconnected human beings for the 45-second ride up to the sixth floor. After they got out and thanked me for our little rendezvous, I caught a lump in my throat and told myself I'd have to remember my meeting with the sisters and maybe weave the encounter into a poem. I did. Here it is. **SDP**



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*Two ancient sisters standing in the foyer next to me
Their tank and walker told of their decline
Yet I saw their warm regard for one another and for me
They're just a bit ahead of me in line*

*They apologized to make me hold the elevator door
I laughed to share the space that wasn't mine
They trundled in as fast they could, quite slowly to be sure
They're just a bit ahead of me in line*

*So tenderly they helped each other on and off this shelf
Familiar friends past decades numbered nine
They clutched each other tightly as they held to life itself
They're just a bit ahead of me in line*

*One sister reached to touch me and looked me in the eye
Her bones were gnarled, her skin was soft and fine
When they left a floor ahead of me I felt that I could cry
They're just a bit ahead of me in line*

*Such a simple meeting, such a simple gift
The sisters teaching love without design
And I the lucky student in that office building lift
They're just a bit ahead of me in line.*