



## I am just a number

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My bed number is my name, my ward my surname;  
My identity is my number, for everyone here it's the same.  
So I am patient number 10, female general ward;  
My real name is only for the hospital record.

Engineer, painter, homemaker or potter;  
What you are or were doesn't really matter.  
Farmer, banker, shopkeeper or plumber;  
Ultimately, you are known by your number.

My alias is my disease, chronic heart failure in my case;  
So sometimes I am referred to as 'that' CHF case.  
I am seventy-eight years old, but they treat me like a kid;  
They keep on asking what I didn't do, and what I did.

What I ate, my urine, my potty and how much I slept;  
All the minute details of these things are kept.  
Yet I can't so much as understand my condition;  
When I ask, I get numbers thrown in my direction.

My pulse, blood pressure, blood counts, my sugar;  
I just get these numbers, but not the full picture.  
Be it the doctor, nurse, dietician or the attendant;  
In their daily duties, number 10 is a participant.

The doctor checks on number 10's condition,  
The nurse administers number 10 her injection,  
The dietician assigns number 10 a diet plan,  
The attendant fusses about number 10's bedpan.

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Behind me on the wall is painted number 10 in red,  
And a number 10 sticker has been pasted on my bed.  
The number has become part of the hospital culture,  
To be accepted as such, without so much as a murmur.

Over time, the effect rubs off on your caregiver;  
My son now talks to the staff referring to my number.  
My number has now evolved into my identity;  
In the process, I have transcended anger, insult and pity.

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