

Just an ambulance driver

Standing in chest deep water
Freezing rain falling and stinging as it hits the exposed parts of my body
Holding her head above water to keep her from drowning
Until rescue can get here to cut her free
But I'm just an ambulance driver.

Comforting an 89-year old woman who just watched me and my partner
Cover the face of her husband of 64 years
As he lays dead on their bathroom floor
But I'm just an ambulance driver.

On scene at an MVA with a mother trapped upside down in her car
And her dead son's body lying on top of her
And without a second thought for my own safety
I crawl into the wreckage to take C-spine and calm the frantic lady
But I'm just an ambulance driver.

Called away from my just-prepared meal to respond to a house with no numbers
No porch light on, nobody waiting to signal us in and they bitch because we took too long
Only to find out the patient left POV ten minutes ago...
So, we smile and walk away from the verbal lashing
Only because we are just ambulance drivers.

Standing in the middle of the street at midnight, on the 'wrong side' of town
Trying to patch the holes and stop the bleeding of a 19-year old shooting victim
With the occasional bullet whizzing past our heads
We never break stride because this kid's life is in our hands
But I'm just an ambulance driver.

Doing chest compressions on a 16-year old girl
Who decided this life was more than she could take.
Her family screaming at us to help as though we are the ones who did this to her.
Her lifeless body flailing about as the tube goes in and IV is started
My arms and back burning from the pain of 30 minutes of CPR, never once giving up
Hoping she could make it through and overcome whatever led her to this bad decision
But I'm just an ambulance driver.

Death is all around me and still I go home to live my life.
I get kicked, hit, spit on, bled on, puked on...
I look into the eyes of a lifeless child at 7am and by 8am
I'm holding my child a little tighter and they know nothing about what happened.

I have hundreds of hours of classroom time
Years of in-the-field experience
I have challenged death and won
I've helped the helpless
I've neglected my family for yours
I find comfort in complete chaos...
I eat cold meals, if i eat at all!
I work with no sleep for days at a time
I miss birthdays, holidays and school functions
I put myself in harm's way for a total stranger on a daily basis
All because I am just an 'ambulance driver'

By Alan Torbet, paramedic