

Town Center Village Assisted Living Facility, room 323, February 21, 2014

I bring recorded ocean sounds
because you said you wished you could have
gone to the beach and smelled the salt air one more time
but I never took you there

(they say the sense of hearing is the last to leave)

When I come back from a lunch break
the hospice volunteer who sat in my place
tells me, as she was leaving, that the cookies the staff had brought by
are “to die for”

(and that your breathing was a little more labored)

I hope she doesn't suddenly realize the joke
getting into her car, at the grocery store, washing dishes
and feel brutally ashamed
because I held in the laugh to not embarrass her

(I told that story and laughed out loud for years afterward)

I was almost too late, coming back
I breathe with you

(in out in out in out)

until your face turns the color of a tarnished nickel
and the stillness settles like a shroud

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