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Liminal Space

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Poetry

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I park my car and sit for a few moments
in a visitor spot, but I'm not listening
to NPR anymore. I sit in silence,
breathe deeply, and prepare myself
for what awaits in the apartment before me.
I get out and walk to the entrance,
jangling my keys, not knowing
how she is on the other side.
I open the door to find it quiet this time,
no hospice nurse or hovering chaplain,
just my sister sitting at her bedside
reading a book. She waves at me.
I go directly to the bedside and take
my mother's chilly hand. "Hi, Momma,
I'm here." Her eyes flicker open,
and there's a moment of disorientation
before she smiles, "Hi, baby."
That's me, the 42-year-old baby of the family.
"How've you been sleeping?" I ask her.
"Not so much," she says.
"I doze, but I don't really sleep."
My sister nods her agreement
from the other side of the bed.

"She's in a liminal space," my therapist tells me
as I stare at the flickering candle on the table between us,
"and you can't follow her." I know this logically,
but I seem to be lagging behind emotionally
and spiritually. "I know," I say. "She's at the threshold;
we can only hold her hand so long. But the letting go
sucks the big one." My counselor laughs at the juxtaposition.
I shake my head. "I'm not sure what to do about the whole thing,
And I'm not sure what I believe anymore."
"Believe about what, exactly?" She prods.
"About … about God. About whether there is a reason
or even a rhyme anymore. I used to be able to write it out,
at least get it on paper, but I can't even get a word
to come from my pen." "Are you upset
about your mother dying
or because you have writer's block?" She asks
in all seriousness. And the answer is simply,
"Yes."

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