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# At the End

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## Poetry

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Room 430.
Starchy walls, sparse furnishings and the smell of despair. Nothing
prepared me for what came next.
There is no next for you.
I realize.
This "knowing" tortures me more than my own grief.
You settle in bed, hospital gown draping your gaunt body.
It reminds me of majestic swans we saw last spring.
Our last spring!
I reassure that you are still beautiful
— "Can death be beautiful?" — you say.
If I had answers, would I scream in the corners of my soul
when you felt nauseous and I could not help,
when waves of pain swept the last of your essence and there was nothing…
left for us.
Like a disheveled vagabond, tossed in the stormy waters,
I handled poorly: your parents, our friends, my relatives,
their crying, laughing, advising, criticizing, loving, hating, grieving.
My anger.
It did not stop your nurse from reminding me to eat,
or tend to your needs for my respite,
or touch my shoulder and explain to my brain
what the heart already knew.
Her compassion did not cure your disease,
or softened my blow,
or saved our marriage.
Yet, it let me walk barefoot, on the grass,
as she briefly stepped into my shoes.

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