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Mother, Dying

Lisa Bolin Hawkins

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Mother, Dying

*I have not lost you; I know where you are.
Gowned in silk and steel gray,
patchworks of grass and flowers,
frost and mud. I can visit you.*

Every three hours for 15 minutes,
I can visit you. Monitor green lines and tubes.
Behind your mask, the gasping, gracious hostess,
you welcome all who come to smile to you and cry to me.

You cry to me, squeeze my hand,
Hello, Don't leave, Keep singing.
I exhaust my repertoire:
I can't stand here any more tonight.
You wait for morning.

I wait for morning. It won't be long now;
Your only consciousness is breathing,
only breathing, only trying to breathe.
Numbers fall; green lines slowly tumble flat:
flat as nothing, flat as gone.
All the crying before was only practice.

*Still, I have not lost you; I know where you are.
After you drowned in yourself, you woke,
took one deep, sweet, easy breath
and looked upward.*

—Lisa Bolin Hawkins