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LOVE IN THE TIME OF ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

She always told the same story
Over and over
To anyone and everyone
Even complete strangers,
From the grocery bagger
To the bus driver.
I can be that stranger too.

Every doctor's appointment,
It is the same thing.
The doctors cushion her.
They call it
Perseveration.
Empty speech.

The doctor asks her
"What do you do with your time?"
She smiles and says,
"I read a lot."
Asked what she read,
She just gives a flat, blank
Empty smile.

Then she cries.
She tells the story.
How she would go to the ballroom
When she was young,
Full of life,
Dressed in a pale blue dress
With red glittering shoes.

This is the memory she holds on to,
Not our wedding day,
Just her, dancing
Not with me,
But just her, dancing.

She had always been
A most intelligent lady.
Brilliant.
Beautiful.
I loved her at first conversation.

I do not really know
When she started to forget
At first, there were panic attacks
Some paranoia,
I thought it was stress.
She started making lists
And everything was organized.
We fought a lot
Let no hair come out of place.

Reflections for November

She needed structure.
I hated her for it.

She would walk in a room,
Ask, "What was I supposed to do?"
I would answer,
"Why are you asking me?"
She would then say,
"You're not being very helpful."
I would answer,
"You're being difficult."
I hated her then.
I suppose
I should not
Hate myself.
I did not know.

And I did not hate her
When she threw her make up
At my face,
Mirrored compact and all,
Because she thought I stole them.
She hid them inside the oven—
The one she forgot to turn off.

I did not hate her.
I just held her,
Even when she screamed and cried,
I just held her,
And I told her the same story,
Of her in the pale blue dress,
In the brightly lit ballroom,
With the parquet floors.
Just her, dancing
Safe,
No one to forget,
Just her, dancing.

She had always been
A most brilliant lady
Beautiful.
I will love her until
Our last conversation.

"I will always be,
If I need to be,
The nameless stranger
Holding you,
Reminding you,
Of the beautiful dancer
Inside you."

Let her sleep
In my arms.
She will sleep in my arms.

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Reflections for November: Love in the time of Alzheimer's disease

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