

When Death Came

When the family gathered at her bedside,
they reminisced about her life,
discussed politics and weather and sports
and children and recipes.
But she was beyond caring.

Whether it would rain or snow made
no difference to her now,
nor did she care who would be president
or who would win the Super Bowl.

After they left, taking with them
their noisy talk, leaving behind their empty
Starbucks cups and candy wrappers and
donut crumbs, she saw

the events of her life
unfold before her, as though
she were a little girl again watching
autumn leaves float down

the stream behind her childhood home.
Voices and scenes from long ago, her first bike,
her first kiss, her first baby,
everything suffused with rosy light.

When Death came, it came not as a
Grim Reaper, or an Angel of Light,
but as a Compassionate Friend.
She welcomed it for she was tired
and had been ill so long.

When Death came, it came serenely
as a winter sunrise over a frozen lake,
orange and purple and pink streaking the sky,
snow heaped high on pine branches.

When her daughter, awakened early by the
phone call, ventured out without
a coat to see that sunrise, a cardinal
sang to her from the ash tree,
then flew away.