

The Light We All Carry

That morning when I enter the room
your eyes hide behind a pallor of gloom.
Grim-jawed, you ask, *Was there enough coffee?*
then switch off the TV with the remote.
I sit on the chair by the dresser,
notice the red cardinal on the cup beside you,
the one I gave you for Christmas just weeks before.
Up early from a restless sleep, you tell me,
thoughts spinning about boxes to be cleared,
the second eye operation,
how you'll manage once I'm gone.
Yet in the telling, knots untangle
like dark birds let loose from their small cage.
Your face softens, a glint returns to your eyes
and when we hug, the warmth
of your shoulders against mine offers
the unexpected: a knowing you've found
a bough from the light we all carry.

Where the Trilliums Grow

Hummingbird hovers,
flits into a tangle of ferns
where the trilliums grow,
white tongues translucent
from overnight rain.
Soon the petals will fall,
I think, life so close to death,
and I remember my mother
in the darkened room the month before,
eyes luminous, voice a childlike whisper
as she asks, *Where's my father? I miss him.*
When I tell her he's been dead
for sixty-five years her face falls
so I add, *Anytime you think of him*
he'll be with you,
then pull out the metal cross
her mother brought from "the old country"
eighty-five years ago.
Father had one too, she muses,
still in that boundless place
where time and memory fuse.
Back on the path I retrace my steps,
see a fawn's dark eyes peek
from the bushes where the trilliums grow.
The next day the flowers are gone.