

## A Book from 1977

I brought it along because the New England photos  
and Robert Frost's simple lines  
seemed soothing.

The surprise was the art lesson.  
Normally full of abrupt opinions about life,  
she turned her somber attention to the pores of the page.

She became a painter again,  
using a fine brush for the sparkles on the snow,  
choosing the right whites and yellows  
to make the lake glisten in the sunset.  
We talked about greens for ten minutes.

I saw her at 40, 50, 60.  
I felt her whoosh along with grace and beauty.  
I knew then that she was one of the lucky ones  
with a gift of expression -  
an artist of the oil,  
a patron of the word.

Mr. Frost quietly read to her right there on the white couch.  
He spoke through an old book that I had given my grandma  
but had never been able to sit with her to savor it.

My sweet new friend gave life  
to an old poet and a deceased loved one.  
Like all humble artists, she was unaware of  
how her quiet work  
ministered to me.

*Jan Brown*  
*Hospice Volunteer*  
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## **Where Are You Now?**

**(For Ruth)**

I try to imagine your day.  
Do you get up to see your husband and son  
before public transportation  
whisks them towards their routines  
and their private thoughts of you?  
Maybe you sleep through this early morning ritual  
if the night was not kind to you.  
Maybe you're tired.  
Maybe you're tired of being tired.  
I see you climbing out of bed, carefully  
descending the steps, avoiding the cats that  
wait for you to acknowledge their very existence.

Do you eat breakfast?  
I can see your husband leaving something special  
to entice your appetite.  
Do you watch Matt Lauer?  
No one would fault you if  
your focus were mostly internal now.  
But, I know you voted early.  
I know many who are perfectly healthy  
but still can't find the ballot box.

You put the dishes in the sink,  
to be considered later.  
The piano awaits  
but you don't want to sit on that hard bench to play.  
You'd love to crochet  
except the med's  
stole your focus for the right number of stitches.

So I see you sinking onto the couch with a prayer  
to get through this day  
to be whole: wife and mom and friend  
to care about what happens next  
to fully believe that you are not alone  
to realize every morning that you are,  
in fact, a Beloved Child of God,  
a Dear Granddaughter, Daughter, Niece,

Sister, Cousin, Wife, Mother and Friend;

And finally, to lay down this gauntlet:  
to refuse to be defined by your role as Patient.  
To grit your teeth  
and prove that there is so much more  
to your story.