

OUR LAST COMMUNION

Lee Evans

The last time that I saw him
He lay upon a hospital bed,
Strapped down and thrashing to and fro.
But when he heard my voice, he slowed
And paused a moment as the words
Within his brain were registered.
Relaxing in relief, he smiled
For that one moment, when he knew his child.

He chuckled then with pleasure—
A greeting I would one day treasure.
The white cells in his bloodstream gnawed
Each other, and the virus spawned
Where there was no immunity:
It sapped his store of memories,
Until my image blurred and flowed
Away, and he relapsed into his throes.

But over thirty years loom
From then till now, and we still commune—
At least I do. What if the dead
Were not so smitten with their friends
And family as we might be
With them? We, who need memory
To make it all cohere; while they
Must clear their minds, to live beyond the grave.

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