

# Family Leave

by Laura McCollough Moss

That's it  
don't be restless now  
Dial soap  
hot water in a plastic basin  
squeeze the cloth tight  
wrap it around your hand  
like a mitt  
never forgot that  
press the moist, clean-smelling warmth  
gently against her face and  
hear the grateful sigh  
Wipe the eyes carefully  
outward from the inside corner  
each side of the nose  
wet the lips  
dip  
rinse  
"I was thinking,"  
she rasps  
"About the restaurant.  
Mike could make up boxed lunches.  
He could have specials with  
a different sandwich featured every day."  
There's a pause while I stare into the cloudy water  
tears piercing my eyes  
She looks at me  
"What's wrong Honey?"  
I look at her  
really look  
we both know her time is fading  
"I'm just sad that you won't be there."  
I take her hand and clean between the fingers.

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There's so little I can do and yet  
it is everything.  
She doesn't look now  
closes her eyes  
"I'll be there,"  
she says  
Picking up the towel  
I know  
she will.

