

Sickness

by S.H. Gall

Within six months of her diagnosis, she'd refused chemo, checked out of hospice, and lay emaciated in the bed she'd shared with Dad. She wasn't even trying to live.

Dad hired a nurse.

I came home one more time: arrived drunk, as usual, and allowed my mother a brief visit.

"I've been in Palm Springs," I said.

Mom said, "Did you go with a group?"

"Just one man," I said.

Her eyelids closed.

I walked downstairs to my room and lay down. The nurse woke me, whispered from the top of the stairs. "She's gone."

I grabbed some beers from the garage.

I cried for a moment. But the urge left so fast I barely noticed. I relished the buzz from the beer, called a friend from college, told him. Hanging up I breathed, closed the blinds, and lay back down. The ordeal was over. I was redeemed.

