

## CREEK CROSSING

Mother—  
how unseemly you  
appear: I'll  
think of you this  
way. Gray hair  
escaping out  
from under  
Dad's old tattered  
hat, stick in hand  
to pole each  
step, while  
eddies whirl about  
your feet, spin  
and swirl as out  
you go—wading  
in the creek.

Sunshine spilling  
down like honey,  
willow branches greenly  
sway. Were ever  
a mother and daughter  
so delinquent? Forsaking  
dishes in the  
sink and leaving  
Father at the  
plow: to steal  
away to  
shady banks and  
splash.

Tell me once  
again how Uncle John  
with fishing line and  
school clothes on  
split out his  
seat—there in

the mud—chasing  
down a perch that  
slipped the hook.  
Mother — why  
must those old  
days all recede, like  
this creek in  
a dry summer?

The shadow of the  
opposite bank  
enfolds you. The veins  
branch down your meager  
arms like twigs in  
winter time. More  
wrinkles cluster greedily  
ronnd your smile  
than yesterday. . . (I hadn't  
seen these things  
before).

The pastel sky admits  
but one small  
cloud—tiny, just  
there, beyond the timber  
line; impassive, yes,  
and white  
as the doctor's  
smock, this  
morning, at the  
clinic, when the  
stern voice  
shaped  
that quiet word:  
cancer.

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