



Margaret Chula Winter Deepens



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“cleaning out”, “those half-used tubes”, and earlier versions of “autumn afternoon”, “one more time”, and “this morning”, previously appeared in *Just This* (Mountains and Rivers Press, 2013) and are reprinted by kind permission of the publisher.

Winter Deepens

autumn afternoon
Mother and I sort through
her jewelry box
accepting beads and brooches
just to hear their stories

her clip-on earrings
pinch my ears
the sweet smell
of pink petunias
when I press their petals

one more time
I help Mother
write her obituary
wisps of fog
shroud the maples

her broken femur
secured in a brace—
four seasons of shoes
nestled in their boxes
with tissue paper

cleaning out
Mother's lingerie drawer
the tears in her stockings
sewn up so tightly—
all my unanswered questions

moving Mother
into assisted living
on April Fool's Day
we say good-bye to
her battered golf clubs

those half-used tubes
of her cosmetics
why did I keep them?
rubbing in face cream
I feel my mother's bones

her tin of brush curlers
with plastic plickers
childhood memories
of Saturday night baths
and watching Ed Sullivan

sudden stroke
her life taking a turn
still hanging
on the bathroom peg
her pastel nightgown

bookmarked
in her dictionary
on her reading table
a vocabulary of words
she wanted to remember

Winter Deepens
a haiku sequence

keening of coyotes
wakes me at dawn
pale blue icicles

bad news
I turn the compost
just to see the worms

we've said everything
we came here to say
bowl of empty crab shells

Mother's dementia
moonlight shines through
a crack in the blinds

cubes of tofu
float in my miso soup
winter deepens

this morning
pale white light
shines through the window
it's snowing again
and mother is gone

winter sunset
smoky clouds linger
in the darkening sky
today is the day
they turn you to ashes

in darkness
chanting the Heart Sutra
in Japanese
I watch the incense stick
turn from fire to ash

should I add incense
to the lacquerware box
with Mother's ashes—
sweet shards of soap
in her lingerie drawer

here it comes
her ninety-seventh birthday
without her
this year, my white roses
bloom in profusion

Award Credits

An earlier version of “autumn afternoon” received First Prize in the Haiku Poets of Northern California Tanka Contest 2009.

“cleaning out” received an Honorable Mention in the Saigyō Awards for Tanka 2008.

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