

Absent in Your Dying

Rich Nelson

I was absent in your dying
As I suppose it was meant to be

For years we danced this dance
As your bones grew ever more
bent, twisted, a visible incarnation
of your discomfort with living

At one point you had supposed, I suppose,
That I would be the one to stand
Over your grave and say
the solemn words that would mark your passing

But I was not there, or even aware,
that this time had finally come

When I returned I walked
to the place, flowers in hand,
As memorial and apology
For failing to walk with you
to the end of your road.

Feet giving way to ground
As if your grave sought to suck me into it as well
I brushed away tears
Refusing to let them add to this mess by
reaching the ground.

I placed the stems of the flowers
into the mud of your grave
Praying they might somehow
take root and live.

Then turned to walk away
Refusing to look back
Knowing some things must be left
undone