

Angela L. Hankins

Devotion

I watched you make his sandwich-
calm, patient, steadfast.
He was talking to me about Vietnam

for the first time in my life.
I was trying to listen but
I couldn't stop watching you.

A breeze was blowing in off the lake but
he didn't realize that it was summer.
The curtains you had sewed, back when

the nights were filled with simple
dinners and watching *Cops*, swelled
up off the window pane, then sighed

down in exhaustion. You glanced at his
arms, chilled, and quietly shut the window.
I watched as you served him lunch,

as you turned up the volume on the tv,
then as you turned it back down again.
I watched you as you rubbed the lotion

on his legs as if each careful caress
could attenuate his illness.
I thought of how deep the fracture

of what you have lost. How woven
the recollections with the new suffering.
The sun was beginning to dim in

the late afternoon, flickering through
the window, wavering, like his memory.
I thought of what Robert Frost's

words said about devotion, and how in
this moment, these days... weeks...months...
you were his wave, his devotion.