

# I'm Going to Have to Buy Another Ham

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First it was breast cancer,  
and they never quite controlled  
it. She was a nurse, so she tried  
everything: had a hysterectomy so  
it wouldn't lurk there. Went to Johns  
Hopkins for a clinical trial. Meanwhile,  
she kept busy, working as the school nurse.  
She started a Wellness Center; they've named it  
after her. Started a program to help people  
after surgery; visited cancer patients.  
Worked with mine officials to prevent  
accidents. After she got too sick,  
she worked from home. Then  
it got into her brain. They said  
they'd done all they could.  
She's forty-nine.

A month ago I bought  
a ham sliced thin because  
she'd been given two weeks  
to live. Since then, I've been  
to three funerals. To every one,  
I took thin slices of ham wrapped  
around either cheese or asparagus,  
and she's still alive. She quit eating  
two weeks ago. She can't talk. Can't  
see. When people come to visit,  
she holds her eyelids open  
with one hand while she  
writes notes  
with the other,  
teaching us  
how to die.