I’m Going to Have to Buy Another Ham
Linda M. Hasselstrom

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.