

Moments

The first one I notice is in the coffee shop
at the hospital—really just an alcove
with a few tables where you can get a sandwich,
snack food, a piece of fruit. I
am paying for my tea when
the woman behind me in line asks:
"Do you have any Splenda?"
I had noticed only the little pink sweetener,
which didn't bother me because there are ten
or fifteen packets of Splenda in my pocket,
stashed just in case. "No,"
the man behind the register says,
so I pull out a couple of mine
and a smile explodes as if her boss
has just told her she could go home,
take the rest of the day off.

The second is some weeks later while
I am walking down the corridor
of the nursing home on my way back
to Dad's room. Eileen's roommate,
whom I do not know (I do not know Eileen
either) wheels her chair over says:
"Eileen needs someone to hang up the phone.
She is about to drop it on the floor."
"I don't work here," I reply, "I think
you should ask one of the staff."
"I know you don't work here but
no one else is around." So
I go into the room, take the receiver
from a feeble hand, place it in its cradle.
"Bless you," the roommate says.
"I am sure you will go to heaven,"
and she seems to mean it.

Now, for some reason my thoughts turn
to the last time I read at the open and,
although we were strangers (remained so
afterwards) I saw your eyes sparkle
at the final lines of my poem—as if
someone had just given you two packets
of Splenda—and, during that moment,
as you catch me in your smile
I imagine what it would be like
(going to heaven, that is).

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