

SCRABBLE EVENINGS

Oh, how we enjoyed playing Scrabble
late in the evening
after the dinner dishes
were cleared away
especially the final year
when I put poetry aside
to spend precious time with you

You were a tough contender, Leo
with a broad vocabulary
excellent spelling skills
sharp strategies and keen challenges
that usually availed you bonus points
Most of the time, you won
but my game improved
as the months went by
and surprisingly, I began to win
more games than you
I stumped you with *oud*
and *aoudad* and a few
strategies of my own
This made you wonder
if your mind was losing agility
if the lung cancer was metastasizing
to the brain (as lung cancer
is known to do)
I couldn't believe that was so
You seemed quick
and intelligent as ever

A year after you died, my darling
a man from church, a widower
who used to play Scrabble

with his wife
suggested we get together
for a game

When the day arrived
we set up the rotating board
on my dining room table
agreed upon a dictionary
to settle challenges
agreed not to use the timer
then each selected seven tiles
set them in wooden holders, and began

Soon it was apparent
we were accustomed to different rules
stemming from simpler days
with comfortable spouses
He wasn't accustomed to adding Ss
to create two words
from a single plural—
couldn't see any contest in that
whereas I hoarded Ss
to boost my score
by doing that very thing

I challenged him
He challenged me
I spoke of you
He spoke of her

In marriage
we had both been
winners

By Maude Carolan

