

ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE

She had a stroke,
a lightning-snake to the brain,
followed rapidly by dementia.
From hospital, she went straight to a Nursing Home.

After a few months
her husband sweet-talked the Social Worker
into trying a care package
at home.

He went to collect her.
He parked the new Motability car
and went in. Coming along the corridor,
he met her in a wheelchair,

pushed by the handyman, who did odd jobs
around the Home: took the post round,
changed lightbulbs &
the date on the whiteboards.

The Assistant Matron followed behind,
holding the wife's small case, and a bag
of spare pads. After greeting the trio,
he rushed back to the car, fussing and bustling ahead,

as if to outflank the truth. He opened the door
ready, and put her favourite music
on the CD. Then he turned
and saw her face. She regarded him

without recognition, then looked around
with a virgin incomprehension
splintering to terror. "Is this Swindon?"
she wailed. "Are we in Swindon now?"

He paused, silent, and then he knew. He walked over
to the Assistant Matron and said
a few words. Then the handyman turned her around
and wheeled her back down the long corridor.

Phil Maillard,
For the Glasfryn Seminar,
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