

The parking space (Sister)

I always saw your car in the same space.
Third floor, two over from the stairs,
not right against the wall but close
enough to make it a short walk.

Morning after morning you arrived
before the rush to find the same space
waiting. Some days I'd see you walking
slowly in, a little pain apparent in your step.

I'd pause my hurried footsteps for a smile,
just time enough to say hello
and let you know which child or family
would need an extra prayer or hand to hold.

On the rare mornings I had luck
to find the whole row empty,
I'd leave the spot I knew as your space free
and take the next. On my walk in

I always thought of you not far behind.
I heard about that night—a nurse
left work late and found your car still there.
I wonder if you knew something

was wrong, but chose to stay
to talk with one more patient,
pause for breath, then start toward home.
Months have passed. I no longer turn

around to look for you each day.
Others are there to hold the children's
hands, just as you taught us all to do.
But on those early mornings when every

space is free, I always choose the one
two over from the stairs.

A nod to you in the morning,
another when it's time to return home.

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