
POETRY | SPRING 2017

Coming Back North

By Bruce Jennings

You came back north with nothing
but cancer and a line of credit

forsaking the south Florida smell
the taste of water you didn't like
seeking a bed near mine.

You came back north with
no need to speak of credit or debt
we knew what was to be,
played out in a zone of life
where obligation whispers.

You came back north with nothing
but x-rays and memories

we exchanged two views:
inside out and present to past
no hope and hoping backward

You came north to go back
and I had to find my own way home.

Bruce Jennings is a bioethicist and a faculty member at Vanderbilt in the Department of Health Policy and Center for Biomedical Ethics. His mother died with hospice care in his home in New York many years ago.
