

*Jonathan Kravetz*  
**On His First Walk**

**T**he floor tasted like valium. The nun walked on a table of water. The baseball ate the pizza. These were the thoughts Calvin had on his first walk since the diagnosis of colon cancer that would be ending his life by the end of the year. Orange juice is a coward. Rectangular shapes are sex. Sight is the stairway in the back of the house that leads to the basement. Why hadn't he had electrifying thoughts like these before the diagnosis? He spent his life wondering if he loved his wife, deciding what to eat for dinner, considering if he should quit his job to write a novel, fulminating over the poor players on the city baseball team. Rabbits should do yoga. That was a thought. He pictured a white fluffy creature in downward dog on a mat in his living room. His wife is reading a magazine and laughing. She never laughed anymore, but this was funny. Yes, rabbits wearing stretchy yoga outfits were hilarious, he had to agree. Quick, he says, taste the floor. What is that flavor, she wonders? And their gums taste like butterscotch and they drift into a reverie. They're driving a car in the desert and the sun scorches his bald head and they're thirsty and pull into a casino; they watch the nightclub act as they consume the great works of the 20th century for dinner: a nun is walking on a table of water, grinning, confident she won't fall in. A man runs on stage with a hook to pull her off; she avoids him but for how long? It's up to orange juice to save her, but he's afraid. Finally, after a long struggle, the man gets ahold of her. Where's the pizza? he says. Tell me or you're dead. She doesn't know and begs not to be killed. The man turns to the audience. Can anyone tell me where the pizza is? The tension grows. And for some reason he knows the answer. The baseball ate the pizza. Everyone cheers and he and his wife win a free room at the resort. His wife jumps him when they get to the heart-shaped bed. She's round and soft and he's a big potato, but the sex is rectangular. Later, in the middle of the night, he gets up, restless, and watches his wife sleep; she's so still. Calm. She's always been that way, hasn't she? Taking things in stride. Living. He wakes her up and they run, naked, through the empty halls of the hotel, but the more they run, the more it becomes clear that these hallways don't go anywhere and there's no way out. Our adventure ends here, it looks like, he says. She looks to her right and strides away from him; a stairway opens up and she begins walking upward toward their basement. She says, as she ascends, thank you for the valium floors.