Nobody Liked Him

Friday: St. Mary's Hospital

Father in a bag unzip it unreal
Eighty-nine years inside a bag lips froze-open to sweetness
not to speak but *nearly* to speak nearly to ask for his tea
or his cane or yell at the nurses again He won't stir
he won't yawn or cough or listen to reason
Where on earth is his voice? can't they do something?
I'll put his glasses on him and maybe he'll snap out of it
maybe he'll stand up or shout or raise a hand—
And that peculiar smell
of extreme medicine or spoiled food that slyly rises
uncoils spreading
permanent apathy
where all the light should be

Saturday: Sinai Memorial Chapel

Carrying my father's clothes I wait for the mortician in the shining and silver rotunda

A stranger appears across from me bearing clothes as well He rests them on a chair as I rest mine our eyes meet we cannot speak he with his clothes

I with my clothes What can we say?

What is proper? What is needed? Stranger lost in the cold rotunda friend...

Somewhere nearby they must be storing Father—will they let me visit him?

What would be the harm?

Sunday: Around Golden Gate Park

Henry J. Frankel with your beat-up Jaguar your millions your stingy tips What am *I* doing lugging around your glasses in the trunk your rings your bracelet your watch your billfold

Who will I persuade to go to the funeral?
San Francisco: upbeat crowds
rich young couples pushing strollers stop to chat with
rich young couples pushing strollers
and I thought Henry Frankel *owned* this town!
Who will I recruit
for the funeral? No one answers
or returns calls
and the hands of the old Vietnamese masseuse
feel tentative and feeble along my thigh
"You no want hand job? Too tired?"

Monday: Eternal Home

The gravediggers are dark and hot not more than twenty-four
What do they talk about at night without music or a breeze?
God
make this dream explode
into such a fairground of hair and stream and cotton candy
Sweet mystery in that coffin!
Sealed in there forever? Not my father he'll claw
his way to safety feisty
free to explore downtown in the blazer I brought him
free to check balances reclaim his passport
because he needs Lake Como and the Alps
as badly I need his anger

and his voice