

## By-Pass

*for Phil*

February 14th—What better day for a drop-everything-last-minute-appointment with the men in green? An omen everyone agrees: the elder son flown in from New York, the only daughter whisked home from college.

Valentine's Day—The last I-love-you's and tentative goodbyes clogging up their throats the night before. That long night of fasting, thirst, the door of death ajar to the slow flow of memories. All night long the intermittent surge of regret, of roads not taken, shunted to the foreground for final consideration.

At dawn—prepped, disconnected—the ebb of awareness giving in to the twilight sleep dripping into his veins. What better day, ask the clenched hearts at the end of the bed—

PAT JASPER