You were a college student, a waitress paying your way through the 'sixties, and I was recently divorced, alone and lonely, looking for someone to love in those dreary years when it seemed no one else was willing “to make a commitment,” as we said back then, and I mustered my courage and asked you to dinner, and met you at your door, and we walked downtown, both of us shy, both awkward, both scented and scrubbed and overdressed and clopping along in new and uncomfortable shoes, and over wine and dinner, as we began to feel more comfortable together, sometimes touching each other’s hands, I told you my story and you told me yours, the way young people will, you finishing yours with the news that you had leukemia, the slow kind that with “adequate treatment” could keep you alive, at least for a time, and it frightened me, having no courage for anyone’s pain but my own, knowing nothing at all about love, and surely you must have been terribly hurt to read all that in my expression, and forty years later I’m still ashamed to have been the kind of person who could then walk you back to your door still early in the evening, and leave you there with a dry little kiss and a promise, who would never phone, who would avoid the restaurant where I’d first seen you wiping the tables, working your way through so much more than college, you in your starched uniform apron with a plastic tag pinned to your breast and your name that I’ve even forgotten.