

### LEAVING THINGS TIDY

I sat in the French Provincial  
chair labeled “Alvin”  
allocated early  
for her youngest son.

Today, three weeks before  
death she held court,  
cloistered in the bottom wing  
of her two story flat, in a house

within a house where her world  
was now. We spoke of breathing  
in & out with death;  
of arrival points in life

like the day belongings  
don't matter anymore;  
of titrating worry  
within 5 cc's of functional,

and accepting so many non-options;  
of trying in the world that is  
—because nothing else works—  
of feeling illness cancel comebacks.

Referred pain, a promise from days past,  
spoke of a philosophy of staying into everything;  
of keeping a calendar full to the future;  
of being a shell collector

. . . collecting interests  
& treasures in life for hobby,  
remembrances of tidier times  
when living was likely.

Bonnie Raingruber