

I THINK I WATCHED HIM DIE

He sat in that chair ... night after night ... day after day ... season following on season.

He'd lost a frightful amount of weight. You didn't notice, though, until he stood. Then you saw his pants sag and wave in folds of extra cloth around his middle.

He'd shuffle off to the loo or kitchen ... baby steps, it seemed, labored, unsteady, unsure.

His mind?

Hard to say. He always was a silly heart ... always a bit forgetful ... distracted. But, yes, he had lost his hold a bit. The pile of bills ... paid, he said ... but didn't do the subtraction anymore. I wondered if he could still. I didn't know. I suppose it didn't matter ... one more of those "oh so important" ... needless things we do.

And the rows of canned goods and cracker boxes on the kitchen counter. Gifts, he said, well-meant offerings from concerned friends.

I wondered how long he could go on like that. He could say exactly how many days, and weeks, and months ... since she'd died ... but, more often, couldn't complete his thoughts ... his voice falling off, fading with the dimming of presence in his eyes.

I think I watched him die. We never spoke of that. His spirit was alive throughout, even if more difficult to touch as time passed. His tripod set up in front of the TV – still shots of golfers or old western movies.

He made a drawing – the view from his chair of the far side of the room, the side with the box of her ashes on the self. He framed a copy for us. Before framing it, he added a bold-lettered "M" to the box and a same-styled "T" to something which lay on the couch between.

He didn't know why he did that, he said. So I would know, maybe.
Know what?

As I left that day, he filled a vial with her ashes. For you – she would want you to have it. Thank you seemed so ... inane.