

Rocky Peak

Nice to earn the view
from my favorite peak again
Writing this from one of
my sitting rocks
This one is at the top
It's July
First time I've pushed it
since April

Every time I call my youngest
daughter
a few rings go by
before she answers
There was that
early morning phone call
The one her fingers remember
even when her brain forgets
"Sweetie, I had a heart attack
last night?
They want to do bypass surgery
tomorrow
But I'm OK"

I didn't realize my
ICU recovery nurse
was leaving me forever,
until she was almost out the door
I said "Wait, pull down your mask"
The next moment lives with me
Hospital tip #6:
You can fall in love with your nurse
but don't expect it to last

My oldest daughter
left her kids
With her best friend
she didn't have to say
"It's my turn"
Her friend's mother died
a few months before
The kids knew each house
was their own

She was in the air
during my surgery
After the plane landed
she tried to breathe as her
finger hovered above
“Airplane Mode”
When she turned it off
the message would arrive
Her father was dead
or alive

She busts into town
with a good blanket
for me (hospital tip #2)
Charge nurse that she is
she takes charge of my nurses

I’m slow, but steady
going up Rocky Peak
Steady is good.
The heat pressing down is an old friend.
The new gear is holding up great.

Hundreds of feet above the valley floor
a raven enjoys a thermal
Just thirty feet away from me
A flick of black and gone
She’s a bird with purpose
The raven makes me smile
She reminds me why I’m here

They told her to stay home during
my surgery, covid and all,
So my wife did our morning walk
alone
Fastest time on record

I surrendered in the hospital
She had neither surrender
or control
Just horrible lonely visions

Home a few weeks
they didn’t want me to drive
As we pull out of a parking lot

sun glare and window haze
My wife couldn't see
which lane to pick
She stopped the car
and started screaming

They re-graded the first mile of this trail
What does it mean that I miss
the steep and unsteady footing
in the first quarter mile?
With a few good rainstorms
the bedrock and gullies
will emerge again
I can hike a hard trail
but the same thing
can't happen to my heart
My new smooth arteries
have to stay that way
This heart beats in more
than my scarred chest