

Senior Division, Nonfiction

Connie Boland, Corner Brook

### **Memories are Like Shrapnel (an Excerpt)**

On Palliative Care, Nan's sons thrust their chapped fists deep into workpants pockets. They talk too fast about the weather, the price of lobster, and the cost of diesel. Nan's daughters flutter around her bed like hummingbirds.

"Does she want a cuppa tea?"

"Is she comfortable?"

"Where's her teeth?"

Nan watches us with the same steel-grey eyes that haunted our teenage mistakes. "I can hear you," she says. "The answers are no, no, and in my coat pocket. What I want is my rosary beads."

Mom tugs a worn leather pouch from a familiar purse on the bedside table. When she tucks the glass beads between Nan's trembling fingers, I am devastated by the women's look of silent understanding. Nan closes her eyes. It was the last time I saw her smile.