California Route 1

Marc Tretin
California Route 1

Dad, I want to slap your face.  
Although the blue of the Pacific  
Is the color of your veins  
That your hospice would not cut  
To give you water, it is your fault  
My son Rob won’t speak to me.  
We took this trip to get closer.  
As your sucked-in face took heavy breaths,  
You rose and screamed, “Too close!  
Too damned close!”

Now on this granite outcrop  
Rob stands too near the rim  
And looks below to the sea-beaten  
Boulders and half-buried bones.  
“Dead seals,” I say. My cheeks  
Go red, anticipating his words.  
“Shut the fuck up. No talking  
In nature,” he says. To please him  
I have driven 139 miles in silence.  
In silence, we have taken our meals.  
I need to leave him; I need to drive.  
In my rearview mirror Rob gets smaller  
And smaller. I mean to speed up,  
But my foot slams on the brakes.

-Marc Tretin  
Valley Stream, NY