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Losing Control

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Losing Control

Caroline Johnson

It was the early 1970s and you thought it would be interesting to hypnotize your children. So one by one you sat us down, counting slowly to 100. I remember looking at a blinking Christmas tree light. You told me to close my eyes. Your voice was smooth, intoxicating, like the vodka tonic on the side table. We sat together for 10, 15 minutes, you feeling more in control despite each sip of your drink, me drunk on the attention.

Now, I spend quiet afternoons with you in your wheelchair. We gaze at the television—the voices of Dan Rather or Wolf Blitzer hypnotize our psyches. Now and then you close your eyes and I speak to you in hushed tones, coffee in hand. You worry about your finances, as you grip the remote, the panic of losing control aching into each second, each minute, each hour.

—May 29, 2012, at The Clearing

—Revised May 30, 2012.