

The windowsill is bathed in cold sunlight. A seashell bleaches again, and nearby, half-used bars of soap. The several clumps of hair pulled from the comb ring a dissonant note, but as the photographs in *Losing It* show, the beauty of the sun and the side-effects of chemotherapy exist simultaneously. Kathleen and Brendan manage to show us the extremes of both, and the moments in between. I return frequently to Kathleen, brushing her teeth.

*Losing It* is the collection of photographs Brendan Burdzinski made in 2018 while his now-wife Kathleen Hefty was undergoing treatment for a brain tumor. The photographs mark quotidian moments along the path: phone calls, damp towels, burning sage. In about a third of the photographs, Kathleen looks directly into the lens, acknowledging the person on the other side. The combined effect is that we are invited to an intimate space where there is pain but there are also silk garments. Following Brendan's eye and the sequencing of images, we are also shown things that are not visible. In the friction created by the pairing of mundanity and extreme experience, an energetic sensation emerges.

The hospital monitor reflects the flash of the camera, causing a circular form in the screen to go white. In the previous image, Kathleen's face bleaches out as well, as she pulls on a black sneaker; the upholstered arm-support pushed up, the bandage around her wrist. Was it the recently-drawn blood that causes her face to pale, or is it the flash?

This photographic apparition re-appears midway through the series, in the wood-grained wall above a table. It illuminates two

flowers that reach toward each other from separate pots. The narrow space between the two flowers' edges vibrates with proximity, but never closes.

The same could almost be said of Brendan and Kathleen, in *Losing It*—that they never make contact—but there is that one photo, where Kathleen holds the camera, snapping a pic of their combined reflection in a mirror. In the other photos, it is the space between them that is held, a space where tension and heat reside. While they remain in their separate pots, they relentlessly lean toward one another.

The interior space of a car recurs, they are on their way somewhere but are not there yet. This liminality echoes not only a course of treatment with unknowable outcomes, but also the position of the viewer: in our inability to get beyond the photographic surface, or to ask “what happens?”, we are along for this journey.

The “It” in the title could refer to a myriad of things: hair, appetite, fertility, to name a few. But there are things you cannot lose, and in the after-glow of these images, we stand and wonder, if you may even gain: a way of being, a way of seeing.

Kathleen, out of focus, leans slightly forward in the back seat and watches the road ahead of the driver. Out the window behind her, “HAIR BEAUTY SALON” in red and blue characters; the city carries on. Back inside, Kathleen's hands pull against each other. As I look between her eyes and her hands, I feel suspense for the day to come. Will they make it on time, to what appointments, and what will be the news.

Maggie Barrett