12. After a Death

Let your poem be woven out of thoughts of missing and trying to move forward.

First Morning
_for Shan Goshorn, December 3, 2018_

This is the first morning we are without you on earth.
The sun greeted us after a week of rain
In your eastern green and mountain homelands.
Plants are fed, the river restored, and you have been woven
Into a path of embracing stars of all colors
Now free of the suffering that shapes us here.
We all learn how to let go, like learning how to walk
When we first arrive here.
All those you thought you lost now circle you
And you are free of pain and heartbreak.
Don’t look back, keep going.
We will carry your memory here, until we join you
In just a little while, one blink of star time.

Joy Harjo
in _An American Sunrise_

The Winter After Your Death

The long bands of mellow light
across the snow
narrow slowly.
The sun closes her gold fan
and nothing is left but black and white—
the quick steam of my breath, the dead
accurate shapes of the weeds, still, as if
pressed in an album.
Deep in my body my green heart
turns, and thinks of you. Deep in the
pond, under the thick trap
door of ice, the water moves,
the carp hangs like a sun, its scarlet
heart visible in its side.

Sharon Olds
Mom, this is the last day
we get to worry about little things
such as will the caterers show up
or will the septic system overflow
at your house during the enormous gathering
after your memorial service?

Will there be room for all the cars
in the parking field the plow cleared?
Will we trip over our words
and blubber at the pulpit
in the church of the high white steeple?

And tomorrow we’ll have to begin
to wander the long halls of quiet
in which your absence echoes.

We’ll reach through the new loneliness
for flying golden thread-ends,
to try to weave again a web
of belief and belonging.

Blue Work Shirt

I go into our bedroom closet
with its one blue work shirt, the cuffs

frayed, the paint stains a loopy non-
narrative of color, of spirit.

Now that you are bodiless
and my body’s no longer the body you knew,

it’s good to be reminded every morning
of the great mess, the brio of art-making.

On the floor, the splattered clogs
you called your “Pollock shoes.”

Gail Mazur
In the journal “ploughshares”
YOU

Cold I stand here alone.
The snow is lying on the pine trees.
The snow is lying on your grave
And on my heart.
The snow, the wind, the grave,
But not you.
No, not you.

I look at the grave cold with snow.
In the spring the grass will come,
But not you.
You do not come.

Traitor, you said you would love me always.
You said you would always, always...
You lied.
My sweet traitorous love, let the snow blind me.
Let me not see, let me not feel,
When I cannot see you.

Steffi Fletcher