

## On Being a Widow

I mean I miss  
the momentary back rubs,  
the warmth of your hand  
on the spinal pain between  
my shoulder blades,

but maybe I sleep better  
now that you're not here. Or maybe not.

The void is wide open, expansive enough  
for both wakefulness and dreams

in the absence of your maleness  
not pressed into me at two in the morning,

in the weightlessness of your forearm  
no longer laying across my side,

in the empty air where your fingers  
no longer seek my belly and breast,

in me not fetus curled  
while you embrace me in sleep,

not folded inside your  
singular reach of us, not matching  
your rhythmic breath.

My solitary breath—I hardly hear it—  
continues without you,  
the way memory of that slow dance in our dreams  
lingers within my skin.

## We Are All Dying

The ash tree in our front yard is dying.  
Every morning branches and twigs are in the yard,  
the droppings of old age, the weariness of holding on,  
worn thin and brittle by expansive exposure.

Before cutting the grass, we gather these branches,  
not acknowledging their peaceful end nor the jagged sorrow  
that pokes and tears through plastic trash bags.

Like the branches and twigs, we too become weary, weakened  
by strong winds, soft winds, the slow watershed of loss,  
by the constant lifting of daily life.

We drop parts and pieces of us every day—  
our hands less steady than before,  
our balance a bit off as we stand,  
eyesight weak in annoying dim light,  
dropped words we strain to hear.

We plop memories into shallow pools of refreshment—  
our iced tea or hot coffee or energy drinks—  
trying to maintain our rooted strength.

Our arms outstretched, we seek hugs, normalcy,  
or even lift them in praise,  
though we flail in even the softest breeze,  
stumble at even the slightest lean.

## The Marks of Good Intentions

Unfinished projects leave a trail  
of invisible punctuation.

For months—or even years—  
exclamation marks surround  
abandoned notebooks.

And question marks slip into junk drawers  
stuffed with justifiable randomness.

And ellipses dots follow paint cans that  
patiently collect dust in the garage.  
And partially read books  
protect fancy bookmarks like hyphens.

Unfinished projects land softly  
in a halfway house in the mind and heart,  
that parenthetical space of our to-do list.

We feel the quiet tug of commas,  
like tiny hands reaching for us.