

Every Song

I hear is *Laura*, our love song,
the daughter we never had.
It is a sound on a saxophone,
a horn's lament with strings,
a theme song from a film,
Film Noir, not a choir, no
requiem, nor a vocal, a love
song with no words—a yellow
butterfly with black lace filagree.

Friends keep calling; one sends
lines from Emerson: trust the horse
to find the way back to the stables.
Another wonders about otters, so
playful again in the Savannah River,
finding the same boat to climb into.
One hears a poem set to music,
The Shipfitter's Wife, a sensual
piece with a spark of lead kissing
metal, sweat, salt, skin, ocean, whistle.

Tonight there will be music in the park.
I will go to listen for a tune I recognize,
drop the reins, let love lead me home.

Graves & Church Yards

tourists in cairns souterrains tombs ...

we are gravid robbers of graves—Neile Graham

The afterlife hides in handmade cairns
the bones of trees are lost & found
the green begins again to surround
summer soon covers coffins

the bones of trees are lost & found
I walk the woods learn of afterlife
summer soon covers coffins
the woods is a copse closing in

I walk the woods learn of afterlife
in spring I read the grave stones
the woods is a copse closing in
unruly earth uncovers stones

in spring I read grave stones
see life in lichen eating granite
unruly earth uncovers stones
to explore is to redeem

see life in lichen eating granite
feel lives worn to rags fold them
to explore is to redeem
find cavern cairn bone & stone

feel lives worn to rags fold them
save them remember colors once bright
find cavern cairn bone & stone
save sights in blind caves see right

Requiem for Louise

save & remember colors once bright
wash them honor them flags on a line
save sights in blind caves see right
sometimes darkness frees us feel alive

wash rags memory flags wave on lines
pollen settles like doom breeds loves life
sometimes darkness frees us feel alive
our planet spins I age in vertigo

pollen settles like doom breeds love life
bird's eggs fall army ants surface detritus
planet spins I age in vertigo
I walk the woods ponder afterlife

Requiem for Louise

Love Letter To A Patient

I woke with mourning doves, without you.
I prayed *thanks for everything* while walking.
Your Mom keeps counting the magnolias
in bloom; she noted yellow day lilies
passed. Eldest son phoned; he's sending roses;
finished teaching; granddaughter Corinne is driving
her wheelchair like you, but wears a full leg cast.
#2 son sent a card with wild ponies running in surf
off Assateague Island, descendants of Spanish horses.

You were very brave yesterday starting
REHAB. I told our gecko of your Neo-Baroque
knee bending; made a rainbow sprinkling the palm.
Your mahjongg friends keep calling. Meditation
on the Passion. You seek pain's sublimation.
I read the prayer again from your Puerto Rican
friend, to offer up pain & guide your surgeon.
Your hydrangeas are so blue without you.

Presence

Cannot write. I see you—but have no tongue,
am dumb, in ruins. Empty room, hollow
morning. You are out of this world. To feel
your absence, I look down as if on high
as moments of fifty one years run by.

What is left? What comes back?
Not the last hard breath, not the last exhale
but your laugh on the dance floor when my boss
stole your shoes. Not the vertigo
the neurologist explained, nor the pain

everyday in your spine
but the view from the mountain at night,
the lights of Phoenix, our driftwood table.
Not the anxiety before the pacemaker.
Not the news you had stopped breathing
but the engagement ring I drop in front

of the chapel before the Air Force Chaplain
blesses us and you worry we are to be married
on the spot—you wearing black for a party
at the O Club the night before Kennedy was
shot. The next night at the theater

the theme of Puerto Rico in music and dance
holds us together in *West Side Story*.
Not the pain you felt on the air plane
the time we flew too long to Denver,
nor the fear I felt leaving you to rent a car,

but the trip to St. Kitts & Nevis
and the cow we saw in the dark—
you thought it was a lion.
Not the hard rehab after your new knee
but the dances in Syracuse when cadets

Requiem for Louise

admired our mambo moves.
Not the miscarriage before I deployed
to Turkey—but the drive down to Key West,
seeing one of Hemingway's sons
in the Hemingway House; you knew him.

Not your demise.
But your direction.
Your love of hummingbirds who hover
before departure for a season at end;
your love for the doe who shows

us her new fawn. Not the sandy ground
at Fort Jackson, the garden of headstones,
but the flowers we place three days later
over your fresh grave under new turf
an Army Chaplain who prays

and praises your service.
Not the maps you could not read
but your heart, my compass.

Requiem for Louise

