

failed ~~haiku~~

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Allyson Whipple 'Failed' Guest Editor

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Photo by Debbie Strange

Cast List

In order of appearance
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Radhika De Silva
Steliana Cristina Voicu
Bryan Rickert
John Zheng
Randy Brooks
Pitt Buerken
Maeve O'Sullivan
Bonnie J Scherer
Dipankar Dasgupta
Cynthia Anderson
Eugeniusz Zacharski
Jill Muhrer
Debbie Strange
C. Jean Downer
Ravi Kiran
Deborah Karl-Brandt
Lev Hart
M R. Pelletier
Tracy Davidson
Rick Jackofsky
Ruth Holzer
Chen-ou Liu
Andrew Riutta
Tony Steven Williams

Roberta Beach Jacobson

Michael Henry Lee

Richa Sharma

Govind Joshi

John Hawkhead

Bob Lucky

Jo McInerney

Bryan Cook

Mike Gallagher

Adele Evershed

Jerome Berglund

Colleen M. Farrelly

Neena Singh

Vandana Parashar

Vijay Prasad

Rohan Buettel

Ron Scully

Anthony Lusardi

Wilda Morris

Maxianne Berger

petro c. k.

David He

Jan Stretch

Robert Kingston

Alan Summers

David Gale

John J. Han

Ramund Ro

Tony Williams

Barrie Levine
Natalia Kuznetsova
Sondra J. Byrnes
Arvinder Kaur
Robert Witmer
Marilyn Ward
Chen Xiaoou
Christa Pandey
Gil Jackofsky
Srinivasa Rao Sambangi
M. R. Defibaugh
Tazeen Fatma and Shloka Shankar
Mark Scott
Keith Evetts
Kimberly Kuchar
Kelly Sargent
Mark Forrester
Eavonka Ettinger
John Pappas
Charles Harmon
Mary Arnold
Jenn Ryan-Jauregui
Christine Wenk-Harrison
Nancy Brady
Valentina Ranaldi-Adams
Lakshmi Iyer/Robert Kingston
Susan Burch
Marsh Muirhead
Shasta Hatter

Louise Hopewell
Linda Papanicolaou
Tim Cremin
Mike Montreuil
Joshua St. Claire
LeRoy Gorman
Julie Bloss Kelsey
Susan Farner
C.X. Turner
Patricia Hawkhead
Claire Vogel Camargo
Katherine E Winnick
Richard Tice
Cristina Angelescu
Sharon Martina
Keith Evetts and *Ann Smith*
Bill Fay
Lee Strong, OFS
Cynthia Rowe
Marc Brimble
Laurie Greer
John S Green
Ron Nhim
Tim Roberts
Thomas Haynes
Wanda Amos
Susan Spooner
Henryk Czempiel
Lorin Ford

Mike White

Ann Sullivan

Mike Fainzilber

Oscar Luparia

Sarah E. Metzler

Maya Daneva

Ram Chandran

Minal Sarosh

Hans Dringenberg

Kevin Valentine

Allyson Whipple

tooth fairy time-
open mouths of dead kids
at war zone

autumn evening
grandma counts the leaves
on her oak tree

Radhika De Silva



Steliana Cristina Voicu

sickle moon
her cut marks hidden
by the casket

wish you were here suicide forest

one drink at a time this suicide

death anniversary combining our book collections

introverted–
my funeral
another gathering
I'd prefer
to skip

Bryan Rickert

Vision

Li Wenliang was a young ophthalmologist whose eyes were as clear as crystal balls foreseeing the befalling catastrophe, a quiet and brave messenger whose voice was as sharp as a laser beam that ablated the blind spots of the mind, is now declared a martyr—the highest honor bestowed on this good doctor who was reprimanded for being a whistleblower of the Covid outbreak. Is this declaration a step to abate anger or an end to an absurd drama that has cornered our humble lives in this masked age? Can we see what we want to see? Will all end well for a world bright again with no fears of death?

crematory
in a dead man's hand
a ringing cellphone

John Zheng

a purple martin
swoops down and takes her
to kingdom come

tiny wooden cross
in the far north quarter
homestead baby

the geode
grandma left me
its time

dying farmer's wife . . .
the fields could use
this all-day rain

Randy Brooks

last exit taken
the dog is still looking
for him

before heaven's gate
when he hears the singing
he turns back

Pitt Buerken

that woman's body found behind this holly bush

old graveyard a bumble bee drinks from heather

sean-reilig ólann bumbóg ón fraoch

Maeve O'Sullivan

losing the beat
a heart knows
when to stop

what's left of me
a stench so vile
rotten eggs

I depart too soon
my pen
still has ink

Bonnie J Scherer

tuberoses
the cremator door
between us

Dipankar Dasgupta

Gone, But Not

I stare at the envelope. Her handwriting is unmistakable. What can explain this card from a friend who died a year ago?

Inside: her artwork, dancing fairy sprites on a turquoise and orchid background; and a note expressing love and gratitude.

Come to find, she made and addressed many cards before her passing. Her husband forgot to mail them, and later came across them. Never too late to share her spirit.

diamond match
she reserves the right
to strike anywhere

Cynthia Anderson

after grandpa's death...
his tv receives the signal
from outer space

Eugeniusz Zacharski

quartz grains
through an hourglass
chemo drips

unopened
the new sweaters
she'll never wear

Jill Muhrer



Debbie Strange

Progress

The cat chatters in the window, and I read while crows destroy the front lawn. They start in a corner and dig like clam hunters. Carefully. Quietly. Not a single caw between them. The next day, more crows join the feast. The cat and I do nothing. Our neighbors use tinfoil scarecrows and sprays. Only a small portion of grass remains now. The rest of the yard is tilled like a farmer's field. I'll try to grow grass again next year.

crop dusters
another childhood friend
has cancer

C. Jean Downer

empty beer case
in the graveyard
was it enough

how quick
the burial
landslide

Ravi Kiran

autumn wind
in her address book
~~names~~

depth of winter ...
incense smoke uncurling between
death and me

flickering candle ...
counting the p a u s e s
between his breaths

white knuckles ...
no more chemo
he says

Deborah Karl-Brandt

dad leaving
before we got here
cicada shell

passing spring
mom's bleeding hearts bloom
without her

Lev Hart

Deathbed request ...
her last words
go to voicemail

Third age ...
thinking now that maybe two
were enough

Jar of ashes—
a speck of dust
in her eye

One year later ...
the table still set
for two

M R. Pelletier

the bad fall
leafing through
a catalogue of coffins

last post
the funeral plan leaflet
she should have read

Tracy Davidson

drone strike
swiping the blood
off our screens

Rick Jackofsky

senior housing—
a resident throws herself
from the roof

silk gown
how many worms
have died for it

her bell and collar
crushed in the gutter—
ninth life

live lobsters—
boiled free
upon request

Ruth Holzer

test results
I teeter home after
my shadow

snowflakes on wet snow
the heaviness and lightness
of being older

alone
at the river's edge
this floating world
with or without
me

Chen-ou Liu

Flowers and Fruit

The problem with the day was that his frail, chain-smoker's heart could already hardly bear the bruises left by lilacs that had turned brown before he even got a chance to smell them, after punishing drought. (The ferns in the flower bed were fallen, too, but this was most likely because they were trampled by neighborhood cats looking for food and love.)

And now he finds out that his sailor uncle, who could flip over pool tables at the bar with just a mean, dirty look and wrestle down tree trunks as wide as a horse barn, has become a shriveled plum.

plastic pussy willows
in a mason jar vase—
end of July

Andrew Riutta

I'm losing friends . . .
Facebook ghosts
now out of reach

cloudy day—
he asks his son
who are you?

Tony Steven Williams

sympathy flowers
my coworkers wish me
happy birthday

war games yet the tanks are real

staircase
that final tumble
from top step

Roberta Beach Jacobson

final arrangements...
making
a day of it

cloud bank
all my treasures
laid up in heaven

Michael Henry Lee

wind-spent
the moment i will exit
my soap bubble

evening wind left with her horoscope

with all the shadows I know living songs

Richa Sharma

railway station
missing person's poster
fading

war effects
a soldier's widow
vows to be a soldier

Govind Joshi

family Christmas
hanging up a string of lights
with four dead bulbs

Saturn's rings
the family circle
diminishing

hospice garden
bunches of flowers
on the compost heap

John Hawkhead

deathbed visit
the grim reaper jokes
not too bad

undertow
wondering where I'll be
when I'm gone

wilted poppy waiting my turn to be called

Bob Lucky

her button jar. . .
everything she used
to hold together

laying out...
dad's good suit
too worn to wear

a sun-warmed spot...
scattering
the cat's ashes

Jo McInerney

No Regrets

roller-coaster life

*after the carnival
silence
and empty cups*

not envying

*a tom turkey
gobbling and fanning
the decoy*

the cat's nine

*doomsday clock
chimes midnight
oblivion*

Bryan Cook

a dark ending
the offer of the blindfold
accepted

graveyard
the moon bathing
all of them

Mike Gallagher

scattering Mum's ashes
I feel the kick
of my unborn child

midnight mass
shadows of the three wise men
and my father

borage blossoms
handing out blue armbands
to the mourners

Adele Evershed

raven on
the yellowed grass
gone a moment
now returns
with company

drowning
would pull me
under
I don't return
the voicemail

that time I saw
a stranger go down
did not intervene
watching, waiting
printer jammed

Jerome Berglund

shooting stars—
the dash between
born and died

autumn moonset
his last
overdose

another life
I'm just passing through
neutrinos

new moon
I mourn the birth
that would have been

Colleen M. Farrelly

final farewell
deleting a loved name
from my mobile

this long dream
almost near the end...
wake up, wake up

Neena Singh

the letter returns
with father's things
winter chill

hollowed pumpkin
cleaning up after
another miscarriage

from the swell of the womb
to the curve of her urn
women's moon

Vandana Parashar

little fly



death doesn't

stain

Vijay Prasad

poppy petal
between finger and thumb —
a silk shroud

five bouquets
on the coffee table
metastases

Rohan Buettel

obit review
older than me younger than me
available

the last time
we would report the begonia
change our will

Ron Scully

grandfather's slippers
how i can't wear them anymore
with the worn leather
but how i can't
throw them away

hospital garden
where she used to sit
a lot of black mulch
and very few
white chrysanthemums

Anthony Lusardi

side by side
on the family room shelf
his and her parents

moving
on his arm
his dead sister's name

and I thought
I knew you . . .
obituary

Wilda Morris



mother and I
traipsing through the park
her boots on my feet

maxib2023

Maxianne Berger

the long stretch
between cities
counting roadkill

faded name
on the headstone
a final death

child's eulogy
not enough words
and too many

final judgment
making out my will
and my won't

petro c. k.

Mother's Day
our son stares
at her portrait

cold rain
the impression
of a dead cat's face

a pupil
buries a bird...
bud dew

David He



Jan Stretch

a fox
Its tail waving goodbye
with the traffic

shifting clouds
a duo of grave diggers
turning out old bones

Robert Kingston

sunnyside up
the autopsy shows
a decent breakfast

death mask
he tells me it's not
on yet

creeping sepia
the dusty sheen
of spent ammo

six figure deaths
the politician's false apology
lingers in corridors

Alan Summers

five stages of grief
the cracked skin on my hands
persists

flaming autumn maple
we discuss
funeral plans

David Gale

sweeping
fallen leaves...
one more death notice

frost warning
and yet, the red
of roses

her broken sentence followed by a death rattle

John J. Han

best-by date
coaxing one more tomorrow
from the crumbling loaf

more global warming
the undying heat wave
in this afterlife

silent ferryman
I ask him if we're going
somewhere nice

Ramund Ro

house viewing
everything in place
except my aunt

three plates...
still getting used
to just us two

in a tearoom
news of his passing
between soup and sweet

putting away my tie...
how his absence
feels like a presence

cat carrier—
one last rub
of my leg

Tony Williams

graveside service
the minister's eulogy
goes on forever

family reunion
all the headstones
the same last name

family plot
my DNA
already buried

ornithology hall
the dead silence
of extinction

Barrie Levine

mother-in-law ...
final instructions
from her deathbed

curiosity ...
grandson asks which bucket
our neighbour kicked

Natalia Kuznetsova

how deeply
the chill sets in—
no memorial

light from
a white dwarf star—
funeral mass

off the ventilator his mala beads still warm

Sondra J. Byrnes

so much of me
in the scattered petals
on the dust track
forgotten even before
the parade passes by

fading footprints
somewhere
around the bend
this long path
we walked together

Arvinder Kaur

another birthday
candle wax
and wane

a failing light
bent over a battered board
checkmate

doorstop
the medical dictionary
with the missing page

we grow old
the world turns
a broken cartwheel

the steady pendulum
of a faceless clock
one more happy hour

Robert Witmer

purple hair dye
Grandma looks young again
in her coffin

journey's end...
he pays the ferryman
copper pennies

Marilyn Ward

ICU

watching the last of
the stirring leaves

Chen Xiaoou

post office line
ahead on the scale a box
marked “human remains”

forty thousand dead
casket makers
among them

Christa Pandey

doing something “important”
an old friend says . . .
enough, time to go

on my deathbed
twenty twenty hindsight
I forgot to love

Gil Jackofsky

class reunion
the circle narrows
by one more chair

last journey
she carries all the roses
in my garden

buzz in the ward
one more death
no one regrets

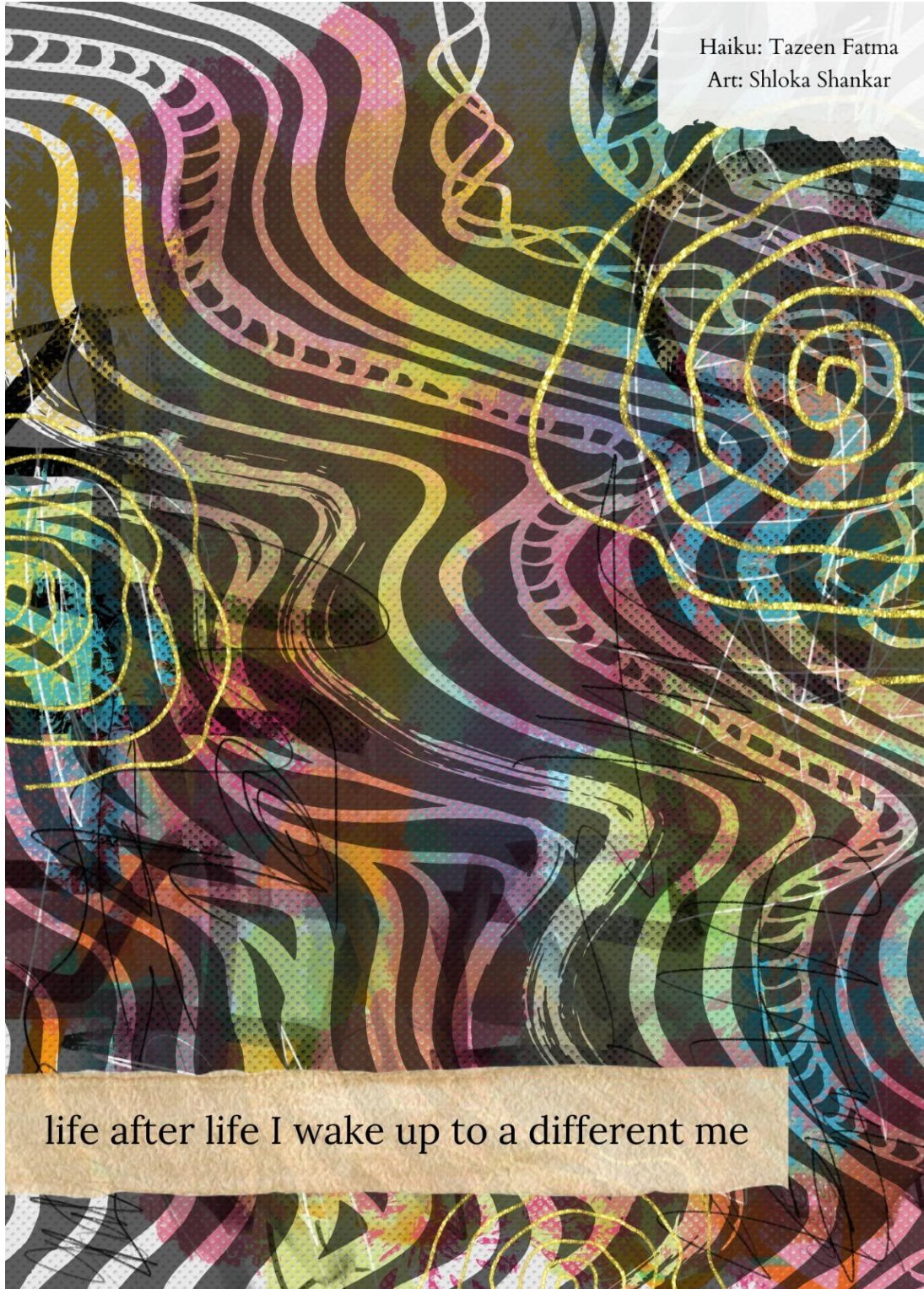
Srinivasa Rao Sambangi

—open heart—dad comes home in a coffin

winter moon the mouthless moth dances with death

butterflies no longer nervous about what's next

M. R. Defibaugh



Haiku: Tazeen Fatma
Art: Shloka Shankar

life after life I wake up to a different me

Tazeen Fatma and Shloka Shankar

another solstice—
the Sun and i share stories
of impermanence

cold moon—
another time around
the rosary

morning walk—
this time I go
alone

Mark Scott

cup final
discussing goals
with my dead dad

leaning headstones
the intermittent hum
of honeybees

long night
the dead fly count
increases by one

Keith Evetts

Mommy says
there are toys in Heaven
I ask for the doll
lying in the coffin
next to my baby sister

aurora borealis
her late husband
holds out his hand

morning the silence of her empty bird cage

puking up pills
she crumples up
her death poem

Kimberly Kuchar

the potholes
in the potholes ...
funeral procession

four-week prognosis —
the number of breaths
to split a chrysalis

Kelly Sargent

freezing rain
finding my grandfather's headstone
online

spring thaw—
my death haiku
grow cheerful

Mark Forrester

old pine tree
dad's knotty hands
build a coffin

missed memorial
finding a message
in junkmail

not knowing
it'd be my only chance
abortion

Eavonka Ettinger

too late for the james dean death dream hospice

left behind
the straight path
of the heron

unmarked graves
the empty meadow
emptier

autumn winds
bit by bit the scarecrow
learns to fly

John Pappas

a day in the life of a mayfly

asymptomatic

patient zero

boards another plane

Charles Harmon

from here to there

Feeling helpless with the whole country between us, I scramble for my phone. It's our turn for flowers.

1-800-we-hope-these-get-there-in-time.

rush delivery

the card too small

for the last goodbye

The light from the laptop burns my rubbed-dry eyes. I've started this message over and over again these past three days, hoping to get it right. The struggle against your ending already written.

in memoriam

your handwritten recipe

comfort food

We walk into the brilliance of the Appalachian autumn. Stepping off trail to escape the laughter and chatter of tourists.

day hike

a six-pack of ashes

split between us

You take the shape of the wind, shimmering in the sunlight for one last look.

(For Ann, Mara, and Watty)

Mary Arnold

butterflies
the last time I felt
her flutter

zero waste
in the weeks I carried her
cherry blossom

last rites
my tongue tips towards
forgiveness

Jenn Ryan-Jauregui

checking all the boxes
single...married...
widow

year-end loss
the brevity
of holiday cards

forever in review the last day

Christine Wenk-Harrison

unwary fly wrapped
in the orb spider's silk
summer's end

melting ice..
shad float
to the surface

Nancy Brady

no frog to leap
into a dry pond —
climate change

family funeral —
old conversations
resume again

pass it on —
the sudden news
of a death

Valentina Ranaldi-Adams

Heybridge basin
the outgoing tide
churns an urn

*stirring moments
to recollect his past*

Robert Kingston
Lakshmi Iyer

tenth summer
recalling father's
Gregory Peck hairstyle

*applying salt and pepper
to the dead pan steak*

Lakshmi Iyer
Robert Kingston

after his death rolling up sushi

suicide
neither boy
gets the girl

it's only
a matter of time
before I'm gone...
the hollowed out center
of a strangler fig

Susan Burch

after she's gone
the weight
of hanging apples

so many flowers
on Mom's gravesite
sibling rivalry

our aging population
all those
encyclopedias

someone's last first cicada

Marsh Muirhead

looking for
my great-aunt's grave
finding the babies

she lived
for a few hours
thirty years yesterday

Shasta Hatter

singing nan lullabies
she once sang to me
palliative care ward

your name still on
my Christmas card list
fifth anniversary

grandpa still too much a man
to say he loves me
last breath

Louise Hopewell

urban church—
the priest wipes the cobwebs
from a chantry tomb

dostadning—
I set aside the book
my father wrote

Linda Papanicolaou

retirement party
talking about me
like I'm dead

birthday candles
wishing for the end
not to come
too soon
or too late

Tim Cremin

awaiting sentencing heart disease

graduating

death and taxes

begin their pursuit

Mike Montreuil

ambulance lights
detecting a supernova
in a distant galaxy

after wars
and rumors of wars
a few lichens

Joshua St. Claire

dead man's curve
wildflowers lean
with the wind

Easter morning
the preacher
nails it

DEATH IS

LeRoy Gorman

after her death
runners of the spider plant
turning brown

crumpled space suit
an alien unzips
my body

conjoined—
my spectral twin
denies our existence

just one afternoon
to gather my memories
estate sale

Julie Bloss Kelsey

dreaming
of the dead
too much coffee

conversation
with the dishes
I miss your dry wit

our drive to the kids
only the gps gal
for company now

new travel brochures
single rates
so high

Susan Farner

clouded memories patch the holes you leave

unfinished . . .
her instructions
on self-care

inside the hill
burying more
than a tiny casket

C.X. Turner

solidified air
a stopped breath
freezing clouds

cold call sales a grave for life

drystone wall not a tear at this plot

Patricia Hawkhead

something's not right
mom says when I visit ...
later, all the what ifs

hospice moon
outside dad's room when he calls me
last chances

at the old end of life still unprepared

Claire Vogel Camargo

moonflower
as you close your eyes
we open ours

drifting
into the pyre—
fallen leaves

Katherine E Winnick

nothing remains
of believers' blood
snow-covered stones

worn-out baggage—
new luggage now
for that train

preparing a place—
in our Father's house
are many mansions

Richard Tice



Cristina Angelescu

one empty desk
death takes a seat
in the classroom

autumn deepens
trading his walker
for a wheelchair

Sharon Martina

12,000,000 Hits

autumn rain
only Google
wants to know me

*copper pours
on the forest floor*

humus
an attractive prospect
...is it not

*kicking around
the matter
of wormholes*

in silent language
mushrooms talk to roots

*finally connecting
the pieces
of this multiverse*

Keith Evetts and Ann Smith

windfall
the branch my child
used to climb

family reunion
only grandpa's grave
tilts right

the stroke of midnight on my father's face

Bill Fay

empty house -
circles of unfaded shelf
where spices stood

blood on the pavement
mother distracts child
with an old folk song

my late father
when I see deer in a field
when I see deer

Lee Strong, OFS

your departure . . .
a coldness seeps
into my bones
as I trace your image
in the dwindling stars

a butterfly rises
from the cracked angel—
grandfather's grave

Cynthia Rowe

only her daughter
at the funeral
—my heart breaks twice

I curse my life
for being so short
—Brahman blinks

Marc Brimble

gilt-edged clouds
blowing together...
his mass card with hers

spiral nebula...
looking lost
in her late husband's coat

a name he doesn't know
on her headstone
lichen

Laurie Greer

a friend request
from a dead relative
flickering street light

long walks
through deep dark woods
the vagrancies of war

the worst fear that can ever be hurled spinning through space

John S Green

farewell memories
cold cuts and dull eulogies
his last legacy

funeral procession
the GPS keeps telling me
to take a U-turn

Ron Nhim

mum's box
pressed flowers
and the bullet she shot him with

letting go
becoming a psalm
....even if i don't know any

Tim Roberts

The Price of Me

All the skirts, shawls, and purses are packed away. I contemplate what to do with the jewelry. My scented sprays and hair care products have been passed on to my oldest daughter. And all I'm left with is a legal name, a deadname, that one day will cease to exist, but in memory and archive only, and the odd slip of the tongue from a friend or family member. A name that I will never forget, but could never be.

oil change
I slip on their
“young lady”

Thomas Haynes

music festival
the gruesome finale—
shattered butterflies

morning greeting
bell attached and purring...
another dead bird

all in black
we stand solemnly
a patriarch gone ...
the voice of a child rises
what a big hole

Wanda Amos

leaving the garden
my mother takes with her
the Latin names

estate planning
getting my death haiku
out of the way

Susan Spooner

old gravestone
the four legible letters
just like mine

she adjusts his tie
as gently as usual
an open coffin

Henryk Czempiel

funeral service –
the widow's smile hidden
behind her veil

smoke haze—
a dead man's thumbprints mark
my notebook's pages

Lorin Ford

forget-me-nots
we let her talk to
the wrong gravestone

exposed roots
his little dig
mid-eulogy

cemetery path
he brings back
another dog's ball

Mike White

white caps appear
disappear
nursing home vigil

sunlight dims through the window she passes

Ann Sullivan

massaging
his highness
embalming fluid

city of the dead
even the mausoleum
lacks plumbing

Mike Fainzilber



*21 grams . . .
an ultralight equipment
for my final test*

poem & photo: Oscar Luparia

Oscar Luparia

departure gate
my last point
redeemed

her tapestry
cut from the loom
I unravel

Sarah E. Metzler

doctor's news
the soundless scream
in my sister's eyes

dad's gone...
I hug the snowman
we made together

tiny snowflakes...
the traces of funeral goers
start fading

Maya Daneva

death asana—
my instinct
to survive

day after granny's funeral
someone removes
the empty mailbox

Ram Chandran

shaky monitor line
grandpa's hand becomes
more still

friend's funeral
I see my shadow
walking away

Minal Sarosh

morning mirror
no traces of the child
who was

gnarled oak
a face turned
memory

Hans Dringenberg

seeking asylum

a father and son float

into the next world

Senryu by Kevin Valentine
Artwork by Steve Valentine

Kevin Valentine

ghost of Christmas past
the father-in-law
I never met

Passover—
nobody spared
a third plague year

first shovel of dirt
hits your casket—
break in the clouds

Allyson Whipple

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