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For My Husband

by Sharon Snow

I feel your presence in these empty rooms.
People tell me you are dead.
I don't believe it.
You are just away, I say,
You will return some day.
I search for you every morning
and throughout the day.
It isn't fair, that you're not here.
You're not there.
I have searched everywhere.
Yet, I feel your presence near me.
I will not say goodbye.
At twilight I cover myself with a velvet blanket
of warm memories,
then fall asleep listening to the sound
of seagulls crying
and angels singing.

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That Shirt

by Eileen Rassi Ayling

I remember the photo session.
The boys were so little,
maybe four and five.
So unbearably cute in their
matching red pajamas.

Your T-shirt had drawings of children,
their hands clasped,
making a circle around the globe.

You were lying on the floor with them.

I remember bitching at you
after the session,

“So Cam,
what about taking pictures of me with the kids?”
One day they will ask you,
where are the photos of us with Mom?”

How untrue my prediction.

The boys look happy and peaceful.
Your sexy, hairy arm is around Michael’s chest.
His look is bliss.
James is laughing and
sharing the pillow
with you.

Pure joy.

Did you know that we were packing it all into seven years together?
The four of us?
Now three.



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And Michael said at his papa's death,
"James got one more year with daddy."

An irreparable inequality.

You died in that shirt.
You specifically asked for it as I helped you get ready to go to the hospital.

Even having trouble breathing, you asked for that shirt.

"The one with the drawings of children on it," you said.

I look at that photo
eight months after you passed to the other side,

I feel an initial, ancient rush of pride and happiness
only to have it
stained
and
corrupted
with sadness.

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And Then He Died

by Joan Weir Dayton

I stop talking to you.
You are not listening.
You don't talk.
You're in your head.
I can't reach you anymore.
You are here with me,
but you left me some time ago.

I wash the dishes
and you stand behind me.
You shadow me these days.
You are afraid
to stay in the other room alone
You ask me with your patient smile
when those folks in the other room
are going to go home.
There is no one in the other room.

I live with this now.
Day after day,
you become more agitated
as the sun begins to set.
You know something is wrong,
but you don't know what it is.

You start to pace the floor .
Your fists are clenched.
I stop what I am doing,
and coax you onto the daybed,
to talk away your fear.



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I hold your hands in mine.

You smile.

You're all right now.

You are not alone.

I am with you.

I will take care of you.

You are calm now.

I leave the room.

When I return you are trying to put your pajamas on.

You have forgotten how to do this.

I can't find your trousers.

For two days I look.

You have carefully folded them

And put them under the bed

in a storage box.

Inside the folded trousers,

are your missing glasses,

your watch and keys,

we thought lost.

I can't find your pajamas.

As I help you undress,

I see your pajamas are

under your shirt and trousers.

When I point this out,

you look bewildered.

I laugh.

And then you laugh.

I pray for more patience.

We sit in the kitchen

and watch the sunset.

The silence takes over,

there is no more contact.

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We go shopping.

We use the bathrooms.

I wait for you to come out.

I go in.

You are not there.

I panic.

I run to the window

and see your military stride,

some distance from the store.

You are looking for me.

Maybe.

I miss you so much.

The reading we shared.

The nature films we enjoyed.

Hiking the Headlands.

Fishing.

The oneness.

The passion.

The sun is down.

I sit on the side of the daybed,

holding your hands,

calming your fear,

and you say to me,

I know this is embarrassing,

but,

What is your name?

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my life in a bucket

by sally garrido-spencer

the world must be neutral
looking death in the eye as a birth

try as I did, and as I do
death is an end for me
there is no benignant trap door
it was vicious, crippling, ghastly,
and it is

to understand control is not
to hold our child to my breast,
giving and praying,
knowing and denying
hoping and believing,
collapsing of wanting,
and wanting
and losing
and losing my mind
my love

and the loss was his,
giving his love until he was not, and I hold him still
bathing our cooing life in a mauve hospital bucket
and his love
on bleached white sheets
between those long spindly legs

I would have kept the bucket, but for the memories
retching his insides, everything that should have gone down
for years
long and lavish

I am a crippled now
and the world is neutral
blossoming this spring
in the colors of evolution
the fragrance of process
and Stella is learning and speaking
of what was taken
and why?

looking birth in the eye as a death
the world is neutral



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these rings on my fingers

by sally garrido-spencer

bliss has returned
history, a sometimes dream
the line is blurred and distorted
but it is direct
between my mouth and chest
like a stuffing

i imagine the sensation will reside there forever
pulling against the weight of mortality.
what irony
the vigor and momentum of death
leaving me with rope burn,
asking for miracles
the prospect of floating down a river

i love to watch
the people i love relax in the miracle of breath

grandmother counted red and brown cardinals
flitting outside her kitchen window
passed hours pleased with their chirping
and their appreciation for her simple gift
of easy sustenance

we meandered naked between
sleep and rest
the heat of luang prabang, our blanket
gentle gazes passed between
the imperfect rotation of
our ceiling fan and
languorous lines of sweat down our bodies

i have never regretted any time given
these Sabbaths devoted to inhaling the smell and form
of the people I love
2 weeks old and sprawled across her father's sleeping chest
my hurry lost in the image
and I never left

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rising

by sally garrido-spencer

i am paralyzed by your moon faced suffering
you, the strongest being that I know
head firm and heart decidedly reaching

you ask now for your papa daily
not yet 2-1/2 but expecting and deserving,
child of no fool

above you, between us, within you
under band aids, in our loving,
and especially under the cold autumn moon

in our most tender words
in all the newness of seeing
and in laughter that erupts

he is there
which is not enough,
but is more than nothing

so keep your spirit near to me
I look upon you
and I am seeing the first light of my beloved

I see his face streamed with tears
at your dawn, again relived and again
our greatest love realized

reflected in your eyes
gifted by your papa
to look on him still



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my capacity

by sally garrido-spencer

a closing hand
a hollow eye
your skin has changed in hue

I want that you might seize my soul
and pull it under too

your pain I know
prevents such force
you hardly rise with breath

this smell curls into my denial
you will escape this death

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Weeping

by Jean F. Schulz

The heavens have been weeping
since the death of my beloved,
crying the tears I cannot cry.

A drop for every life he touched,
a drop for every sorrow he bore.

The wind's rage measures his very time,
but nothing can halt what is gone,
what is done,
what is foretold.

The sun will come,
will warm my heart,
will make me smile.

Always I will look for the rain
to bring me back to this time,
beside him,
to weep for us.

Sleep is
my lover now.

February 20, 2000



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A Widoe's Thong

by AnnMarie Ginella

A widoe's thong is black.

Black ink spilt across white skin, writing fluent lines across moistened mounds and dipping valleys, writing cursive into coarsened curls, writing want into heavy loins.

A widoe's thong is dark green and slight. Just a string. Worn with a black satin skirt, slit at the side.

A widoe's thong is a reminder of the nights he untied her strings with his teeth, teasing her hips with his nibbles, turning her onto her belly, gently biting her undies away from her bottom, down her legs. Slowly. No hurries. They had a lifetime to bite at each other's underclothing.

A widoe's thong was sometimes forgotten, when he'd say, "how about nothing under your skirt tonight?"

A widoe's thong is soft, aqua-green, stretchy cotton, revealing itself from behind, just a bit, at the top, when her pants slip down her backside, in a yoga pose.

A widoe's thong is washed carefully, by hand. Scrubbed with bubbles, hung on a hook to dry, fresh to be worn again, tomorrow.

A widoe's thong carries sap smells, ripe like flowers. Ripe to share honey with buzzing lips, but draws no bees. Her pubis seeps to untasting tongues.

A widoe's thong cries out to be touched underneath clothes. Touched by some other, touched by the familiar fingers of a now dead lover.

A widoe's thong wears the stain of blood when her life spills and smears high in her thighs. Her blood proof that she is living, still capable of producing life. Blood - vital and red against her shocked white panties.

A widoe's favorite thong, the one cherished for dress-up and dancing, sits in her third drawer down, in her reserve dresser, waiting to be worn again.

A widoe's thong is worn, with tears.



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The Perfect Gift

By Amanda Shaffer

A shopping center. On a bench
I sit in silence
A dark smudge on an otherwise brightly colored canvas.

Families bustle by,
Loudly arguing:
Stress over locating the "perfect" gift.

But little do they know
That perfection
Is the time spent with their loved ones.

My perfect gift is non-existent:
There is nothing
That I want more than to have my partner back.

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Untitled

By Amanda Shaffer

my skin,
starved for intimacy.
his hands:
so masculine,
and yet
so careful.
his chest:
burying my nose
in the hirsute warmth.
his lips:
a perfect, soft pink pout.

my soul,
hungry for a connection.
his eyes:
sweetly seductive hazel,
contained a knowledge of me
that i may never see again.
his brain:
an encyclopaedic library
of our memories together.
his heart:
pumping our blood, life and love
throughout his body.

now, decay:
the vessel returns
to dust.
does the soul live on?
my legs, worn.
my feet, tired.
looking and looking
for a sign
that part of him
is still out there
somewhere.



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Anatomy 35

by Tricia

Concentration
eludes me.
Talk of cadavers and hyperplasia
steers me eerily away from the classroom
with its fluorescent lights
and too deep seats.
Instead I am holding his hand,
grown pudgy after days of excess fluid,
signs of organ
failure.
He grips back,
assuredly.
But, really, he doesn't.
They have dimmed the lights.
Reverence?
I suppose.
They say it will be "soon."
Why does it have to be at all?
I have no interest in cadavers.
Or hyperplasia.
I do not like the wooden seats.
I only want to hold his hand.
I want him to grip me back.

Comments or inquiries about this story?

annmarie@widow-speak.org or 707-824-8030