

on death & dying
for dad

i. denial

the days are beautiful. flax
taking in wind taking in sun
taking in the rapture of a summer
sky. clouds never move
when watched closely. there is
a hole in the landscape
& we fill it with an inventory
of countless treasures: fresh
rose petals, black & white photographs
of uniformed men/bridal-gowned
women/jewels seaweed-hidden
along the atlantic coast.
the days are always beautiful,
& the nights live on forever.

ii. anger

days were beautiful. soot-covered
grass as though it were
an inseparable shadow. the umbra
of whatever it is that is left
when love no longer breathes.
time is nothing
 but sorry it was ever born
because in the end there is no
difference between ash & dust:
the fist a terrible universe, a curse
in itself in air or in pocket, a
hinge-rusted vessel by which
we access our anger on
those nights that live on forever.

iii. bargaining

if the days could be beautiful, if
the years could roll themselves out
like gold carpets, if God himself could
put his finger on a pulse & flow

life into hungry veins like tributaries
following their own current, if
red could turn to green come twilight, if
we could carry our medals on our
shoulders as the world cheers us on, if
we could cast our lance at death's
runaway steed & strike a blow
so hard it separates rider from horse, if
this were remotely possible, then
this night would last forever.

iv. depression

is a day that lost its will to be beautiful.
a disconnect from those things
that green from the very process
of greening. photosynthesis—
a lesson in history, the eye
no longer able to block the light.
the light no longer able
to stave off darkness. somewhere
in a cave as vast & wide
as a mountain beneath the ocean
a cry echoes
the same words over & over:
this night will live on forever
this night will live one forever.

v. acceptance

the days are beautiful & they
are not. they come to show themselves
for what they really are: a petri dish
where molecules of flesh & dust
collide in atmospheric rhythm. yet
we feel none of it—we become
cubes of ice, nebular particles
water-massed & hanging in the air
over the landscape in silent submission.
we come to see the world as a series
of things that live & things
that don't: a frozen gauze that now
turns to the west. a once-ageless
night that no longer lives forever.