

a hurry.

"Sorry," he said. "We hit a bump. Are you all right?"

I guess I was stunned. I couldn't think quickly enough to say anything.

"Would you like some water? I've brought a flask."

"I don't drink," I replied.

We'd gone a few kilometers in silence when I felt the blood trickling out of my ear. It was just a few drops and I was able to catch it on my finger and swallow it, so that the poet wouldn't see such a personal thing. I certainly wasn't hurt, and I didn't feel any different. But the accident must have loosened something in me, for the strangest thing happened. I started to talk.

And that nice, helpful poet turned off the motor to hear me better and I hadn't even asked him to. As the bike carried us, half-coasting and half-floating, I talked non-stop. And Dad, I must have been talking about you and Mom, because the poet kept saying things like, "That's awful!" and, "Did that really happen?"

As we approached my apartment building I was prepared to jump off and wave goodbye: It had been a full evening and I had to teach in a few hours. But the poet acted as if he had plenty of time. He brought the bike down to earth and balanced it firmly with both feet. Then he looked straight at me and asked me softly, "When did you say she died?"

"Last week," I replied. He kept looking at me. I wondered what was wrong. Finally he asked, just above a whisper, "Aren't you sad?"

I really didn't have time to chat, so I said, "Of course not. These things happen to everyone." He had really been very nice to me, and I wanted to reassure him.

But you know, Dad, the next day I was sad. I was sad for days after that. And I'm confused. I'd always thought that in order to be sad you had to be happy first, or at least love someone, and I don't know why I'm telling you this, Dad. I don't know why I'm telling you this at all. Maybe I just wanted to let you know that unemployment is down and Mom's dead.

Grief

By Anne Szumigalski

The tears I shed, *she tells me*, more than filled my bathtub; they splashed over the edges and soaked into the rugs and the curtains. They seeped into the walls and dripped through the floor. When I rolled back the carpet there was a damp white deposit thick enough to be scratched with a thumbnail coating the pine planks. Then, just as I feared, some officious person flung open the windows and let in all the sharp air of autumn. I was left staring at a stained floor and a salt-encrusted tub. Later I noticed that a few dribbles had escaped the airing by hiding behind the joists. These dropped, an unnatural dew, upon the room below. There was not enough though to cause more than a few spots on the furniture and a persistent, though not unpleasant, briny smell. *And she stares down at her crooked feet grimed black from working the garden all*

summer. She sighs and is silent for a while.

At last she raises her candid eyes to mine. How I long for the winter, *she admits*, when I can stay in the house all day treading wool shag that sprouts between my toes like grass. I shall pad about the sunroom trying this chair and that until I find one to my comfort and settle my bum into the cushions and hoist my feet up on the padded footstool. There I shall sit and watch them grow whiter by the day, sometimes even by the hour, at my side a pile of the largest and longest books I can find in the library. God grant that some of these will yield tales both pathetic and heroic, for only in such stories can I find that optimistic sadness which holds my attention and brings pride to my heart and new tears to my eyes.

I shall rise only to make coffee and sandwiches or to visit the bathroom. Even

these small journeys I shall make reluctantly. By March I shall hardly be able to move from my chair to my bed, from my bed to my chair. Then one day spring will appear again with its flurry of digging and seeding, and I shall forget that I ever said this or did it.

Thus will my life wear on from season to season, from equinox to equinox, until one spring I shall find myself unable to get up from my chair, my book, my melancholy. I shall be left gazing through the window at my daughter, herself by this time grown into a stout grandmother, or at least a great-aunt, walking barefoot between the rows of the garden, a measure of carrot seed held lightly in her palm. From time to time she will rest from her continual bending and flinging and stare up at the lead blue of the sky which threatens, or perhaps promises, rain.

DOROTHY LIVESAY "The Jest of God" (Story by Margaret Laurence)

i

We move from dark
to light
and back again
pressing the button
turning the knob

Those who believe
know that the light will come
but refuse to accept the dark —
dress up death
in a jester's motley
of wings

ii

My father said:
*Those who believe
will return in some guise
will live on.*

But he remained sceptical
up to his last
breath