JANE AND THEN-JANE SPEAK OF THEIR BELOVED

Then-Jane:

The day before we married:
a gully-gouged hillside,
trees angling up from
the muddy bed below.
We sat with feet hanging
over the empty bank and
talked of eons, water, wood.
He ran a nickel across my palm,
then buried it, shallow, in the dark
dirt cut of hill—an offering.

Jane:

The night after the L.A. mugging,
brass knuckle branded on his temple,
he looked at me and asked, “What else
is there to know?”

Then-Jane:

The words and their weight,
order, and meaning. Despair
with me and relish in details,
for who else but we can travel
to this sacred pause?

Jane:

Brown gully water turned
to clods of cracked earth.
Splintering trees reach
black on gray, roots exposed:
the withered anchors.
Then-Jane:

I want to know the months it took, the colors he wore in death, the finality of him and all his forms. Please.

I want to know if his eyes closed first, or if I had to close them. I want to know the speed at which he traveled, leaving.

Jane:

Tender blue scattered waves, rust-colored sky—singing his death I think only of landscape, spaces filled by water and air, a window to black above us. His death a becalmed sea. His death a custom and a mythology. His death a rainy day, sunny day, cloudy day, and snow. His death on a Wednesday—I had gone to the store that morning to buy butter, eggs, and bread. His death a copestone, rite of itself and black, black mark on a map. His death an ending. His death the end of history.

Then-Jane:

[breathes in and considers the act]

[a beat]

Jane:

There were months of waiting, of intermittent joy. “I remember” is collision, is gateway, is love. “I remember his hands” is—
Then Jane:

—sawdust and chapped knuckles, sanded, cherry wood—

Jane:

—all the kinds of lack