

HANNAH WHITEMAN

*The Law of the Conservation of Energy
Says Not a Bit of You Is Gone*

you are just less orderly,
just repurposed.

A man of faith, I hear the timbre of your voice:
to be absent from the body

is to be present with the Lord

yes, but
what is earth

if not a divine exhale of breath?
if not a consecrated spinning-out?

Today, I watched a father hold
two small girls in high-tide and laughter

and I thought *here we are*:
you and I surfacing

out of time,
but soaked by the same water

in endless cycles of reform and refall
from the Ocklawaha, the Mississippi, the saltpools of suburban sprawl. . .

and I thought *here we are*
in a moment temporal. In joy.

When home was still the home
your body filled—

when you were last to leave the carport
and found me, studying the sky,

waiting for the comfort
of your arrhythmic squeeze on my shoulder —

we would marvel at order, the pattern of starpricks:
heaven, an infinite near tangible

an awe just ours.

Tonight is starless, but holds a tide high
enough for the moon jelly, the ghost crab, and me

to settle, scuttle, feed, fade,
to habit ourselves to infinite dark.

My new home is far, a never-have-been
place your body inhabits still.

Photos altar-like on a windowsill, leather-
bound books, our same in-chair scrunch

as I stop and stare and think —
the same clear color of our eyes.

Since you,
the pastors, the elders, the brothers remind me

surely I am with you, even unto the end

(stern, their held belief that it is only God who speaks
when comfort is promised in spirit, holy).

And doesn't the physicist echo it
and doesn't the physicist add

that your photons

—the very light of you—

were absorbed by my eyes?
You — collected —

form ordered constellations of neurons, solar systems,
electric pathways that power

every stroke of my pen,
every step, every future embrace?

Faith and science to each other concede:
left to us is what is left of your body —

bits of ash and bone and
a light that will not extinguish

until the final burn.