

1976

Four Days of Your Death

Jack Myers

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The dead pots hump in corners
around the shack. No music here
but the music of white bone

drying beyond water in sun.
Late August. I bring back distant
summers—the air of memory,

the distal air of avatars
mixing water and mud, clay
the admixture of sky and earth.

A few miles away the sea wind
moves, sweeps salt in sheets over birds.
I sit now on the grey wood

of the kiln's benches. It is bright.
The salt, like birds, hovers and then
moves on. I have never been here.

I'll leave no bones still pink with flesh
or blood. There are no bones to leave.
There are no thoughts to leave. Only

the mind runnelled like earth, dry
and bare as the limed earth,
nothing but the wet flesh of memory.

Four Days of Your Death / Jack Myers

In memory of Irving Cohen

1
At the other end without a body
no one believed in his death.
It got larger like the blackness
of a pupil in the dark
until it soaked up all the light
to fill his form.

2

The casket stands for character:
stained, unvarnished hardwood
holds the irrefutable fact best.
The rings of hardwood ripple outward
like a flat scream the body lies in.

3

Memory has senses that the dead can use.
The hand that taught us how to touch
now feels like the wind of a man passing.

4

The family gathers together
like so many presents to each other.
It is the middle of winter,
the time of the tree cut down.

From the Blind / Paul Nelson

I lace them together carefully, the pine boughs
under the bank at the tide's edge, hiding
the milking stool, the cheesebox shelf
where my shells are stored, the root
that loops once to hold the bottle.
There is a downed spruce that fits
the arches of my feet above high water,
and in the dark I crouch there with my stomach full
like a fat child peeking at his sister,
waiting for gratuities to wing in, whistling,
shush down and splash in the thin pond that makes itself
each twelve hours of my life.
Sometimes, cradling the big ten-gauge, I imagine
my body loafing in the marsh like a pulp log,
a new occurrence, the man who stepped off
the creek bridge in April 1886, or the girl
who followed him by eight decades, my mother's
sister's girl, talked about, pearl of a girl,