

March 2020

There is a thick pine counter, as long and nearly as wide
as a casket
between the room where he lies, still alive, always sleeping,
and the kitchen ...

The counsellor is coming, and then doctor, and then probably the priest.
The little amount of wife that is left
looks at the mess across the counter, and feels some urge to organize, to control the chaos
that is already here, and the bigger chaos coming ...

May 2020

'Wife' rhymes with life.
'Widow' rhymes with death.

June 2020

But what astonishes now is the silence, in every room,
at every hour. There is no talking, no viola, no trumpet, no cello
no organ of any kind to fill the space around or in his shadow.
It is brutal, this quiet.
I expected something, some sense of him hovering, some magic awareness
that he was still behind or beside or waiting.
But there is complete absence, no music, no lyrics.
I am afraid I will wake up one morning and have forgotten his voice.

July 2020

'Bereft' is the word in all English that most achingly sounds like what it means.

RBC/PEN Canada New Voices Award

Sharlene Lazin | 2023 Finalist

Selection from *A Widow's Notebook*

November 2020

I know the day is about remembering the death
of those on bloodied fields, far away and ago,
separated and dug into even more foreign fields, forever

but for us it was the start of life
together, the day he took half my bed and all
my heart. Our arms were never ammunition.

Except now, it is remembrance day, not anniversary.
Like every other day, forever.
There is no resting in peace
for the lovers left behind
in dry gardens with untended poppies

January 2021

Grief is that skinny old teacher, the one with the steelwool hair
who made you want to cry when you worked for days and weeks
on the essay, made your clear argument, checked your spelling,
and all you saw when she handed it back was streaks of red ink, comments
like gashes, and somewhere someone said it was not to hurt
but to make you stronger, better, things to learn from,
but you realized later, no, there was nothing good about the old witch.
She was, in fact, mean, and did, in fact, just want to hear you scream.

March 2021

When you were here, I knew where I was going, the same way I read the last chapter of a murder
mystery first. What matters more than the ending is how you get there.

Now all I know is where I've been, with an outline of a body and no clues.

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