

Andy Young

Villanelle of Her Absence

I keep on forgetting my mother is dead.
The fact is sealed: a shard in a vitrine.
Loss sews me up with its surgical threads.

I almost send her a pic of the kids
hugging the dog in the sun. Their sweet grins.
I keep on forgetting my mother is dead.

So I send it to my sister. Try to get out of bed.
Light a candle in front of her picture again.
I'm lost; breaking at the sutured threads.

Which saint for students? Which for staying fed?
She knew the saints: more like friends than religion.
I keep on forgetting my mother is dead

until birthdays, Thanksgiving—I'll dread
every time she can no longer be in—
her loss the last gossamer thread

of the time on earth she had to spend
with us. Why didn't I pay attention?
I'll keep on, forgetting my mother is dead.
Loss is remaking me: cloth, filling, thread.

Runner-up, poetry category, 2021 Words & Music Writing Competition