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Catherine Jagoe

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Catherine Jagoe

To My Parents on the Day of the Dead

You're perfectly fine
but I've been noticing
you walk more slowly now uphill
it takes you forever to read
fine print
and your house
has started to smell
orderly and tranquil
like the houses
of my grandparents.

I've begun to fear your death.
When I've been swimming in the sun
a spasm of remembered dread runs through me
at the thought of winter,
how it will come on
no matter what.

Today as I rake the last leaves
beneath the mulberry tree
I remember when you told me about leaf mold
how the old leaves make potent soil
how their dead bodies
nourish the new seeds.

I lean on the rake and look up.
This is the first time
I've seen the way that dying
clears things out.
How when all the leaves are gone
you see out and up, with no obstructions.