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Conjuring A Basque Ghost

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CONJURING A BASQUE GHOST

for Jean Ospital

You died as I could—
snag on the mind. I've fallen enough
timber to know how easy it is not to hear
that slight deadly crack in the top.
I know you didn't look up. The chainsaw roared
in your ears as you stood waiting like
a lamb while the widowmaker fell.

Three white horses graze your pasture now,
Jean Ospital. Your gates are locked, wife gone
to town, boys back in school two weeks after
the funeral. All your sheep are gone in steel
trucks. At your auction, everything sold high.
The realtor is out there now nailing up *For Sale*

Do you want me to show how you loved your dogs
or drank the brown goat's milk? Should I say we
spoke in *Espanol* that day going down to buy
those five black fleeces still waiting here?
Should I say the ache in your eyes as you saw
the pasture dying in the heat, your ewes

grown thin? Should I put here your jeans
reeked with lanolin and sweat? Should I buy
your farm? I had no such money when the empty
trucks rolled in. What do you want from me?

Watching my wife spin the wool your dead hands
sheared, I make the little I know into this prayer
for you, Jean Ospital: *Pyrenees, receive
this man. I send him home. Inside the mountain
that watched him being born, cover him
with wool and let him dream.*

This is all I can say for you. *Adios, pastor.*
Leave me now. I have wood to cut today.