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With What Is Left

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Marnie Prange

With What Is Left

- I. Let's bury them face down, the thieves
and cheaters among us. Those who
have taken our husbands and wives,
who have spoken ill of us and not
paid their debts. Imagine them
with bedsores, trying to turn.
This much we know for certain.
If we don't help them they will stay
like that forever. I like to think
of them forever staring back
into the empty socket of their skulls,
thinking the porcelain shine
they see is the moon. It is the rim
of what's left when what's left is nothing.

- II. The ones who died sick with sickness
still inside, let's give a second chance.
Say we bury them with water and food.
If resourceful, they can heal themselves
and go whole into the next life.
Isn't the next life the one we want
to be healthy in? Let's pray now
for no temptation in the hereafter.
Grind our cigarettes into the ground,
let the good earth's water run gold
with our whiskey. We won't care.
We have forsaken all that kills us.

We are dead and buried
with our water and our good wheat bread.

III. Those of us who were saints in this life,
or wanted to be, let's cover their faces
with dishes from the ancient tribes.
Let's make a hole in each dish, let's make
them no good for water. Where saints go
they don't need water. They don't need
the invisible, the see-through,
what they've already got. It's what
they've always wanted. Give me the bowl
I like best, the one with two hands
at its center, spreading apart earth's lips.
Let those hands be mine. I want out
while getting out is good.

IV. Isn't each one of us a saint and sick
to death of it? The one same cheater
guarding his necessary lie? Ignore us.
Bury us anyway you choose.
It doesn't matter. We've given up the game.
We're each of us already dead and buried
in the grave we dug our whole lives long.
We call it the heart—that empty place
we carry inside, the one we've tailor made
until it is the fit we try on for size.
We slip in easy. We learn to live there,
unafraid of any thief but ourselves,
who ends by leaving us nothing.
We slip in easy. We learn to live there.