



A Passing



Poems

Joan I. Siegel

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To My Family

A Passing

Does someone pass forever from your life
the last time you hear him speaking
in your sleep or remember
how a certain hat slants above the eye?

9

Or listen to that aria from *Tosca*
and not remember
the city park one April when the cherry
bloomed and the grass stained your legs green?

How your skin tasted of sunshine
and his mouth
singing
was all that mattered.

After the Ninth Life

10

Something woke me in the middle
of the night. Barefoot down
the long dark hallway, I saw
a gray sack, empty
as a shadow spilled
on the cold kitchen floor.
I turned back to bed.

Of course I knew.
He'd lived fourteen years among us.
So I dreamed on through darkness
letting him sleep at the foot of the bed
in his accustomed place.

After Thirty Years

11

All these years used up
like pages of a book
we know by heart
except the ending.

Although it is you
who get it wrong— telling
another version
as if I hadn't been there
all along.

You leave out words, forget
the weather
where I was standing
the color of my dress.

Sometimes you swear
there is no story to tell.

Among the Married

12 “Mating Dances Go On and On”
(*The New York Times*)

A couple of old married grebes
tap dancing on water
breast to breast

you & I

two seahorses
entwined
quivering a strand
of sea grass

you & I

peacock &
peahen

you & I

hands and hips humming
lips doing their pas de deux

And Again

The ease
of slipping a hand
into a hand
that made a good fit
the first time—
even the hand remembers
the voice speaking
in your sleep, eyes
looking
across a table
find what they
are looking for.