

You Could Die Laughing

for Sarah Purnell and especially for Anne

DON FISHER

I told a co-worker about a mutual friend dying.
She thumbed away one tear.
“Death is stupid,” she said.

Death is stupid
like stubbing your toe in a dark room
when there’s a light switch right beside you.
Or driving the wrong way down a one way street.
That kind of stupid.

The end of anything is stupid.
The only mutual relationship I ever had.
The end of that was heartbreaking.
It was also stupid.
I mean why?
Why end it?
My inner brat came out and stamped his foot
“Stay with me or I’ll hold my breath until I die.
I don’t want anyone else, I want you.
This is stupid.”

Death is the ultimate stupidity.
The exploding cigar at the end of a long smoke.
A years-long daisy that eventually squirts water in your eye.
A banana peel you miss cause it’s around a corner.
Death is stupid.

You signal right and make a left.
You look one way but not the other.

A stupid way to go.
If you believe in heaven
you go there and there's a special room.
You get a seat next to the guy
who plugged in his radio above the bathtub.
Stupid, right?

My mother losing her memory is stupid.
Getting old is stupid.
Maybe this poem is stupid,
and years from now
will stupid people scratch their heads over it?

It's okay
we're all stupid sometimes.
On occasion it feels like life
is nothing more than a struggle to outrun
our own dumbness.
To transcend our stupid selves.
I mean everyday stupid
not monumental stupid
not evil stupid.

It's okay if you buy sun-dried peppers
instead of sun-dried tomatoes.
Bubble bath instead of body wash.
It won't be the last stupid thing.
Chances are the very last thing
will be
mind-numbingly
irrevocably
stupid.
You could die laughing.