

Letter to a Lost Friend

In memory of David Breaux, 1973-2023

When I hear the rumors, I don't believe it's true
that you've been brutally opened into death,

so, at least for this morning in April,
I believe instead that you've gone out walking
under the leafed-out oaks,
your journal rolled into your back pocket,
your work laid down for just an hour.

And I want to believe that if I'm quiet enough,
I'll catch you at the university stable,
stroking a gelding's neck,
holding out wild rye for a mare.

But here in the afternoon, along the arboretum's well-worn path,
the barn is empty,
except for a blue chair in sunlight,
facing out to the meadow.

Five blue dowels on the backrest,
a blue sun-warmed seat.

I think you must have set it there,
a place good as any
for the utterly lost to sit.

And I do,
thinking how you loved to say

Take as long as it needs to be.

And wondering how it is
a man can live so simply, so completely inside humanity
without an expectation of exchange.

As for what you believed
about the long memory of our wounds,

you always had a knack
for seeing the best in everyone.

So I'm trying to believe in something kind or good
about the knife and the hand that held it,

but all I can come up with is

at the very end, your body did not hold back,
but went fully into the hurt you'd been given.

Because most of the time, love can't help itself
which has a lot to do with suffering,

though Jesus it's beautiful here, in this blue chair,
wind moving through the meadow barley,

silence making a common path
through the sacred and the profane,
the saint and every sinner.

As for forgiveness,

Take as long,
you liked to say,
as it needs to be.

Julia B Levine
April 30, 2023