

Ash and Water

Your precious form burned upon the funeral pyre,
A pile of silver ash scattered with flecks of white-earth
Bone all that was left of you.

Ash and bone

Now emptied into the marsh-wide river that leads
To the sea.

Goodbye, my newest ancestor.

I hold your legacy now
And must carry on the work that you began.

Yes, I know what I must do:

Light the torch in my heart and walk
Boldly on—
Not hiding from the glorious sky
Or wasting my life in fear.



What remains when the spirit eases
Out of its creaky home, seeping
Like a silent, expanding light through pores?
What remains of these mortal frames,
Vessels that once carried great love,
Now lifeless?

Poured into the clear-bottom bay
On a drizzling afternoon,
Your bones must have settled
On that fleshy wet floor, planted

There like seeds to nourish
Creatures unseen.
Your holy ashes fanned out – the color of sand—
And now they sail across the vast and loving
Arteries of the Earth,
Back to the Source of all that is.

You are the Earth now, Grandma,
And I a devotee of all things wild.

The tides come forth and recede,
And the sheaths that conceal the soul's light
Take hold

Then fall away.

--Carrie Grossman (2008)