Not like this, O Judge of All.
Not like this.

This is not the way I would write
the story’s end for one I love—
cut down by an intentional act
of unnecessary violence.

   So senseless.
   So brutal.
   So random and surreal.

It is a crime, a loss, a shock, an evil,
and a tragedy all in one for their life
to be cut short like this, to have to
grieve a death that did not have to be,
the taking of this life in clear violation
of your good commandment.

O Christ, where is the justice that could
ever make this right, when no one can
restore what has been taken?

My life will not continue as before.
I cannot be so happy or carefree.
This loss, and the manner of this loss,
is like a caustic fog, permeating everything.

THE PETITIONER SHOULD INCLUDE ANY OF
THE FOLLOWING FOUR PARAGRAPHS THAT REFLECT
THEIR EXPERIENCE.

My sense of the world I inhabit has changed,
twisted by this act. I navigate my days with
heightened dread. My thoughts are more
disorganized. Forebodings and suspicions
crowd my head. I feel so powerless, so often angry,
disquieted, distrustful of strangers, without peace.
I cannot quiet these obsessive thoughts of my loved one's final moments. In my mind the scene plays out again and again, either as it was, or as it might have been.

I hide away, increasing my isolation. Even in a crowd, I feel alone—as if my close proximity to violent death has marked me with a stigma anyone can see. People treat me differently. They either tread too lightly, or they stomp.

Now I find myself avoiding people and places that I cannot bear to face, for they remind me too much of what I lost, and what I’ve come to fear—I fear that harm might come to others that I love. I fear that harm might come to me. There is no way to guarantee our safety when our loss is built of someone else’s choice. I cannot guard against all selfish acts that anyone at any time might take. I can’t control the variables of life to guarantee that tragedy will never strike again.

I surely cannot change what happened.  
Or make sense of it.  
Or find some lesson in it.  
Or force the wheels of justice to spin to a satisfying end.  
And so I am left feeling vulnerable, and violated, and helpless.

Be my refuge and my shelter, O Lord.  
Be my shield and defender. Hold me in this hour; hold me through this long, dark night when death’s shadow obstructs the light; cradle and carry me through this vale of sorrows; deliver me to higher ground. Let justice roll down, O Christ.
Lift my head that I might see new evidence of your mercies in my life. I am too weak to walk this path alone, or to power through by force of my own will.

I know, O God, that you would have me be completely honest in my words to you, voicing even these discouragements and volatile emotions. And you are more than able to bear their weight, never wavering in your constant love and care for me.

For you, O God, watched one you love die violently—your only son. You sympathize with me. So I will freely speak to you the depths of what I feel.

**IF ONE STRUGGLES WITH AN OVERWHELMING ANGER TOWARD THE ONE RESPONSIBLE, INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:**

Sometimes I feel such rage, O Lord, against the one who took a life. I know it is a natural response. I cannot, by a simple choice, quench the fire of what I feel.

But in my heart I also know that there will be no freedom in the fanning of those flames of rage. I will not deny the anger that I feel today, but I do not want to feed a fire that would in time consume me with bitterness. I would be honest in my pain, but not become the walking sum of all my pain.

Now let me come to you, uncovering these wounds as often as I need, and learning how to offer them to you, that you might minister your grace to me.
Now shape me, Lord, even through this ache and sorrow, into one who does not let my pain harden into hate, but who instead is made more tender over time.

Convince me of your promise that my loss will be eternally restored, and so let me, in time, grow still more fearless in my love, O Christ.

Vengeance and justice are in your hands, not mine, and even when our human systems get it wrong, still your eternal judgements will be right. So do not let the darkness of this world overshadow the light of your love in me.

Now make your redeeming mercies manifest, O Christ. Take this great evil and by the unseen movements of your Spirit subvert that act of violence, shaping as a playwright crafts a scene, taking one character’s ill intent and weaving even that back into a grander narrative display of beauty, grace, and restoration.

O Holy Spirit, hover now over the chaos of this broken world, this broken situation, and my broken heart, and from them call forth new mercies and new hope:

From fields seeded with mortal sorrows, let me one day reap a harvest of immortal joys. From this stony soil of human hatreds, let fountains of divine love burst forth, let streams of gladness run and pool, let shoots of verdant mercy root and bloom. Over all this dark and weary land,
let your eternal glories rise, radiant as a dawning sun dispelling a black and tragic night.

From this very heart of death, O God, call forth new and everlasting life.

Amen.