

Lexicon of Grief
Diana Raab

After my father's funeral,
I told myself that I'd always remember
all he taught me about
how to live a good life.

He wanted the best for me,
never a bad bone in his back
'a happy go lucky man,' they called him.
I didn't inherit all those traits:
occasionally I dip into the river of sadness,
most often when I am criticized
for who I am.

During this month of autumn,
the season where in my hometown
leaves fall from their trees,
I think of letting go of all sadness
gripping at my heart and stifling my lungs.

I need to breathe again
in a way that my lungs expand
unlike dad's because of decades of smoking.
Oh why did he keep puffing those cancer sticks,
and only quit when blood spurted onto his hankie?

The lessons we learn from our ancestors,
as I think of my own children
who want nothing from tradition.
They want to cruise through their own life
all woke, as they say.

As tears fall from my eyes, I stop to wonder
what have I done wrong so they see
tradition as a curse or is it our universe who has failed?

I ask spirit for a blessing right now—
please give me answers
and the strength to carry on
so that my demise is not like that of
my grandmother Regina, whose heart
could not find peace in what we crave.