

# April, New Hampshire

by Sharon Olds

*for Jane Kenyon and Donald Hall*

Outside the door, a tiny narcissus  
had come up through leaf mold. In the living room,  
the old butterscotch collie let me  
get my hand into the folds  
of the mammal, and knead it. Inside their room  
Don said, This is it, this is where  
we lived and died. To the center of the maple  
painted headboard—sleigh of beauty,  
sleigh of night—there was an angel affixed  
as if bound to it, with her wings open.  
The bed spoke, as if to itself,  
it sang. The whole room sang,  
and the house, and the curve of the hill, like the curve  
between  
a throat and a shoulder, sang, in praising  
grief, and the ground, almost, rang,  
hollowed-out bell waiting for its tongue  
to be lowered in. At the grave site,  
next to the big, smoothed, beveled,  
felled, oak home, like the bole  
of a Druid duir—inside it what comes not  
close to being like who she was—  
he stood, beside, in a long silence,  
minutes, like the seething harness-creaking

when the water of a full watering is feeding  
down into the ground, and he looked at us,  
at each one, and he seemed not just  
a person seeing people, he looked  
almost another species, an eagle  
gazing at eagles, fierce, intent,  
wordless, eyelidless, seeing each one,  
seeing deep  
into each—  
miles, years—he seemed to be Jane,  
looking at us for the last time  
  
on earth.

From The Unswept Room (Knopf, 2002)