

## Living Grief

We Google it. Laid on our backs in bed  
together, cursed by our tired, three-pound brains,  
we search our phones' blue light for wisdom, voyeurs  
of YouTube clips on other creatures' pain.

For seventeen days, a mourning orca  
attends her dead son's corpse. She sinks  
and hauls the weight of him as if to fetch  
the breath back, have him suckle once again.

A chimp will carry her lifeless child for months.  
She lets the troop draw close to hold her, hear her  
screech. They watch her comb the straw from listless  
fur and floss with grass between its teeth.

Elephants know to sniff beloved bones.  
They seek to raise the fallen, rock their own  
bulk back and forth. Each one waits its turn  
to stroke and roll the skull, slow blow

through its trunk, take time to bury its dead.  
Like us, giraffes and housecats, dingoes, horses,  
dogs forget to forage, forgo sex and sleep. Like us,  
at burial mounds, they pace and yowl and keen.

So why should it surprise us, sweetheart, – us  
who matter most to one another, us whose marriage  
is as deep as marrow – why is *this* loss  
unthinkable: me without you, you without me?