

POETRY/FICTION

Poems

AFTER, AS IF

After a week, I went back to work.
I didn't want to.

After a month, I myself unpinned
the black ribbon, tattered then
as well as torn; took my suit
to the cleaners, my top, too;
started taking pictures anew:
as if.

(As if I could ever find
that line, within or without,
this time without. As if
I could, without or within,
or you. It's over before
we know it, light supplanting dark
supplanting light supplanting
dark, gone in the wink of
an eye, or behind our backs,
gone forever, if never.)

After a year, I stopped the
prayer, or tried to. Now I
lay me down to sleep without
Yisgaddal v'yiskaddash sh'meh
rabbo, sit when I would stand.
And tears flow finally as if
a river undammed, so fish
can swim and mate and
grow, the whole of things
returned, restored, as they were
and always shall be,
the coming and the going,
and the gone.

—Rita Sherman