

Paul Zimmer

A LOVE POEM FOR ALYCE HUSAR

I am planting trees in my meadow.
From over the hill I hear a chainsaw
bite the morning, shrieking into
an old oak in my neighbor's woods.
I cut my spade into the wet turf
and lift a divot out to see
the dear face of Alyce Husar
like a sleeping toad's in the mud
where I had almost cut it in half,
her eyes unsticking one at a time
as her awareness rises.

At last
she is able to focus on me—
eighty years old—she says,
“You're going to be mad at me.”

I had smashed into her car with
a force that drove her thirty feet,
hit her broadside with my pickup
when, with not a blink of caution,
she'd pulled in front of me.
In a final millisecond, my tires
shrieking and biting, I managed
to swerve enough to avoid
crushing the door in on her body.

When I walked her to the shoulder
out of traffic, her hand was chilled,
yet her lovely pearl and gray patina
was glazed and unblemished.

She said it again,
“You’re going to be mad at me.”
Then added, “A lot of people are.”

I admit I was furious—
but it was a furious love—
a love that visits me sometimes
still at odd, distracting moments,
when I am planting trees or reading,
a love so furious that I lied to her,
“How could I be mad at you?”
I told her. “I almost killed you.”