

In the Middle of a Life · *Linda Pastan*

Tonight I understand
for the first time
how a woman might choose
her own death
as easily
as if it were a dark plum
she picked
from a basket
of bright peaches.

It wouldn't be despair
that moved her
or hunger,
but a kind of stillness.
The evenings are full
of closure: the pale flowers
of the shamrock fold
their fragile wings, everything
promised has been given.

There is always
that moment
when the sun balanced
on the rim
of the world
falls
and is lost at sea,
and the sky seems huge
and beautiful without it.

I lie down on my bed
giving myself
to the white sheets
as the white sheets of a sloop
must give themselves
to the wind,
setting out on a journey—
the last perhaps,
or even the first.