

## **The Sun my Father Loved**

My father loved America the way he loved  
people who made him laugh, good wines,  
particular foods. He loved the idea of Mother's Day,  
and Father's Day, Hallmark cards,  
Thanksgiving holidays when he would see  
his youngest son, and his son's American wife  
and their two American-born children, all of which  
belonged to America and America's promise of  
an exceptional American sun.

But when he found himself in conversation with me  
the politics of the day would end our talk.  
He'd quickly stand up as if he suddenly remembered  
to shut windows against a storm, "Stop it,"  
or "Do you hear me clearly?" he'd say in a tone  
I came to loathe as I learned to mine the dark.

Yet now that he has gone, I think my father struggled  
for what he believed to be a chance at light  
and the good life. He funded our educations, saved for each  
of his three children, even grandchildren, gifts  
he believed would help us live what he had missed  
fighting as he did, at 15, when he joined Tito's brigade  
against the Nazi machine.

There were piecemeal off-guard stories  
suspicious as he was of the dark – it hid the enemy,  
but those fighting the enemy too.  
I would visit him and my mother in their expensive American facility  
and he'd slip into his Greek, *sigá, sigá*, he would say  
*slowly, slowly*, in answer to a question, to encourage himself  
as much as anyone else, to be patient.  
*Pan metron ariston*, was another admonition, everything  
needed to be *done in moderation*, to pacify  
the ghosts who were never moderate.

Nothing was without discipline, yet few  
things were relished the way he sipped at Bloody Marys  
in the baking, midday sun, the backs of his hands  
scabbed with dark melanomas.  
I was amazed and slightly afraid, watching him perspire,  
the skin of his shoulders and arms blistering in the heat  
by the sea or next to a pool, the drink by his side, a Bloody Mary  
garnished with fresh scallions.

So, it makes sense that he wanted flames  
to take him, to have his body cremated. He had seen  
too many dead in the Greek mountains of his youth,

images crept into his talk, but then  
he would grow silent, and I would grow anxious  
– why speak of this he seemed to say, why wake  
the dead who slumber, especially those  
whose ends were brutal, why remember this  
in the brief luck of a good life as he would soon become ash too  
and we, his children, would take these to the Aegean  
on a bright day when the light would be fiercest.