

Tobit's Will

*"If I saw one ... who had died and been thrown outside the walls of Nineveh,
I would bury him..." (Tobit 1:17)*

A fish's gall brings sight back to my eyes.
I am Tobiah's father; death is near—
always, because whenever someone dies
in Nineveh, no matter if they're dear
to me or strange, when they are killed, and cast
outside to rot, by orders of the king,
I bury them by stealth. I am the last
to look at them before I pray and fling
earth over them. Always, beneath my nails,
the loam of secret funerals. Blindness comes.
I am its trout, my eyes covered with scales.
My son returns, touches my eyes. I view
his face. He wipes my weakness with fish oil—
returns me to my calling, to the soil.

Return me to my calling, to the soil.
A gravedigger's at home with earth and clay.
My bones will clothe the naked dirt. The hole
I'll fill is like a mouth; and I, the bread.
When you are old, you visualize your end.

But working with death long enough, I've learned
to see life there. Things sprout from what you tend.
I've pulled the weeds; I've planted. I have earned
an expectation that something will grow
from my life when my body's underground.
There'll be some mourning, planted in a row,
flowers of memories; but what's more sound
is how the ones I've taught live like I showed.
That is my monument: what I've bestowed.

Annabelle Moseley