

hurry spring
for Charlie Halloran

hurry spring
push the petals out from tightfisted buds
give the grass its deep green dancing
bring the golden poppies catching sun
free the ice from drifts
send rivers tumbling down granite falls
come soon

when Charlie was still walking
slow and regal with his cane
carved with fetishes and decorated with silver
and leather
while we were shopping for the puzzle of food
sustenance without appetite
he looked over at me shaking his head,
smiling, he said,
look at all your gray hair
I know, I'm getting old, I replied
not as old as me, he said

he never looked so deeply
into my eyes
until he became ill
and we never spoke of loving each other
until we talked of the end

the room washed of sickness
I sit with you in peace
dressed in your finest garments
your handiwork
headdress of leather and amethyst
robe of painted fabric
slender cranes balance in cool water
the flowers arranged around you on the bed
like a fancy dish at a catered affair
your death
not hated or celebrated
clever thief, arrogant!
not secret, all final
mirror, liberator
I whisper, help me not to be so afraid

your death invites love into the house
to sit, to rest
to embrace a stranger
I will think of you often
and especially in the spring
I forgive you for leaving me
sweet, old
wise man

*Charles Gormley Halloran died from AIDS at the
age of 35 in February, 1993, just before spring.*