

Poems by *Jenny Factor*

She Said to Me

The difference between the lived life and the slept life
is not the chipped ivory picture hung-or not hung-on the wall,

Or choosing to bring home the periwinkle bra
instead of the white one-

The difference is a quality of attention. The difference is
always knowing where Death is. Mislplace death,

and the ants in your kitchen matter, you'll care
that there are crumbs in your son's bed, your hair

needs a trim, and his socks don't match.
The slept life dithers on in a kind of otherly-

centered attention like a Viking compass, a lode stone afloat
in a bowl on a boat, bobbing directional yet directionless,

personally landless, othering, othering-
The slept life repels like North to North, retells like

your lover's favorite story, unspells like a malaprop
you chose only because it rhymes. So when you pass Death

on your drive, and stare into his street corner, his cardboard
sign, behind the wheel that's yours to turn,

you'll feel alive. Smile kindly.

JENNY FACTOR

Letting Go of What's Already Departed

Love, we grow old
unloved by degrees.
The hand curled to
the breakfast mug

spills coffee now.
Its amber gold
stripes the table
that we bought

when we were new,
while in the hall
a charleston chest
slumps like a hulking adolescent.

We lost the key
many years ago.
Our lives are this:
Row of fringes,

Row of doors
to rooms that are ours
we can't get into.
Shut by dust, and laziness,

And time. Mine,
and mine, and also mine.
My love, and my shadow,
my dailiness, my regret,

We watch light
lather the table, its suds
are lilac forgiveness.
We are not ended yet.

Jenny Factor's first book, *Unraveling at the Name* (Copper Canyon Press, 2002) was a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award.