

**I.**

The house missed you first.

Gone was the reassuring rattle of the newspaper, hunger-inducing cooking smells, the chatter of daytime TV, the sound of your favorite radio station, or the ding of the microwave delivering a reheat of your beloved coffee (always black, always sipped from the same mug).

I now follow Sable, the aging husky, slowly up the stairs, remembering when it was you.

**II.**

There is a new stain on the iron

Outdated products in my cupboard

And no you.

**III.**

I would rib you for talking to yourself.

Now I do.

Mostly I favor phrases you said all the time

But I never heard

Until you weren't here to say them:

*Heavenly days*

*You're driving me to drink*

*God help us all*

I deliver these with a smile, directed at Pie and Sable, who protest their innocence.

**IV.**

There are books everywhere

In a house with one reader

And no you.

**V.**

You always had a vision of things continuing

Relationships reviving

People and pets getting well

Life marching on

**VI.**

But that leaves us without a playbook

Is there a heaven?

Does it have a microwave?

Daily newspaper delivery?

**VII.**

There are funky colors on the walls

Fancy new thermostats

And no you.

**VIII.**

We all do it: imagine the departed happily conversing

All the people we love together

*Grandma Carini*

*Aunt Phyllis*

But is that how it works?

**IX.**

The rooms of my house contain sincere attempts at memorializing:

a candle

a handbell

a Mother's Day balloon

and no you.

**X.**

I have told you what it's like here.

Won't you do the same?