

## **Anne Elezabeth Pluto – Two Poems**

### **Tender Husband**

I have found you in a mortuary photo  
album montage: your dead father  
in law – remembered – you are not  
what you appear to be – dutiful son  
in law – tender husband – your hand resting  
on her shoulder – the picture of her mother  
your second wife – the policeman's daughter  
each photo more foreign than the one that came  
before it – your anxious laughter – stopped in freeze  
frame perfection – you were a handsome boy – awkward  
with an open heart – my hand slipped inside your pea coat  
pocket – January 1971 – the new year upon us – and star  
crossed we moved forward into nothing – a milky way dotted  
with the weakest stars – writing our names in heaven –  
pain takes over – memory remote and shameful – what would  
I say – for silence too, in language fine and broad – silence too,  
is an actor's greatest tool.

### **Remembrance Day**

A solitary ring of the phone tells  
me you are breathing but when I  
reach for the light it never comes  
on this your Remembrance Day.  
I have willed you here  
spent the last 8 hours in the ER  
where they first took you and  
I ran after the doctor with your  
DNI and DNR papers waving  
them as a declaration, the flag of your  
freedom to choose death  
over suffering they followed  
their protocols: asked me twice -  
how biblical - to repeat myself  
as you lay hemorrhaging on the table  
a flurry of residents and nurses  
poised to turn on gadgets  
insert tubes - it all STOPS with  
the wave of my hand - my steadfast  
answer that you are ready.  
They administer the morphine

one injection at a time - a four-day  
vigil at your bed - you leave  
listening to the winter  
birds caught  
in the light  
snow melting  
the frozen  
ground.

**Anne Elezabeth Pluto** is Professor of Literature and Theatre at Lesley University in Cambridge, MA where she is the artistic director and one of the founders of the Oxford Street Players, the university's Shakespeare troupe. She is an alumna of Shakespeare & Company, and has been a member of the Worcester Shakespeare Company since 2011. She was a member of the Boston small press scene in the late 1980s and is one of the founders and editors at Nixes Mate Review. Her chapbook, *The Frog Princess*, was published by White Pine Press (1985), and her chapbook *Benign Protection* by Cervana Barva Press (2016). Recent publications include: *The Buffalo Evening News*, *Unlikely Stories: Episode IV*, *Mat Hat Lit*, *Pirene's Fountain*, *The Enchanting Verses Literary Review*, *Mockingheart Review*, *Yellow Chair Review*, *Levure Litteraire – numero 12*, *The Naugatuck River Review*, and *Tuesday, An Art Project*.