

GRIEF AT WORK

Jeff Holt

A few long months after his wife had died,
John's manager told him that they had to meet.
He came on time, but had to wait outside.
Bev's laughter carried. John stared at his feet.

Finally Bev hung up and waved him in.
"Come in, come in! Sit down, we'll keep this short."
John's lips would not produce a corporate grin.
He nodded as she pulled out a report.

Tugging her hair, Bev said "Your sales are low,"
And then "It must be hard to lose a mate.
What was her name? God, what an awful blow!
No wonder that your numbers aren't too great."

John stared at Bev, but Kimberly looked back,
Telling him she was leaving for the night.
John whispered "No," but then the room went black
And Bev was asking, "John, are you all right?"

John heard his voice tell someone "Yes, I'm fine,"
As he was begging God to bring Kim back.
But what was God? A being who'd design
A world where Kim could have a heart attack.

John rubbed his face and opened his red eyes.
Bev shrank from him as if he might explode.
Though John was tempted to apologize,
He simply stared, knowing his mad grief showed.

Bev cleared her throat. John shifted in his chair.
The silence labored with the words unsaid.
John hoped that Bev would not pretend to care
That Kimberly, and his young dreams, were dead.

Eventually, Bev said "John, here's the thing:
You don't connect with customers these days.
I understand your troubles, but you bring
Them in to work. You need to learn some ways

To leave your cares at home." John said "Yes ma'am."

Bev studied him. Lowering her voice, she said
“John, get some help.” John twitched, and said “I am.”
As John stood up, dreading the day ahead,

Bev cried “Come on, young man, you’ve got to smile!”
John grimaced painfully and left the room.
His throat backed up with a foul tasting bile,
John dreamed of joining Kim within the tomb.

That night, at home, John curled up in Kim’s chair,
Hugging her picture as he would a child.
Asleep, he found Kim’s arms and, lying there,
For a few moments, John held Kim, and smiled.

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