

## If I Die First

After the burning's done, pour  
what's left in a Mason jar – nothing new,

but one washed clean of applesauce or pickled beets,  
the clear kind that kids keep fireflies inside.

Let my cinders rest there  
like sand art in jelly jars carried home from the fair.

If the small or gray of me unsettles you,  
pin flannel or fleece around the glass,

leaving a gap, thumb-wide, under the rim, enough  
to let sun and moonlight in. Store me beside the poetry.

When it feels right, talk to me, sing, or sit by quietly.  
For a wheel of seasons, take me down. Hold me open –

to campfires, fallen leaves, a lilac's laden bough.  
Press me deep in moss and snow.

When my birthday comes, add a pinch of salt,  
toast to us with good bourbon or dark rum.

And when you're ready to move on, release me somewhere  
we once were. As dust blurs through your fingers,

quick or slow, know I miss your touch, and let me go.

– Wendy DeGroat