

Life After Death by Laura Gilpin

Laura Crafton Gilpin was a nurse, poet, and advocate for hospital reform. In 1976, she was given the Walt Whitman Award by the Academy of American Poets for her poetry book, "The Hocus-Pocus of the Universe." She was a founding member of Planetree, an organization dedicated to advancing patient-centered care. What follows is an excerpt from her powerful poem, "Life After Death."

Life After Death IV

The things I know:
how the living go on living
and how the dead go on living with them

So that in a forest
even a dead tree casts a shadow
and the leaves fall one by one
and the branches break in the wind
and the bark peels off slowly
and the trunk cracks
and the rain seeps in through the cracks
and the trunk falls to the ground
and the moss covers it

and in the spring the rabbits find it
and build their nest inside
and have their young
and their young will live safely
inside the dead tree

So that nothing is wasted in nature
or in love.