

No Longer Missing
by Elaine Zimmerman

You are leaving again, this time for the living.
So different from when you were missing.
Calling and calling until a stranger picked up.
Put you on. You spilled drooping syllables.
Hung up. I rang again. Someone said, "Look for
a pumpkin in the window. Blinking on and off."

Up and down Ella Grasso Boulevard looking
for a pumpkin. Pimps offered words for work.
Drivers hurled curses. Staring into empty windows,
blocks of darkened houses. Then I saw it. Lit up.
An electric jack-o-lantern. Trying to reach you
before someone else did. Pounding at 4 a.m.

You were on the floor. No longer missing.
Limp, tumbling arms; down a long staircase.
Heavy as pails of water. No telling if you
would make it. Those who don't know, ask
about cause. Those in it, reel through rapids.
Someone pulls you out breathless, face down.

You fall in again. Maybe you'll make it, maybe
you won't. Truth disappears, though always a
prime character. We all know someone who lost
the battle; been to the funeral. Buried outside the
rehab window, where dahlias shoot sharp color.
No telling if we should drive to the hospital.

You lurch awake, as if nothing happened. Memory
empty as the new morning sky. Now you are clean,
driving west. Cropped hair and enough hope to fuel
gas runs. Still, calls after dark ring like the coroner's,
a walk on Ella Grasso, one lit pumpkin flashing and
strangers dragging a limp body up a long staircase.