

IT WAS AN ACCIDENT

Anne Marie Wells

I learned a man I once loved died
three months after it happened.

His hair was wild like a blond werewolf when it wasn't
pulled behind his head behind the bar at The Rose.

He'd start pouring my drink when he'd see me
walk in, even when hunched shoulders crowded

the countertop, huddled with folded bills waving like sails
eager to transport their patrons far away from the world's

futileness, its nihilism. Several times I watched him leave
a lineup of shot glasses to mix my seltzer and lime, leaving

it on the end of the bar for me to pick up.

The library was holding a workshop

to learn how to write an obituary
and linked this wolf of a man's

tribute as an example.

He had moved to California,
and I never noticed. No one

was going to bars in 2020. Not even those
who weren't struggling with grief and sobriety.

He was working hauling lumber, steel beams,
and the like. Click after click I sought more

answers with my aspen-leaf fingers, and found
more questions. His semi floated right off the top

of the cliff. His body created a universe of glass
shattering the windshield on his way to the ground

before his truck landed on top of him.

He collected lamps.

Who found him? Who went to get him? Who dragged
the mangled metal off his body? Or what remained of it?

What remained of it?

What remains of him in my memory? I try and remember
every wink, every how are you? I think about that mane.

Had it ever known the love of a comb?

I found his parents in the Yellow Pages,
maybe. I wrote them a letter letting them

know a complete stranger thinks their son was wonderful,
and will remember his howling laugh the rest of her life.

I didn't leave a return address. And I tell myself it's because I didn't
want them to feel obligated to respond. But, of course, it's shame.

For making his death about me and my feelings. When I never
knew him. Not really. When I didn't even know he died when

he died. I still hope it was his parents, though, and not someone who had never
heard his name. Maybe it would bring them a moment of joy. But if strangers

to him received my letter, then someone else would know this wolfman
existed, and for a couple of years, the sight of him lit me up

like the full moon in a Wyoming dark sky, like
an empty room holding a collection of lamps.

Anne Marie Wells (She | They) has been published in *The Dallas Review*, *Passengers Journal*, *Brain Mill Press*, *Santa Fe Writers Project*, and others. Anne Marie is the recipient of the 2020 Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce Rising Star Award for community service and the 2018 Marius P. Hanford IV Award for playwriting. She was a 2021 Wyoming Woman of Influence nominee in the arts category. Currently a faculty member of the Community Literature Initiative through the Sims Library of Poetry, Anne Marie received her bachelor's degree from the University at Buffalo and her master's in applied ecology from Universidade de Coimbra, Portugal. You can learn more about Anne Marie at her website, AnneMarieWellsWriter.com.