

Does she glide in a gondola?

1. My dead neighbour's name typed in black.
Glossy AAA Travel insert
with two gondolas and red flowerboxes
arrives in my mailbox instead of hers.
Promises of discounts and odysseys
gleaming and alive.
2. Jubilant to go on a movie date
when she finishes reading
Under the Tuscan sun
Shelly flutters like a songbird.
I want to return her mail
talk to her about Italy
what wine to pair with dinner.
3. Did Death guide the mailman's hand?
Was I buried under a featherbed
when he knocked — climbed her stoop instead?
My cloudiness frightened him
her soft soul an easy catch.
4. She slices tree branches *like butter*.
Look how easy this gizmo works.
Her son's banana curls bounce
stacking the branches.
5. Does she glide in a gondola?
I still walk the sidewalk.
She's in an urn with cobalt blue butterflies.



6. Serious little girl
her daughter sits at the sill
dark eyes survey the neighbourhood now.
No replacement for mother's love.
Just slow melting, simmering sauce
on Sundays when her aunts come by.
7. I want to have a word with Death.
Scold him. Tell him he's all wrong.
What about the neighbour behind her
who complains about their dead pines
every chance she gets *What if they blow over?*
Might kill me.
8. Shelly lives in bold brushstrokes —
her front door, lilac; her son's room, crimson;
the family room, magenta.
I long to sit on her celery-coloured porch
dip pitas in hummus, watch the traffic
with her laugh raising the roof.
9. She tells me *It's okay*
I see everything now.
I know your darkness
when your baby was born.
I know you tried your best
Please bring my daughter flowers for her birthday.
10. Spring will shoulder her way in
bring buds to the dogwood
and rows of purple bulbs.
Now, her husband ploughs our sidewalk
the motion methodical, medicinal.

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