**The Death of Marilyn Monroe**

*Sharon Olds*

The ambulance men touched her cold

body, lifted it, heavy as iron,

onto the stretcher, tried to close the

mouth, closed the eyes, tied the

arms to the sides, moved a caught

strand of hair, as if it mattered,

saw the shape of her breasts, flattened by

gravity, under the sheet

carried her, as if it were she,

down the steps.

These men were never the same. They went out

afterwards, as they always did,

for a drink or two, but they could not meet

each other's eyes.

Their lives took

a turn—one had nightmares, strange

pains, impotence, depression. One did not

like his work, his wife looked

different, his kids. Even death

seemed different to him—a place where she

would be waiting,

and one found himself standing at night

in the doorway to a room of sleep, listening to

a woman breathing, just an ordinary

woman

breathing.

In an interview in *Salon*, Sharon Olds addressed the aims of her poetry. “I think that my work is easy to understand because I am not a thinker. I am not a…How can I put it? I write the way I perceive, I guess. It’s not really simple, I don’t think, but it’s about ordinary things—feeling about things, about people. I’m not an intellectual. I’m not an abstract thinker. And I’m interested in ordinary life.” She added that she is “not asking a poem to carry a lot of rocks in its pockets. Just being an ordinary observer and liver and feeler and letting the experience get through you onto the notebook with the pen, through the arm, out of the body, onto the page, without distortion.”

