



Image from Meowen

Paula Appling

That Handful of Dirt

Her soft body baffles me—
and that eye—shiny
and bright
like it can see . . .
The splotch of red,
a dead give-away but,
swaddled in denial, I see
nothing conclusive

pointing to not-alive.
Not the food
left uneaten for days,
not the still body,
not the paws that—
after how many days?—
are only beginning to stiffen.

The morning after we
put her in the ground,
he, the digger of cat graves,
stands alone in the kitchen,
 no one there to wish him good morning,
 no one there to ask him for breakfast . . .
he stands alone in the kitchen,
feels her absence and sobs—
big gulping rasping sobs
alone
until I rouse myself and
wrap him close in my pain.

Paula Appling's work has been published in *The Road Not Taken* and *Toasted Cheese* as well as *Caveat Lector* and has won monthly challenges in South Carolina and California. She has published a chapbook, *Shadow World*, and edited and published a dozen books for others.