COUNTING MY LOSSES

Jacqueline Osherow

One by fire,
four at will
(one who’d hang,
one who’d pull

the plug on his
own ventilator,
one who’d hit
the crowded water

just beneath
the Golden Gate,
one who learned
to operate

a shotgun
bought an hour past)
one too slowly,
one too fast,

two from age
(one broken hip,
one too weak
to wake from sleep),

one who’d slip
(a cliff-side path),
one surgery’s
botched aftermath,

one who wept,
one who prayed
one heart, alas, 
ineptly made 

one who moved 
a single thumb, 
(ALS 
her conundrum: 

brain intact 
while body withers), 
cancer of course 
for all the others.