

ALLISON GRAYHURST



Currents
- past life poems

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Edge Unlimited Publishing

Currents – pastlife poems
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Watchman Of The Night

**From the horizon
he emerges
winged man
sapphire eyes
savagely unfurling his bright feathers**

**He cups the salt from the sea
takes it to his mouth as nourishment -
pellets to spew at the sky**

**Then up!
twisting with the wind
dancing in the aura of the setting sun**

**His silver hair
flares the sky
his midnight lips
lost in haunting song**

**Chariots, tigers
race, prowl
around his blue body**

**Swirling, he meets the moon
and takes his place among the stars.**

I Will Run

I will go now
into the constellations
like into a field of marigolds.
I will run now like a drunkard
at dawn. The waves
of morning's early light
will be my medicine - the blue
& purple & orange thin arches,
all aglowing.

I will funnel my way out
of this personal war. I will
carry wounds & swords
in my arms. I will throw
them to the sky until
they fall like rainstorm,
leaving no trace after a
a day of sun.

You will not find me
walled behind my face,
or hunt me beneath
the garden cellar.

The nothing-air
will steal my name
& tomorrow I will
slip between the rocks.

Wax Museum

God is your hobby:

**My mouth inhales,
flushes you in.**

**Going to the wax museum to visit your sleeping body;
tonight with effort, tomorrow, with regret.**

**It is the end of a miracle, nevertheless,
I won't forget the sirens, your steel throat
rusted with alcoholic burns
or the hooves and the poison,**

how you tempted me to the maximum degree.

**There is a sunset I am cupping in my hands,
it is turning dark blue like the colour
we both love**

and I am staring into it like a poet mesmerized by the sea.

Farewell my pirate friend -

**Live good,
conquer the pitiful sky in your dreams.**

Every barrier is a mountain

challenging your devotion,

torturing your nights with its magnificent summit.

**I drink like a root from the underground: I am not upset
though shadows are cleaving, swarming my soul.**

**I am only running,
and it's a long way to paradise
even when you hurry.**

The Boy

Under the limp tree
he sits, curing himself
of the bawling rains &
patchwork
gardens.

He inhabits heartbreak
& hunger as a primitive,
refusing all
that does not measure with
instinct.

The cloud's configuration alters him
like a new philosophy.

He thinks of the cosmos
like a bird, who plays its part
blamelessly
under the yawning cover.

Destiny is
a grain of sand.

Life itself - enough
imagination.

He holds hands with
the outlawed beasts, bearing
the world as though it was nothing
but a small, small
shadow.

Marrakesh

Up the proud hills,
through the red Moroccan
morning, girls sing
as flies fill their nostrils,
arms covered in clay -
terracotta flame.

It is winter and sheets of sunlight
overpower the paths. They go down
into the casbah with bare feet
& clothe:

dreams of indigo justice.

A little boy guides tourists through
stealing kisses & cash.

Tall as stretched flowers, the blue people
come with their ancient arms, swinging
like whale fins from side to side. Bees crown
the orange juice with buzz & sting, as the snake
charmer carries his wealth on his back,
(*around, around*), like a
heavy fear.

The rains come.

Pant legs lifted to knees,
eyes smiling in awe. Rains
as thick as the devil's sobs. Rains
as wild as the children

who need no remedy
from the bending ocean
of froth & sky.

Guardian

(For Beeper)

**Dog-eyes like a morning
infused
with warmth.**

**I dream of sending you
silhouettes wedged
from the mountain,**

**where we would go
flooded with lyric & hazy light.
By the campfire furnace,**

**chasing the breeze through
the haunted wood. And then,
by the river, by daylight,**

**your tongue outstretched to cup bee.
Your oversized ebony head gliding through
the water like a dolphin's.**

**Under the bridge, on the railroad tracks,
your muscles moved erecting
monuments of innocence and incomparable strength.**

**Past the fence, past
my sight, releasing sounds of excitement, sounds
of a simple, language bark,**

**as you ran
thunderous & dark
as departure
often is.**

Sight at Zero

I am where fireflies dance
in a birdless noon.

I am treading water, looking
for a lodged piece of land
or even a dolphin's fin
to navigate me through this
wounded sea. The air
is smoking & a world
away lovers assassinate love
for the sensation of pride.

Rain, drumming onto my neck, onto
my jugular, rain spewed from
the moon's mouth, enters & dissects
worse than any broken fame. Too late
to cross the inner clouds. Too long lost
in the wood under a weird & angry sun.

It is my jealousy
that has woken, generous
with hate. It is agony & frailty
like an eggshell hammered
by a razor's sharp tongue.

I see dragons rise
from sand dunes. I hear
the laughter of a bride. My days are closed.

My element (*water, hymn, water*)
abandoned
for wishbones.

Dostoevsky

Demon of everglade beauty
of the dark space around the
moon.

Sensitive to the point of sickness.
Deep-set eyes like the eyes
of some brooding god,
hammering
the earth to pieces.

Breath of an invalid, gambler
& saint, weighed down by
sentiment.

Breath of grey and yellow
skies above you, blood red
buried beneath bone and
skin.

Hand of a writer,
naked without a pen,
like a new-born bird
flung
from its nest: flesh on fire.

Apocalypse mind, opener
of the seventh seal. Mentor of all
believers.

Christ-like visions swarm your mind.
Ravaged by depression,
by high ideals that
rip
out your ribs, one by one
into the thick day.

As I Sleep

**No sun shone
on Adam's breast
when first his strength
was bled.**

**When sharp like a lion's tooth
the milk of dreams flowed,
half the sea perished
stale with prehistoric lineage.**

**And under the rafters where
unborn children wait,
I dreamed of a world
invincible with perfect hunger,
inchng out of each curse -
all armour shed.**

**I dreamed a second life where
tenderness abounded. In every
pyramid, pavilion, parental hand,
the secret light was saved. The ones
who sought did not seek again for
desert and grave were one. And the
salt and bone in each breathing body bent
toward the sun. No angels came, neither did visions
that gave a full understanding.**

**For what was not accepted or surrendered
was broken, pierced
by a savage love.**

You came to me

through the hard jaw of the world,
anguished, under the weight of bad habits,
your happiness fading like
your fate, into a fine line running out.

You came, prowling the landscape, out of
some gripping past, eyes driven deep by
loneliness.

You came, dressed in feline black, carrying
the weight of a shattered city
in your arms, and your blood was cold
with howling.

From the snows, finding me with a glance, you came
like spring in my nostrils
and cried & cried as you came
plummeting down, lost from some angel's
symbolic grasp.

Swim

**He sinks into the river
tossing his garments on the muddy shore.
He takes the river-water into his mouth,
pressing her sturdy thigh in his mind.
And in his movements he waits for her,
smells her in the rocks and in the geese
passing overhead.**

**He lifted her from her burden, promised
a garden and other two-some things.
He spoke of stories until she found her heritage.
He treads the river's current, keeps his eyes open
underwater to see the weeds and fish beneath
its greying surface.
She told him of her duty and how love is
for another place. She looked straight ahead,
as if their hands clasping was a weakness
better to forget.
He gathers his breath and dives
into the rapids like one fierce, in fight, one
who has left his peace forever behind.**

Once

alone
where the deep star
failed to glow
I saw your heart come crawling
out of its obsessive shell,
crawl to where all shapes sing
of passion and mercy
side by side.

I saw your hard seed grow kind,
losing none of its brutal drive, but
gaining a natural beginning - grow in a soil of sensual
joy and a wild aching desire to be more
than nerves & need.

I saw your hands like waves arriving
to the final surrender of shore.

I saw you as stone, draped
in the mysteries of primal truths -
your head bowed in gentle fury, a figure
of unwavering embrace.

Here, I am lifted

into your fanatic faith
that bleeds like the wind
a steady downpour.
I hold your hand. I listen
and long for you on every street
I wander. I long for your emotions
to be within me, overpowering, altering
my earth with their unashamed passions.
I long to view your eyes in all eyes I see,
to view them in the half-dead stars mounted
in this city's sky, to know you,
your manhood, suffering and strength.
I long to dream myself into seizure like you
who grieves for the most forgotten sinners,
like you who receives the wounds of every innocent
and continues wanting (tirelessly wanting)
for more.

Surrender

**I yielded to touch, to
the coldness of my skeletal hopes.**

**I yielded toward a winding stairway
that lead to where footprints travelled
through vines, through treeless ground,
through oceans of lethal predators. I watched
as I was caught by fangs, watched
my each limb shred through teeth of earthly origin,
and soon no feeling, not even fear, remained.**

**The last of my blood was drained,
and once again I turned into a pale
and will-less thing like before I was given
body or breath.**

**Then by fingers made of fire my paleness
was carved, foaming out of the cyclops eye of God,
forming nerves and nostrils - a new and
waking lid.**

Dream

Again it came like hari-kari,
twisting my innards on its holy blade.
It came at 4 am, into my lungs and brain,
like a new death rattle sounding
an old, familiar fate.
It came under the blankets like a scorpion
between my husband and I, touched me
with its tail then raised its head to my eyes.
It unchained my killer-hand, bent my tree
until it broke. It found me in the violence,
in the night of unconscious beginnings and
jealousy too brutal to be controlled.
It plucked my morals one by one, like plucking
a cat of its whiskers. It turned
me into a nameless creature, into a betrayed
and raging deformity of myself. It came
like scissors to a flower, like an axe
to a pig's straining neck. It came
from where, I do not know, but came again
as though portraying something within
that I must unclothe and undeniably own.

When Air-borne Beings Fall

**As though my heart
was sand, absorbing
the dive of crows.**

**In the deep,
in the still deep ground
of dust & ruins, wings
fall like smashed shells
expanding into
the flowing air.**

**I would give my capsized house,
my bed, my favourite corner
just to feel the rise of their quickening tides
clap over my bones & spirit. To know the fury
of feathers skillfully slicing
the skin of clouds. I would say this
is worth my enemy's claw, worth a mouth
full of laughter. I could speak again
of love without weight, of a saffron flower
exposing all to the sun.**

I could take pictures in the garden.

After Sight

**The vision lifted,
then darkness set in.**

**A different darkness,
one not yet
encountered, not yet
imagined.**

**Grey silhouettes brushing the dawn's early
sky. Joy consumed & sorrow
lived to its limit. The image of flowers,
so slow in their pursuit
of the sun. A tremendous night air
as I walked past the deserted streets
into a life that would demand what I
had never given.**

**This too was death, & dance & death
entwined like autumn in its blood-splattered
leaves. I praised & I was free & afraid
of what would follow this gift of rope
& tender sunshine.**

**Enemies remained within,
spiders & also the murderous moon.**

**But sinking
& sinking again into the quicksand
threshold, my breast gave way to tears,
my lips, to the astonished tremble.**

**I walked back into my den that coveted
no light, holding fast to
love
like a thousand children, a thousand soldiers
burned

by heaven's weight.**

Childhood cracked

The doll fell
and was never picked up.
It fell by the curb
in a lucid slumber
of inarticulate words
like a dew drop
on ice.
Nothing was coveted,
the chant grew like the moon
as the month moved on.
What was cold inside was a needle
of sharp divide and the impact
of unbuffered death.
Into this autumn
the doll fell
and the meridian of grace
was at last
on the table.

Room, no room

**Moving in the circle of this ritual
smoking out my lungs, hand-paddling away
from the heat-strong current. The walls
have become a bookshelf on which
the books have been repeatedly read.
The walls are a room where there are
no windows and the paint is yellowing,
where the stale breath of confinement has
moved in.**

**I hear the animals deliver their outcast tongue
as the flame flows from the crack under the door.
I am folding and folding,
longing to join the delirium of a new language and of fire.
I cannot flourish in this parched land of ineffectual despair.
I long for a pond to catch tadpoles in.
I long for seeds to scatter,
or for now, just a small tool to chip away
at this concrete floor.**

The Path Before

Inside this cup polliwogs drown
for the sake of a child's curiosity. Following a man
wearing a long maroon robe around his shoulders,
a group walked the dirty morning streets,
pretending inner peace.

I was there, there in the sinking sand, abandoned
to mud and nature. I was there, handing out sandwiches
I couldn't afford to make, following the one
with the robe, thinking he would save me.

Save me from the dead fish lodged in my throat,
from the desolation of my eunuch intimacies, save me
from the ulcer that tore apart my insides like a feral cat,
trapped and too far gone to look around.

Waiting at 4 a.m. to steal away into my cubicle
and watch the dawn break over the park,
or running with my brother
over the farmland of a mutual friend that frightened us,
who we kept because we had no other, as we sat quietly
on his cast-iron stove, quietly in the danger, not together
as brother and sister should be, but separately wondering,
never holding hands.

Jesus in my basement

**You are serious as the elements,
master of miracles that overcomes those elements.**

**You are golden and landing always
in the depth of true light.**

**I think at times I can hear your voice, immediate,
ambushing my breath and my lazy self-pity.**

**You call on me to change my skin, walk
this world with belief and wonder. You guide me
in your discipline, offer me promise, eternity,
hills and hills of lush mercy.**

**You want my words to be exhumed - to speak exact,
not be encased in avoidance, not caked in layers
of mind-twisting complexity.**

**Just to be here, in front of you - simple, unimportant,
broken by the world, remade by you.**

Before Atonement

**At night I was full
like others are in summer,
myself, just a silhouette at dawn,
part of a church, but never part of
a calling.**

**I would look for owls as I canvassed unfamiliar roads
in winter, when everyone was lonely and the vein
of fulfillment pulsed obscure. I would knock on doors,
smile as though I was innocent, young in my hope
and inspired by ideals. Sometimes I would have tea and talk
as though I understood something, secretly carrying my
pink powder in a small golden tin,
desperate for any kind of magic.**

**The smell of that powder - sweet, unusual and old - the feel
of that powder - like rubbing thick blood between
finger and thumb - I was someone with that powder -
maybe a witch, maybe a prophet - someone
who communed with the gangs of cats that would
emerge past dinnertime; sit under cars, behind tree trunks
watching me as I watched them.**

**At night, the van would pull up and I had so little to say,
except to the driver. We loved our silence,
the awkward closeness
of agreed non-personal communication.**

**For me, there was only those nights and books,
there were only incoherent surreal images
storming my brain, longing to be submerged
in hard hard substance.**

The Long Pitstop

**When I woke up,
I was a daughter of God,
for a while as pure as
a river, moving towards
a place of cascading surrender.
It took years for the cockroaches
to enter my house, to gnaw away at my toes
while I was sleeping - poverty and broken hopes and
death spiraling around me like a dust storm
I could not see through. Even then, my faith remained queen,
and the love I found from others and God - even in death -
opened new passages of perseverance and renewal.
I had a child. Then two, and the singing never stopped.
Death came again and age stuck to my skin like wet sand.
Poverty dosed and soaked my bed
with its despairing drug, and hope
for a way out, fossilized, completely lost its pulse.
My future became a stuffed bird
I kept in a drawer to look at and admire its inert beauty.
Many weeks now I wonder
if I will be claimed, pulled from this sea of floating fish,
from this asylum where nothing ever pushes through
to the bright land of clarity.
I am waiting for a bell of my own, a kiss
of divine liberation.**

When I Lean Closer

**Remember when we were falling,
making hoops in the sky? When intelligence
didn't matter, only the desire
to be alive? Remember when a different rank
and inequality never blocked a friendship,
when the heart was whole,
and money never shamed us
one way
or another?**

**Remember the light in our pockets,
the frame of our minds as we lived
in perpetual loneliness, free
but cold?**

**Remember when guilt could only go so far
to actually change us and a lie was never
stronger than imagination?**

**Remember our handprints, those handprints
on the wall?**

Marseille

**Like you, I lost the spring
in a bed of stagnant water.**

**I withered under the sun and gained from it
only a small truth.**

**Like you, with you, I climbed those stairs, cried
all afternoon then sought out a redeeming parable.**

**In that chapel of our minds we sacrificed abundance
for bones, we traveled together because we hurt and we
saw one another as the proof needed
to confirm the validity of our road. We rented
a large room where commodities were traded,
(or often, by you, just taken)
where we stained the walls with our indelible presence,
cutting ourselves out destines from nowhere.**

I will go back there today and collect the pictures.

I will hand-make them an album then deliver them to the sea.

**Like you, I am still denied,
but now I know love.**

**My axle is female - and though
20 years later, my flesh is barely
(just starting to be)
my own.**

A thank-you note

I liked you for your love
of the little creatures, for the wild,
unsavoury animals that others
have no use for - like rats, tortoises
and cats that are blind. I liked you
for the wound you kept a mystery -
something about your father and a
despair that set you apart from the rest
of the living. I liked our full-blown connection
that seemed to conquer time and mistrust and
prepare for us a feast of sisterly ways.
For a year we held close.

In that car ride through
the farmlands, once I feared you might stop and stab me
under that canopy of stars and darkness. Because
there was something terrifying about you -
something hurt and distorted
by a tremendous overload.

One day you stopped calling,
stopped speaking about poetry, your dog and your love-affairs
gone wrong. Months later you wrote me a letter,
explaining the days that kept you from me -
days of being unable to eat, get dressed
or even call on the phone. For me, it was
too late. Too much so soon and then, nothing.
Like a betrayal I could never get used to,
like a friendship I would always be wondering
when it would vanish.

Only later did I learn your last name.

First and Only

The first time I found you
at the donut shop with the perfect balance
of youth and torment
absorbed in every movement, I knew I found
an eternal friend. The first time you sang, I felt
a fiery and surprising happiness.

The first hug we shared on the church steps
as the music played below was like a wave,
strong and soothing
rippling along my back and arms.

Our first kiss outside the café, when the rain
was about to fall, told me there would be
no number to our days, no greater gift but
to feel this - our lips once apart,
now vibrant, like a new being.

Our first laugh together as we drank our coffee told us
the depths we shared could be lightened by one another,
gave us more than important conversation, gave us
a rope to sometimes swing on and to always hold.

Our two children born were more than bluejays
on our shoulders,
more than any joy gone before, bringing us further
into one another's arms. Blessed by this indelible love,
I am here, counting on nothing but on what we have,
strangely at peace, like the peace I found
the time I first found you.

Wallpaper Stars

**At the top of the stairs
sits a box covered
with wallpaper stars. In this box
there is a small coin that
holds the memory of another time.
A child has pushed the box down the stairs
and the light has caught the coin on the way down,
glimmering like the leaves on branches after a rainstorm.
I pick up that coin and I take it away.
I am better than the coin that fell,
but less than the child sitting and
staring and waiting for the coin, sure
of the gift like Job was sure of God's love. I once was
the same, now I am different, tainted as grownups
always are.
The box is empty but I will fill it again.
The box is beautiful like the child who
sits and smiles - coin between fingertips, knowing
its proper place - inside the box
covered
with wallpaper stars.**

In My Corner

Kneel to the weather.
There is a fountain up ahead,
glowing,
but no one is on my deck - no bones are dry
in my pocket. Criss-cross, betrayal in my juice cup.
Magic is for fools. Living here, my voice cut,
my pet octopus drowned. Living here
in elementary wealth - nothing but
old-world, nothing but chaos.
Will the angels sing to me? I have been waiting
on their love.
So heavy is the window I look through. Brick by brick
I count my way up. My memories belong
to another world.

This spirit is speaking

**How much must I tell you,
with the dark sorcerers seeding my
potted plants and the old ways lost to
new ways yet unfound? How many times
must I twitch at the remembrance
of my cut throat in spring, contain my tears
in see-through plastic and continue to watch
the world go around, without a hiccup?**

**Acknowledge my fight, my flight into the wolf's den.
I am not a whale, pure as garnet,
nor am I full of your grandeur
and the calm, strong dive down.**

**I have the blood of a prophet, but not the backbone.
Side-swatted into a long consuming grief
and the world is just the same: Brides and school bells.
How long must I explain? I have lost the contours
of my face. There is a man
on my kitchen floor deliberately, almost artistically,
shaving my fleshless bones. One by one, like that,
I am unformed.**

Entrance Door

You stand at the entrance, robbed and dazed,
alone with the rain.

Your school is poor, much like water on a grave,
it cannot restore the yellowing clover. But I believe in you,
in the parting of your eyelids and the outpouring
of your creativity.

I saw your eyes, written with the depth of the wind.

Your sorrow is not easy,
but the power of it within you
will play out into an unimagined liberty.

A longed-for communion
will possess you and bring you barefoot out of exile.
I don't know why this disappointment must claim victory
or why joy and intimacy

were not open mouths, parting, to match your ageless purity.
I don't understand the burning, the collapse, and why
the Earth is so hard. But I understand you,
and what a blossom of magic you are.

You are meant to know this sorrow before
you can be happy. You are meant to dance out your grief,
your rage, the incapability
of others. Balance yourself here. I will help you.

I will kiss your hand. This is not random. Disaster is yours.
But the animals know, and I know, you are close
(so very close)
to the last release before
resurrection

Covenant

Legends in the snowdrifts
of soulmate saga and the artists'
struggle to stay alive. Gospels in
the house of manna, sleeping,
somewhat blessed, always true.
I put my robin on the line, held it
to the cat's mouth and waited.
Through the window I saw a prayer
almost answered. Jesus, stay beside me,
hold my hand as we pass one house and
then another. I can feel your breath change the air.
I can trust you, smell your skin and be protected.
Everything depends on you and I
staying close, my back against the mirror - my face
only reflected through your eyes.
I will sing in your ear, be ready for the deep-sea dive.
I will love you first then radiate that love. I lean
on your shoulder, and I will stay this way
forever.

Just before

Before I say goodbye to bitterness
and the slug that crawls across my living room floor,
let me hold my breath, holding thoughts
of the executioner's rope
sleeping very little
until morning.

Before my grave is exhumed and the daffodils planted there
are carelessly removed, let me thank my every nemesis,
the silence, the autonomy of being underground.

When I am halfway to the surface, let me keep my eyes
on the sky, never turning back to see the place
abandoned, never regretting the companions I found,
though they were roaches
and other crawlly things that only stuck around
to feast on my unprotesting flesh.

As I say farewell to my six-by-six hovel
let me release the leaches that latched on
to my every side.

Let it be over with completely.

Let me rise from this pit like a child does from her bed
on Christmas morning.

I see differently

I see things differently,
like lyrics and shades,
differently than the cold pale mouth
of worry and intellectual revelation.
I feel things differently - what was empty,
just background,
a faint perfume, is now sharp, suffocating,
expecting so much from my guarded solitude.
I walk differently, hesitating at the sound of birds,
watching lines in the clouds, a child angry with
her mother and the small cracks on the sidewalk stone.
I sleep differently as though I never do, remembering
each hour passing in the depth of
daydreams not sleep dreams,
not resting, but rising, my breath, my flame, living
and musical.
I wake differently, never tired, but full of throbbing,
heavy beating
and the spring is almost here, trapped
in 'the-moment-before', in the power of painted hair
and earlobes caressed and kissed.
I love differently, like I've never loved, demanding
the wind, the desert, a vigil of remarkable intensity.
Love, lacking
dilemmas. Love, like a place to play, playing,
then laying flat out and waiting for
rain, a hand, or stars.

River

I will run my breath across your eyelids,
go to you, trace the edges of your hands,
finding infinity inside your torment. I will
drift into you like wind and you will not mind
my lips like a concentrated shadow on your skin,
darkening but leaving no weight. You will let me
be inside your picture, a background to your lyrics,
softly at first, I will heal the red in the whites of your eyes.
I will release my wardrobe for you and you will be the mania
that I climb through to reach tranquility. I will
cup your flesh and stretch you through this intimacy because
I own you as you own me and it is not a bad thing, not
blasphemy or anything
to fear. It is your hands, mine - these
poignant burial grounds that have been excavated,
these days of standing close, depending upon the ease
of our mutual exposure. I will speak in your ear and you
will step into my voice
like stepping into a river.

Broken

**Breaking bonds and bonds
that are breaking in spite
of efforts made and lifetimes of
glorious connection, in spite
of promises to never part and always be
like tall innumerable weeds, keeping alive
no matter the challenges to growth. Growth
once so great, celestial forms descended, joined
to contemplate and just listen.**

**Catapulted into the future with no way back,
into another lightyear spinning, picking up pebbles,
putting down shoes. Hoods and earmuffs, locking
eyes with the cold, locking tight with the bluegrey anguish
that breeds explosives inside the flesh of my tongue,
but is buried too deep beneath the tastebuds to ever emerge.**

**Pinecones retrieved from the spat-upon pavement,
to add to my obsessive collection. These pinecones
remind me that I too have dropped, naturally, from
my source - laying flat on an unforgiving surface, unable
to dig into softness and sprout.**

**Breaking bonds and bonds broken,
adding a slight shock of unpredictability
to an otherwise stagnant formation,
adding a wider scope, or memories
to later inhabit - small fields
where there is no viable substance,
only leftovers and
open space.**

What it is I want

To die this death and not be reborn,
to exit this tepid wake, be stopped
from forming and maturing in this blistering purgatory
of unleavened bread, not be a DNA strand, mutating
perfectly fine habits, or disrupting rituals to count on.

I cannot count on staying adjusted, same
as the everyday banker or any other grownup
whose disappointments have been diluted by the memory
of endearing acceptance and arms that reach
from behind so that all weight can fall, so that shoulders
can loosen and kisses can be established.

I want to tear at the tendon heels of uncertainty,
be simple as a dog in a happy home with dark eyes
and easy affection, be someone not sucked of colour -
sharp hairs protruding from every pore, a poor
collection of broken rocks that no bricklayer
would set his trowel down for and gather.

I want to be exposed as a lit lighthouse, as a mother
dealing with her temper-tantrum child, be circled,
again and again, entwined, tightened hard around,
clenched, wanting
only this tension, stillness, awakening here,
before the plummeting pulse,
before the movement of ecstasy, wanting nothing else
more, ever again.

No Stone No God

I sang a stone, a star
retracting, turning charcoal, still
blood-fire aglow. I pulsed in the aftershock
of entropy, but never believed black
holes to be anything less than the pupils of God,
absorbing light, surrounded by swirling iris-galaxies.
Sucked through the mighty hurricane,
living inside the deepest of organ-flesh,
directing a liberating unfolding – a grand outside
poly-shield, infant-squalling. It is celestial traffic and
it is alive, caught in the mower, twitching, having
the edges shaved off to form a more easily
movable body-round – end-of-summer-stone.
I sang a stone, a star
tuned in to what flows out, seems like cement,
but isn't, is a babbling, bubbling child – wonder
here – wonder at the root.
Limits are the end of all exploring,
the disconnecting, overtaking void, more void,
no food, no stone, no song.

I can see the sun

but I can't be the sun
or know the sun
in this wilderness clearing
cutting up, suctioning out my insides.
Sing alone over the wide span
of dead rolls, broken by a secret
and wounds dried up, salt hard,
hard with condensed pressure.
Creak and slide over insect glitter, sun
beams shaping the edge of the bank. I am a
fish in a polluted stream. Tires and concrete,
broken blocks blocking my way to the river.
Evolving is hard, takes time to earn a body
that can leap over high obstacles, conquer resisting currents
while starved of a clean home. It takes a fool's joy
and an easy detachment to soar far out of the nest, lift
up and skim the skin of golden warmth. But I am a fish
meant to find shelter at the bottom bed of the ocean,
not in rivers or in streams, not leaping, but slow, slow,
surfing the cold sandy terrain,
skylight forgotten, sunlight undreamed.

I am a definition

with many loop-holes
octopus arm holes,
and then some.

I speak of a pavilion
where my ancestors bred
their disciplines
and murder was released -
an option, like a second chance,
murder as affirmation.

I was a definition,
secular, single-habit,
yang-streams exuding,
sharp and solid, marvelous as
a thunderstorm - rage, ripple into a cave
into base-neck movement,
into
simple one-focus activity.

But here
I lack a definition
under banners, barely audible
compromise,
excuses to not take up the sword,
battle the lies told
as traditional fables.
I swing from pillar to post
navigating ceiling heights
and floor splinters when I land
niching out obedience
to
a changeling definition.

If I knew this haunting

Melted, swung high over the sea,
plunging into the perishing darkness.
No one sees me, single as a stone,
madness on my island even with gifts
of peaches, blueberries, sunlight and sun-birds.
Windows are never here. The truth is
a deep-throat dread, lower belly drain, water gone,
shadow in between. Swing over a mound
of dry bones that used to be flowers, hummingbird
retreats. Shattered glass greenhouse in winter's embrace.
Nothing flows. It tried to flow and for
awhile I can remember the small animals,
remember ease while breathing, myself
more silence than flutter.
I can remember walking on high wet grass -
rolling fields all around, walking to keep
from eclipsing, determined to walk, and not
burn at the roots.

I moved like a moon

in predictable orbit, smashed
by meteors, space pebbles
meeting my surface with deep impact, when
there were dark oceans under my skin, unseen
single forms, coupled forms, and beds of
colourless weeds, but I steadied myself
on the cold shell of repetitive expectations -
dead valleys here, dead heights there.

Going through the hard crust, under, into
a thicker atmosphere, currents of heaviness,
breaking barriers better off broken.

Haunted by shapes that come close and rarely touch,
in this weighted environment, by-passing predator
tentacles and jaws by instinct alone, no journey-map,
stars or horizon to act as goal or inspiration, but

rolling
through cross-waves with creatures captured
by a dark density like
myself, shaded, loose at the extremities, compact
at the core, thriving on plateaus of deep pressure,
salty flavours all around - so far gone from walking
that legs leave, replaced by fins, and language is not
sound, but a full-body resonance - no delay
between appetite and attainment.

Evolution for some, not for all

Piercing malleable opening,
a softness in the face
over ridden by cynical neglect.
Supper is almost ready, folly on
the garden steps.
Intonations speak the
underbelly layers of languages.
Puddles I deliberately
step in to know the intimacy of water,
the revival of being overpowered by the strongest
of all Earth's elements.
Superimpose me on your raincloud.
I cry like Lazareth shedding his week-old shroud.
I stumble under the falcon's swooping breath,
remembering myself prehistoric -
a bird before birds.

Master-piece

**Patterns of
perfect chaos,
intricately separate and
growing, inside the fulcrum
of my personal biology.
Defined only by my relation
to another, weighted down to this rock,
this glorious giver of gravity and greenery.**

**Dreams of galaxies, streams of potent
heat, maneuvering glows,
brilliant pallets, housing
celestial communities.
Limited to a repetitive rhythm that alters
incrementally, evolves, slow, unperceptively, inside
of that,
I expand, fingers not
like the dead-hand of a yogi master, lifted
permanently drained, shriveled by an irrational
devotion to suffering, but like a startled
infant's fingers, outstretched
mid-air in a move of instant instinct I touch
lightwaves,
merge with their flow,
twists and swirls,
cosmos canyons, rivers, dunes -
a sweet remembering of womb-like love,
a thumbprint kiss from lips I have always
always known.**

Undertow

Somehow I stood

**dark and brave below the deck, in small spaces
emptied of shadows and science.**

**The walls took advantage of my privacy,
and before I could collect my wealth
I was tied to the mast of a pillaged and
hacked-away ship, joining the races
of hunted whales and tentacle creatures.**

**Dissecting the storm at my feet, seeping into
my lungs, I promised myself to live my last moments
without envy or rage. It was easily done
until my ropes became loose and I rose to
catch a breath, catch sight of my splintered sea-house
where there was wood all around - dead bodies of comrades,
but no sharks, no children needing my protection.
I promised myself another promise,
to die in meditation, fixing on the sky, transferring my pain
and crushed confidence to the stars' philosophy of afterglow.**

It is a long time to be still and look up.

**It must be a painter's journey. I must learn
to sprout roots from the tips of my frozen toes,
knowing water is not earth and earth
will never be a sailor's deathbed or home.**

Govinda in the mud

**This line of devotion that moves
bitterly as lust tracing unresponsive thighs,
cups a poor groan of invisible blooming,
following you underneath a diseased tree,
smelling as you spread your aloofness
and mingled your affection tighter with the dealers of denial.**

**It came to me at first in healthy moderation,
as a permit to appease my obsession.
Then it grew indecent,
flushed through me like a spell, drowning
my apprentice music with your own reclusive master-drum.**

**I found you in the carcass,
in the millipede's dart into the drain.
You swelled your glow across all my sunny spots, mighty,
but not brave, only bored with the circular twists
of relief, thirst and sorrow - diamond clear,
you asked for everything, wanting nothing for yourself.**

**I knitted together the practicalities of decomposition
to the voyage of your ever-increasing detachment,
understanding what you did not - that love
is not living alone on a dried-up hill**

**nor is it consuming every crumb of dream-life
until the flesh is reduced to accident.
I cannot rekindle my devotion, so I must leave you
to authenticate a future. This deed of leaving is like you like
a star - old, seen many times over by many eyes,
power with no purpose but to be bright
and desolate, eating away
waves of darkness, emptied of praise, tenderness, the bullet**

needed to puncture a human heart with revelation.
I do not believe in nirvana. I do not believe in immortality:
when things change they die and do not revert.
We were, it seemed, perpetual, connected
by the red rope of my loyalty.

I am dawning. I that is I,
cracking the dome of my hereditary inertia.
I leave the shadow-guilt of solemn yearning, and also you
of coral-reef intricacy, simplicity, perfection.

I know I am alone, though permanently imprinted -
by my years of unnoticed devotion,
by the shunning of personal expectations
and by your long finger,
tanned, transcendental, a spiritual aphrodisiac still
pointing.

Neruda

I can't be and think like you,
majestic in your sensuality,
Godless but deep with sorrow, forever restoring.
From you I see women's hips.
And though I would never care to shield kisses upon
their soft swaying mounds, your waters swell
and grow and make me long for Spanish trees,
seascapes I saw as a child. Rising male, always like a mountain,
you pick granules from the ground, place sand on your tongue
and name the sensation.

If I could be and think like you,
like a native river that has known no footprints,
gathering rowboats, families of endless generations,
my house would sing, fruit would fall and
I would hold a hand, glorify each fingernail, memorize
the exact curve of each cuticle. I would retire,
rest my shoulders on an old bed, loosely clothed,
feeling the Mediterranean heated breeze encompass me
like a lover's welcoming demand for unity. Speaking,
my words would drip like oil, gifts
of oil and bread.

The Book

Inside, spending all my coins, rejoicing
on ephemeral longing, on a lustful inhale
for physical redemption.

Hidden in the pages, I am hidden
at four in the morning, bathing in perfection,
lifting into heights that obscure drudgery.

Thoughts are shapes that float as shadows,
hardly solid like butter left out of the fridge.
Cages unravelling and houses cleaned of cobwebs.
Between soft book covers freedom kisses explicitly,
candy-ices without embarrassment.

Hanging on hinges, on barely glanced-at walls,
I gather my vision in the grass, paint on the
bones of another's life - beautiful bones and hallways
of many feet walking and swishing bathrobes.
In the book I can face forward and never fear rejection,
I can shower sensuously in warm rhythms,
tied to the stirring light of early summer.

**Love between these diary covers is not just canvass
or thick hues that merge and make a middle, it is where I will
at last know another's body as I know my own,
be protected from the torrential pawing pierce
of middle-age loneliness.**

**Inside the book, you are under me like
a bed of lavender bushes,
there are waves where once sunken skeletons rise like coral,
polished pure of their violent history.**

**Drowning in the book, imagining ants collecting,
synchronized on an apple core.**

**Bells in my head, footsteps rising, closer now,
you know me well. Inside the book, you know me better.
We are two trees - branches and roots,
an interwoven crocheted
impressionistic portrait, staying through heavy storms.**

**Inside the book, we are creatures of greater sympathy.
You are like yarn, tied to my brush and hold, never in
the liquid valley of a distant boat, or obvious as a prickly,
rigid rope. I am mature, a woman with a ceiling to touch,
fifty feet of surrounding stillness, unfettered
from the expectations of my time and gender,
radiant, more, whole.**

There are names

and allegiances that triumph
when spoken aloud. I do not speak
these sounds or have a country
that edges near ecstasy. I have loved badly,
pessimistic, fostered a hostile vacancy
of fantastical hope. Insolent towards God
and the steady rapture that only comes with patience,
I purchased an industry that leaves no mark,
makes nothing useful
or sweet.

Remembering my waxed-leaf collection held
within hard cover books, and the frolicking of field mice
that burrowed patterns into my head. I sat on the bus and
I was alone. Did I know how fragile sanity was, unlocking
doors, imagining mountains on the surface of the sun?

Snared before my shelter broke
and I could be saved by surrender.
A thicket of needles and bushes trembling with little birds.
Contact. Glint.

Won't something rush at me, increase my odds?

I could send you away, then I could live

cold, complete as a reed or as an angel.

Science will not have me. You will not let me go.

Remembering seashells wrapped in tissue paper, in a box,

on a shelf, just above the closet floor, counting them -

rough external even ridges, glassy sheen empty pocket inside.

Myth

**It is not the same as being limited
by loneliness, these feelings of broken fidelity,
abandonment. It is not enough to germinate
in this grief, pleading for a picture
of better times, appealing to
memory, sentiment, knowing
I could be wrong.**

**Those days, married
to your insatiable outpourings, ecstasy
just to listen, to share our minds - walking
on streetcar tracks at 4 a.m. and never sleeping.
I carried you like a book, wilting always in life, but never
when mingled with your stature. Between us,
nothing was spoiled, not soft either.
I was delivered by your high forehead and
by your crazed emotions. I was celebrating.**

**If it was only
paper flowers, a painted-on sunrise or
imagined completeness, in that time, I was
devoured by my own individuality, stripped
of my conditioning, a person to reckon with, lean on -
whole. I was so much better than I am here, as I am
salvaging a heartbeat from habit, marked by a used-up destiny,
just me with these crippled hands, bare feet, no mentor
to merge with, nothing
to follow.**

Three days

since I was found,
panicked by my bed stand, calling out.
They put me under covers. They wet
my forehead but the fever was too bright inside of me.
Words were repeating.
Words were fireflies swarming my optical nerve.
They did not see the vision. They tried to stop my shaking.
They could not know that in the end,
I was left with a choice.
It was in my power to affirm or deny.
It was a light so potent, sharp as broken ice,
demanding. It was strength and perfection
without tenderness. How could that be love? They
were love - weeping for me, making promises
of togetherness for eternity.
Three days since I was found and they've never left my side.
In these arms that hold me, is a devotion
that comforts. I am better now. At last, I am called.

Meeting

I blend under the covers
to drift by the songbird
though I never reach the songbird
with my mind or my eyes.

I can only melt with the mirror, a strange being
blessed by freedom
but not by much else.

And here I hover - outshone by the beautiful sound
I cannot capture, replanted in a foreign soil,
a death warrant, a challenge of rapture. The angels
have called me. The dark breath has answered me.

It is not enough, under the covers, listening, crushed
by the morning light - my pattern unraveled as though,
for now, I am only shadow. It is not enough to remember you,
to have touched the miracle and for a moment, to have
perfect belief. Because there is chaos in wake of this beauty,
there is a fall on jagged rigid ground after the swim through
synchronicity, there is the dead bird, broken by
heartbreak, held in my hands, nothing
but hollow bones, and a picture I owned
but lost, of you and me, in black and white,
aged in love, so long ago.

Months Before Resurrection

**In the sea, I awoke,
wet, under the sun,
taken into time by
the lord of anxiety.**

**Grief and instability covered my skin
like the suction of an octopus'
tentacles. It held me, carried me down
below where the pressure is unbearable,
and strange fluorescent creatures thrive.
I landed on the sand-smoky floor, without
a spoonful of oxygen, murdered by an immutable force.
I died that day, chained to the nadir of my zodiac -
once a living woman, now chewed at by tiny mouths,
soon to fossilize in this wet, unsentimental grave.**

I was not a bird

or a bride
but wedded to the thick masculine
thighs of war, a priest of the dead -
myself a small idol that gathered a
kingdom of followers. I had but one lover,
a soul drenched with my own - long hair
and pretty eyes, a man of calm devotion, while
I enjoyed my blonde hair soaked
with my conquered enemy's blood.
I enjoyed the cries of pursuit
and the galloping of hooves on foreign sands.
I was not driven by the robe or the snake charmer's
deep throttle. I was fresh, never a victim of fear,
writhing with rage like a piranha plucked from the waters.
In the daylight, I was whole. At night, my lover
kissed my ring, my arms and forehead. We made love
with everything left to give to only each other -
two, dying young in a tent, just
before dawn on the brink of battle, never ones for
soft goodbyes.

Husband II

The one who found me
in the schoolyard by the old tree
fell to his knees with patches of burnt skin
along his pale arms. He tried a pact of suicide
with the sun, many times, but his inner ache
gave out, replaced with a potent drive for revenge.
Then through a threadbare journey where
he never allowed his passion to be quenched,
he turned from revenge
to a window where he saw heaven, sliced and untouchable
like a painting at an art show. He saw a way to find me, past
the hospital ward, past the mushroom cloud of his existence.
When he found me, I too was shut
in a sea of quicksand, waiting
on the final miracle. We smelt each other's hair in the
openness of a winter sky.
I told him my faith was at his side. I left him
lingering by the tree - his old darkness staked and
a new one, sure to be born.

All the Light

All the light from the beginning
remains - even as long as time
and then, continuing on so that distraction
and fears blot out the exuberance, and sometimes
nullify with the dark chains that bind us to the funeral
ground, to the alcoholic's breath and to the child,
too abused to even cry. That the sacred chalice
gets ripped like a paper cup means nothing, because
the light from the beginning remains with the intensity
it was born with, remains and cannot be removed.
And the light between us - sliced cruelly like a cow
into thin fragments for consumption, like that cow, still
has a soul, somewhere hovering in happy pastures, loving
all the while, like in the beginning, when it was born -
beautiful, knowing only its first intake of breath and
the sweet nectar of its mother's protective warmth.

When This Is Over

**At the end of the day, the pears will be ripe
and the ones I loved and died will float before me
in waves of growing beauty.**

**At the end, when all of this leaves, then I will breathe
an owl breath, still in my tranquil sky.**

**At the end, I will find you, thank you for this sick chaos -
myself, a garden, hit by a massive storm.**

**I will give life again to the little birds, insects that have no
use or concept of glory. I will return with you
to the Buddha waters, happy to know so much love.**

**I will walk out my door and there will be summer,
early summer, and you and I
(though bruised and that much more
world-weary) will walk into the warmth:
ultimately loved, unequivocally whole.**

Cutting the Bond

The sheet fell on me, and I was drawn
for the last time to open the casket
on the hill.

There I held myself like a figure made of sand,
barely touching, but still crumbling my thick features.
My scent was golden that day,
and full of storm.

I walked to the grass and thought
of history. I put mud on my lips
and laughed at all I had lost. I would lose
again - lose, until my memories
were caramel coated, became something unconscious
like my guilt and my necessity - internal,
branded on my palms.

When

**When I was a fish the morning light
brought me near the shark's skilled swim.
I would hide behind rocks and sea urchins, watching
octopi and their slow contracting movement.
When I was an octopus, my tentacles could think.
I knew of things like volcano ruptures and how
to escape fishnets and other forms of human capture.
When I was a deer I was in union, safe with my clan,
grazing in the lion's domain.
When I was a lion, female, tense with the hunt,
protective of my playful young, I knew of thirst
and days without food, retreating from the large and
ever-present sun.
When I was a baby child, it felt like there was a stone
stuck in my throat and a restlessness racing through my limbs.
I cried and cried when I was a baby, unfamiliar
with this daunting helpless form.**

I think I was

I was that man
climbing the stairs to the hospital room, that man
with wavy brown hair and open eyes.
I used to live near the moors where
I would go to re-enact Thomas Hardy fables,
choked with the sorrow of outcast women.
I was that man never reaching the room,
never able to mourn except on paper.
As that man, I dreamt of India -
one day I would go, be under its large, unusual sun,
maybe hold hands with a beautiful deity.
As that man, I never went to India, I died
too young.
As that man, I remember a split in my soul,
the violent burn of uncontainment.
And I remember the feel of bare feet
slowly walking across wet moors.

Connection

I remember you on a hill
in Ireland, undecided as to who
would be your master. Where
the devil swore to drop you in the red valley
and the angel promised only
to embrace you as you fell.

I remember the tree you stood beside that was
your mansion, the one with the grey and gnarled bark
with mushrooms all around - you would
whisper to it, sometimes crying, cursing the dilemma
that ruled your soul, and the daylight that wounded you
and brought you into years of isolation.

I think you missed the colour of flowers the most as
they rejoiced in mid-day.

I think you always held your strength
as a boy would a wild foal, hoping one day to curb its burning.

I remember you on Eastern ground - laying flat
against the cold dead soil, wanting motive enough
for suicide but always being drawn back
by your foul hunger and by
the promise for a cure. I remember you, your eyes -
dark and cruel, yet never void of needing
to be loved.

Vow

The noise broke
by the garden where I loved you
like I loved the truth,
where my bones drowned in your darkness
and my war was unlocked like the need
for completion that you promised but never
could attain. This wilderness
of power, purposelessness and extremes I laid down inside of
to be beside you and the softness of your mouth
and the elixir of your touch
became mine, grew like a second body
merging with my own like death does
with cold eternity.

Once made of stone - Wellesley Street

What was the shape of that shelter before you came?
It was made of lost centuries of torment
and sporadic, but deep, connection.
It was more a seed than shelter,
protecting, feeding the blood dream of my ancestry.

Then you arrived and for awhile
we stuffed ourselves inside that shelter
like ying and yang, in zen-like union.

My path was to follow the dolphins - live in the sea,
breathe what I must and be happy.
But happiness was too hard,
I was left wanting the darker layers of guilt and grief.

Your path was to find what was given to you,
to re-claim your privilege, hand-printing the walls
as though you were king.

You took the bed, I took the floor. I paid the rent
and you shared your food. Soon that shelter then became
a fossil for me. And you and I - facing each other
with crossed arms, could not find a common ground.
The boy next door worshipped you, and more and more
I felt like the estranged sister, toyed with though loved.

I took my cat and left you with
the dollar day-old-donuts and the bottled water
you used to brush your teeth with. After that,
my trust was broken. And though we still painted together,
I never showed you my jewels or sorrows.

That shelter up all those stairs, overlooking
the streetcar tracks is now this paper, an inked-in memory
without entrance
from any valley, flat plain or hill.

Draw Near

**One day the drift drew near
and lightning touched the lips of angels.
The light was left only for the mighty.
So we sang. So we sang.
The murderers were shelved
beside the mighty because the only difference
was degree.
We opened ourselves up while in the rain, open
under the dark cloud, open
through the winters and the occasional plague.
We felt the evergreens between our fingertips
and sold only that which was ours to sell.
One day the drift drew near
and we sang. We sang.**

The Wind

The wind was moving
across the leper earth.
I saw that wind and that earth
in a vision building strong
as the autumn chartered on.
The sparrows sank into that earth,
each one carrying its own
unique song.
I was a sparrow filled with seeds,
sitting on sand in the sun
sure of all things. Then I was sucked
into the sick earth, breathing in
worm-infested dirt - myself,
forgotten, dead as a broken-off stick,
not even making a shadow.
In a vision I rose up a ghost -
a stronger sparrow now lacking substance.
I found a tree to claim and share.
And in that vision as the wind was moving,
it moved me
no longer.

Interlude

**Upon the window's sill
I saw a ghost walking
of a young woman veiled in grief
with sunset hair and moral eyes -
her death drifted to me like
a scent. I called to her, with
overflowing sympathy, but the grave
was now her bed and the enemy-world
was her heart's betrayal. I saw her sit
then look to the sky, her tormented forehead
glistening as the rain did on the roof's old shingles.
She spoke three names softly, and over and over their
sound ripped my skull as if the sun itself had entered
to burn all hard-held secrets out.
I loved her like someone I had long known and understood,
watching her, hardly visible
as the rain pushed on.**

The Hand That Came

**The hand that came from
the cool water, reached
upon my deck to soothe
my extremes. The sun that
flowered green crumbled
across the twilight tide and painted
me a joy before unseen.**

**I watched the breaking waters
and felt it drifting over my skin like a spring-fresh leaf -
soft, majestic and full of promise.**

**The new seal was made, the old one broken.
It is the third birth.**

**A skull had fallen into my pocket and my secret
sold to dull fantasy. The waiting was cruel.
But the hand that came stripped me of my scars
and gave me an altar to place
my dying future upon.**

The Ride

Again the stars were plucked
from her mind and the world below
leapt up and sponged her with its flame.
That summer she made a wish upon her chains
and walked the deserted farmyards.
The ravens followed her through the weeds
and heat, keeping up conversation. At night
she sang to the beating of the rain and stroked the head
of the dead bug in her pocket.
She was neither of the mountains nor of the desert.
She was calm as crazy sometimes gets, and the thunder
hissed out her name as the June's morning rays
danced her a sermon. She talked
to her shadow when the birds had gone,
and her fingernails were brittle as cracked ice.
On the seventeenth day her breath collapsed with
the rising sun as the cobwebs about her sparkled, stirred
by a sweetened wind.

Tunnels

I have lost what was left
in the tunnels, and wandered
like a millipede through miles of underground.
The burn of cold brick, the taste of damp air
in my lungs, my skin against concrete.
Friction, losing what's left, but finding
a different pattern to follow, finding interest
in each detail of the maze, finding fascination as I age,
wandering through the narrow medieval fields,
knowing there is no exit,
and I am here - immutable, almost
dammed.

High Hill

**On that high hill
the wood burned like a flower,
the smoke rose to my lipline
under a decaying tree.
I walked down that hill to kiss a grave
and marry my heart to the iris of death.
But heat mounts near the waking sun,
and on and on goes the wind, brushing
the powerful weeds.
Walking along the path, my skin has changed,
my shell is under water where it belongs.
There is not much to understand, but to
surrender to honesty and to covet
the courage needed to speak
my ruling rhyme.
On this high hill
I drowned in the devil's chaos,
but that place is long gone.
And though the asylum of darkness still comes around,
it vanishes so quickly with kindness.**

Salvation

In summer,
sweat drips into the mouth like sunshine
and the dry clay cliffs
crumble, fracturing the fox's foot.
The lake's moaning waves repeat with swollen voices.
Children hang shapes on windows, understanding
the transcendence of imagination.
Long ago there was a shadow that turned into form.
Under some bones a prodigy was born - growing
grass in a stone, making bread from a smile.
She watched the circles and placed her body there,
inside the motion, though her mind traveled
without geometry. Just believe it, she said,
and all the world became a lovely dream.

In Time

The mutual condition
of our heritage. The thump-thump
in your thigh. Thin as a warrior
of Japanese fortune and eyes
rustling like wool in the wind.

At bed time, the cockroaches are my cousins
and the movement of your housecoat is my water.
I found a necklace centuries old.
You told me you were not ready
to paint the autumn gardens or do cartwheels
over a cliff. The hope that bled
from your belly, and the seas
of men's and women's breasts that
you floated through, like Adam awakened
from paradise, hungering for that one, strong connection,
was like me in the winters of my adolescent youth,
was the India I never visited or the Russian squares
I buried my imagination in.

I am red as cinnamon candy, hoping you'll have me
like the first day our hands joined and the bells of trinity sang
a melody to finally, resolutely live for.

The laws that find me bind me

**heavy and wasted
as in the first weeks of lost love,
as if the lifting song of summer sank in the bog
of my many crippled attempts at salvation.**

**Loose skin around the cheekbones.
Fissures repeat kaleidoscope visions.
Snake bites on my ankles like
the opaque rules of tedious afternoons, trying
to cut clean into a full separation the already divided wind.**

**Exhibitions and energy not worth keeping.
Anger resolves with an ethereal kill,
making and placing food on the table to limit the direction
of desire. Desire to stalk a pale flame
and grow a core of heat, but instead
snipped and clipped at the meridian centre,
pitted against love at its softest point. Love
at its most isolating point,
flayed across a concrete pyramid, inside
a Minotaur-maze of forgotten exit passages.**

**Dealt and received, a stack of conditions
that can never be lifted or walked away from.
I will speak because
the explosive veined-sun dominates our Earth's universe,
and bloody barren corpses infiltrate the ground,
calling upon mealworm dialogue - calling
for useless conversation,
eating makebelief applecore practicalities and gossip seeds
like 'Bobok''s people in various degrees of decomposition.**

**Let me live on the rooftops, away from the ghosts
puffing up their tuffs with spintop epilogues of I, I, I, and God
in all four pockets - enslaved, once-beautiful divinity,
to sloppy-string opinions and ritualized overload.**

**Great stained-glass eyes of the one eye, where are you?
Only the sound of a shallow drumbeat drumming,
plunging me into this sewer-tunnel template, dangerous
as the planet we are all forced to manoeuver on.
Save me from cherished traditions and filing-cabinet dreams.
Save me from my bodily needs. Transform me into
an angel or into the one transformed from the angel -
never to come here again,**

**except to hold my only true love
and to cradle close the heads of my sleeping children.**

I have been born

a thousand times over,
flaked into existence by
force, by will and by desire.
I have had my days
under the siege of physical limitations,
of bloodlines burned and bloodlines
mended. There is no more
time for this rotating scheme,
no space for waiting
or for continuing. I stop here. Unplugging the
flow, breathing only because
I want to, because
this skin that is mine is
the last skin I will ever claim
as the landscapes I drop, drop, then
drop me.

About the Author



Allison Grayhurst is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Three of her poems have been nominated for Sundress Publications “Best of the Net” 2015, and she has over 850 poems published in more than 380 international journals and anthologies. Her book *Somewhere Falling* was published by Beach Holme Publishers, a Porcupic Book, in Vancouver in 1995. Since then she has published twelve other books of poetry and six collections with Edge Unlimited Publishing. Prior to the publication of *Somewhere Falling* she had a poetry book published, *Common Dream*, and four chapbooks published by The Plowman. Her poetry chapbook *The River is Blind* was published by Ottawa publisher above/ground press December 2012. In 2014 her chapbook *Surrogate Dharma* was published by Kind of a Hurricane Press, Barometric Pressures Author Series. In 2015, her book *No Raft – No Ocean* was published by Scars Publications. More recently, her book *Make the Wind* was published in 2016 by Scars Publications. As well, her book *Trial and Witness – selected poems*, was published 2016 by Creative Talents Unleashed (CTU Publishing Group). She is a vegan for the animals. She lives in Toronto with her family. She also sculpts, working with clay; www.allisongrayhurst.com

Some of these poems have first appeared in: JVC Poetry Newsletter; Existere; Poetry Halifax Dartmouth; oasis; Pennine Platform; Reach; Jones Av.; The Affiliate; Indigo Rising Magazine; Hook & Ladder; Decanto; Indie Poets Indeed; Malevolent Pegasus Literary Zine; Snapping Twig; Pawn Press; First Offense; Bewildering Stories; The Fat Damsel; A New Ulster; Juxtaprose Literary Magazine; blackmail press; Section 8 Magazine; Gossamer Poetry Page; Gris-Gris; The Bitchin' Kitsch; Dali's Lovechild; Carcinogenic Poetry; Ginosko Literary Journal; The Bijou Poetry Review; Dead Snakes; MadSwirl; The song is...; Indiana Voice Journal; Green King Poems and Poetry Zine; Jotter United Lit-zine; InnerChildPress; Wax Poetry and Art Magazine; The Foliate Oak Literary Magazine; The Peregrine Muse; Profiles in Poetry Literary Zine; Duane's PoeTree; Scars Publication; Scarlet Leaf Review; The Wagon Magazine; Fragrance Poetry Magazine; Blue Heron Review; The Milo Review; Sentinel Literary Quarterly; Wilderness House Literary Review; River Poets Journal; Napalm and Novocain; The Penwood Review; Eunoia Review; The Poetry Community; Asian Signature; Black Poppy Review; Bigger Stone; The Galway Review; Straylight Literary Magazine on line; Straylight Literary Arts Magazine, Volume 9.2; Fine Flu Journal; Poem and Poetry; Subliminal Interiors; The Sygyzy Poetry Journal; Eye on Life Magazine; The Screech Owl; The Open Mouse; Full of Crow; Peedeel's Blog; Dark Blooms Literary Zine; Junk in July Poetry Zine; Sonder Magazine; Poetryrepair; The Kitchen Poet; Anti-Heroin Chic Magazine

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“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry combines the depth and dark intensity of Sylvia Plath, the layered complex imagery of Dylan Thomas and the philosophical insights of Soren Kierkegaard, taking the reader on a fearless journey through the human condition, delving with honesty into death, grief, loss, faith, commitment, motherhood, and erotic love. Grayhurst intertwines a potent spirituality throughout her work so that each poem is not simply a statement or observation, but a revelation that demands the reader’s personal involvement. Grayhurst’s poetic genius is profound and evident. Her voice is uniquely authentic, undeniable in its dignified vulnerability as it is in its significance,” *Kyp Harness, singer/songwriter, author.*

“Allison Grayhurst is the Queen of Catharsis. Allison Grayhurst’s poems are like cathedrals witnessing and articulating in unflinching graphic detail the gritty angst and grief of life, while taking it to rare clarity, calm and comfort in an otherwise confusing world of deception, mediocrity and degradation. Allison Grayhurst takes the sludge of life, and with fearless sharpness of eye and heart she spins it free of maggots with the depth of honour and passion. Allison Grayhurst’s work is haunting, majestic and cleansing, often leaving one breathless in the wake of its intelligence, hope, faith and love amidst the muck of life. Many of Allison Grayhurst’s poems are simply masterpieces booming with thunderous insight begging to be in Bartlett’s Quotations, lines such as “I drink necessity’s authority.” Nothing is wishy-washy in the realm of Allison Grayhurst. Allison Grayhurst’s work is sustaining, enriching, and deepening for the soul to read... a light of sanity in the world. As a poet, Allison Grayhurst is a lighthouse of intelligent honour... indeed, intelligence rips through her work like white water,” *Taylor Jane Green BA, RIHR, CHT, Registered Spiritual Psychotherapist and author of Swan Wheeler: A North American Mythology and The Rise of Eros.*

"Her poems read like the journal entries of a mystic – perhaps that what they are. They are abstract and vivid, like a dreamy manifestation of soul. This is the best way, in prose, one can describe the music which is ... the poetry of Allison Grayhurst." - Blaise Wigglesworth, "Oh! Magazine: Ryerson's Arts and Culture Voice".

"Grayhurst's poetry is a translucent, ethereal dream in which words push through the fog, always searching, struggling, and reaching for the powerful soul at its heart. Her work is vibrant and shockingly original," Beach Holme Publishers.

"Her (Allison Grayhurst's) poetry appears visceral, not for the faint of heart, and moves forward with a dynamism, with a frenetic pulse. If you seek the truth, the physical blood and bones, then, by all means, open the world into which we were all born," Anne Burke, poet, regional representative for Alberta on the League of Canadian Poets' Council, and chair of the Feminist Caucus.

"Read at your peril. You will never look at this world in quite the same way again. Your eye will instinctively search the sky for eagles and scan the dark earth for the slightest movement of smallest ant, your heart will reach for tall mountains, bathe in the most intimate of passions and in the grain and grit of our earth. Such is Allison Grayhurst. Such is her poetry," Eric M. Vogt, poet and author.

"Grayhurst is a great Canadian poet. All of Allison Grayhurst's poetry is original, sometimes startling, and more often than not, powerful. Anyone who loves modern poetry that does not follow the common path will find Grayhurst complex, insightful, and as good a poet as anyone writing in the world today. Grayhurst's poetry volumes are highly, highly recommended," Tom Davis, poet, novelist and educator.

"Allison Grayhurst is a great poet. All of her poetry is original, sometimes startling, and more often than not, powerful. Anyone who loves modern poetry that does not follow the common path will find Grayhurst complex, insightful, and as good a poet as anyone writing in the world today." Tom Davis, poet.



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