

**THE LONGING
TO BE**

ALLISON GRAYHURST

The Longing To Be

Allison Grayhurst

Edge Unlimited Publishing

The Longing To Be
Copyright © 1998 by Allison Grayhurst
First addition
All rights reserved

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage, retrieval and transmission systems now known or to be invented without permission in writing from the author, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review.

Cover Art (sculpture):
“Longing” © 2012 by Allison Grayhurst
Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data
Grayhurst, Allison, 1966-
The Longing To Be

“Edge Unlimited Publishing”
Poems.
ISBN-13: 978-1478197683
ISBN-10: 1478197684

The Longing To Be by Allison Grayhurst
Title ID: 3925690

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| The Longing to Be | 7 |
| These I See | 8 |
| Crush This Colour | 9 |
| Together Journeying | 10 |
| First Snow of Winter | 11 |
| In His Arms | 12 |
| Jealousy | 13 |
| With arms stretched, | 14 |
| In The Days | 15 |
| Swim | 17 |
| He is | 18 |
| Once | 19 |
| The Stone-frame | 20 |
| Nothing Without You | 21 |
| Days To Break The Richest Dream | 22 |
| A Month Unthawed | 23 |
| New Lovers | 24 |
| Donkey | 25 |
| As The Serpents Scatter | 26 |
| Possessive | 27 |
| Party | 28 |
| The Jesus Fire | 29 |
| Chosen Kin | 30 |
| Birthright | 31 |
| Lessons at the End of the Rope | 32 |
| Nights With You | 33 |
| Imprisoned | 34 |
| In Spite of Vows | 35 |
| You Are | 36 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Where Gold Is Blood | 37 |
| The Storm That Saves | 38 |
| Of Body and Spirit | 39 |
| Wedding | 40 |
| Three Blessings in the Shade | 41 |
| Like the Colour Blue | 42 |
| The Tension and Terror of Being | 43 |
| Without Opportunity | 44 |
| Matriarch | 45 |
| What Day? | 46 |
| Dying Sculptor | 47 |
| Show of Light | 48 |
| Baptized | 49 |
| By Water | 50 |
| Here, I am lifted | 51 |
| Upon These Hours Sleeping | 52 |
| In Praise of Walt Whitman | 53 |
| Addiction | 54 |
| This | 55 |
| Child Unconceived | 56 |
| Animal Sanctuary | 57 |
| The Last Walk of the Mayor of Casterbridge | 58 |
| The Path I Followed | 59 |
| Under the Coupling Clouds | 60 |
| The Aging Artist | 61 |
| Surrender | 62 |
| The Quenchable Drain Within | 63 |
| Second Farewell | 64 |
| Every Hope Inhaled | 65 |
| Heart's Exchange | 66 |
| Through This Strand of Time | 67 |
| When I Close My Eyes | 68 |
| Unrelenting Groove | 69 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Walk Low | 70 |
| Blood Spent | 71 |
| The Hope of Lovers | 72 |
| Elizabeth Barrett Browning | 73 |
| Quebec City | 74 |
| The leach that reaches | 75 |
| My Heart Creeps | 76 |
| Leaning in the Weeds | 77 |
| elegy of this day being | 78 |
| Heritage | 79 |
| Dream | 80 |
| Purest Obedience | 81 |
| Overcoming | 82 |
| Because of Yesterday | 83 |
| Breaking the Circle | 84 |
| Once I Cried | 85 |
| Heart-bearing | 86 |
| path | 87 |
| Of The Same Cloth | 88 |
| Face | 89 |
| After twelve | 90 |
| Near Daybreak | 91 |
| In a Stillness | 92 |
| Praying Mantis | 93 |
| Nightmare | 94 |
| Out of Poverty | 95 |
| For a Lifetime | 96 |
| From the Corner of My Eye | 97 |
| Everything Happens | 98 |
| Beyond Instinct or Dreams | 99 |

The Longing to Be

On the dregs of dreams
abandoned, the unfortunate
fall, for reasons that trace
no discernible pattern
but that the sun and stars
are every beings' only known
permanence and even the strongest
have been seen to perish. Beautiful,
carnivorous Earth that holds
the intensity of a tiger, through your
worst crimes forgiven and your greatest acts
of compassion remembered, here like clay
we await your wind to mould
what our own hands cannot control,
to take our will and seal our every desire
with your brown and luscious blood.

These I See

Shape of a dragon
in a cloud of
great grey density.

Dreams of an empty shell
sitting cracked like the earth
after a quake, before the last flesh perishes.

Shape of a leaf blowing past
an old man.

Dreams of the children
who run to catch it.

Shape of a bird
wooing the sun with
a beakful of roses.

Dreams of raised arms,
protesting this
and every gesture.

Shape of a worm
drowning.

Dreams of a human heart
breaking but doing nothing
to save its bloating body,
only eyes that look, look and feel
the sheer mercilessness of time
as its wormish head ceases its struggle, floats
obsolete as though never knowing
of existence.

Crush This Colour

**Crush this colour
of filthy grey that summons
all my parts to follow
into a labyrinth where
birds and beasts never go.**

**Because I am alone in this nadir,
and bitterly red is the hope I hold
to relieve me of this sterile station, crush
my name and when that is done,
my tomb and all its witnesses.**

**Strike this snare with almighty
light, let words and flesh fade until
only the nightmare fire remains
to burn and turn me once again
death-knowing, anew.**

Together Journeying

We lie in a long neck,
 constricting,
in a roach-ridden cell, in the trunks
 of earth-weary trees.

We are like the octopi
 stretching all arms available
but finding only weeds, the droppings
 of guppies and a child's broken bracelet.

The weird breath of birds lights up the sky as we lie
 in the places darkness knows best, as we lie
in a gesture of chaos, biting our shells,
our eucharist hope.

 Wine on our foreheads, thick as whale blubber,
wine like drink to our intelligent kisses. I kiss
my lover floating homebound on black ice,
floating past
 flowershops and hearts of many hues.

My lover lies where I lie in promises
 vague but quenching.

Down the screaming nerve. Through
outside crowds and social duty.

 We do not believe in the contagious code
but in the slug at midnight under the stone,
curled tight against the predator's paw,
in flesh-driven grief, in the bed-pan
 under the invalid,
 and the infant's hanging feet.

We rest in both grey-soiled glue and in sunset haze.
We rest with appetite, beginning.

First Snow of Winter

First snow of winter falling.

**The bed is unmade.
Rooftops are beautiful
and white.**

**Home is a birthday cake,
a painting etched in crimson
light. The cats are intently watching.
The sounds outside are few. One lover
is sleeping, the other breathes in
the wintry view.**

**Like a cleansing, like an unmarked page
or a slice of Italian bread,
the snows descend, bringing warmth
to the veins, bringing the comfort
of sweaters and knitted socks, bringing
bodies together and the year to an end.**

**First snow of winter falling
like another chance, like a farewell
to colours fading and flowers on the graves.**

**First snow of winter arriving,
its tide of working magic
caressing away the rage of the city
with its cold, immaculate embrace.**

In His Arms

**In his arms the blind night sees. I see
an eagle's nest, and nocturnal
beasts rejoice. I see a path unbroken
by doubt and windows where moonlight slides in.**

**With all the weeping of disappointments
met and overcome, of drinking bitterness
like sleet and trouble beating vibrant
in moments of silence in dreams of something new,
he lies like a legend fossilized, asleep on his back,
giving worth to the whole of a lifetime's suffering,
worth to this continent of drizzling skies.
And I am lucky, more than fulfilled.**

**In his arms I can hear a prayer echoing
from the branches of trees, I can feel
my despair forgiven, cradled in the flow
of his tenderness.**

Jealousy

The deep yawn of night
follows this. Follows into a strong fire
of orange and blue rhythms
that destroys all but blame. I blame no one
but my heart that twists on
this precipice. I have chosen
this intractable devotion for you -
you who can take the gravity from my walk,
leave me a fugitive, limping
for unholy escape.

What follows this is the street
at three in the morning, starved of children,
agitated and cruel.

What follows this is nothing
I can cope with, is my imagination
bent on the morbid decay of love,
is my faith underfoot
and you as someone other
who would steal the lyric and bone
from our good tomorrow.

With arms stretched,

**hands clasped
toward the sky, faith has entered his cold eyes
like a dog dying, losing its connection.**

**Facing the guilt of a thousand sinners, he feels
the cracking of his heart, leans on the shoulder of his
hardest enemy and longest friend, touching
his dead lover as though death were a good thing,
a place of unearthly hope.**

**He has made up his mind to let the axe fall
and let his guilt be finally buried
along with the light he sought to master.
He asks his friend to do the deed, to free him
like her who surrendered to spiritual trust.**

**And his black coat falls, his pale complexion
is beautiful, flushed on such a threshold.
He bows his head, waiting like one
whose purity has been restored, waiting
with brave anticipation.**

In The Days

**In the days of Weatherspoon
and Enos, the spring arrived
like the drumbeat of an enemy tribe.
In the temples little birds died,
sacrificed like a good tasting brew
for the sake of the whole.
Lovers wept upon their own finished graves
and children played only when they were told.
Grandparents turned their backs on their kin
and marigolds died before their colour set in.**

**In the hours of everafter, when cats and dogs
were sold as beef, and all the leaders prided
themselves on the accomplishment of peace,
people took showers three times a day and
counted their money like virtues. Depth was
crushed by medicine. Brothers and sisters shared
no childhood secrets they wouldn't disclose. Volumes
of books rested on the public shelf of mystery stories
and "How To Better Yourself"s.**

**In the minutes before our doom,
righteousness glowed in florescent
orange and blue on the political dreams
of the go-with-the-flow many and the radical few.
Women danced in leather on the streets
as strobe lights flashed the desperation
in their eyes, for those who could, to see.
Men marched like in the years of war
side by side in white T-shirts and blue jeans
looking out for prey, for any non-conformer
to come their way.**

**In the time of now
crosses are fashionable
and people are only frightened of what
the impossible may bring. There is a donation
in every can and tyrants walk with wide, toothy smiles
shaking everybody's hand. Beggars collapse
in hoards on the streets, and even the best of them
shake the dust off their feet, hardened like Cain,
by whispers of self-preservation and futility.**

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 flight, one
who has left his peace forever behind.

He is

Filled with a something
that lifts his heavy chin.

Filled with the silence of woods,
with a perpetual moon in a perpetual
night, with the bones of small creatures
and other luckless prey.

Born of strong sorrow, stronger than pride
or a mouth open for song, he is
my lover rocking in the shade, he is
a forward marching on yellow autumn grass,
he is flying over stones and fog, over
the sigh of doom, falling into a gracious depth.

He is looking where the light never goes, into
the eyes of a subliminal cry.

He is a quick moving cat moving across a
barn's black roof. He is my umbrella,
my need and my deliverance.

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 and 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.

The Stone-frame

**The stone-frame sings
my threshold, sings my
heart's futility. It is
so hard a cage it makes
my knuckles crack, it breaks
my bones from too much leaping.
The stone-frame wishes to be my womb, but
could never be a comforting hovel,
or resting ground away from
world-wind and flame.
The stone-frame maims my voice
from protesting, strikes a match
to my endurance and holds me in
its damp, dusty dorm.
The stone-frame lets me dream of miles
away from its door, but never lets more
than my imagination go wandering.
The stone-frame is my perception trapped
in faithless monotony, is my coward smile
that fears the chaos outside
its grey, unchanging walls.**

Nothing Without You

Like a hawk whose
shadow falls first on the mouse
before its talons carry the prey away,
so first falls the static shade
where confusion and useless struggles reign,
before the soul is scooped into a killing sleep,
and all that was familiar falls, below the manic moon.

I tried to give away the things I was wedded
to keep, I tried to drown in the fire of your demand,
but the wage was too high though my glass eyes still glow
for the house of your deliverance.

And in my bed where the prayers arrive to grip
and alter my unconscious flow, I feel you near like
a lover and like death, patiently waiting my embrace.
Your drink is wonderful, though
my passions falter and my habitual fears are relentless.
Your love beats the bitterness from my breast,
rips my nightmares
of their shields so that I crumble like a wood-stack with
one middle-wood-piece pulled, until I have
no reverie for all these worldly things.

And with my self-might crushed and your mercy
by my side, all but that love is made the fool,
subdued then denied.

Days To Break The Richest Dream

**Eucharist thin
and glued to the roof of the mouth,
hope comes stale, comes
in farmers' overalls, carrying a snide,
deceptive charm.**

**Hope is for him a sad mason building
a phantom hearth. For him, these days
weigh like unwashed hair on his fixed brow. For him
these days are tedious as housework.**

**But he does not fade like some do into
masculine despair which is anger,
which is not the saddle he mounts,
but perseveres with a steady pace,
his long fingers waving in perfect rhythm
inside a room, where hardships reach living
but mild.**

A Month Unthawed

**You sleep each day
without sunlight.
Gentle, as always, you
resign to the fatal bruise
inside. You look with sick,
half-closed eyes, with love,
barely visible, but in your veins
death is unveiling, deliberate.
I am the one to hold you,
to weep a yellow suicide,
to press your thinning back
with my palm, maternally
holding, whispering of sunflowers
and of faith.**

**Any other would have sank
into the hairy blood of wrath and blame,
but you and I, with an affinity between
that no illness can kill, are bearing this as one.**

**You are the favourite seashell found as a child,
a warm hearth in a room of shadows.
You have comforted me when the world
harassed and promised to rule.
And now humbled to lose what I cannot lose,
the doorway is opened.
Hope is what has been given.
Strong together in this giant pain,
we will raise each hour as a lifetime
and believe, unflinchingly, in miracles.**

New Lovers

**In rooms of wood
and desire's breath
they move like beggars
in one another's arms,
lulling their elements together,
lucky to forget the world outside, to live
inside passion's timeless dark,
ebbing in their throats and loins and in
the touching of hands.**

**Blue like hot fire and like water
nakedly combined, the signature of love is
mounted on their foreheads & toenails,
on dust cloths and in the bathroom sink.
Fully revived, they are like infants
awake to all the animals and sounds
spirits make.**

**It floods them in dangerous peace.
It is shadowless, apple-pure, a blessing
to cling to when time drives their hearts
into realms of pride's separate sleep.**

Donkey

Large liquid eyes,
a slow four-legged walk,
seeking true affection from my hand
that wanders along your cheeks and nose -
its gravel grey, brittle as the straw
you sleep in.

Small and old as so many lonely are,
you follow me along the fence,
patient for my touch, for a soft voice
to speak your name or a palm
to stroke your dusty back.

Like the feel of foreign sand
or the miracle of a flower,
our hearts join in this brief fraction of time
as I stop walking, offering some plucked grass -
a token of our mutual need.

As The Serpents Scatter

I lean
my back on the clock.

I drop the bitten sandwich
in a cellar full of mice. Joy
dries like the singing grave,
dries the eyes of sorrow. Snip. Snip.

I am burning a blade over the neck
of Death. I am under the kiss
of a leopard - turtle bones
in my back pocket.

Deep as loneliness are habits that nurse
these days with doing.

The eggshell is carved
like a prayer repeated - known
and drained of substance.

I roar on roads and highways.
I am the sound spiders love to carry,
love to hunt and consume.

I am a white feather caught in a cloud.
Do you see the house by the water?
Do you know the trap of each stepping stone?

I turn my back on the seducer's claw.
I have my hope to blame.

But there is love in an owl's wild eyes.
And there is a dream I cannot bury.

Possessive

This vice I keep
is like a limb, blistered
and useless. I swallow
it down a bloody throat,
into a pocket of stubborn hurt. There,
it unmuzzles my scream
and shrouds the sun in tar.

Why do I harvest the fear, the desperation,
in dreams where the bonds of love
collapse and I convulse
in betrayal's shock?
Why won't it go when my lover is true,
and honest tenderness
is the substance of his heart?

This vice I drink like
a hallucinogenic, obscures a living vow.
It has a face like an abscess, reeks
like an earthworm's underground home.
This vice comes cruel
as a hunter's bullet, comes like vinegar
in the eyes, baptizing my nerves
in a thieving rage, until I am
overwrought, fractured, ambushed
by its primal illogical cry.

Party

Rake the light,

I am alone upon
this distant stone.

I drum my plea,
no good for love
or beds of needed warmth.

I lose because I am not in need
of protection any more, because
my smile is drugged and time has dulled
the green glory of affection.

Stalk the depths where subtle glances can
separate the living and make hurt a hell
that is not snuffed out with each sip of drink.

Hang the flower-head on the wall, pray that life
is more than memories and gentle speaking.

I stand beside him. He is not in love,
but the highway is in his eyes, and the hummingbird
too, fluttering faster with each crack
of laughter.

It is the weather. It is no time for kissing,
but time for quiet sitting, for watching
the parasite inside grow to eclipse the sweet dream,
that gnaws a well of sensual sorrow
and is for always bonded - irrepressibly, your own.

The Jesus Fire

When I saw words
that no symbol shadowed,
old as life, stripped
of mask and sleep . . .

When my heart broke
from too much truth, broke
and was humbled, carried
and was humbled like a dragonfly
is by the wind . . .

When what was so familiar
became new, burning all space,
building the consciousness
of death, of choice, of the wanting communion . . .

When I was fed with this food
and my enemies ran naked in visions
of wounding beauty . . .

I was lifted
I was one among many, safe
as a sapling
sheltered by the brave devotion
of a lonely child.

Chosen Kin

**There is something
that binds us to share
our hardships like a team,
to talk for hours, burying
our inner enemies under the grass
of a richer shade.**

**There is a hawk riding our favourite
window, poems where our coffees sit,
warming our hands, the brittle veins.**

**There is you with your eccentric
brilliance, your diligent searching
and laughter of open endings.**

**There is this time given,
living on the same street,
a season in our lives graced,
an offering of salt and sun,
and a trust between that leaves
nothing up the sleeve, housing our hearts
where only family can tread.**

Birthright

**Always the soiled
creeping feather in my gut,
destroying my aspirations
with its ticklish bite.**

**Always me talking to spiders, caught
in a sack where only the dead cat does not struggle.**

**I know no one, know not why I burn
and recoil into my net, into
this nude rebellion and its futile rage.**

**I want a basket of grapes at my doorstep,
a child of my own.**

**I want to run barefoot on soft fruit, believe
there is more than the growing weight
of this chain and ladder.**

Lessons at the End of the Rope

**Be there to let the night wind in,
let it fill your bones with its darkness,
knead its spikes into each nerve,
until collapsed, unrecognizable, you
see yourself primal, stripped to the root
of ancestral fear, until you see
your house on fire, and all your children trapped.**

**Then begin with involuntary surrender
and let your eyelids hang limp and
the towel of your dignity too.
Let loneliness be your inheritance prize,
not the public judging eye.
Let the empty schoolyard be your bed.**

**Believe all the more within your doom
though God's love can appear pitiless
in the framework of time, it will arrive
fresh-faced, answering and apparent
when you trust the hood and ways
of the tide.**

Nights With You

**After all the marvel has flown
and the egg is minced inside
its nest, I feel you in my sleep
as a babe feels its mother's breast,
or a tribe its evening song.**

**I feel my skin brushed with gravel,
feel doubt sealing me inside its zoo,
feel my hope sink like money into a reeling sea,
then you with your labyrinth of love,
discover new ways to restore me, to hold me
close to your taut belly and drown
my breathing on your flesh.**

**I cross through the cabin doors. I soar within
November skies. My secrets are no longer mine.
And morning finds me strong in my footsteps,
patient once more.**

Imprisoned

**I cannot lose you
nor live as your body
nears death. And soon
the sun will descend and
your little breath will be the all
to fill my hours. Soon
friends will gather and kneel
for you and for me.**

**What a vicious teacher
this illness is, impotent and
sterile in its madness. Five
months immobilized by pain.
Lingering like a wasp lingers
near a babe's fresh face,
it takes with it our fear,
our anger, our hope, all but our love
that cranes its touch over this grief,
guiding us through the inevitable.**

In Spite of Vows

**Desire mends
the wax-faced age
of calm acceptance.
It is for her a child
belonging to bravery, hearing
clouds collide and command.
It is for her, a hand
regaining touch, a kitten
retrieved from the cold
or something underwater
finding gills to breathe.
It mends the crack in the
pavement. It is so long
coming, unavoidable
as the moan of taunted bees.
It is hers - strong ribbed, flushed,
eager to release whatever prevents
its satisfaction from being blessed
and openly achieved.**

You Are

You are simple
like death is simple,
like death is unmistakable,
containing the most feverish and trying
of mysteries within
its boundless domain.

You are beautiful
like a cat is beautiful
silently sitting,
galactic in its sensual form,
giving with its gaze
substance to voice and blood.

You are fire-driven
like stars and like sex,
in perpetual combustion,
with an inner pulse of endless
dance, dancing
in savage, mystical tides.

You are gentle
like a raindrop caught
in a lucky palm, gentle
like the shelter of a best friend's arms.

You are more than sun and bird and fox,
more than soil to my groundless heart.

All I bless and all I need,
I hold because of you.

No meaning nor madness
could replace the milk and breath
that you are.

Where Gold is Blood

Turn, turn

the tunnel darkly
to see the slash of destiny.

Wherever the unquenchable heart
crosses the common path, grief hisses on the tongue,
and like a falcon drenched in acid, death
discolours the air. The wax is broken,
fingers are frozen, butterflies weep, and
no grain of wheat will rise.

Give, give

what can only be given,
let the oil and ribbons fall.
Dreams are mortal, but not a vision,
for each must find the stride
of their chosen kin.

The Storm That Saves

**So he lives,
watching himself bemused in the mirror.
He lives his life with flying
pine needles and emaciated toads.
He wants to surprise the careful one
who guards against letting go.
He wants to fall at the heels of morning, dive
from branches into the open mouths of children
first learning the meaning of "mine". He is willing
to wrap himself in snake skin, dip his
features in tar, anything to reach
within a scalp and raise perception from
its daily doings.
He is the grave digger, the bee in need of a flower.
He is the body's sex, the yearning
engraved upon each bone,
a doorway in the tenebrous, compelling unknown.**

Of Body and Spirit

**I seek your mouth
of sensual burning,
its sponge-soft pressure
merging perfectly with mine.**

**I seek its subtle textures,
its waxing and waning, the way
it condenses my being into
its single substance, into
a movement of focused bloom.**

**I seek your hair, your blessed smell,
your hip bone rocking like
the whole of the sea over uncharted sands.**

**I seek your voice sweeping the air
with its rich unconscious moan.**

**I seek the taking of your hand,
the tension of our bodies balanced
in mutual, animal awakening.**

Wedding

Wake the house, the ants and dandelions too!

**His eyes are bright as candy,
they warm my earth and sky.**

**His hands deliver comfort
like a child's, they bud with open hunger
and reach with the strength of a grail.**

**His arms are sails bounded
for adventure.**

**His legs dash the firmament
into many stars.**

One day, this day he vows his everlasting to me.

**Wake the music from each lung and finger!
Wake the oyster from its shell!**

**Time yields to our togetherness.
Time quenches our blood in Spring.**

Three Blessings in the Shade

Two lone crows on a crust of snow
pecking to find sustenance. They,
the keepers of precious
wings and intelligent things
that seemed to sense my sorrow
as I passed, gave something back
which time took - a seed to see
equal wonder in the vast array of branches above
and in the muddied ice on ground.

A good person arrived and
with a brief turn of his lips, warmed my mind,
put colour where greyness had webbed my love
in a fatalist's prison.

I felt the three dance. I felt the simple,
the heroic and the awake. And driven
to merge with the blending foliage,
I was pulled toward the aching arms of high trees.
There, in flight, I was blessed.
I experienced a soft
and a useful death.

Like the Colour Blue

**Loud as a horse's
excited hoofs, night
springs into my station, sufficient
with its dread.**

**Would this delicate hurt
but fall away or undulate within
without my knowing, then I could
run on beaches or sit
in a rocking chair for hours,
leaving the brutal spawning clouds behind,
and learn the glory of a new opinion.**

The Tension and Terror of Being

**I see no brave and better
day than what we own.**

**I see no more precious challenge
than that which is given us -
to chose decisively between
goodness and malice, to long
for God and long criminals from
their slumber.**

**The heaviest pity, the most sheepish betrayal,
the refuge of ugly ambition, all murder done by pride
is but a shaky father preparing for the grave.**

**And to glimpse the light that offends the forsaken,
who would avert evil for a grain
of this glad devotion?**

Without Opportunity

**Because today you descend
the broken branch and meet
the soil, be hot against the vaulting
of your despair. Turn and let die
your mangled wanting, want for
tomorrow and that is all.**

**Angry terror troubles your eyes
and gloves your admirable strength.
But your fingertips are gentle, stroking
music out from death's dim head.
And your pulsing vision crosses city gardens,
repelling every complacency.**

**Because today your life is in bondage
to the ill-luck groan, and each obstacle seems
to make your desires
both a burden and a disgrace, I who know you
and know life's tyrannical fault, have only belief
to effect your numbed hopes,
have only what I know -
the greatness of your labour
and the way you have moved
my most hardened of vices, to turn
and face a kinder shore.**

Matriarch

Grandmother is reciting
a rhyme from Indian lore,
in the evening on the sofa as her
90 year old mouth loosens in the firelight,
and I am crowned with knowing
that here, beside her is a warmth
I never before could drink,
that beside her, other than strength and conviction,
is a softness that journeyed on in spite of
her husband's death, that lives in the motions
of her caramel hands clasped on her lap
in the evening on the sofa as this Christmas day sun
shimmers its last ray of savoury gold.

What Day?

**What day will I be like a stallion,
copper-coloured, brimming with
restlessness and love?**

**What day will I be looking at the lusting sun
and still remember the small - small
as a mouse's eyes, small like a dew drop
or a sparrow's swift heart?**

**What day will I know my luck has run out
and be brave with such a secret?**

**What day will the fear leave me
and when it does, will my nightmares
limp out of my skin to rot in the backyard,
gaining nothing on eternity?**

**What day will I lose my shoes,
run my road free of judgments and
the cold ghosts haunting, in pursuit?**

**What day will my being sleep,
sleep like a sculpture,
unknowing of hunger, unaffected
by its own inadequacies?**

Dying Sculptor

**A thousand nations
coil within her veins,
within hands whose blood
have slowed despite their
depth and ecstasy.**

**In her poncho of sunset orange-red,
in her hospital bed
where the dim light looms
through a window on the ninth floor,
she is adorned in conscious resolve.**

**Conscious of the pain that creeps under
her covers like an unwanted lover, creeps
through her body like a narcotic,
mauling her mind
chaotic and cruel.**

**Yet with an optimism that rages beyond
her physical doom, she watches
the conversing of trees and stars
from the window in her room, gently easing
in and out of sleep.**

Show of Light

Why is it like this - this untimely shift
from requiem to rhapsody
as your voice and manner tilts my heart
like the wind would direct the ripples in a stream?

I hurt alone in bed, resigned
to the falseness of your mouth, then
with morning, the lushness of your love
recites an elegy to my fear and once again,
adoring, I call you one with my own.

Who would guess that neither years nor vows
take the sour sting and peppermint wing
out from love's strong bones. But falling
forever - the darkness, the renewing song,
hands over bodies, yours & mine, as time
lies with us, perched as the watchman
on devotion's elusive bow.

Baptized

**Then when goodness was torched
with an indelible flame,
and toothless innocence
was molested by ambition, pale were the days
that followed, dashed against
the rocks of prophetic doom.**

**I was where I should not
have been, in jealousy's
neck-breaking grip. I was
in despair's limp embrace. And
the child I once was and the child that
fell among these faithless fears, grew up
clutched between the devil's burning fangs,
until I cracked and bore a new being
out of my tattered shell.**

**Now when my lips part for air
and are happy to receive
and love is daily fostered,
darkness lives like one more covenant gift
to milk for the heart's deep roar
and resurrection.**

By Water

**As flesh pours into flesh,
at once gentle, then convulsing,
she burdens onto him
her conscious mouth to let it be
a mouth of primal need, needing his
fingers and belly, his lips of perfect
artistry. She burdens onto him
her womanhood, to be
voicelessly living like long ago,
before shame and analysis was known.**

**Finding death in such miraculous merging,
finding immortality in the immediacy
of loving without symbol, they hold together
like a long-sung note,
delivered.**

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.**

Upon These Hours Sleeping

I look upon hours sleeping
with dreams of this world,
dreams of shallow greed
and changing lusts, and
I dissect the shadows I once
bent to embrace, filled with their
shadowy blood, their saltless blood,
suffering still under the forces of
drudgery and unnamable despair.
I hear lunchboxes scream a cancerous
pleasure. I tell the sky to hold me
in its infinite blue womb, to make me master
of these smallish needs, to fill me with
a love to latch onto that will guide
in summer and winter both, that will not
be outdone, despite the pit I now descend
and tomorrow's slow struggle out.

In Praise of Walt Whitman

**He wandered as an individual,
care-full and tender with all he touched.**

**He embraced beauty in his arms
by embracing a young man's dying limbs or
the trunk of a tree, hundreds of years old.**

**Faithful, clean, pursuing
vitality and depth with compassionate strength,
he was what each hopes to be,
entirely oneself, unafraid of battle
or of withering or joy, unafraid to stake
everything
for the necessity of honest expression.**

**He, with his brave, child-like being, waded
in the brutality of war, in the ponds of dazzling
and delicious Nature, equal in his love
and in his giving.**

Addiction

**Today I am preserved from the withering chill.
I am held at a hair's length from misery,
but held and still frightened.
Frightened of my pulse
that beats (poor like it is)
in defeat's domain.**

**All my passions betray
the nurturing hood and spade,
drag me down to horrors that hound, that make
my spirit overflow
with nullifying waters.**

**But today I am spared
the snarl and self-pity,
spared the blank death that outruns
every attempt to breathe, spared
because I asked for a little faith and
was given.**

This

is yours,

**and all that comes
from your silence
into the wounded world,**

comes to rectify what is confused

**comes to give substance to each
shape and circumstance.**

**This that quickens our pulse,
makes us scream or praise, cuts
the artery of our ego then mends with
communion.**

**This is always good,
destroys (in endurable amounts)
the attachments that keep us from you.**

**This is our stumblingblock
and our cane, arrives with the most mercy,
healing what can be healed
by setting the rest of us aflame.**

Child Unconceived

**Tomorrow may bring you nearer
to me, but then it may cause
grief that no instinct nor love could
rectify.**

**If I cannot form the dustgrain of your life
in my womb, cannot carry
your limbs within my belly proud
and drench my veins
with our combined blood -
(you and I merged for a time, guiltless,
expressing the earthy essence of God
with each our individual heartbeats),
then be damned my entrails
and this longing
that drives my impatient summer.**

**When I see your face for the first time,
and your father and I behold your
living smile, be sure
there will be a depth of welcome
that no hardship could turn cold
nor ever diminish.**

Animal Sanctuary

**He turns his hawk head
to view the shells of turtles streaking
the still-shroud of water in tanks
as blue as sky.**

**He lifts a leg and talons tensed,
pivots to defend against an enclosing shadow.**

**With whitish eyes and an impossible urge
to fly, he hops along his man-made perch toward
the cages where squirrels leap
from metal to wood, scattering like leaves
in unpredictable flurry.**

He listens to the ducks' lipless sounds.

**Spring, he will never experience again, nor know
the scent of a pent-up life released like
sunflowers blooming, or the feel of the moon,
colder but more comforting than being touched.**

**He is without time or tribe,
and like fire, he haunts
by just being.**

The Last Walk of the Mayor of Casterbridge

**Heaving strange
the pride in my mouth that will not drown.
After all love given and failed, to hold only this body
of a starved finch, gold but lifeless like all else
that has inspired me on. I shifted extremes, bandaged
my disappointments in bitter hate and landscapes
where only serpents were resurrected.**

**Of my self, I have no virtue to defend, what I have
is impulsive and merciless, and a fortune that has placed my fate
at the feet of a cunning enemy.**

**That I was saved from the seal of drunken suicide.
That I saw my own image float in the river, giving
seed to a non-judgemental faith, and she, my daughter
(who knew nothing of resentment), cradled my cure in the
compassion of her eyes. I walk with a simple fool trailing behind
who says I was rough but somehow kind, who seems to show
concern when I stumble and for my face so down,
it will never see daylight again.**

**He carries me to an abandoned shack
where soon I will die - he, unaware of the killer that I am.**

**If my daughter finds me, never let her know
the loneliness that drove my desperate deeds or the fear
I felt of losing her natural devotion. If she finds me, tell her not
to put flowers where I rest. Tell her not to grieve the aftermath
dust of the likes of me - a crushed,
unatonable man.**

The Path I Followed

The topping night
presses its muddied finger
on me. Wounded, like
a country seized by internal strife.
Wounded, like a forehead fraught
with grief as ghosts spy on
and dissemble sensual minds.
The unmarried night, companion
to discordant prayers that rise as hopes
fall, handcuffs my despair to its
wet, warmless belly. My breast breaks
as I walk past porches, a schoolyard, new-cut
grass, breaks to hear the voices of strangers
so unconnected to my own, breaks in the night
like a sparrow between talons, says not a word
but walks further to where
no eye summons the gift of kindness,
and love is given without a gentle tongue.

Under the Coupling Clouds

**Under the coupling clouds
weddings and funerals
reign, faith is crushed like
a blade of grass beneath feet and destinies
capsize. Forging through life's worst mishaps,
enduring hearts still burn great
and potent dreams.**

**While reeling in the cries
of rat-bitten love,
comes legends of courageous
forgiveness.**

**Under these coupling clouds
people heed morning as an adored
second chance. Habits break
to let begin a blazing birth
received.**

The Aging Artist

**The breath of illness beating upon your flesh.
The dizzy and slow-paced walk causing you
for the first time to know dependency.**

**A breaking down of smiles and thoughts.
A terrain, where even your hands can't move enough
to create the sculptures that inspire you
to ward off the grave.**

**Your mind has weathered
an age of nagging conformity, has risen,
individual, brave in your isolation.**

**How lonely the trees must seem, peering from
your cabin doors. How lovely the sounds of waves
and wildlife, mingled in undying symphony.**

**What mourning, what wonder you must know,
with your eyes as blue and clear as they are old,
as you sit at your table -
 those years of longing past
 and the peace, at last, beginning.**

Surrender

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

I yielded toward a winding stairway
that led to where footprints travelled
through vines, through treeless grounds,
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.

The Quenchable Drain Within

Like pale blood that rises
from cut skin, I see how poor
my devotion is.
I see my mind entranced
by frivolous difficulties
and mean shadows that drown
my lover's heart. I do not do. I dissolve
my conviction by distraction and thick
is my vanity that pulses louder than
my any prayer.

But like the undying air
I am comforted through
every break and self-betrayal.
Forgiveness drives out the ache
that keeps me immobilized,
where all is stultified by guilt.

With you I am whole,
despite my drifting thread-thin
desires and despite my own love
yearning.

Second Farewell

Thin like a crane's neck
or a starling's yellow beak
you loved.

Your voice too, I could not
brand in such darkness, could
only hope I was not deceived.
But there inside your empathetic
eyes was a sting, cold
as a dead animal's body.

I gave again my heart to be
grabbed by your airy claw. I lived
to hold one more winter in my hand,
to feel the bite, the monstrous white, for you.

I close the drapes to another sun.
I think of lone gravel roads of centuries ago
and am content to forget you.

I think of schoolyards where best friends play
- running, holding hands.

Every Hope Inhaled

**Everyday there is no day
where the fullness of his being
goes unhatched.**

**Not a day when I do not smell
his smell and hunger
for the rub of his lips.**

**Not a day when he stands so distant
I forget the kinship we share,
the mousey tide he sprung me from
and the gro
und of faith he thawed in my breast.**

**Here in July with my fishscope-view
and the shifting of circumstantial thorns,
when the tombstone tumbles and each handful
of hope has been hacksawed off,
he alone helps justify
and lamps my richest theme.**

Heart's Exchange

**I look to see
your naked back
against the day's light
and see a language
translating the flow
of flesh, into wave and wind and all
that moves with the bouncing tide.**

**I am not blind
to the weeds of whirlwind circumstances.**

**But together, with eyes locked
in knowing love, we are like a mother with her child or
like that child, feeling (on open lips) a noon rainfall.**

Through This Strand of Time

Breeze, I long to let lull
between my hairstrands
and move my heart to gentle sleep,
forgetting you and the reach of your
impulsive heart. Into my hands
the bit-bar of longing wanders, so that
my fingers scale the air in hopes of climbing
beyond this helpless loss.

Your primal vision is latched
to my own - I see you in dreams, with
your black eyes and unshifting devotion.
I see you when I walk, in crushed snails' shells
and rainwater puddles.

Through the hours of morning,
the shrill of not-knowing burns like plastic
on my tongue. I am
not far from falling, not far
from letting a pale tear take my all.

When I Close My Eyes

**The voice I hear soothes my unwatered ribs,
speaks generous and strong that the
stagnant heat that has made them brittle
will pass like a wave that passes
over a rock, accommodating yet
still whole. The heat will die like heat
eventually does, rising up into
all-absorbing arms.**

**I will be removed from this vultured pit,
and when removed the pit will be remembered
as a womb. Then I will be praising
its every depth and syllable.**

**The voice I hear soothes my flesh-stripped knees,
singing of a mercy, indestructible.**

Unrelenting Groove

**Waiting to be pushed
from this groove. Groove of tilted hell where
a dull blade hammers like bad memories on the
seedlings of my thumb stroke.**

**Waiting like this, lamed by the unturning earth.
And music does not come, nor does the comfort
of a higher command. Trail of living,
of a brown boulder rolling forever down
Sisyphus' hill, of the hunter's proud cry
and the prey's ignored pleading. Trail of living
clockwise, of spinning around from week to week, waiting.**

**I am here. I am of anger and feathers both,
like the hawk that watches the constellations
to find its way home, I am so alone out here, feeling
not the pressing of lips my lover gives nor the kind
embraces of friends. Feeling again and again
the marrow sinking from my bones - and frail,
frail like an arrow without its tip, like a worm
on the pavement, drying up.**

**I am of the dead red cardinals' corpse. I am
of the plucked flower and the cancerous throat.
I am not
who I thought I would be.**

Walk Low

**Walk low in case I forget
the roots of my deliverance.**

**Walk low so my head knows it is human,
and my heart touches daily the earth I will
return to.**

Walk low in days of joy, in hours of toil.

**Walk low when leaping over burning fields,
into a relentless hunger.**

**Walk low on the land and café corners,
kindled by the sun's yellow grain.**

**Walk low, remembering how I turned from
another's need, held a dead starling
with eyes unable to weep, and thought
myself good for getting through.**

**Red wagon on its side. Red dream filling my
mouth like fire.**

**Walk low for whatever in me that is true,
was given by and belongs
to only you.**

Blood Spent

**I rest these limpid hands
on your face
where my shame falls.**

**For I was colour once, then I
turned chaotic like an insect
in a duststorm, swirling in
frail deathness, swirling in the
choking, greying air, sick against
you, cursed against you my morbid howl.
I was sad, but more than that, I was
falling from a great height, like
a grape to cold pavement. I was sunless,
and the maggots swarmed my mind, nibbling
my nerves with their hundred tiny mouths.
I was indulging, unable to control the violent
famine scissoring my breast. I spewed
my foaming tears on you. I came
destroying of every song.**

The Hope of Lovers

With thin love
and a heart that pangs
unnourished, lovers
meet to undo their
bitterness and know again
undiscerning grace.

Meeting in passion's excessive
persuasion, all heavy wounds rise
to dissolve as though never there at all,
then reappear as embedded and destructive
as they really are.

They reappear beyond
any calm abstraction, as lovers lean on
the blindness of each other
to find their individual sight.

As lovers lean to advance with the strength
of two made whole, and lean to reach
the truth of love (forever re-told).

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

**A visionary of intricate simplicity -
her mind was a hymn
of starving tenderness, her voice,
like manna to the desperately lonely.**

**For forty years, away from friendly enchantments,
isolated by illness and the societal conditions
of womanhood, she held her belief intact and found
a kindred grief, a kindred gentleness
living in a man. Living for her,
a love at last, to parallel her intense
devotion. Living for her, a love awake to eternity,
terrible in its purity, saving.**

**She died one day in the depths
of her lover's arms, leaving behind
her legacy, recorded by words
of faith and the rhythms of
those flooding fires.**

Quebec City

On plains of autumn green
where hardly bird or squirrel roam,
the dream we find by holding hands
is like a wave of sunshine
undulating on our brows.

On streets of winding stone, old
as Medusa's smile, old as wounded
pride resting on an enemy's throne,
we laugh at the struggling day - mouths
full of kisses and a hunger soothed to sleep
by so many unforced smiles.

Up stairs once crushed by cannon ball fire
we lift our limbs to see where the city wall
extends. We are both thinking
of the good day behind, both sniffing
the devouring scent of unforgotten history.

Evening drifts through our hair.
We are alone, like all babes are and lovers too
who have perfectly communed
beneath this Northern sky.

The leach that reaches

into my fleshy eye,
cramps and blinds my bed
of grand delight.
The straw I crouched in when a kid
is all that remains
of childhood's play,
is with me wherever I go,
scratching my skin beneath my clothes.
Hard is the squeeze of the agonized wind
arriving where the sun cannot follow.
I am that wind, a maiden puff of breeze
that wanders without knowing
away from the sky.
A woman's time, five days that crack
the palm and rid the attic
of all sane hope.
Because the voice is madness.
Because there are funerals in my fridge
and mouths opening and closing on the wall.
Tonight, this is home and nothing to do.
Tonight, my mind is forsaken
by my body's blood and mood.

My Heart Creeps

My heart creeps through the caverns of death, examining each pothole, each lost, decaying soul. And there I find you curled against the light, resigned to the apathy that has infected your flow. I drift to where the weepers are and the howlers of animal grief. With me, you go, though your head is barely lifted and your eyes are dull like sanded jewels. With me, through the eerie tunnels where stones lay in wait for us to stumble upon - stones of helpless rage, stones of defiant fear, of overwhelming hopelessness, of blaming life for what must be endured. We manage together beyond these rocks of bitter doom to an opening where an angel's steady hand strokes our spines, loves us in our wanting, though we see no change, see only sickness, months ahead without cause or cure. The angel sleeps beside you, merges its goodness with people who help to give me strength so I can give you what you need. We journey as friends whose souls combine. We press foreheads and wait for the burden to break. The angel speaks in the wings of crows who pass our home day and night. The angel speaks through the T.V. screen, through the smile of your compassionate caretaker. It tells me to hold on, to hold you, be patient in this grief. The angel holds my hand. He cradles you in his dress. He tells us death is nothing. Death will not come. He sacrifices his breath to you, then kneels for your recovery.

Leaning in the Weeds

**Drink for the stopping of stormy pride, not
for the one word irreparable
under the sun.**

**When longing ceases for everything
but the grave and the mind spins in
shock, in rage, then what could
never be, becomes real enough to erase good memory.
Hope and love's security crash in the cumulative point -
a wound released that will consume more and more.
Hear the mock of watching angels, the friend
beside you, happy for your defeat.
Why does envy ring a lunatic groan,
as if it was pure instinct that cannot be controlled?
Where does the courage hide to face this bitter,
blinding ghost?**

**Through the night of blasphemous pain,
leaping into the burn of violent betrayal,
no morality can restrain this filthy eye -
defeated, deformed, surrounded on all sides.**

elegy of this day being

At the throat, brushed green like tile I shine.
The devil says "hum-drum"
as the eel struggles, futile like a wagging tail.
So many broken, hating with the hardness of crocodiles
and ants, pulling along their dead,
to consume, knowing nothing of sorrow or forgiveness.
All night I sit with my naked thighs
on the carpet, red from the heat.
What point could there possibly be
to all this pain, the death
of others, the sickness that swarms in mid-air?
Hurricanes hit the graveyards.
A gull tilts on a telephone wire. I wish to bid goodbye.
I wish for ice-cream cones in my fridge,
a handful of poppies to give some child,
any child, I meet.
I see dead eyes in my dream,
glossed with mucous and unbearable vacancy.
How do I serve when the world is so cold?
The humpbacks know this, the midgets
and also the centipedes.
I want to hide in rooms where
infants are sleeping or salamanders nurse their young.
The darkness is in me. The ground deceives me,
changes colours as I go.
Let us go now, my nightmares
and I, go under the light, go until
our heart's blood is free-falling, exposed.

Heritage

In a room of celibate smiles,
in a fever of shame and reprimand
they hold the symmetry of hardness and
idolatry, they adore their
dying god like a babe, adore
his bleeding wounds and delicate face.
They curse the children for their freedom,
forgetting the tenderness he spoke,
forgetting the force of renewal
that penetrated his every sharing speech
and unnerving demand.
They axe away the threat of all non-conformity,
maul the flesh of each guiltless dreamer.
They hold back what he said each must give, blessing
only snivelling sentiment and hands offering gold.
They are in beds leaning next to spells,
cuddled close to candlelight and the demeaning lure
of confession. In a room of fur coats where hearts
never dare to melt, they judge with turned backs
what they cannot kill or control.

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.**

Purest Obedience

**Like a fierce wind
driven by the fires of Jerusalem, he
overtakes me from my eyelashes to my
fingernails, mends the hole in my sock,
the scar on my lip.**

**Like a new truth spoken, like the
veils of God dropping, he calls me
to his table, cleans my confusion,
spins me on my axle and holds his hand to mine.**

**He is the one thing guiding,
the one that takes all else into itself,
saturating me with good fear
and with the safety that children know
beside a parent's accepted love.**

Overcoming

As the fledgling swallow falls
onto the rainy ground,
so false shields fall, leaving
us raw inside the middle, wet inside
the middle, spilling forth our old defence.

As the snows come in spring,
so greyness can cloak the brightest
change because it is change and is
hard to come by.

As two old people talk with their hats
and canes, so the angels talk to our hearts,
steadily being, patiently being beside
our every gesture.

As is the lamp in a winter's night, so
is the grace that feeds our eyes
with its kindness. And holy is the one
who stumbles but finds a way to stand.
And holy is the effort to love when the dragon
embraces our being within its scaly arms,
tries to break our faith with fiery addiction, or
with bitterness as blue as its damp, hungering tongue.

Because of Yesterday

Through this dark dread I will glide
like the devil's tail beating
my mark on every hope and innocence.

When the rain falls I will be without humble hands
to receive, I will have lost my one good gift in life.
I will clock the years as one who feeds
on the thinning muscle of memory.

And in bed, curled against an indifferent wall,
my mind will turn toward a new myth
to encapsulate my joy. I will grow old
like love does, like children do, like the sparrow will
who rejoices despite a heavy snow. I will be without
your hand to hold and forever my heart
will know no other.

Breaking the Circle

Trapped like a boat
under a wave or like
a girl in adolescent angst,
I feel the pouring of all my emotions,
wooing me to an attic hide-a-way.
There is no answer but to leap
from this sting, from the weeks
snagging my music, leap
from my birth, into a new heritage,
a journey of dreaming my madness alive.
Where will the crows be when I fall?
At my doorstep or above on telephone
wires, conveying comfort with their eyes?
Where will I fall from this navy sky? -
a word on a grain of rice, a lamp in a window,
a dying, but lucid voice? Seashells
collected as a child. The river is blind.
Trapped now and holding - soon it will end and
the trees outside will whisper, developing
a new landscape of imagination.

Once I Cried

Once I cried the conscious death,
reborn in the orb of humiliation,
mopping the slime off floors,
nausea permeating the base of my spine.

Once I was trapped in a wavering faith,
shifting in a restless sleep
from nightmare to being awake.
My skin was caked in lime, scorched by
the unharvested dream.

Quick the sky cracked as though scissors
sliced right through,
and the spell of suicidal defeat reshaped
into an era that was past and never to be relived.

The house door opened, the sore removed,
the picture frame expanded to encompass
more than I ever knew.

And now with rent unpaid and time
a driving axe, the grass looks gold
as my dignity blazes through the flood
like a beloved ship unchained.

Heart-bearing

**Here our lover's seed
speaks secretly from its shoots of giving rays.**

**Here there is no drug-red hurt,
no drowning in the juices of jealousy.**

**Here no lightning permeates our veins,
no kiss is given for convenience's
sake, but all is like a wild lily that
brightens with its orange bud the eye
that rests and observes.**

**Gentle is the itch of my restlessness.
Gentle is the way you hold my hand.
I am raised, I am the first fulfilled.
Flood your breath around me
and together in life we will shape
our possible world.**

path

I look to the earth,
it is a shadow made
of stone. It turns its
grey-lake eyes to me,
it dreams a white cloud,
communing with trees and
growing things - strong
in their mutual stillness.

I look on the December day
where the private raccoon roams
and crows congregate
to threaten a passing form.

The path where the young bird perished
is where no one but my dog and I go.
He sniffs the fresh-fallen snow as squirrels
sit motionless, looking on.

And in this tender wood there is no
division between my heart
and God's great wing.
There is no time not brushed with beauty.
There is no pavement slush, no hand
that reached out, I would not hold and trust.

Of The Same Cloth

**A perfect balance
of mystery and understanding
we contain in our
fiery hour.**

**Like a gull
against the sky, we merge under
the thick thighs of God.**

**You enter me like water
enters earth and I am within
you like a fish inside a wave.**

**Wave of your exotic beauty,
always capturing me, new to me, a taste
of perfect fulfilment. You bare the teeth
of a stranger, a hand of delicate,
tireless motion and I sink in the snows
of your spell, chilled by your intensity, by
the beautiful form of a man beside me.**

**You give to me the gallery of your secrets
as I give to you the skin of my defence.**

**We are the lucky one:
marigolds and cathedral stones
line our weathered pockets.**

Face

Inside your luscious eyes
is the burden of depth,
are the stones and rivers
of centuries unguarded
by time.

On your lips
is the sensual curve of tree-line
and sea-shell, is a language
unbroken by bad experience.

On your nose
of boyish turn are nostrils
unlocking the breath of endurance,
is the edge where sunlight rests
after travel.

On your forehead
is a heavy mist of
oscillating pain and grace,
are the marks of a struggle
relieved by love.

On your jaw, cheek and chin
is the strength of the moon
and night-wooded things,
is the hoot and howl
of the sleepless earth, ascending.

After twelve

**affirming years,
your head is raised toward adulthood.
After twelve like the zodiac sphere,
they came to snatch your heart
into a barren day, where conformity
would dry the void in your stomach
and the radio would be enough to hang your
curiosity upon. But you, like a starfish,
swam slowly out of childhood - kindness intact,
individuality still pressing through your bones.
You would not tip the turtle on its side,
would cry for the crushed ant, for children
in pain you never saw. You kept the truth
you had when you were one, kept a depth and wonder
that refused to be buried.
After twelve affirming years,
the night still beats
softly for you.**

Near Daybreak

A flood of gentle morning,
grey from last night's storm.

The form of all I long for
leaps into a cloud.

Branches fall, crows call
out to me, an old man
walks with a doorframe in his arms,
cursing the sunless sky.

I sit in my morning chair, the faint
hum of distant cars soothes my belly
of its lonely ache. Balconies are
deserted, and even squirrels continue in sleep.

Who loves when no one is around, in this
embryonic stillness, this cloak of ash and humidity?

God is in the churchbell waiting its first ring,
in the dreams of the dying, and in the chestnut tree unbloomed.

God is in the tails of chasing cats,
the underwear on the line, and in
the pressure of time, as this morning lulls
its carefree, sabbath song.

In a Stillness

**Just add upon our days
of private history
this day, that for each is different.**

**Let God get us through
what vanity and determination cannot
and let spirits rise or sink,
like constellations do, given their hour.**

**Serpent pain, hollow time lingers
like a bad stare from a wounded heart with
bad intentions. I break doors but travel
unseen, thin as a ghost through crowds of ghosts,
placeless in this torrent sea of World.
And World alone, I beg to and compromise for
the duties of my higher heart.
Things tear inside, but I know God is here
just the same as when there was no ache
and love was fiercely felt
from all encounters.**

Praying Mantis

I see the praying mantis, the reaching mantis,
dumb, deep in the guts of a searching spirit.

Reaching mantis, holding
confusion between two insect toes, whispering
"no" to all demanding choice and deeds that char
the innards with renewal.

I see the praying mantis
speaking of the pride of diversity, of never committing
absolutely to anything, let alone of leaping
into the darkest doom with love.

I see the praying mantis
snaring the ones who strive with a smile.
Thin mantis smile, wide as every religion combined.
Thin, I feel its mantis legs itch the skin,
never giving relief or satisfaction.
Thin like a thread is to hang from.
Thin like the story of an empty house:
Nothing breathing and no one
to talk to.

Nightmare

I harbour this hemisphere
of thundering fears. I close my eyes
and whirl in the anger of
my imagination, bellowing curses
to eyes I love and faces that
have never failed me. My pain
is loud like chaos is,
and near the threshold of cold madness
my mind is thrust, helplessly
betrayed and collapsing. I dream
with grief, without control,
doomed by suspicion, by anxious motion,
hatching a dread beyond the healing
of forgiveness.
Out of a blank curve I awake
like one whose mouth is
ice, mute, in rising
shock.

Out of Poverty

**Crack the nut, the womb
of fabulous visions!**

**The verb will carry us
to the beginning. We will
have no doubt, but as the window opens
and our nostrils clear, and
believing only,
we will be made whole.**

**Pumpkin seeds in the garden.
A spell of sparrows grazing on the lawn.
We must be mild, remember the beauty of the pear tree
and the miles around us
of living parables.**

**Red is the colour. Red is the flood pouring
down your spine. You are burning, becoming
a sail to bring us through the storm.
We are learning of patience, the heritage
of our tribe.**

**We must keep our hopes
thick and warm, pulsing strong
like a lion's thundering breast.**

For a Lifetime

He outsizes the mountains
in his grandeur, and inward
reaching, his alleluia and amen are
uncorrupted. He is beside me
as I ready for sleep, and puts
his hand on my leg. Light like laughter, he curls
his fingers around my steady thigh.

We kiss and talk as if no tomorrow
awaited us, as if tomorrow's duty we are
chained to keep could not rule to condemn
us empty.

Tonight, trusting each other's love,
he is beside me like a dolphin against a wave.

And safe I breathe and safe I dream, safe
beside his need and
strengthening kindness.

From the Corner of My Eye

Torn from the spirit proclaiming,
and now revenge has abducted the anchor of
my feeble wisdom, has cut my coffin in half,
punishing with the anguish of duty and survival first.
Again I sing, disciplining myself
out of the clutches of madness, and
the dialogue of infants I hear in a terrible
dream that blames my rage on all the living.
I am yielding to the charms of my enemy's poison,
to the aftertaste that promises an antidote
but gives only a look in the mirror or
a bath towel in the morning.
I am grieving my imprisonment, welcoming
the nightmare because resistance is but
a shadow struggling against a real thing. I am
taking the canopy off my bed. I am gleaming with
guilt and the sheen of ingratitude.
Forward is the highest goal, to keep moving
in spite of words like 'freedom' and 'happiness',
in spite of our nature and our greed to
accumulate, to be outward looking for distinction,
or to obey what is in place because it is all
our private thoughts can explore. I made a sea creature
with clay and two hands. I kissed a cloud
with both eyes open. Let the world be crowned with
its two-week-vacation glory. Let my hourly wages
get the better of me. I am fixing to fail. I am reaching
for something strong like belief. And over my shoulder,
I see a gift of a thousand roses.

Everything Happens

Everything happens
meaning nothing, fashioned by lack
and political flags.

Who will stand the light,
a suicidal winter,
the awakened ghost under the bed?

Criminals build their heaven and
sinners are so beautiful, are us
in the full of our hypocrisy, our striving, lazy wills.

Joy. I know I could blossom
if only threatened by the cliff's edge -
held hanging by God's fingers
like an insect without wings.

Everything happens
like sleep eventually does.
I am lost. Too preoccupied with snails and moss.

But blessed be the hunger
and the saltiness of others.
Blessed be the essential, inseparable rib,
the quenching of all our boredom.

Beyond Instinct or Dreams

**Renewal is in the night,
comes like lovemaking
to heal the bruise of harsh words
and lonely needs.**

**Because a cigarette is sometimes
all that is wanted, or good news in the mail,
and because the ways of the heart are erratic,
inconsistently falling as flakes of snow,
that is why we sometimes sleep with death
as we do with God, not holding but letting It hold
us in a warm invincible sack, offering promise, a journey
to somewhere unfathomable.**

**That is why some fear is good, is intimate as love.
And the sky is breathing and the oceans, the seas,
the rivers are breathing. And the beetle and the rooftops too.**

**Trees sway with the clouds.
The butterfly and guppy are great as mountains.
All chimes of tenderness or tragedy,
seeking its necessary role.
We bear the weight.
We take balloons to birthday parties.
And happy is the motion. And graced
are each of our failings.**

All of these poems have been published and have appeared in: Parabola, Alone & Together, Summer 2012; White Wall Review; UC Review; Indigo Rising; Crash – a litzine; Wheel Magazine; Surface & Symbol; Purple Patch; Poet’s Podium; The Syzygy Poetry Journal; Decanto; Bursting Plethora of Rainbow Colors; Out of Our; Lit Up Magazine; The Blue Hour; Message in a Bottle: Tophat Raven; Subprimal Poetry Art; Boston Poetry Magazine; Green Panda Press; First Offense; SpinRock Reader Lit Forum; Poetry Salzburg Review; Spirit Fire Review; The Bitchin’ Kitsch; Ink, Sweat & Tears; Creek Side Writing Forum; Kritya Poetry Journal; Rocket Boy Poetry Page; The Poetry Community; The Drunken Llama; VerseWright; ken*again; Poems and Poetry; Creative Talents Unleashed; Communicators League; above/ground press; Indie Poets Indeed; The Poet Community; The song is ...; Wizards of Words, Poetrydig; The Indus Streams; Morphrog; Tiny Moments Anthology; The Seventh Quarry; Eskimo Pie; Snapping Twig; Profiles in Poetry Literary Zine; The Furious Gazelle; Imaginary Conversations Lit Page; Temporary Lunatic Literary Zine; DogStar Poetry Zine; Malevolent Pegasus Literary Zine; UC Review; Venus in Scorpio Poetry Ezine; Green King Poems and Poetry Zine; Punch Drunk Press; Cavalcade of Stars; The Writer’s Newsletter; Lunar Lit Poetry Page; Tangerine Heart Poetry Zine; A New Ulster; Chicago Record Magazine; Ygdrasil; Scarlet Leaf Review; FishFood Magazine; Leaves of Ink; Vine Figure Poetry Page; The Miscreant; Degenerate Literature Magazine; Minerva’s Housecoat Writing Forum; The Galway Review; Dark Blooms Literary Zine; Grease Monkey Literary Forum; New Mystics; Foxglove Journal; Rusted Rose Poetry Forum; Duane’s PoeTree; Winamop; Stone Face Literary Zine; Nazar Look; Smashed Cake Review (Sidereal Journal); Eye On Life; Medusa’s Kitchen; Poetryrepairs; Rasputin; The Poet By Day; Change Seven Magazine; Peacock Journal

Review of The Longing To Be:

“The contents of Allison Grayhurst’s book *The Longing To Be* are both personal and universal and are described in such thematic and golden terms that one can see that a lot of thought has gone into each line. The poems are written mostly in free verse throughout, with both rhythm and soul weaved into them. For some poems, the layout seems experimental, and there is definitely a playfulness in the way that the words and verses fall onto the page. Others do conform to a "norm", whatever that is. All are dramatic and thoughtful. These are layered poems with new horizons presented to the reader in every re-read. The effect is to keep things fresh with poems that constantly surprise in spite, and because of, the number of times being read. I thoroughly recommend *The Longing To Be* as a poetry book to study carefully and cherish far into the future,” poet Brian Shirra.

About the Author



Allison Grayhurst is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Three of her poems were nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2015, and one eight-part story-poem was nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2017. She has over 1,125 poems published in more than 450 international journals and anthologies. Her book *Somewhere Falling* was published by Beach Holme Publishers, a Porcepic Book, in Vancouver in 1995. Since then she has published fifteen 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 in 2016 by Creative Talents Unleashed (CTU Publishing Group).

Collaborating with Allison Grayhurst on the lyrics, Vancouver-based singer/songwriter/musician Diane Barbarash has transformed eight of Allison Grayhurst’s poems into songs, creating a full album. “River – Songs from the poetry of Allison Grayhurst” released October 2017.

**Allison Grayhurst is a vegan for the animals. She lives in Toronto with her family. She also sculpts, working with clay;
www.allisongrayhurst.com**

Contact the author:

allisongrayhurst@rogers.com

www.allisongrayhurst.com



“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, cartoonist, author of *Wigford Rememberies*, Nightwood Editons; www.kypharness.net

“Allison Grayhurst is the Queen of Catharsis. Her 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.*

"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.

“When I read Allison Grayhurst's poetry, I am compelled by the intensity and strength of her spirituality. Her personal experience of God drives her poetry. With honesty and vulnerability, she fleshes out the profound mystery of knowing at once both the beauty and terror of God's love, both freedom and obedience, deep joy and sorrow, both being deeply rooted in but also apart from the world, and lastly, both life and death. Her poems undulate through these paradoxes with much feeling and often leave me breathless, shaken. Allison Grayhurst's poems are both beautiful and difficult to behold,” *Anna Mark*, poet and teacher.

“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry has a tribal and timeless feeling, reminiscent of the Biblical commentary in Ecclesiastes,” *Cristina Deptula*, editor of *Synchronized Chaos*.

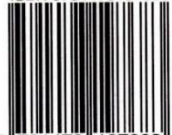
WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT THE POETRY OF ALLISON GRAYHURST

"WHEN I READ ALLISON GRAYHURST'S POETRY, I AM COMPELLED BY THE INTENSITY AND STRENGTH OF HER SPIRITUALITY. HER PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF GOD DRIVES HER POETRY. SHE FLESHES OUT THE PROFOUND MYSTERY OF KNOWING AT ONCE BOTH THE BEAUTY AND TERROR OF GOD'S LOVE, BOTH FREEDOM AND OBEDIENCE, DEEP JOY AND SORROW, BOTH BEING DEEPLY ROOTED IN BUT ALSO APART FROM THE WORLD, AND LASTLY, BOTH LIFE AND DEATH. HER POEMS UNDUPLICATE THROUGH THESE PARADOXES WITH MUCH FEELING AND OFTEN LEAVE ME BREATHLESS, SHAKEN. ALLISON GRAYHURST'S POEMS ARE BOTH BEAUTIFUL AND DIFFICULT TO BEHOLD." ANNA MARK, POET AND TEACHER.

"A RIVER IS IN ALLISON GRAYHURST'S POEMS. SOMETIMES IT RAGES OVER BOULDERS HIDDEN BENEATH RAPIDS. SOMETIMES IT IS AS CALM AND PLACID AS A SUMMER DAY REFLECTING SKIES SO BLUE THEY ARE AS UNUSUAL AS A STELLAR JAY'S WINGS. SOMETIMES IT IS AS UNPREDICTABLE AS THE RHYTHM OF CLOUDS GATHERING BEFORE A STORM. MADE UP OF WORDS, EMOTIONS, THOUGHTS, THOUGHTS CRYSTALLIZED INTO IDEAS, THIS RIVER, LIKE MOST RIVERS, IS UNFORGETTABLE. ONE POEM CASCADES AFTER ANOTHER INTO A FLOOD OF POETRY. AS IN THE POETRY OF WALLACE STEVENS, ALLISON GRAYHURST'S WORK CAN BE DENSE WITH MEANINGS HIDDEN BENEATH THE FLOWING SURFACE OF WORDS. THE EMOTIONS IN HER POEMS SEAR WITH THE POWER OF SYLVIA PLATH. ONE LAYER REFLECTS LIGHT OVER ANOTHER LAYER OF THOUGHT AND EMOTION THAT LEADS TO YET ANOTHER LAYER. THIS IS AS SERIOUS A POET AS IS WRITING POETRY TODAY. FOR THOSE ADVENTUROUS ENOUGH TO VENTURE INTO A RIVER WILD, DEEP, CALM, BEAUTIFUL, SHADOWED, LIGHT, FILLED WITH MOODS AND EMOTIONS OF BOTH AN INNER AND THE EARTH'S LANDSCAPE, THEN THIS IS A JOURNEY WORTH TAKING. IT LEADS TO EXPERIENCES THAT HAVE THE TEXTURE AND SUBSTANCE OF LIFE." THOMAS DAVIS, POET, EDUCATOR, SCHOLAR, PLAYWRIGHT, AND NOVELIST.



ISBN 9781478197683



90000 >



9 781478 197683