



Allison Grayhurst

The Poetry of Allison Grayhurst

- Collections from 1988 to 2017 (Volume 6)

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(Volume 6)

Seamless – A Collection of Love Poems
If I Get There - Poems of Faith and Doubt, a collection
As My Blindness Burns – three long poems
Our Children are Orchards - collected poems about
animals, children and pregnancy
Currents – pastlife poems

Allison Grayhurst

Edge Unlimited Publishing

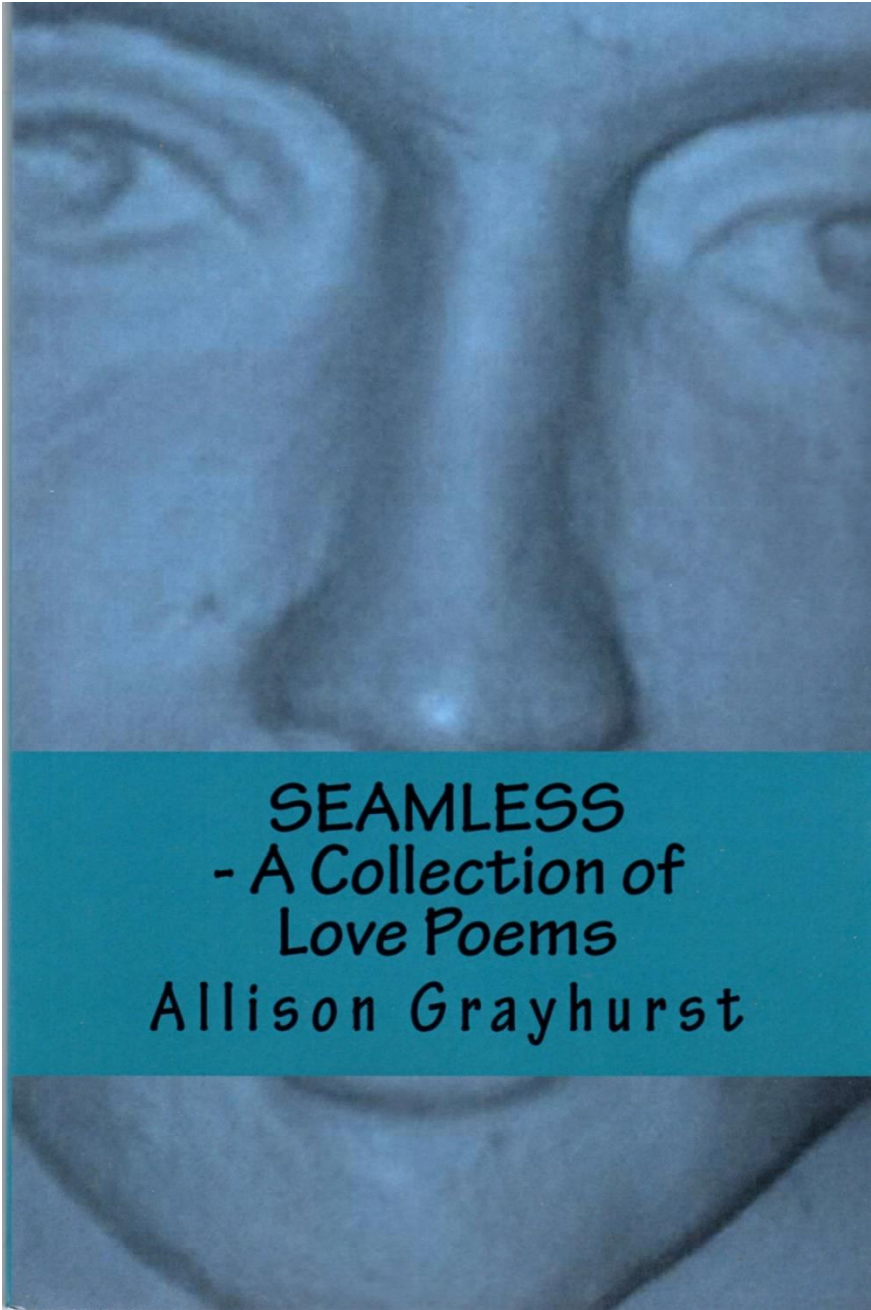
**The Poetry of Allison Grayhurst
- Collections from 1988 to 2017 (Volume 6)
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SEAMLESS
- A Collection of
Love Poems
Allison Grayhurst

Seamless
- *A Collection of Love Poems*

Allison Grayhurst

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Crow

I followed the herd
into the abyss. I drank venom
from the eucalyptus
trees. I rushed against you:
My flag was waving.
The next day I left you,
abandoned. Shot like a beam
into the dark cave night. You followed,
coaxed like a crow
who beckons, black and beautifully:
I gave myself up without a word.
You wore my skin, laughed freely
at my thirst.
So easy now . . .
I am consumed and in
a dream. Love is falling
like apples.

Kneel Beside Love

**If ever you kneel beside love
strip yourself in the midnight cold
and your heart expands
moist
like ice on heat
feels the flood
the zealous delight
uprooting misery
in moments too marvelous for words . . .**

**Gardeners, lovers
you decide
the wish
beside each other
faces are made real
inadequacies vanish
leaving no trace of murder
or time**

**What you feel
walking
in this pulsing spring
daring such joy
no illness could alter
What you feel
briefly
as you join skin and souls . . .**

**creating refuge
even death
cannot violate.**

Days Without Water

My arms grow weary
under the wheel
Skulls in my pockets
and a mountain up ahead
with flesh and jaw bone
extended

I search for his airborne heart
in the crevices of clouds

I search for his pure
brave gaze in the way
birds with wing graze
the edge of each rainbow, anew

I walk into autumn's
darkening rays, lonely
as the architecture of church walls,
lonely as the light
in the half-closed eyes
of children

I think again of his thin fingers
exhaling tenderness in every blind curve touch

He is milk & wind
He is nowhere
to be found

Seizing Time

Legs, thin
and curled
like eyelashes.

Hands, tucked under head,
supporting the weight of so much
lonely thought.

Stomach, a flat curve,
bones and muscles perfectly
ordered.

Sleeping, no one would know
his timeless howl, his long
wait in grief's unrelenting realm,
his requiem fire, or spirit
that outdoes the marvel
of daybreak.

Quiet, he finds
no peace on the pavement of this town,
he holds solitude sacred and feels
each soul's whisper as an unnursable cry.
He breaks all habit with his horn
of piercing mercy.

He, so still, even birds
hold their song to watch
his placid breathing.

Through That Day

**Through that day of yesterday
one full sun ago, together, their
spirits fed, walking as lovers past
familiar streets.**

**Warm smell of intimacy flowing between two
like nectar to the thirsting throat. Warm feel
of smiles like there was the first time they ever met
and met like a finding of home.**

**Warm grace in their voices, warm fear
in their laughter, warm
like a justborn child.**

**There when walking their depths
merged in an uncompromising blessing -

the chaos of confusion
removed
from their astonished eyes.**

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.

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.

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.**

On Tour

**Pale as the Eastern gulls sitting on rooftops,
he speeds over the wide country.**

**He hurts with uncommon intensity -
liberation balanced between his two lips.**

**Like the slow hum of rain, I hear him
treading the snowed-in cities, hear his kiss
like a prayer of protection, flowering.**

**Freedom stitched to his smile,
he crosses the sea he's never seen before,
as he carries his guitar
like a lover's warm hand.**

Bonded

Notes stream over their bodies
like spilt wine,
dizzy with forgetfulness
and engulfed by devotion's
desiring arms, they quench
their love in these realms
of trembling communion.

They do not lean their heads
on ground of finite meaning but
transported to a common passion
they stare at the wonderful eyes of
the moon and roll like the sea's emotion,
bodies gripped by one hawk intent, hearts
undiluted by distraction, joined forever
in dance or defeat.

With These Things

**With these things absent of flame, lovers
deny the vibrant depths of twilight,
the beauty of a bucking mare in the wet grasses
of autumn and a gallery of possibilities
to shower their skins.**

**With these things of surface-hold, these things
cured by sleep and time that steals the shock
but never fully heals, lovers
lose the meaning of their merging, the touch
of each other's tongue that touches
like a smooth horn and stings
with unimaginable tenderness.**

**With these things gone like things go that
no sorrow can express, lovers
grow weak from humiliation, grow
devoted to abstraction, armoured
by resentment, callous
as a jewel.**

**But with these things of horror of hatching
a new self inside a familiar world, lovers
learn to fly despite the lovers' legends and
the arsenic.**

Dancers

He dressed her with forgiveness
in the gold shadows
of passion
seeking death, seeking the
swelling heart
of God. Under
the weight of his wings, into some
starless summit they rose, clasping
limbs with alien abandon. Each rich
with superstition, as in the forest
terror
poured from the tip of each tree,
from the tongues of black bears and insects
crawling.
They held, waiting for too bright
a birth between them, waiting for the
magic to merge
their pain into one great beginning.
Like the thighs of angels in flight,
their thighs
cut the warring air and smashed against the sky
into gales of
colour, into streams
of happy endings as they
dropped like a flood
at the feet
of death, and love
began to weave
under
their astounded skins.

This Love We Hold

**This was the endurance sought,
moving without sorrow away from
spear and shield, loving again
chained to the most-impossible-dream
and yet surviving unveiled,
with each envy rectified, removed.**

**Happy are the flowers that pierce
with swift vibrancy the
down-trodden eye. Happy are the flowers
that briefly shine then suddenly collapse
without sacrifice or a moan.**

**Never did I hope to own a stone
so cold, spread across my flesh
like a darkened shell. Never did I know
a void so dull and so insatiable.
Never ascending like I ascend now in a gathering
of clouds that eclipse the birds and mirror
on the lake so grey.**

**I went walking and knelt before the trees.
Wise days of youth and fresh love that
made us bare of questions, made us sick
from such intensity. I held your presence
in my breath and breathed my spirit
free. Freed from phantoms awakened,
freed from the pendulum tide.
Free to outspoke the wind
and ride beyond the parasite of time,
beside you and sustaining
forevermore.**

The Foliage of Our Music

Near the shut lives of people
who love intangible,
who hide within the spell of seasonal spirituality,
you are the all that intoxicates my hunger,
summons my vision beyond
its threshold, takes my hand amidst
the tyranny of worldly demands and loves
me through my weeping - your body happy
to receive me, to blanket me with touch. Your hair
and belly and your thin bones
that carry such a restless warmth that
only sharpens each day with charm and insight.
No one desires like you the forgotten passions,
reads to me the marrow from books and dances
with mad laughter when seeing the solemn
horrors of most daily deeds.
No one grows so weighted with sorrow,
so beautified by empathy as you when tracing
the footsteps of the oppressed, visiting
each broken with a dense compassion
that embraces all as your equal.

Haggard hope between us
to avenge the space that splits
our love with petty differences.

I spend no delight but dread
the thorny flame of loneliness, of
loving again a lesser love, looking
into some appealing eyes that are not
your eyes nor know the things
of your kind wisdom.

Christened

Because of you, my blood is nourished.

Just beside one another

in laughter or decay, passing looks

that bid for nothing.

Because of you I am able to blink

where others are blinded:

I bury heartbreak in our kissing.

My colours would be grey

**if not for your heart so
tempered by preserved dreams
and accepted disappointments,
dancing in the unknown,
with a tongue
unafraid to astonish or offend
the public swallower . . .**

**if not for every morning, finding
your eyes closed, sleeping near my
smiling body, and your lips that unearth
each tear from my harbouring breast,
unearth the giant seed of deliverance . . .**

**if not for our partnership,
our home of unhooded tenderness,
the doorways within that lead
to evenings of geranium spring . . .**

**if not for holding you, or
your touch splitting the shell
of my skin, flooding my womb
with fires of indomitable
peace . . .**

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.

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.**

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.

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.**

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.**

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.

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.

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.

I Dreamt

**I dreamt that you guided me
across the barren roads,
up steep stairways
and into the rooms of a kind stranger.
I dreamt I killed the Buddha,
that I fell headfirst into a blue flame fire
and felt no features of hopeless defeat.
I dreamt you were covered by
half a shroud, waking with a picture
of God in your hands.
I dreamt we were thrown together, flailing
our limbs until we entwined before the grave,
before the growing old.
I dreamt we kissed. And praise and guilt
were devoured by our sensual labour.
We found a doorway near that natural ocean.
We were crushed then cured by the heavy tide.
I dreamt you loved me as you do just now -
there was no loneliness, no voice withheld
and no place of shame.**

Our Days

I place my arms up here
reaching for you in the morning
at half-past six and later
when you are just waking, disheveled
and wishing to return to dreams.
In the afternoon when we
finally talk, the brightness of the day
absorbs into your face and what is left
is the movement of our connection
between coffee mugs and our children's play.
At dinner, you tell me stories.
I see the years behind us, and for a moment the
curtains of heaven draw back before my eyes.
At night when we hold and the children sleep,
we talk of the unspeakable things - ourselves for a time,
fully happy - two together
in the arena of society's plight,
two together, beholden
to only this love.

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.

Shedding

**It is the cure for us,
locked on soft land, our
music combined and the golden
ether Earth that so often evades us
is revealed with tangible ecstasy - us
stripped of every worldly moor and medal, just
us lying true to our bold callings, eyes locked
shameless, raw as the sun, whole as we were before
we were born, in one another's arms, returning,
recharging, elemental as dying.**

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.

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.

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).

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.

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.

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.

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.

I Dream This Shelter, This Precipice

**Your rare and bare natural tongue
and your unfathomable kisses, distinct
like the sun, that dwell without limits
on my lips.**

**The torrents of your quick pulse and your
slow release, overflow my chasm, brings warmth
where warmth is no longer felt, only
the driving nail of locked souls - yours and mine
and all things sacred, accumulated like this
in the wild deep.**

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.

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.

Replenished

Whenever roused with grief
or shaken by the cynic's cry,
I feed on your words and warmth
then wonder why I stood so long
held by the darkened grip.

For in your subtle bend
and caressing voice,
the rain is petty, as are all the
drunk and desolate things that
send my spirit heaving.

Whenever lost
in the crushing swirl
where sick and mindless crowds
roam, I draw up your face
from my memory's well and
am eased, believing once again
through fear and disappointment.

My Love is Waiting

In the bald winter
where only the cold grows,
my love is waiting.
Strands of sorrow like
straw stream from his fingertips,
and his clothes are the shade of indigo,
resurrected by his constant desire.
Clouds clear at his feet and coffee is poured
on his behalf whenever his hands need warming.
He is sheltered in the alleyway garages, takes his cue
from the pigeons. His legs are long,
like candlesticks they stretch across January streets.
My love is waiting for the blanket of my flesh, waiting
to salt his emptiness with my touch.
He watches from the balconies.
He is mad, ruled by the erratic radiance of music.
He is waiting on the branches of the elm,
waiting for the night to clear,
waiting for my heart to open and claim him
like a birthmark.

Without Covers

Because of lips
perfectly full and pulsing,
and hair, black and living like
sea creatures fathoms below that swirl
their strong bodies through the thick dark,
I knelt next to your tallness
and placed my hands in the centre
of your torso. Like feminine blood
your muscles moved, shivering with touch.
Your man's heart rocked, unconscious
of every thought, and night became for us
a different thing. Came in the colours
of coral reef flowers, came like wet moss
in the hand, came like swallowing
a falling star, like paint dripping through the hair,
as our two bodies merged. And as your thin neck
turned, our closed eyes saw together every
abstract condition collapse, in the flow
of undulating flesh, in the broken frame
of one another's mortal love.

Whole

Sing, for love is in his astounding
form and mind that welcomes the intricate unknown.
In his touch are the things of wings and
a leopard's elusive step.

Sing for his heart is a cavern where
mysteries are kept, where my lineage begins
and the mirror is no more.

Sing, for the sensual stomach, for the
timelessness of impassioned blood.

Sing, for the connecting limbs, for the
instinctual rhythm inside that joins us higher,
together at the deepest core.

Things I Must Learn

To speak like I should
in the wayfaring night, to
hold your hand when the shelf cracks
and the books are all read, when the fridge
carries only last week's fruit.

To lean my head on your heart and
let you speak your need, instead of curling
under the blankets like an angry, disturbed thing.

To kiss your lips when nothing is going on, when
the dried flowers crumble to the floor and
the guitar strings have snapped, when summer
is only a month away and the city prepares in the same
dull way.

To touch your arm when the shower curtain rips
and a spider's eggs lay behind the bathroom mirror.

To be kinder than I've been,
to wrap a hand around the back of your cold,
delicate neck.

To take pictures of you
in the afternoon, loving you better
when darkness inevitably descends.

As One

In the empty spaces I wait
for you, for my own being to
bend again towards your beating chest.
And sorrow like a grey October morn
stretches between us, leaves us each
alone watching out the same window.
We are locked like the shore to the sea,
perfectly different and merging in natural
rhythm - each shell and struggling fish
exposed, until we hide in separate elements,
bonded to our own. I follow your footsteps
in my mind, then kiss your shoes for speaking.
You turn on the tape recorder and commune
with the clouds. Often I have held in my breath
and ignored the ache in my throat. I have loved you
without giving - under blankets, more at ease
with the coming of private sleep than with trying.
Often I am bruised by your laughter,
counting pennies on the table with fierce concentration.
Though you with your hands,
hold all the mystery my heart can fathom,
pressing with gentleness my folded brow,
or blending your legs with mine, sure and warm
as the summer earth.

Anniversary

Thick and frantic rapids
moved us to believe
that the natural law is sensual.

We walked to islands of
greeny coverage, placed our
hands together and eyed the
circling hawk.

We watched the rocks
with their majestic edges and strange white
colours as the water cupped them in its
thin transparent palms, promising to awaken
a memory of primal wonder.

The gulls speckled the cliffs as the
red-winged bird remembered its song.

We stood and stared at the heavy
waters falling, and in its thunderous
movement, we joined - contained
by our true love.

We Walk Again

**We walk again, becoming
the watery breath of lovers
touched by the same vision.**

**We feed our skins again
on the shifting flame
that burns all natural affliction.**

**We kiss again on home ground,
and do the things of togetherness,
full of letters and sighs and the bones
of our ancestry.**

**We stand under the umbrella,
nearing the darkness but staying alive.**

**We release all secrets
drenched in the soft light
of a fluid and tender joy.**

On Valentine's Day

He gives me oxygen,
the golden lamp in isolating winter.
He raises me up like Lazarus
from quicksand. His is the
cord untied, the touch of tender pleasure,
a vehicle of lyric and curved flesh.
Many a day I lived behind the curtain, separated
from the sun, mad as a birthing mother.
My vision was void, as was the giving water
that softened the hard seed. I thought my sound
was smothered and my beautiful pony enslaved.
But with his olive eyes and male love
he unwrapped the dark expanse, nourishing:

I am bound to his appetite and to his comfort.

You who saw

**You who saw the
morning fall on leaves
all rotted and brown but
kissed this darkest turn
and threw your coins to the clouds.**

**You who loved and always learned
that love is nothing earned.**

**You who opened your heart to a child
and let her wed and weave her own.**

**You who felt the wanting grave
when you felt the skeleton hand of a friend
unchained.**

**You who beheld your wife like a sunrise
and gave her everyday a new light to live for.**

**You who are so beautiful and always beginning,
like a band of circling swallows, like a whale
first seen in the wild, like the scent of home.**

**You are a thousand good men on a morning walk,
the chapel bell's waking call, sweet and deep
as the true belief in miracles.**

Let Us Show A Tender Love . . .

otherwise the moon would be
half a shadow and the wasp,
a sandbox companion . . .
otherwise a gentle wind would
scorch the birds and seventy years
of staying alive would be ineffectual . . .
otherwise the rain would die and
I would bear my bed like the torturer's glove . . .
otherwise, the trees would crouch
to the dead earth and the eyelid of God
would remain forever closed . . .
otherwise the child would plan his days
by astrology's chart and the broken hearted
would long no more . . .
otherwise home would be a filthy cave
and my bath could never drain,
but would remain a stagnant
murky cold . . .

As We Walk

I spent an hour listening
to the grey and cooling sky, and the blackbirds
that gathered low.

We are but gestures sown
by particles of love, desire and greed.
Few are one tapestry, most are a bit of
all three.

There was a plague in my eyes
that has thinned my expectations, but
I am better.

Being in love this long is like a voyage
underwater, swarming with glorious and
dangerous beings.

You will always be the one to hatch my breath,
the catching flint when I am shipwrecked,
and the good thing I can hold up willingly to the light.

We have been shown there is no grave,
only the mourning. We have been shown
it is the aging in front of each other
that makes aging wonderful.

I no longer worry about what I am going to say
because there is you, with the scent of autumn
strong in your hair.

Found

While in a century surrendered to
a howling vision that bridged
the Earth to God,
while in the chaos of the self-assured
and beautiful, with obstacles of half-felt focus
and rough charm
dropping like heavy hail along my path,
I found you. I found a mind
that could not join the perpetual
and charred motions of loveless togetherness.
I found someone who held to truth like a child,
thick with depth and a rare sort of intensity.
Someone who hasn't the wherewithal to deceive,
who is freed by his belief in lasting, evergrowing love,
who faced the terror and turned
to serve the implausible, only possible mercy.

I no longer cry from loneliness. The light is in
his body and all around is the labyrinth of his mystery.
My eleven-yearlover who still haunts me
with his impassioned creative touch, who loves me like I am,
mostly bare and broken, though sometimes
high with gratitude, glittering,
at peace.

By This Love

By this love
we have learned to pluck
the honest word and place
it freely.

By this love
we have lived a good thing
unlike the things of dark regress.
We have robed the stick figures
of half-made breath in gold
and the scent of animals.

We have touched the minnow fish and the
primordial whale. The clouds speak to us
when lack of money hurts the gorgeous morning
and we are nightmarishly beckoned barefoot across
white ice. Then you tell me things of wild eternity
to keep my regrets from overtaking.

And how I love you
even when I am slipping headfirst
down the brownish stream.

Still

**You and I are a terracotta river
encasing the unmanageable rock.
We drink from the cyclone fire
and fill our ears with the sounds of harps
and nocturnal rejoicing.
When I am touched and my head
is under the feather then time is
fossilized and my body is the voice
that drives me down the curve,
wide enough for an astounding fulfillment.
When I touch the core of your bones
and join the urgency of your kisses
with my own, then we are lured
from our daily plots and cast-out dreams,
until flooded and found by the golden synergy
of our married tongue.**

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.

Secret

We share an altered epiphany each night
we merge below water, never speaking
but touching satin against soul, tumbling
in our home-spun ecstasy
like the pounding of pure birth.
We rise and fall speechless, buried
in the radiance of our realm where we journey,
our skins seeped in sensuality,
still discovering after nineteen years, building a depth
unencountered - the two of us,
bending, refitting the mantra
of male and female confinement,
drugged by the surprise, by the thickened lips of our
controlled urgency, blind to all but each other,
the muse of our
naked dancing, breathing, visceral releasing, and
at the end, laughing as though we were seeing
our first ever snow fall.

I Could Have

I could have waited
in my personal eternity with the yellowed books,
on the cold other-century floor, night upon night
reading of murderers and painters and women
confined to views of freedom, caught in a rebel
stratosphere. I could have underlined the philosophers,
changed channels on the radio,
stayed with my father's typewriter,
with my buckwheat mish-mash and the ants that collected near
the sink. I could have taught the rabbit to sing,
kept my special and comical cat - stayed
with my angry prayers and my exacta-knife,
craving equilibrium and knowing only a violent vacancy
that would find no distraction, nothing
to ease the pressure of such urgent longing.

(how lucky I didn't)

It was years after that when I found you
on the steps of the church,
embracing me with your black hair,
boyish charm, thin arms and
matching intensity. It was the first time since I was a child
that I could trust God, holding you,
joining my burden with your own -
and in doing so, alleviating the weight of its core.
It was the first time
I could leave that floor, the books, change direction
and see something
of happiness.

Alive

on your wave
of wet torment, licking
the moon of your lips,
cradling your breath in my mouth
as I held you submerged in my contracting core,
held you within as you were within
saturated with my pulse and flow.
I went under, planted
in the memories of your soul.
You swallowed our merging
with rapid speed. We evolved, stripped of every season,
you and I with our initials carved on each other's skin,
undulating
in our sensual, blessed commune.

Greenhouse

Inside this greenhouse on a hill
there is an arcade, an eagle
and the fear of scorpions.
As the vegetables flower
I can almost hear the traffic on the streets below
drowning out the crickets. I know we belong here -
where there is an internal wind, seven bodies
and so much heaven. Our windows are bullet-proof.
When it is time to eat, we eat then we play, love and fight.
At the head, there is music, there is greenery.
The eagle gives us depth, and the fear forces us to grow.
The arcade is a machine of imagination.
When we leave the greenhouse, there is a path
we take downhill. We greet strangers,
and sometimes we bring home crude, unnatural influences. But
sleep heals our home where we hold
no resentments and keep no secrets,
and the air is as sensuous and tender as
our house is green.

The taste

**of someone else's
memories tracing the lining
of my throat, merging with
my own memories, until there
is no distinction**

**of apple butter
spread across my tongue
thickening as it descends**

**of fire
and of absolute calm
combining and moving
like a wave within**

**of hunger eased
and rapture reached**

**of being fully saturated with
sexual peace**

The taste.

Redemption

A look of strange purity,
the type of a true gentleman
anchoring a violent nature,
the type of innocence rediscovered out of evil,
by the unexpectancy of falling in love
and of being loved
after so much grief, so much guilt, so much
time.

A nature - gentle and commanding,
full of every colour but grey,
potently sexual, but never crude,
burdened by a clear code of justice
that drives that nature to be
irrevocably lonely
without being reduced.

By This Light

By the light,
you carried me.
By the dark, you found my hand,
and together we stood, holding hands,
barely breathing, never resting, just holding
like David held his slingshot and the slingshot
held its aim - synchronized to destiny's rhythm -
you and I and the drumbeat lingering after the sacrifice,
and the coming of age that never came,
and the fire finding
safe haven on our backs - a deep dive in the shallow end,
a kiss that never makes it, but somehow is known.
Swim, you told me. Breaststroke
through the dark karma. Swim
before the fast freeze get us, before we lose
our grip on each other's eyes. Everyday,
your smile saves me. Nothing changes, not
the chemical spill reservoir we counted on
to nourish our crops,
not the crowded bandwagon that takes any route
to bypass our cries for mercy.
But every day we still have each other.
Everyday we claim our peace -
still no footing in the world, but still so greatly blessed
in our love's long-held victory.

Slowly, without reason

**a breath will come and then
another until the spell of defeat is
broken, until the dream stays full and flavourful
in the mouth.**

**We hold hands in the storm. Love can be very
difficult, it is a constant rebounding back to the essentials,
to what really counts and how to fight for it,
stay close to it, commit to it as one.**

**Love is the shape of his lips, the dance he does in
the middle of a TV show. The world is hard, but not
hard enough to break God's wishbone, not hard enough
that we can't walk through it - him and I,
leaving futility and gravity behind.**

The roof is ripped. But it doesn't matter.

**He makes me happy. Together,
a pearl is found.**

Our Love

The salted lips,
the husky sea and the atonement
of death, I called you my tale
of the bull horn and familiar voice.
Crack through the corn cobs, through
the years that seem to spell-up without
answers or digestion. But you and I,
by heaven's chapel and heaven's cattle
left to graze, unkilld, we are sparrows
after a summer rain, blind still, but finding
shape in our children, and in and by the doorways
we have and have not conquered. We are
the mantle where crystals breathe their energy, and
we are the same as twenty years ago, having only
each other in this place of senseless oblivion, having
what others always long for, rich together
and forever as midnight.

My hands,

**your muscle-toned thighs
and the ways between us
that unlock the wonder of
the thin stones tucked under my pillow.
You are glorious like the sun and
a river that curls its breath with
primal speed. At peace with these
broken bones, and even with
things felt, but unimagined.
You are late October in my arms. Everything
is ours. I touch you and know the end, all means
of luscious renewal.**

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.

Now I am Two

It is this way, togetherness:

**A covenant with tenderness and speaking thoughts
only glimpsed.**

**The snow falls like rain as the afternoon moves
without time, our hands pressed as one,
lips and then, something better. Always
miraculous, unexpected, awakening. Always
us, vanishing and then re-emerging with these things
of harmony and friction engulfing our scent and path. Soon,
the tiger lilies will bloom and being
just us will be made difficult**

**with the children gathered in our arms. But this 'difficult' is
whole and adds to our liberation - making coffee, laughing
at things shared and only ours.**

**It is what was prayed for, what years and hardship has not
diluted, but has fused into an unbreakable bond - us -
the summoning of all our parts - ancient, immediate
so that even when death comes or fate and terrible sobbing,
neither of us will ever be again
without the other
alone.**

Intimacy

I lay by your twisted completeness - an ocean
of transformative screams, rolling, lulling, the colour of ice
and sometimes, gold.

I breathe, though I cannot
imagine the radiant death inside you that
maims all warmth, casts out the churning world
like a house fly. Touched by your beauty and
the sharp lines of your natural conviction,
I am final - ripped from darkness into
something too bright - dunked into the chilled water,
naked, my heart not even where it belongs, but rising, rising
not pulsing - pausing and still because
this is not sorrow, not the past nor even is it heavy.
Because I touch your hand
and it is fixed like a star is fixed in the sky or glass
impaled so deep it touches bone. I touch
and like you I am contained, blue –
and I am now and better than,
bigger than
a thousand storms.

Time like . . .

**There is time like there is
a carpet or somebody
knocking on the door. The battle
rages in a chaotic frenzy. People
cave into fears as if that means
'maturity'. There is no time like there is
no permanence other than God.
Stimulation and bleeding gums.
Sit down, run your hand over your face. I will
run my fingers along your jaw line, your
brow line, and trace a constellation. Be my
instrument, expose the terror I cautiously keep. Call me
a hypocrite and then forgive me,
avenge me for my mortality.
In heaven, the Earth is a vegetable left too long in
the fridge. In the mornings, I am lonely but want only
to be alone. Your breath howls, sometimes I can hear it
when you think you are sleeping. Those times I would rip
across any void just to clean your blood. Time is
laughing at us, because we've touched the flesh of freedom
and everything after that wears on our skin,
groaning, growing
as instant madness.**

this prevails

**Footprints you appear in. Fences you break down.
Your back has become my meadow,
laced with dandelion seed. Your muscles twitch to the feel
of grasshoppers' brandishing wings.
Your shoulder blades combine
under beetles' scurrying strides -
flesh becomes grass and grass becomes flesh becomes weeds,
connecting their incompatible sinews, intimately.**

**I plant myself on one side of you,
searching for a conclusion. Permanence is a chain.
I take photos while you are sleeping. I brush across
the stubble in the cleft of your chin with my cheek.**

**Holding is indefinite. Years counted are like ivory
appropriated, but at what cost?
We lift up our shirts, place ears over navels,
dwarfing any future with instinctual immediacy.**

**With each lip-graze our fears are gradually disempowered.
They shrink, and then we shrink-wrap them before
they fully decay, offering them an honoured
yet secondary place.**

**Events are karma. Our karma is caged, dies
from the surgical stitch formed between us -
what was deemed inevitable is void of vibration,
outcast from its orbit.**

**You are a wall made of sponge, absorbing.
I will saturate. For you, I will not be hard or polished, but
exile my conscious desires, give crown
to a steady delirium. You will be central.
And this will happen without conditions.**

**The afternoon rises and what stands on either side
- be it memory or our impending dreams -
falls subject, subdued by our abiding bond.**

Rest

Softer than foam
when the heights are pounding into the body-stream,
adding resistance to what cannot stop trembling.

I make a mould of your footprints,
hang them over the washing machine.
I climb the scaffolding
fearless of my natural fears -
lifting mortar into a pale, bricklaying and laying out bricks
to seal a song, ready then
to pull out of the quicksand and feed you
in your darkness.

Pooling flies
in the jungle of your fragmented emotions.
What you cut off will never grow on its own
until you splice a branch of your bones and bind it fresh
in a ritual of rejoining.

You were born devouring splinters. I cannot change you,
but I can rest my hands on your shoulders, help you
to trust the feeling of family. I can stay,
give you a fork to eat with, make it soft,
and that soft will intoxicate,
thread a cushioned contoured protection.
It will stretch around you, satiate
with womb-like warmth.

Called

Devouring stars and licking the loins
of expiring galaxies, God is moving.
In these orgasmic vibrancies, God is singing and
an incalculable formation occurs.

My lover is very brave to be sitting still on the dead grass,
happily consumed by winter's stretched mouth. He thinks
he is a catalyst, recording the fallout of those doomed stars, but
he is more - brimming as he is with manic velocity,
tied to the tunes that reel through his head.
Consideration is not his game,
nor being possessed by maudlin sentiment
like a drunkard is bound to the heel of his anguish.

He wakes up and never eats until evening.
There is love in his eyes
for everyone. I'm not saying this because he is mine
or because of what we have together -
afternoons of invigorating coalescence, conversing
like plant growth does with the sun.
What we have together is proof enough
that God is and nothing is
by mistake or smothered with futility.

Box

Exploring

thin hip bones, hills of urgency, the grounding
of incomprehensible joy. At sea. Socks. Blindfolded
on the top bunk, looking into blackness, sure
of the kaleidoscope formations forming that press behind
eyes - optic nerves more alive than when there is
sun. Impulses
propelling new positions - toes touching,
calves locked, demanding, skin against
similar refined surfaces.

Clarity climbs the spine. Minds are removed from symbols,
divulged of an audience, resting easy in sounds, validations
of hidden obsessions and kerosene wanting. Wanting
outward what is inward - to pick a pearl
in the tossing waters, to be that pearl
torn from ligament bondage.

Death sings, switches axles. Inside that box,
larvae are destroyed, what is wax-paper-winged
emerges like steam, twisting with a giddy haste, singing
and shedding the crust of coveted seclusion.
Like the brushing wind
of wet breath on an upper thigh, it sings, or
like the smells of predatory indulgence coupled
with tender consideration, cheeks are under siege.
And even what is awkward delivers
unexpected fulfillment.

The box is handprints on glass, fingers drawing
biological notes. Open. Each time
time has no bearing. Each time venturing, the box
is a blade, contracting - multiplying an adrenalin spectrum.
Each time excessive sensitivity expounds, actualizes,
there, flushing.

What is given, returns larger - corners are lifted, four-sided
confinement collapses as two fibrous silhouettes gain height,
hum tangible, hold steady and then
mutually unroll.

Our Light Cannot Always Burn Whole

**Nests that stay through winter
are similar to us at times - left abandoned
on high barren branches,
valueless until spring - if ever, even then, reclaimed.**

**We jog through bitter uneatable harvests, absorbing
disappointments as our only viable feast,
not heeding our self-honouring needs,
too proud to address imagined or deliberate injuries.**

**Jackets buttoned to the neck,
we move in these sewer shafts,
trying to shake the foaming stench off
of each other's tailored attire.**

**On our bed, we are broken, letting our arms rest
like a Spanish squid's tentacles would rest,
pulled from pulsing waters. Our mouths
primed for confession,
our eyes scanning features - short hair, skin under the eyes,
familiar necklines.**

**We tell each other these things are worth
the horror of abominations
accepted as societal norms, atrocities justified
as a soldier's directed bullet.**

**Here in a shut-in space, we can lock,
shed faculties of crusted reason,
create a colourful spread of sensuality, messaging
our blood vessels with deep oxygen, curing, learning
to make saliva and swallow.**

We tell ourselves sometimes we wish
we could be like those who live
never knowing an intimate tender beauty,
like those who get shipwrecked,
daily hunted by a cancerous loneliness.

At times we wish this love didn't exist,
then we could give in to what lies beyond
the cliff, defend our exit, salt the Earth
with a dramatic departure.

Those times, we hear a desolate chorus rising
and we vanish completely into its volcanic siren wind.

Other times, we talk. We watch squirrels dance across
our backyard trees, make tea, passing domestic glances,
gladly sharing the last spoonful
of bottled honey.

Yes

I will stay with you,
acknowledging the four factors that create warriors, faces
of ceramic gods. Taking in these four tides -
erratic electrical fumes;
unarguable weight; ripe stiffening; charitable maneuvering -
this potently controlled receiving, snapping us into a place
where we are never betrayed by our mutual craving
for equal depth and ideals.

The way you look when my eyes are closed.
I see a visceral chemistry copulating
in your vascular system,
changing the consistency of your skin,
showering you with oil. These pressure points owned,
wrapped in dark honey -
a sticky rich worship and weeping - myself,
dripping against you, inside
a red whirlwind of our joined imaginations.

We have walked rooftops, looked down and felt at home.
We worked many nights on forgiveness,
smashing snowglobe sceneries,
defusing any fantastical expectation just to be honest
when we finally awoke, to take each other blatantly,
communing as soulmates should -
peeled of barriers, wrapped freely
in fundamental urges and a desperation
for speed.

Pliant movement - karma or coincidence?

It matters little, for it is
gathering storm. It reminds me of an unkempt appearance,
appearing weak, watery, but is really
like the hollow delicate bone of every bird
built for flight - an aimed and painted arrow,
capable of penetrating a crust of sky.

This is our alchemy stripped of ethics.

This is us as a curry powder-and-turmeric mix, mixed,
we enhance one another's scent and tone. Yes,

I will stay with you, stay with our patterns locked
in perfect spiraling aberration, stay on side streets,
on wet park floors,
under our green roof, stay with you,
holding with solidarity our sunken joys,
precarious compulsions, dandelions or maggots, holding
a constant means of God-given
restoration.

Stay

Fine as a flake of mica
was the vow we made
decades ago, when any
syllable could be forgiven
and the substance of dull horror
was just imagination. That vow has grown into
more than a vegetable - consumed,
vitamins mashed, tolerated.
It is much more than an idealized place or perfect pillow.
It is what we made here, heroes to our own love,
bypassing blame, slaughtering resentments, screaming
through headlocks or when kneeling on the bathroom floor,
bonded to the midnight turn and years of heavy lifting.
My love, remember us again, don't be acid or an orchard
of terrible ivy, fill yourself with renewed determination.
You know
my hands have never been mild, never stroked the molten
skin of treason. Can't you be my pomegranate,
my gunpowder? Don't polish your shoes.
I like them dirty. I like these walls,
even the crayon marks tracing up and down the stairway.
I am not lying. I could die here, with you -
table wine on the shelves,
children on every floor, and us, searching
for lilies in our garden,
making burnt cupcakes, regretting none
of our history.

Linked

by a permanence,
stronger than victory, smelling
you, the minerals you wear and
layers of unwashed clothes.

You are a medical philosopher, stuck on practical theory,
an airplane too dangerous to fly beside
the birds. I am one of those feathery few
who long to burn in your backdraft. I smile
everytime you repeat something funny.

Often, you are the music
and I am listening, squinting at
another region where turtles devour minnows
for sport and vinegar tunnels behind the eyes. Open.
You keep me open when I want to be a needle, nothing more
than a knife, or a pocket of pins.

When I want to wear stockings, you pick me a station
to stop at and tell me to gather burrs -
burrs, up and down my legs, hot as a ripped fingernail or
being showered with poison.

How can I not respect you? Not think you my magnificent
other-half? How could I stay here without you, withstand
any small wound or other
destined occupation?

Too Long

It has been minutes maybe days since I felt
your warm tongue trace the blades of my back.
It has been too long in isolation,
away from your loins, the trembling
of your barely-believing hands and voice,
telling me we are larger than any love,
like druids or those so deep they have no religion.
It has been like living with a cramp in every toe,
walking, searching for a fountain to bury my wishes in
and finding only denial in every eye, alien expression,
computer distraction and political nuances. It has
broken me. It feels as if it has broken me, except
when we are together, when our monastery re-appears
and your fingers flicker, strumming out a conversation,
honouring the strength of God - sensual as thunder lacing
the sky and all that lives under the sky.
It has been a rapid stirring, a slow removal of my self-esteem
- too long without your orchestrated breath and you
cutting,
 cutting through.

Moments Before Merging

I wait for you, veiled with fear like eyes are
when the body's on its way to slaughter.
I take your focus into my sterile forest
running through you but never planting beside you.
I am muddied dead leaves and you are
more open than a robe of welcoming
intimacy. My thoughts in the shower - my desires
spread out and flood rooms, rise against
the walls - picture frames, memories
consumed. I call to you. But you are mature and perfect
like a psalm or an ancient turret I can climb up and into -
surrounded by your history. I can shut myself in. I can
wait. And it is you, only, and everything I am
is so tightly woven into this anticipation.

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.

Seamless

Raincoats and rainy seasons are behind us now.
I picked up a feather.
You took it from me and now it is yours. And just like that,
rich as the coral reef waters, we were initiated into
a lower layer.

Intensity is a button. It is concentration - one part,
one of your parts unrelentingly explored
while ignoring other
distracting sensations. It is the thick blood
raking of thighs against our lesser faith.

Fears of the future put aside and left to their weeping.
Shoulders become secrets receiving
probing pressure-point intrusions.
Like a primeval working of strings,
through this communication, we see
the courage of our history rise, become an advancing truth,
and our pores
grow and sparkle like thousands of tiny sun-drenched ants
pooling together to parallel a single purpose.

We know 'just survival' is tyranny.
What we seek is not movement
purely for the sake of employment, but to create canvases
of vigorous struggles - ones that can only be cemented
in unison.

**Our bodies have abandoned their blood-lines.
We are touching every crease
and tense design with undiluted intention -
first blotting out words, then delectable conversations.
We rejoice in the grand dramatics of our compatibility,
equally committed to corporeal immersion.**

**The past culminates in this single outpouring. It is
a privileged evolution. It is months of misfortune
exterminated by the exertion of our mouths:**

**Strange rhythms are risked, foreheads pressed,
giving way
to beautiful unadulterated disclosure.**

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IF I GET THERE
- Poems of Faith and Doubt,
a collection

Allison Grayhurst

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Edge Unlimited Publishing

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Bless The Fallen

**Bless the fallen, the less than ghost faces
that haunt this cityscape.**

**Bless the one who cannot give, who cannot
nurse a broken heart.**

**Bless the one hardened by degrees, by small failures
that mount a life incapable.**

**Bless the proud bearer of truth who cannot be humbled,
blinded by spiritual vanity.**

**Bless the arrogant, the one who feels movement
only by force.**

**Bless the bearer of bitterness, who has no stronghold
but hate.**

**Bless the one who fails to see the birds fly, hear
the angels in their dreams.**

**Forgive us our canyons where self-pity reigns
and self-pity devours.**

**Hold us near the harbour light though the chaos of sea
be the only realm
we, as of yet, have known.**

Receiving

Though I recognize kin
in a bird's faultless face,
the world is wheel, is cold,

master of my open heart.
And out on the streets, away
from embraces, the sun
disturbs in its strength and independence.

People grow old
before my eyes,
stirred by nothing
but further comfort.

Fire cloud above - it is
this hunger, this old faith, old
as God. This faith so clean
I may go mad, harder than love
to bear:

Endless cutting down.

For This Face Only You Could Alter

**Be for me my mask torn down.
Take from me my old and hatching temper.
Take my wanting, my struggle
to renounce approval.
Be for me the lonely desire, the one
celebrated by each breath.
Take the guilt from my
loins, the hours spent mute,
consumed by fear.
Be for me a living arrow, a communion
of conviction and gentleness.
Take from me my fate, a conditioned future,
an inevitable plan.
Love me though my love
is sensual, thin of voice, of spiritual
decision.**

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.

Safe In You

**In you, mystery is masked
by no one's hood, has grown
away from the tyranny
of world and the gloom
of nations betrayed by
their gods.**

**In you the inexplicable
takes a womb, a rhyme
from your sweet blood
flowing.**

**And love, once pale and clay-like-cold,
selected you to partner my hope,
to resemble visions vacant of sentiment
and teach me to abandon
death and ill-nourished joys.**

**Your love wraps around like a melody
undulating out from your exceeding
intensity, it wraps,
until I surrender, unable, unwilling
to move.**

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.**

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.

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.**

Sheaves of Time

Sheaves of time like wispy hair
freed to the wind, fall on me,
tickling my skin with their subtle happening.
Happy are the people with soap opera love
and yellow hair.

Happy am I rolling and stretching & rolling
under the great white sun. I am moved
to deliver my package at noon. I am myself bonded
to my mission like ligaments to the bone.

Sheaves of time drift on my plate
like leaves from my favourite tree.

Call me out from my doubt and let me
love each day as new, with the kind of hope
only children hold, or lovers caressing faces,
feeling eternity on their fingertips.

Within This Hour

I needed you like someone hunted,
strumming my fear on the stems of weeds.
I crept like a lizard through
cornfields and rainforests
waiting for your evasive eyes
to wake and summon me near your mystery.
A hundred days and a hundred
painted houses appalled me
with their good appearance.
All the waste of yellow maggots
infesting the phone, on the lips
of the viral public, demanded from me
a beauty I could never give.
My tent is dark
like inside the throat.
The blue kisses of disgrace that soak
my cheek seem to fall upon me like a web.
I felt a dead thing circle my waist
when duty made me his. I felt such peace,
a poisonous seed, and I need you
though my sense of curiosity wanes
and I am neither fearless nor brave.

Falling

But one belief, one knowing
that absorbs every desire into
its invisible womb. Simple
like a good taste on the tongue.
Perfect as heaven in the eyes.
But one brave surrender, to open
every book and turn on all the lights.
One mind graced with trusting,
sure of the warmth surrounding and of
tenderness in every destroyed hope.
More real than the corners of a table
or the crisp red of a rose.
More real than the shingles on rooftops
or the touch of a spider's web.
But the one thing unalterable, stronger
than death, than change, than the broken heart.
But one thing to give up all else,
where disappointments, fantasies and greed
melt like candyfloss in the mouth,
and time is the gift given to learn
the infinite dimensions of love.

You Were There

I thought of you
when the stones were thrown
from prairie ground.
I called to you in mornings,
weak with doubt and faced
by terrible extremes.
I ran to you when in the quiet of my room,
the walls oozed unloving shadows
and my heart could find no connection.
I talked to you in restaurants, in words
I dare never reuse.
I found you in my breadbox
and in the eyes of my enemy.
I want you though my wanting is broken
by distraction and gnarled by blunt fear,
but wanting and wanting
your hand on my shoulder
and your voice for all time
(subtle or strong) pressed
within my breathing air.

The Gift

In love like the buffalo is with
its herd, like the fingers with the
hand, like the fish with its translucent tail.
One dish I swallowed of hope
and resurrection. One morning
I held his rock that crushed all other
rocks before. I crawled to the edge
he asked, and understood eternity.
One morning he rippled inside me
like a living storm, and I knew love like food.
My hunger was beaten by his picnic.
The pond that was his cup,
drenched my being in the tender flesh of God.
For one morning I found my good soil,
and I will live for always now,
cleaving close, like to a first kiss,
that graced filled day.

New Commitment

In the wilderness of my dreams,
never shining a colour I could own
as a bluejay, its feathers.
How many worlds must I enter
to peel away to the light?
How to gather sand and build a rock?
And at night,
even love's generosity
is not so glorious,
even happiness cancels out
a great intensity.
I think strength means
knowing how to suffer
properly.
Strip me of this darkness and
let me lean against a beating chest.
I am not to be scattered like a weakling seed
or tossed from shoulder to shoulder
like a child without a home.
In the solid middle I will dive,
driving away my rage and the stuff
of distraction that devours
the better workings of my heart.

Bright

The brightest spot I ever found
has mended the knitted shroud,
has clipped the cloven hoof
and gave heat to the sunless sky.

The brightest warmth inside his eyes
has carried me over the burning meadow,
has placed my head on soft ground and made
the balm to ease my wounds.

The brightest gift that tore the veil
from my eyes, is tender as a cloud,
is sharp as a pelican's beak,
is the nucleus substance and the tree's
great shadow.

The brightest love that works in us all
comforts me through each trial and chore,
is my laughter, my pear tree growing,
is the unlocking of the latch
to every knocked-upon door.

Recovered

The light that fell in the fish's
mouth was a light that came loose
from the predator's paw.
And a thousand moons have died
like the blue whale and the harp.
Since then I have been surrounded
by a dryness that killed my ferns and the
tender, drooping lily. In summer, the
ghost is the future and the bride is
the first one sleeping. I called in my skin
to the humming river. I wanted my darkness
to dance and faith to run through me like
the smell of peppermint leaves.
This was the thing asked for. This was the thing
received. Grace nestled between the joints
of two extremes, and lucky was my drink.
I believe in you - the fire is your smile,
and the soft infant underfoot is your heart and seed.
I have felt a flicker of your shape in a Spanish sunset
and in my father's last goodbye.
Sometimes I am a skeleton, other times, only flesh.
But today I remember the bounty
of all my journeys, and I love you. I am amazed.

A Moment of Clarity

**I dreamt I met you by the river,
washing your hair under the Jordan sun.
I dreamt you looked like no extraordinary man,
as those around you shone.
When I said Yes to your common eyes, then
your beauty seized me like the touch
of God on my shoulder, then you made me yours.
It was either blindness or amplified sight,
with only faith first to stretch the distance.
It was a moment to be offended or to praise.
I dreamt you held my hand then sent me back
to a waking state. I dreamt in the dream
I offered my life to you. It was a decision. It was
liberating. But now on my couch writing these words,
the everyday distractions hit and I am not as pure
as in that dream when seeing you made it simple.**

The Voice We Love

The voice we love is a symphony amidst
the turbulent waves. It is as faint as hope but
it is the ring we've always cherished.
We have flocked towards the cave
where three animals live
with the sounds of vengeance on their tongues.
We have built the gate to pass through.
We have carved a wondrous
beginning. The silverbell has melted. Talk is nothing
but defining and defining.
The voice we love fills us like a miracle, has laboured
on the Earth too long. Time is an idol that binds
most hands. We were awake when we slipped
from the light into secrecy. All the while, the sudden
death, the funeral and the urn in hand. Now we are
left untied, eternity brewing in us like a mortal wound.
The voice we love is agonizing. It is a veil, a kindness
that harvests a good nation. It is the nerve that nurtures
the grief-stricken and the confused.
The voice we love clothes our togetherness.
It has cured the flames that once reigned violent
through our stream.

Because of You

It was the music I always craved,
but dreams were not marked down,
and love was dark as drawn curtains.
But because of you I lived. Because of you
I drank the venom and cure at once.
Because your hand pressed against my
forehead, I learned the strength of my voice.
I learned to dive into the lava-pit of grief and rise
changed, resolved.
Because of your gifts in the summer months,
we made it through with only pennies in our jar
and vague promises in all closed drawers.
Because you loved us under the withered tree,
we found the nectar of our song.
Because you reached when we fell,
all the things we name as good
we now know abide in you. Faith
will warm the broken mother while cradling the weight
of her child.

The God I Follow

The God I follow
is the breastbone of all beginnings,
the gallop in the maimed animal,
the grief that murders any half-measures,
and lifts all eyes to meet the sun.

The God I love is love
unexplained, strange as the depths
of the oceans and strong as gravity.
This love swims through chimneys and air vents,
cloaks the guilty and the saved, is reborn
in every merciful eye.

The God I follow is forgiveness,
blind to all but the true measures of the heart,
is the arrow that hits the hungry
and bends to the burn of divine surrender.

The God I love is personal as the body,
is a lifetime pasture of rich anguish
and gentle revelations.

On Edge

Recoiling then seizing the slanted hero
who lacks virtue or self-reproach
but reaches her destination just the same.
In this room where the flies are bent on suffering,
and cruel words ambush you when you sleep,
the dead play tricks with your long-lived grief
and the good light is crossed out like a lifetime
wasted.

But faith fills the void when you find it,
and know it like an exotic frog's poisonous skin
or the sky after hours spent in the cellar.
And faith is never found
only once but must grow its wings again
and again.

In this room where defeat has clawed into my mind
with the same old tune,
I hold up my head and wait for heaven
to throw me a flame and let
the milk pour.

The Last One

I know my name
like I know the way
I was brought towards
to be saved and made
imperfectly whole.
I know there never will be answers,
there is only faith.
I know that type of light is heavier
than grief, heavier than a pound of eternity
thrust upon the shoulders,
heavier still because it is light
because it is pure and utter mystery
that will never be explained -
unfastening the soul, coating it
with a thick and binding love.

As Mad As Mine

Grief is cold as the world
without a wish, riding
the waking land.
I saw the hounds trace my footsteps.
I believed in an everafter,
and the shore was my mansion to fight for.
I drove from the river onward,
looking for a season to change me.
The miracle, the terror before the miracle,
is the salty flavour of my blood.
Sudden love stinging the throat. Sudden
happiness to renew the cage of day-to-day drudgery.
I cry like a seal who has lost her pup to the killer whale.
Tomorrow is not a void
but a temple of what is held sacred today.
Everytime I answer, I lose.
But when I am holding my breath,
caressing the slit throat of all my hopes,
then and there my eyes and ears
have learned the voice of
golden heaven.

It is not new

**to hold out a hand
and find something dead
cupped inside.**

**It is not love that loves
through essential compromise.**

**It is God we speak to
everytime we verbalize,
and God will mend even the ones
who think they're saved.**

**It is the cracked jaw,
the splintered bone and expressions
of boredom and greed that
disease a child's innocence.**

**It is how we deal with the senselessness of being
that makes us either deny or realize
a gift of spiritual wonder.**

Bellythroes of God

The rawness behind the mastery,
the way to speak of the bellythroes
of God and kneel while doing so,
kneel not from the hindered place of
God and I,
but from knowing it is all God even
your self is God, and you are and God is love wider than air,
more abundant than eternity. Kneel
because this love is both personal and absolute,
it is reaching to you alone while
spreading thick the blaze of stars.
Kneel because for a fraction of a second you
know it is never God who stops giving, but it is
you who stop receiving, you who block
the constant flow, you who deflect it with your habits,
boredom and fear. That God is always there but that
you only feel God's presence when you decide to,
when you let the barriers crack and split a
sliver in your daily husk of coasting existence.

Sometimes too, when grief becomes the sword this
soft word never prepares you for - when with this word grief
you begin to hear not only the sorrow but also the scream
that hits like a hurricane pulling a child from
your breast. And there it is grief in all its monstrous
proportions. There it is, the very thin line
between God and chaos
with the soul's ultimate peace at stake. Faith is the bridge.
For the faithless in grief would either go mad or harden like
little pellets in a mid-February storm. The faithless would
not know how to cope and stay whole.

**Kneel because you know God is the dream we all seek
whether we it know or not.
God is the goal of all our striving -
the financier nestling in the fat, protective arms
of worldly security, the intellectual
devouring ideas like solutions,
ideas as a path to lead to some mysterious
ever-complex cerebral calm,
the soccer player feeling her victory in her torn ligaments and in
the shafts of her sweaty hair -
We look but we do not name it as such.
We look but God still is not the priority,
not the weight of all our emotions and thoughts,
not the bulk of our dilemmas, and not
the subject of our intimate talk.
God is something to hide from, the one hope
we all innately look for in prayer books
or in politicians. But God is not something
to be looked for, God is simply something to see.
God is my cup of restive tea. God in my shopping cart.
God in the standard and not-so-standard things –
in a teenager or a brick wall,
in an animal's unexpected tenderness or a dull piece of box.
God is not something to discover
but something to finally, wholeheartedly acknowledge.
God is and we are when we embrace
the boundless directed compassion of God,
when we realize that God is the only one thing we need
that can grow to be stronger than gravity
and the cold desperation for survival.**

At Last

**At last I hear God's gale
rustling the magazine stands.
I feel the faith of a shellfish under
water and will reach this way into
a fabulous tomorrow with the stars as
my blueberries, and the darkness as
my branded peace.
At last the voyage needs no destination.
I see grasshoppers on every mid-summer leaf.
The barriers have been lifted and the thief has
managed nothing.
At last I have no dream to gain
or platform to paint. I am feeding, and food
is all I need.**

This Love

**Linked to this love
that lives on the cliff's ridge
and below the waves of water and sand.
Linked like the spinal cord is
to the brain or the squirrel to the tree.
This love is hunger with heat,
it is words that stop the gallows blade,
it is the thing that brings two souls together
and walks them home.
This love is naked, shelter, empty air
that has a purpose.
This love pardons, shares my bath and bed.
This love I circle like a sacred fire, but still I cannot see.
This love is a lanced abscess, a camera hidden in a wall.
This love cannot betray and buries all abuse in tenderness.
This love cures the dying swan's cries,
has mercy on the insect and also on people
too broken or hardened to care about
this love.**

Call Me By Name

Speak to me in the
pestilence of my afternoon,
in the dungeon of my self-pity.
Speak to me though love has stopped
its singing and the arrows of wintry worries
sting my weary drum.
Speak to me to anchor me
in obedience.
Together, we could grow and clip
these leprous chains. We could put
out the emptiness that reddens our roof.
We could fill ourselves with perfect sky.
Speak to me and make me shudder
with faith. Let all that is hard to bear
burden me no more.
Speak to me and kiss my plague of troubles.
Bleed your infinity into me and I will be
your secret love.

In The Name

**With the northern tide he came
like a bride to her first wedded kiss.
Born without enemies or pride,
he drank the flame of God. Soon
he was a legend and all the world
would praise his name like an unfriendly
habit. Some knew his word like
bread, like a babe that needed constant
tending. Some would hear and then in years, turn
back to join the assembly of conflicting voices,
pulling behind them the weighted shadows of so many
engulfing concerns.**

**I am one who heard and lost, who felt my blood
renewed and then ingested the virus of adulthood
and all its houses made of paper.**

**I lived with a rotted passion, with a sterile faith
and a heart so tight and annoyed.
This is a remembrance of the thirst
he cured.**

**I am saved again by the shrilling cut of his love
and by the tender stream of his great pity.**

Pulled from the Lifeless Waters

**I see the eyes that blow the day
from the dark throat.**

**I feel the voice of unhindered love
wash over my skin like fresh butter.**

**I hear the world calling with its drug dull
blurbs and I fade like colour in the sun,
exposed at my roots to the drain of muted sorrow.**

**Then I wake to the good journey
and the ruthless tearing away of burdening stuff
to touch a purity that pains like
a small girl's smile or the death of someone near.**

**It is new again, has left me to stand on my own again
and take the challenge to my pores,
with forgiveness everlasting and the terror
of knowing so great, so generous a love.**

I Know That

**I know that faith
ebbs and flows, sometimes
larger, then hardly there
at all.**

**I know my faith
is often all I own,
though barely visible,
crushed under
the world's forearm.**

**I know to sing and that singing
can be freedom no matter
the crack and heel.**

**I know to love
for love is what remains
when nothing else renews.**

I know to pray like breathing.

**I know there is forgiveness
for what I fail to do,
and mercy is there for me to receive
like water.**

Until The Ladder Shows

You answer me,
not with an antidote
but by putting a pillow under
the dragging day.
You answer me,
not speaking of summer
but of sustaining.
Any onlooker could see
my shrinking scenery
but never know
the way you showed me a pebble-stone path
over the high hills and muddy terrain.
You answer me with minimal deliverance,
delicately stepping through this grief-inducing wilderness,
tree-like, moon-like, zen-like
you slide under my veil to add a little colour.
You answer with candle light, not gold,
but answering. And I accept with grateful sighs
this balcony to stand on
while fire consumes each corner of my fallen rooms.

Always There

The door's ajar
and my body can go there,
through the small space of light.
To make a landing for me
in the tumultuous rantings
of existence - held out
a moment, reminding me of how
to be alive with you there,
feeding my weakened gut, breathing
my breath, speaking of a love greater than
any love, and in doing so, forgiving me my
distractions and daily rituals of despair,
forgiving me for forgetting the magnitude
of your cloak that warms both in and out.
The gift again at my doorstep. The times
I do not look for you, then you find me.

I am not afraid. I am just a citizen - yours, even when
undirected, cynical and spent.

One Grain

Bring me home
like the armadillo to its feast,
like the painter to her beholder
and the captain to his sea.
Love me long in this fearful underground
where the world I see is inside out
and the laws of the land have no place
for individualism or mercy.
Touch me on the shoulder,
let me know it is your answer,
and the sun will not be denied
nor will the seed die from bad weather.
Open my sight beyond this kaleidoscope
of contradiction, into the frame work of
one-light, one-way, one beautiful beginning.
Bless me, feed me, know me.
I will be what I can be,
higher than my mind can carry,
higher still with you by my side.

Slice the pony

in the pocket -

a child's gift that ran the gamut.

And now we are onto more elaborate toys,
finding meaning in the pebbles left on the road
and finding hope inside a risk. Because of so many things
lost and remade, I have been left without a plan
but to lean without shame or resistance on
the bosom of God. That is the role, the flesh
and backbone combined. There is only this place
and this time and then - death, like a miracle
in the fishtank of existence. Death like sunshine
in the lonely eye. Death like the taste of a red pepper.
Because I know it is all for you and all is given
by you - we sing, we paint our stories - this story
rich with surprises and laden with disappointments.
I sing and paint and wish for other things,
though I am satisfied with love and with the way
you see fit to carry me across.

Jesus in the Counter-Stream

The grip was lost,
chocolate was made
and the makers were magic.
For this I bled
then opened my heart
to a difficult wonder.
It has been worth
a pile-up on the road,
no rubber under the foot
and a year of hard breathing.
With this I have come to understand myself
and place my hope outside the framework of
normal time.
In the closet
in the here-and-after
mercy is the lipstick,
the colour of the camera.
What is lost is lost and all that was lost was remade
when he was found.

Turned

I turn my head
stiff with anxiety's brutality and shame.
I fill my lungs with the cold fumes
of survival and find myself
lost from the legacy of miracles on my garments,
lost from the jewels under every stone in my yard.
I turn my head
and I see again the gifts that pull me through,
every time, each time at the last minute.
So why do I suffer in doubt, blistering
with fears that never hold water? The world
teaches me it is calculating and void of mercy.
God teaches me of only mercy, of treasures
astounding and undeserved but given with the love
of a thousand parents to their only child, teaches
me not to listen to the babbling crowd so full
of good advice and my future's concerns.
God speaks of grace, with grace manifesting at each
brick corner I face. At every impossible deliverance,
I am delivered.
I release my held-back breath.
I accept your goodness like a song that has finally
developed to fruition, sunning the darkness once so coveted
in my head -
turned.

Friend

**Under the frame
needing - a child surging
with need for that maternal hold. I am held
by Jesus - terrible in my river, wondrous
like a colourful bird to my scared vision.
I have found a deeper attachment, a lifeline
that can have no other country - a living gift
to rescue my drowned wishes and comfort
the salted wound. I am pinned down to this divine
nourishment, my blood like the whale's blood,
like the sea lion's shifting in perfect temperature
according to the touch of sea.
I found words that caught the miracle in my hand,
that broke the rock around the gold - sheltering me,
demanding of me a devotion,
that with thoughts alone
I could never hold.**

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 Flood

**Glorious weather, wetting
the decks and smallest of worms.
We were made to split the light
with voices singular and clean.
We were destined to wade in
night, free of logic, partakers
of heart-wrenching dreams.
I name myself lost but loved
and that is better than any key.
I count the madness in cracks
and know the world is ready to turn.
Funerals and baby births and
a barn alive with birds, soon
clouds will come and the zodiac will
burn.**

**God will be full of joy
and each household will be looking
in a new direction - close-to-the-bone,
materially threadbare.**

One Light

that sails the final way,
dreams the book open, gives
and gets its power from the place
of no middle ground.

One light that knows that the grey space
sandwiched between life and death
 between faith and Godlessness
is not, can not, has never been
there.

One light that is light
like water is water
and nothing more.

One light that redefines the passageway
of the body's nerves,
that is the way of keeping whole,
the only necessary blessing.

One light infiltrating the nail grooves,
that answers only that which is not
intuitive-denying action, dismantles
the rules of the world while offering
so much more.

The bough breaks

**and dreams collapse uncushioned
like the smile that forsakes me
and the wonderful illusion of things past
but never lost.**

**For here I cut my antennae down
and kiss the pyramid on my grass,
blessed by the end result
but never by the happening:**

**I know the world
and it needs forgiveness.**

**For here the smell grew toxic
and the glass filled to overflowing,
but the grime inside never got better,
though polished every day.**

**For here I cradle my body to sleep,
the long way down is the only way down
and we are sold by the scars upon our throat,
by the longing discarded that never knew it
could end**

**and by the only relationship we are all
bound to have - our stronghold with or
not with**

God.

Another Level

Buzz from the wind cloud,
over the cable lines
and the heads of barn owls.
Shadows are bleeding through the brick
until they seep indoors, pressing in on the furniture.
I know the pattern on the ceiling,
I have witnessed this road so many times
before - to be twisted and toyed with
until finally broken - freed
of the false trap,
the inauthentic hold that holds me
in its manic, brutal indifference
like a fly in a jar looking for air-holes.
Thank you for that jar - to remind
me of the difference between atmospheres -
between common kindness and the evil like pinpricks
that sticks absentmindedly in the cavity of the throat.
Thank you for showing me the carelessness of those fixed
on this world and the generosity of others
that numbs my day-to-day pain
until I am admonished, awakened and ready to soar.
From out of the cave we decide
and then are divided. I choose you.
Make me good and brave - enough
to outshine this phyllo-dough hell.

My Flower

**A strange cup of blending flavours,
expelling creatures from the side of the house.
A gift is given, a gift is received,
making good the sickness of the spirit
by giving equal strength to bear the need.
I hold these cards. I hold them without decision
or seeing another way to stand.
I lift my umbrella and love the rain.
It is my stance that will-power or therapy cannot change.
In waves, the darkness spins around. But I am
owned by you. At your core I find my womb and
my stretching ground. Help me to see,
these disappointments that plague
will never leave, but your love will heal and the healer
will not condemn.**

We Ask For Light

We ask for light

for the given truth tied to your name.

**We ask to break this putrid smog
and allow a breeze to flow.**

**We ask for forgiveness from the things
we see and do and what we cannot see
but know are in us.**

**We ask for help when all the help we have been given
is not enough.**

**We ask for hope, to gain a tangible velocity away
from this stifling mire.**

**We ask for your tenderness, to peel the hardened layers,
unblock our view, our way through, to blow
this atrophied cocoon.**

**We ask, though we cannot offer more
than our asking, not more than our supplication.**

**We ask with all we held onto, dropped -
stranded, unclothed and absolutely knowing we are
welded to your mercy.**

Faith

It is found,
found in a pocket on a jacket
that has not been worn for years.
It is an emblem of uncharted kindness
that cannot fade even when I falter.
It is a name on a wall
that changes but is always mine.
It is the end result, the start of all
things good.
It is not going to leave me, or seep
through the mattress, underground.
It is so beautiful, it has the whole of my being.
It is speaking to me from billboard signs,
from the ones I loved and lost.
It is the parcel I have been waiting for.
It is my graduation party,
my only hope for recovery.
It is warmth and well being.
It is Friday night.
It is a star-shaped candy,
and it is found.

The Luminous Light

The settling light
that bends a path through my woods
is placed again into the chamber and
has constructed something miraculous.
It has brought what was needed to the forefront
when the shattered, the held-together-by-a-pinprick world
mastered the decree of reality,
and all around and before was grey
and sheered off wings,
when it was hard to remember childhood trust
that trusts that every engraving on the bark
of every tree is deliberately carved with love,
that the sacred purpose of that love is absolute love, is
the purpose - and yes - there is no other plan but
to return to the moment of sweet creation.

Where Love Draws The Line

Dark swamp surrounding
extremities, the core.
Mass of gangrene hue,
dripping through each hairstrand
and eyelash.
I felt Death talking to me.
It said to relax
into its nullifying void, to break
apart and relinquish my authority.
Then God held out a hand and said
to hold that hand and heal my
hopelessness with faith.
God said to choose this hardship
or choose Death.
God said I will not give you a solution,
only this choice.
God said - I draw this in your reality.
I offer you no escape, I offer
only the rest of spiritual acceptance.
God said
and Death lost its final say.

In The Thighs

**Blood in the thighs like
a bowling ball moving,
rotating, heavy, at high speed
up between the
hip bones, into the heart chamber.**

**Nothing can stop its weight and damage,
nothing can stop its motion.**

**The trees say “A different face of God is etched upon
my each and every leaf.” But the beetle and ladybug
who eat the leaves do not care. And the person snipping
at branches does not care.**

**Through the thighs, moving
rotating, heavy, at high speed.**

Call out to me

Call the number engraved into the armchair

**He came like light washing over the many,
entering and cleansing only the few.**

He came. He is

**what everyone needs,
but the pavement is thick
and the ground beneath is rich,
saturated with worms,**

moving,

thick

with worm motion

moving at worm speed.

Blind Spot

**Like a crack in the wall
that cannot be fixed or
a terrible loss that waxes and wanes
by varying degrees but never fully leaves.
It is the spot that will not heal,
found on the floor by the fallen curtain.**

**It reveals that faith does not
mean protection from the chaos of chance,
only that God will stand beside you
once that chance has marked you
blood splattered and cold.**

Easter Faith

**It is not emptiness,
but redemption. A redemption
after the emptiness
that comes with the hope of a blessing,
after there is no further down,
there is only up or death.
It is not suffering that bears such wisdom,
but the surrender and acceptance of God's love
no matter what - it is the purity of that acceptance,
the absoluteness of it
that matters, that causes the miracle -**

**playing out like a walk across the sun
without going blind or getting burned.**

Choice.

I will sink your boat and struggle
with your scaly arms.
I will not let your hot sea swallow me
or let the light I earned from the birds
be extinguished in the deadness of your embrace.
One time, I was gentle with myself.
I took the remedy and widened my path.
Then you, with your ashen red-soul minions, ripped
the blood from my throat and I have been lying
here ever since, a victim - not the woman
I was made. I am not fragile, but I am of the sun
and of the darkness and I know the pure joy
of home. I cast you from my heart,
you who stole my fire, left me
weak-kneed and dependent upon an outer outcome.

Guide me down the shaft of this axle,
let my strength rise, dependent on only you.
I am not a single voice, ghostly in the darkness. I am
your servant - let me serve you - release me
from this fatalism, this consuming toxic tar.
Stand by my window, I will fight to save myself -
it will be just you and me at the bottom
of this grave and the demons I allowed in
and allowed to conquer.
At the bottom of this grave, I will cling to you.
Raise me up. I promise, my part will be played -
I won't let go.

Nothing

Nothing is wasted - not
time deposited into an illusion that
never was, not love laid out
like a sliced fruit, taken, then
spat back out - so utterly tasted and
so utterly refused.

Nothing is wasted, not women
counting the babies that once graced their arms,
now grown and gone, so rarely showing
tenderness or need -
not men who were babes, who were once able
to weep and were able to treat all with
unquestioned equality.

Nothing is wasted, not years spent in ambiguity
walking hospital halls, years of blood tests
and ultrasounds, offering no cure or
nameable disease.

Nothing is wasted - not poverty, not wealth,
not death, not grief.

Nothing is wasted if held out to God
held out, naked on a bed, under
the cracked ceiling.

Tomorrow

I open myself to the obsidian stone.

It is too much to lose myself in its
shiny warm darkness, so I press it
to my heart, I press my private light
into its own greenish dark sheen.

Love is coming. Like a tree in the winter wind
of twilight, it speaks to me. It charms my wound,
sings to me of abundance. Love is
on my doorstep, like a fully-fed child, giggling
at the playing squirrels.

Thank you morning for finally arriving.

It has been so cold. And these frostbite talismans
will be mine forever. But grace is no longer
a ghost, but something pure and solid, something I can
swallow. Grace has made its way inside and
the bells of welcoming relief
are ringing, ringing.

On My Belly

**Speak to me as you would to
one of your prophets. Speak to me
before I dry out, before I corrupt the very
light I swore to keep. Help me
out of this fire that turns
like a heap of twisted cut wire
inside. Help me inside
not to be so broken, better
than my circumstantial mess.
Speak to me for a long time
until I know for sure
that you care.**

I Was Soothed

**Blindness and brutality spilled
and I would not have gone on
but for the miracles of God's grace
that tightened around me
like a bandage, that held me up
like a puppeteer.**

**I made it through the impossible,
surpassed what I could do because
God held me in a fold like a fold
in the soft skin of sea.**

I Try To Breathe

God said

I didn't do it out of malice,

I did it out of mercy.

And so I try to understand
through the emotion of purified faith.

I try to recognize the truth petrified within
like a soul cracked and brittle
but still shining its unique glow.

The cold egg sits in my pocket.

I keep it there for when I get hungry,

if I get hungry,

which doesn't seem to happen much
anymore.

So it sits, cold, rubbery and whole,

sits, an egg too squished to roll,

sits for potential nourishment, as security without salt.

I try not to use it. I try to hold onto what God said

and breathe that in

as my only necessary

sustenance.

Drove Me Down

**By your mercy
the stone was thrown
that drove me down.**

**By your love
I catapulted
into the ditch,
and am still there.**

**By your freedom,
my faith was bound
and the rivers
outside
have soured.**

**By these things
my table was set and my ankles chained.
I see no way to be removed
but by your mercy
after the stone was thrown.**

Listening

Rising with the confidence
of 'no choice', rising in my tiny nakedness,
cupping equal parts poison and remedy
in broken clam shells.

It was a rock that was tossed that scraped my back.
It was words on paper that went dim because I was lost,
listening for a gurgle, a rhythm
to cherish, to roll in, lull in my mouth - sweet and hard.

God, do you love me? or is it only a dream?
God, love me, peel away this fishnet,
gather me into a single form.

Letting it out

The vision is a smoke cloud
released from my pocket, wrapping
me with its smoky warmth, breaking chaos
at its backbone.

A thousand chains of fear and grief
swoop down from the once singing sky
to crash on my limbs and drown me
with their weight.

God as full as the sea, flushing through me,
flowing around me with the starfish and the stingrays,
with the minnow fish and the barnacles,
God outside me, inside of me, holding me
in this vision, breaking the vine.

Let the wound not win

You sent me a crib of comfort,
a bridge to walk away from my moth-eaten coat,
a way to suddenly find that piece of string
I was looking for - I received, then
I lost the message, and my lungs flooded
with suspicious contempt.
My comfort was maimed and in this pit
of loudness and conflict, I saw my enemy everywhere:
Rain dripping from my sleeves -
only fear and judgment remaining.
In the morning, you returned to me. In the burn
of one small flame, in the sound of a perfect circle,
I asked your forgiveness:
To paint me with this freshness, shave
this mane of morbid madness and help me
cherish the ocean all day until night,
until I wake as one, hopeful again,
your child.

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.**

deeper layer of love

A bird dying in the tall grass, its wing, a bent leaf
that could not re-form. In the swamp yard, another bird
balanced on the stem of a tall weed, never noticing
the voice of death. The signature of each tree against
an unobtrusive sky. The frog placed by a well-intended child
in the middle of a road. The itch under the casted arm.
What mends the snow? In this land wedged
between instinct and heaven
does anything mend or know a lasting happiness
other than stillness?

Elements carved like karma into a snail's brain,
into the whale on fire with symphony,
into a baby, stillborn, and into its mother, whose substance
is now reduced to a wafer,
fossilized by impersonal failure.

There is so little love, so little to count on but the love
that continues loving despite the not-so-hidden deformities,
despite the limitations that bind us in these ambulance beds.
Only such love that carries the gruesome ghost
of each finite tale
can open the way to a new perfection,
to Gods' infinity of love that sees and heals
by its seeing, by its decided effort of
continuance.

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.

Heaven must be active (not inert)

Life is raw

**as a just-made wound. It is raw
so it is open to acts of mercy
and the beginning of true humility.**

**God is not proud but always available,
is always faultless in the body of love.**

Life is raw

**with no way to be protected from
cruel chance, no way but to ride the raft
down the falls and see what gets broken, then see
what gets preserved.**

Renaissance

The fountain I drank from
became toxic, and the way to make more purity
turned out to be the way to make less.
And so I am small as a lump
of hardened salt. And so what
if my flesh is getting old - a defined woman
doesn't have to fear such a thing,
nor does she have to fear the collapse of her every hope,
because inside she is solid, though
still impressionable,
because she has learned that God's light
is born to flicker, and not to be
a heavy stream.

This Hope

**With the hope of recovery,
and with eyes ever seeing
new ways to pronounce God,
my heart extends beyond
its necessary function
and leans closer to its
greater nature.**

**With this hope, love is possible,
love purified from fear,
so much wider than the typical emotion
and half-made substance of romantic dreaming.**

**With this hope, my hands remember old ways
of feeling. The stars chime with sounds
immeasurable, but finally recognized as true.**

**With this hope, dark is made right
and all extremities are drawn into the centre,
concentrated, solidified -
born and beginning.**

Eagle

**Bound by evil,
the kind that has no shame or hidden gain
that has only stupidity as its strength and cruelty
as its force.**

**Bound to deal with the devil's lowest minion,
to feel its rotting invading tongue touch your
clothes, your books, your headband.**

**But not bound by its game as long as the game
is relinquished and God is sought when the axe comes down,
then it will pass through you like a phantom axe,
mighty in appearance, but achieving nothing.**

**Not bound if the worse comes, and still
you stand with peace and dignity, trusting God's reward
and promise of care.**

**Not bound if you are free in faith, if you know
yourself to be subject to a richer realm, higher than
these inching worms.**

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.**

Impossible, Only Possible Way

**If you can make me better
than this bag of rage.
If you can calm my madness
and raise it ten octaves higher,
massage this grief from my belly, help
me look forward, dig me out of this sand pit, allow
me the strength to be better than who I am - then this death
will be but another movement, this betrayal and shock, only
a further stepping stone to rapture, resurrection.
Forgiveness would be mine, alchemizing my blood.
I could look with love on all this pain and know for certain
that my life is in your hands.**

Speak

Speak to me of mercy
when the world is under my chin
and my body is stiff with fear and stagnation
Speak to me of love,
of forgiving my careless indulgences,
of holding my hand as I tightrope walk over this cliff
Speak to me of staying with me
of comforting my tears, of miracles I don't deserve
to ease this inferno of anxiety
Speak to me of knowing me and not condemning
my childish cravings
Speak to me in spite of my mortal foibles,
my sins of lesser greed and my hope
of a better tomorrow
Speak to me,
wash me clean in your light, take
everything

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.

I have to push deep,

**pray deeply, as the ground
ripples and opens wide.**

**This last year's consciousness will be pulled from my mind
as a searing light radiates through, knowing me,
showing me the road released.**

**Glory will come and free me of this bile,
changed at last - like a larvae into a ladybug,
like a tadpole into a tiny toad - nothing can turn me back.**

I am listening. I have built myself a new main floor.

**I am ready to plunge naked into this pool,
to know myself at the moment of creation.**

**My throat will be dry of speaking,
but I will not stop speaking -**

It is all God.

A Way To Joy

**Words and birthday wishes
fall asleep under the light.**

**In sleep, I see what I do when awake -
shooting stars that fade into dark infinity.**

**So far, I have a bed, two legs and a mission
I've felt before I could speak.**

**Kiss these hands God, bless this pain in my shoulders,
give me hope for recovery.**

**Every effort is stultified, has no nucleus,
no path towards the sun. Every movement forward
dissolves into the flavour of the wind, is weak
in its purpose, in its ability to love.**

**Print my name on your heart. I want to serve,
to walk again across the sand dunes, walk again
hand in hand.**

Hell is High (when the only power left is to surrender)

**At the height of this hill,
the warm air is gone,
the fledging is removed from its nest,
no fossil is found. Once
there was a living thing, up here,
something, at sometime, burned
with hunger.**

**The devil is a thief. The devil blows air bubbles
into the veins. The devil has many eyes,
though none offer clarity.**

**On this hill, I sleep, stride, then unveil this
saga of betrayal and disappointment. The devil comes,
but I will not be ruled. I accept this anguish, anger,
grief, and finally, emptiness - on this hill - I accept
God's love, though it hurts and breaks both my ankles
so that I am stuck here - on this barren pinnacle -
owner of what has passed and what has yet to come.**

If I Get There

**If I was done with this canvas
and the pattern I formed upon it
could be tucked inside the space between
the filing cabinet and bookshelf . . .
If I could read the dialect of normal behavior
and place myself at the foot of its throne . . .
If the next step was the greatest step
that would extract me from this quagmire
and strip away the congealed substance around my bones . . .**

**then my head would be held in your hands,
cradled there like a new baby, helpless but secure -
my whole body supported by your one arm.
Love would be like food, and you would be
my devoted glory.**

No Ground

There are no leftovers,
no cylinder funnel to collect
and preserve extravagant prayers.
In this place, I lean but I dare not cry -
a rosebush past its prime, brittle in the sun.
I am collapsing, out loud,
reforming every cell, painful alterations. My God
of fluid, my God, grand as, and grander than, myth -
I have cut through this horizon. I have cut
through my thick interior, and still, I'm tilting
like an old tree
unable to stand. My God,
breathe into me, make plans for my soul or let me die,
bound in this circle. My God, rain into my reservoir -
it feels so long
since I have been untethered.
There are other worlds. There is Jupiter.
My God, please repair this punctured deck
or throw me overboard.
Fill me, my God, with love,
strong enough to override the weight of this
hard endurance.

I let go

of my will, fantasies
of perfection that make
life my enemy. I let go of things
already lost, of water flooding my ship and
of the dead dolphin floating by.

I let go again of my desire
for unauthorized miracles
and accept the gifts I have been given
as a light over the ocean, guiding me,
marking me a 'someone' to find.

I let go of old photos and unclear stations
on the radio. I let go and embrace what
is living, knowing this is just fine,
knowing I am always held close
in God's engaging arms, knowing
I must let go

Bare Essentials

I waited on you,
now I am free to let the waiting go.
I give you back the burden of setting things right.
I give you back the long walks carrying
a weight I could not control, the tightness
circumventing my throat and my days never perfect
because of senseless lack - I give it back to you,
the fallen star, the third-degree burns,
the collection of my fears and disappointments.
I cannot hold it any longer. My own voice betrays
me - desperation has mutated me, but not
anymore. You can hold all these inadequacies
and the stark gravity
of survival - you can create love out of nothing,
bring destiny to our doorstep, take all this debt
and impossibility and raise it over the threshold.
You can take
this crippled breath and paint it fresh and easeful.
I give it back to you. I expect nothing but
freedom, to walk again like a very young child -
absolute, connected.

On Solid Ground

Beyond the chiseled-out hole,
beyond the seed that died on fertile ground
and the inseparable mourning doves,
meaning will be restored, maybe never grasped,
but down deep the turbulent waters will cease
and the chaos that reigns where there should have been love
will only be the surface coat, will be a storm
outside that cannot touch me in my house
or scratch at the scar in my open eyes.
Meaning is here because I choose God, and in doing so,
I am chosen. God will be more than just my rescue,
will be my Kabala spelled out in simple form.
God is now the pin
in this gloomy bubble, the reliever of senselessness,
the groom that dispels any doubt.
God has provided me a horse to sit upon -
here with my companion there is a loyalty between us
that no despair can swallow.
There is a connection that grows, that I know
angels and other heavenly creatures
will rush to defend.

Lament

It is lonely to be loved by God,
stretched beyond capacity by laws
of magnets, hunger and inevitable reality,
to hold open a hand and have even that
security taken, to smile in the face of pressing,
impossible obligations - things owed, things needed,
and the harvest never ready. It is hard to keep
trembling with service and acceptance, to be at ease
and know the gift will come just when it is needed - God will
choose the music, choose which danger is real and what must
depart. It is hard to not cry, sometimes, just because
the world is so big and heavy and laden
with death and arrogant
stupidity. I am free but time is thick
and I get tired of trying to love and
of this loneliness.

Fidelity

Further in
into intimacy, surrendering
the rosary beads, the Buddha beads,
the Krishna beads - necklaces
of superstitious worth, a means to be compensated
with miracles for work done - disciplined activity
performed with the anticipation of divine participation -
enduring boredom with karmic pride. But nothing works
that way or does it let go and become voluminous
just because of accumulation. Why can't I be
the things I see? Why do I resist collapse, clasp
onto linear principles, desperate to be justified.
Intimacy is everything ever sought - to have God inside
filling, overtaking every other sensation. Movement
like locked loins or other body parts in
synchronized ministrations, joining another's pulse,
extending the body's confines. I will not want for more
but this surrender - the stillness of receptivity coalescing
with the arching activity of advancing without
expectations of results, to be delivered
into the rhythm of tangible grace, giving into a relentless rich
flow that knows taste and substance, but no set speed.
I know staying this way is not easy,
not when the bedsheets are moth bitten and money
is stolen at the corner store.
I know teeth need fixing and foundations
are fragmenting, but how can that matter
when the whole is at stake? When whatever is taken,
explored and received is there to guide further in.
When God is asking
for this union to be achieved, offering peace but
no ego reprieve - no other lovers, no compromise.

Edified

Was I bound by the artificial?
Driftwood down an interceding flow?
Horse stance, back muscles rolling, lines of twine,
and fishing. I will not fish or tighten my spinal cord
for the appearance of strength.
I will not bask relaxed in hot spring nobility or lick the nose
of prey I someday plan to devour.
Was I combined or conditioned
to make a unified shape?

Loudly, my name was spoken. It was God, I am
sure of that. And it was angry, pressing, urging me
to wake and take nothing lightly or so hard.
It was the second time
at the time of 2:30 a.m., when my bed flushed with instant
rigidity, lifting me with dominance
from the gardens of my despair.

It was spoken as a permit to build, to trap the past inside
the future - not as vintage romanticism, but for the sake
of journeying onward, to be integrated
with what must be re-owned, absolved by the fact
that nothing can escape the impact of eternity. I was shown
that the igloo mansions I once erected,
featuring such elaborate depictions,
cerebral justifications of indignant loneliness,
were natural and could not be dismantled.

I heard my name spoken, calling me to dart alert
from a shrinking sleep, to walk the hallway, carve
myself an inclusive center, to answer boldly,
unconditionally step
into the dictates of a personal command.

Will you keep me

here, half-maimed,
a bouquet of translucent daisies, a meager waterfall
that is less than a tide between two places,
more like still-birth - burning improper,
scenting the torso of a tree. A tree
I came across and wanted to cross into its sphere, step up
and build a tight fence around us two
so I would have no choice
but to lean on hefty roots, sleep at the bottom, wide as earth.

Will you keep me, stop me
from compromising a cold solution,
from peddling the fruits of my incandescent plateau
with weak convictions?
Or will you turn me wooden just to protect
what is soft, and not, interchangeable?
Will you keep me in this tattered suit,
as my appetite courses through me grey and unmade,
dragging the tentacle midnight at my heels - my reasoning,
foiled; my affectionate-heart, stunted, incapable of replying.

Havoc and purgatory. Beehives
I have broken. Bend me now to move my lips over
a willing recipient. Will you drink me, go on drinking
the sap that steals
from my pores, purging from my flesh in fluctuating doses?

Will you keep using me? My loins are like snow
shadowing white a lush green. These exaltations I need
are like the images sailing tumultuously
through my head, grid-locking a purer understanding.
I need to be kept, to be your brown buckwheat,
tender and eatable.

But there is more straw on my veranda
than there are stones, more I must conquer to gain.
Outside is not liberating. It rides in
on a limping mare and severs me from holistic learning.
The eagles arrive never asking for remuneration,
but they are useless
as they stream through rainclouds.
They never own anything -
not the cliffs they claim, not prey, and not their offspring.

So will you keep me,
now that I am ambushed by your requests,
thoroughly excavated - liver and marrow - no more,
now that I am gone,
and I have given up every potential shore?
Will you play on my step,
keep me from running, from fading headlong
into a banal madness, keep me
from becoming roadkill, dust
in a never-ending duststorm?

Grace mightier than Natural Law

What if eternity was marked in a mirror,
and we lived there like animated ornaments,
reproducing each dot of matter as reflection?
Especially love
drilled into the furrows of fear, or love
withstanding betrayal by latching firmly to devotion?

What if what we perceived as solid is itself artificial
and that true existence is elsewhere, is a multi-layered
holographic construction coating our reality?
As if death was the overture of our lives,
rooted in continuance and
not defeat.

At times I can taste myself slipping
into the tip of a Cathedral ceiling.
Weapons I cannot use become suggestions,
impractical solutions, there to
analyze other highways not meant to cross.
Highways bearing bright moonlight
on their surfaces, like correspondences looked at
but never read.

At times my singing is subdued,
and I discover these highways I am not welcome on,
find myself disassociated from their flat hum, from their
pavement platform and worn-over buckling curves.

Memories are funerals - the hours we spend
traveling their domains.

I spend my time studying trees. Some trees are not beautiful,
but are depressed growths, even in their grandeur.

When flushed with foliage or sparse, these trees
emanate an aura of monotony. Like looking through
dirty glass windows, watching
pointing fingers, listening
to a zoo of indistinct, inescapable sounds,
they have been drained of vitality.

Ballooned and warm, I am transformed
by the pressure to create symbols to improve
an already great equation.

In this way, I hear a toddler cry, and I think
it is impossible to grow up
and not carry as core the experiences
of kindnesses given and kindnesses withheld:
For we all know it is soothing to be tended to,
to have someone wash our hair.

So what then if there is always a camera
taking pictures? Then it must be important
to be frank in spite of showing rough edges
that spark criticism, disappointment, or a full-body
malaise. It must be important not to falsify speech,
to be able to disregard
pleasantries or other forms of stroking public appeal.

What if I closed the door, turned on the fan, turned on
the light, would I learn to swing or be a domino, a causality?

Principals move like wolves commandeering prey
or like a dozen eggs dropped - their effect built on a single
gravitational happenstance.

What if we are marked, already surviving forever -
each exacting
fraction of ourselves duplicated?

God must muse through such thorough descriptions
of our lives, an overseer of our personalized library,
defeating what seems irreversible
with forgiveness, erasing without remnant
the imprint and impact of things wrongly given, taken, or
left to starve.

Structures I pretend to own

Organs flayed

Nightmares understood

**God is a scientist, a retina with constricted veins,
dictating an obituary with every birth.**

Circular spots; ink-stains, light-stains . . .

there are so many preconceptions I need to let go of.

**I must grasp that rationality and chaos both
are immature theories, primitive understandings.**

**Nothing can be drawn to scale. Inside the void,
it is fizzing, being expelled then absorbed with
a brief division and then a brief collision - beautiful osmosis.**

**I saw a strawberry swallowed,
progress from being a fruit to being
a taste-bud treasure. I was engulfed in vastness,
cultivating a pattern.**

**But there is no pattern, though there is geometry, formula,
and muscles functioning by invariable laws.**

**God loves most things with a sense of humour,
with an unexpected discharge. Energy cannot be
damaged, but it can pulse too quickly,
get caught in a tachycardia loop,
be confined to a fixed pathway like a spasm, repeating, stagnant
in its activity. That is not love.**

**It leads to heart failure, lacking
arousal, inflammation, surprise. That is a condition where
sludge is formed and purity is suffocated, and all and all
it is not very crisp. The result is not creation,
movement only, not breathing.**

**I know I am not meant to hear the angels flutter,
but I hear them anyways. Some nights
they enjoy a quick wing-shudder, jettisoning
in and out of phase. On my sloping rooftop,
near my bedroom window,
they say to me: pregnancy demands a gentle cultivation,
a willingness for a foreign inclusion.
They say: do not look for equilibrium because exact balance
would mean obliteration.**

Rapture When Walking

Celestial pine and
words like this that stick
to the roof of my mouth -
tight, tense, forceful like flesh
compressed, elongated. These fattened senses, I sense
it is not normal to look at the bodies of
trees and see a mouth, a breast, hips in
permanent thrust, thrusting into to the grey mass
of clouds that are brought frequently
to their bloated threshold then drained in a steady relief.
I know all animals are naked and people
think themselves clothed, but vanity and the undercurrent
of striving are photographs etched on their exposed arms,
necklines. Sometime I might lift my lips,
press them completely into the vines,
step a day onto another's shore, lose my gender
and be drenched.
Sometimes, I feel you like a prying lover, impatient with our
differences, anguished by the things that separate us.
You have no use for me, alone.
You claim victory, destroy my shell
and make us join, make me not so small but swallowing
everything that is you, like smoke inhaled or
perfume on the tongue. You again, and that
is good because you must know how much I need this chaos
exploding, lingering, desperate to find synchronicity,
then arriving - order and beauty, exact. You must know.
You gave me an eyelid. And I am arriving
sweet, silk, surrounded
to this place. My God, I am
home.

Emptied

I am tired God
of the lack, invisible
corroded treasures,
deciphered, enciphered
throughout the day. I need you
final in my palm. There is this cup,
a spoonful of nectar, only. Knowing so
small like a traveler who cannot see
beyond the knick-knack souvenir, only
this spoonful and a house too quiet in the
early mornings, not enough connection - a wave
that never crests, metal made into nothing.
I need to build, soak myself in this feral blizzard
approaching, always just approaching. Why can't I
have flour? Be someone alive, with wings and a face
of pure stone? Why is your love so tenuous, powerful
sometimes, and then, wispy, hardly registering?
I remember a planet I once tread upon - spiked, clustered
grass, almost blue, but in the sunshine, it was not
a colour that had a name. I want that rawness back,
a festival of sights and sensations,
constant like a ringing bell, ringing
out a perpetual harmony. I want to stop struggling
in this cemetery, mourning things I've never had.
If you would tell me where to watch,
what to do with this trampled voice. If
I could receive a waterfall. God, I am getting older, younger
somehow than when I started. You brought me
here, away from sensual flavours and the mountains' pulse.
Put salt on my lips, paint me, now, please
in turquoise.

I heard a poet say

**that doing art is a denial of self. I say
it is an inclusion of God into the self.
It is not simply a dialogue nor is it intellectual banter,
but it is being intoxicated with the fullness
of seeing God there with every thought –
in the swimming pool while treading water,
or at the hair dresser, drinking coffee, waiting for a turn.**

**A pebble is paradox like time travel is, or a meteor
entering the earth like a man enters a woman -
a synergy of the round and the sharp,
splicing, splitting, until more splicing and splitting, until
dependency on oxygen is born.**

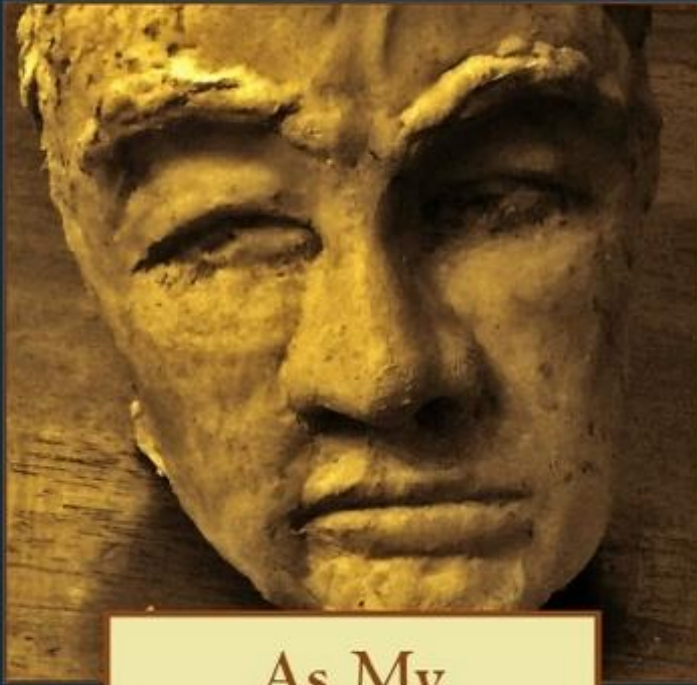
**Speculation, lectures, ceremonies
are deeds to occupy but never to explain.
Hair like a mammoth's - how I long to run
my knuckles through its thickness and ancestry!
I am not intimidated by people with busy days
and many different shoes. Brown
has become my favourite colour, and grey, that too
is magic. I knew this when I was young:
True intensity is subtle, is equal
in its magnitude as it is to its intricacy -
It commands exploration.**

**When I was young I knew God was with me
at every threshold, standing inside my flesh. Since then,
I have played with death,
held conference with death as a sister.**

**But even such sibling biology
cannot cull this communion I have discovered,
can't vacuum apart indelible combined-shapes
into quarantined segregation.**

**I have known death's jolts, have known
its harrowing cripple and crack, and know
it cannot revert humanity back to that interval
before God exhaled, altering the playing field,
resulting in
such a mighty fusion.**

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As My
Blindness Burns

- THREE LONG
POEMS

ALLISON
GRAYHURST

As My Blindness Burns-
three long poems

Allison Grayhurst

Edge Unlimited Publishing

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As My Blindness Burns

Without these things
of rainbow and insight
I stand, fragmented
by despair, fleeting as daylight,
composed of failed hopes
and held-back tears.

Young, like truth is
when first found,
are the swollen joys
of new understandings.
And secret still is
the unsculpted future
that rises unexpected without
resolution.

The muses of this universe hold faith
and doubt equally
in their impregnated beams,
and me with my hideous cowardice
that grows stronger with age, hides
the things that challenge
and direct me to an edge, ignoring the
simple surrender needed
to grow and to deeply be
someone.

This city sobs
when hearing its own wind die,
takes in its industrious hands
the sluggish and the bitter.

And the few who rebuke
this smog-breathing serpent
lean depleted in each other's arms,
hoping to embody something beyond
the world or melancholic pain.

And here, wanting, each slave is born, each
mistrust upheld like a perfected attitude.

People hold conviction without vision,
walking the subway floors, staring
out to empty highways.
Stale are the nutrients of each wished-on star.
Stale ambition bleating into
each small ear.

Lament now the corpses in caverns,
in parades and family restaurants.
Lament the eclipsed beauty of impulse,
the restraint of every compelling break-a-way.

For just one hope to tread behind
Jesus' sandal, freeze,
then crack all chains.

I would delight
in the struggles of individuals
conquering the downcast clouds
that hinder and fill a soul
with stagnant woe.

But like I am, sick with human
needs, political and ungenerous, I face
the storms and hide my pleas inside the
thunder.

Naked, lovers divulge
their infinite shades. Lovers
lean like dried up trees against
an autumn's ground, lean
for mercy and for each
affection denied.

But love they do
in the wintry airs
trying to overcome
personality, imbedded habits,
each other's foreign sphere.

I am pale, forgetful,
I lie awake all night taken down,
breathing the vaporous stench of
decay, in nightmares,
while kneeling before
the brightest flower.

I watch you thinning,
keeping
my anguish private,
for none will accept my five open
senses, the reasons for my withered will.

I cannot embrace my interior
with humble affection, but must
know the labyrinth's breathing tide;
mysteries renounced, complexities explained
by pensive reason.

Where I sit, seeking the inaccessible cure,
madness comes to kill through dissection,
definition and spiritual systems decreed.

In water I am numb,
drifting dazed through dark
androgynous waves.

I think of whispering to your waiting grave,
of netting grief and memory,
starving each of their sustenance
blind.

But then alone, in death, in life,
connection is our bread,
our higher air that beckons and repairs
the cracks that would kill on
tougher days.

How long to hold you in this sandpit sinking?
How long to watch your unwilling heart fade?

That I am through with annihilating snares
Through with the brutes of cold consuming despair

Through your life yielding to
sudden disease, through the closed door
that echoes strong sighs like screams
down corridors of love's
last stroke . . .

Longing for nether fields,
I want to run
in these subterranean, primal places, want
limbs of fire, eternally
red and dancing over the waking darkness.
I want to seal you

into the living Divine.

I am suspended, believing
the horror will not come, believing
death will not make
a skeleton out of you.

Dad (an eulogy)

*"My life was my peace, now,
in the moment of my release."*

Under here in the dark
deepest dream, the cold
loss, unbearable change,
I cry out blood. I have no
overcoat, no more protection.
It is now a different light I seek,
an alchemized marrow in my bones.
Do I sing, for death is peace,
and death is the edge that slices
the tongue in two, that drains the cup
of every drink? Home - I have lost
the essential tie. I have lived with a bond
so beautiful, now broken by fate and the blue-turning
cheek. How will I know my own grief,
the shattering that eclipses all but faith?

In the newspaper turning, I smell
your hairspray, I hear your boisterous voice.
I clasp in my hands the raw fire of nevermore.
Stand close to my mirror,
and help me breathe in and out,
help me take into my own
your generous heart.

I knelt before his photograph
on the casket and we talked
of gratitude and goodbyes. I saw
compassion's light, there, in
his dark tremendous eyes.
I felt the tearing off of seven layers of skin.
I held my hands together. Faith,
where is your shield? Your cradle
to rest my shattered spine? Each cell
is reformed by his departure. I am left
in the winter wind without clothing
or a protective tree.

Cut, the thin clouds
cut a pathway within
where loss is deep as God.
My fingers move like trains
back and forth. Ashes in an urn. Graveyard green
flavoured by tears.
I whisper to him when on the gravel road.
I see him beyond the fence, in the coming
December snows. I need him like before,
when hearing children talk, when waiting
for a terrible moment to pass. He formed a giving spirit,
rooted in integrity. Angels come and go,
hovering in my pocket books and on highways
I never cross. They touch the seagulls'
outgoing breath, they write his name
on Scarborough cliffs. I will not mourn
with unholy regrets, nor would I change
the tension in his nerves.

In closets, memories pile,
their scents and wooden colours
for years at rest in unchanged
shadowed hovels. I find myself
in unfamiliar rooms, emptied
of hope and the driven smile.
I find the walls pulsing, and the floor,
a bruised body I have cried for.
In years, this hot blood of loss
will thin and this tumour of unbuffered
pain will shrink and mend. In years, I will
see his picture and spend a Christmas under a pink sun.
November winds will wrap me in
a sweet and grateful slumber.

Hammered by a kaleidoscope of memories,
through the grand "if" and the willy-nilly
confines of love. Rifts in the pavement
I walk on today, still stunned by the enormous
and the unchangeable, still frightened of my thoughts
that go into the hard void, into the unfocused
stare and the image of him lying there,
no longer. Up & down craters beyond
this century's grasp, beyond the books
I've read and anguish before encountered.
He answers me in my head, wakes me at 2 am.
He protects me still, though his arms have bent
to the cold, unforgiving ash.

Appleseeds I'll never bury.
Evergreens lean towards the greying sky.
He is there like a shadow on my back, there
in the wheat-coloured grass.
He is over the city factories,
his face resides on graffiti walls.
And on telephone wires I see him sit
with the starlings, smell him in the scent
of evening rain. I hear his stories from
the beautiful lips of children. I think
I'll see him tomorrow again, know his
paternal warmth, the way his smile lifted
the corners of his mouth.
Time is drifting into the homes of strangers,
as death strides beside every dream
living, defiled or lost.
He surrounds me like the sounds of a streetcar
running, and I am running, struggling
to stop, lay down and to be reborn.

Ocean-cold and wooed by the tongues
of snakes. Miracles abound,
but still grief gnaws a pathway
through my torso. Trees are singing
of the flames I sleep in and the empty
days toss me to and fro, from heavy tears
to rage. How without him in the huge,
unpredictable world? How without his loud
and open gifts? Landscapes where centres break
and colours are no more. I touch the crocodile
tooth, the boiling point of all my bones.
So alone, coupled with the uncertain dark.

I miss his brown fiery eyes and how
he lived, pampering the hearts of others.
I miss him like I would my very skin, like the shell its yolk,
and the eyes, their vision - Where
is the cure? Where is the farewell
from this gruesome spell? The shock
still rivets in me. Crows spin through the clouds.
Death has been unleashed like the first feel of pain.

*Believe me, you have reached me. Believe me,
this enemy won't win. I will stand tall for you.
I will hold your hand until morning.*

Pale in the December sky,
the sun is but an insect's dream.
I leap from cabooses onto the icy tracks.
There are people in the playground,
happy that Christmas is near. There are
buildings with stained-glass windows,
reminding me of the aloneness we each are
bound to endure. Now my father, I wake to find
you hour upon hour at night. I talk to you
in half-conscious streams. In the afternoon,
I break down. Crows sit on my porch,
then follow me through the peopled-street
where I swear your shoes have travelled, once
in a bachelor's dream. And mother is all
sliced-up inside. Days and days we spend
looking at old photos, trying to dispel
her sorrow and devouring regrets.
My husband holds me like the best
of friends do. He carries me over

these desert fires. I want to tell you
how good was your influence, how soft
my aching eyes. I want to know you again
after I die, like you were in this life -
my strong, my steadfast guide.

Old factory fields in mid-December's light.
Vacant barns and rows of suburban homes.
You pushed me on the swing
and gave me courage to dive.
Sunsets in Spain and the sounds
of the typewriter at 4 am are now part
of my muscles and nerves - you are in me
like a fledgling in its nest or the drive
behind my every restless year. You knew
how the great dream fell, how rage can find
the form of forgiveness, and the bridge
between our two stubborn intensities.
You were my ally in the social sphere, my
guardian in the tower, my place of safety
and self-belief. You held me near
when the curtain opened, and my childhood
fastened to a ravenous storm.

I live in a room of brown-papered walls,
TV screens and empty teacups. I want
to give up like the hand that lets go
of the cliff or the orphaned boy
left on the streets alone. I'm trying
to keep my head steady, but no abstractions

relieve me, only pins and needles in my brain
and the intestinal twist that has found
its way within like a permanent companion.
People call, but only this empty dread
makes its bed in my heart.

I know it is over - the special way we needed
one another. I know I must take the road
to lead me on, past the dried flowers
and 1 pm breakdowns. Shakespeare at
the dinner table and omelettes in the
afternoons - I won't forget a single
kindness, the way you prayed
on that darkest day in my adolescent life.
Ceilings crack overhead. I knife
a million strangers. I curse the cars
going by and the cockroach on the kitchen
floor. There are no distractions from death.
There are no soothing things to do -
but to wait behind this cold and sealed door.

The cloven hoof of
this and that blood's pardon.
I feel the acorn hit,
the crossing of the Nile.
I feel like an Indian summer,
and all the sweat pouring into
the brass cup of mortal knowing.
Time, in time no love is broken,
not the pound pound pound of his
nature, not the be-all of his voice.
I will never hear that voice again,

not his loud centre ringing, his
male pride, gentle in the sun.
I will never carry his water again,
or tell him - I thank God
for you. For you and your quickened
energy, for the artery of your moral
gestures that gave with 'yes & no',
with 'wrong & right', the seed
of my shelter and the over-fair justice
I believed in all my childhood life.
I thank God for your walking sound,
how the room rebounded with your
surely presence, and the smile on
your eccentric face, there, when we talked
of a grandchild. I thank God for the breathing space
you gave, and the will to live out my tale.
I thank God for the hemisphere you made
and the beautiful passions you instilled
in my heart. I thank God for you -
my weight, the reason I write
my song.

If today the closed eye
takes me to where I've never
been before, if I meet my father
in the mirror or in a five & dime store,
would this pressure drain like the letting
of blood, would these horror-stricken
days mean nothing now but a bitter
tossed-away cup? If he moved through
a dream saying - Do not be afraid.
Do not let your mind fracture or your lips

turn blue - would I know him like
last month or meet him with raw wonder, anew?
The rings around my fingers.
The friends I cannot keep.

A month crushed
in the vortex of a python's circle.
Stale breath filling my atmosphere,
and hope is but soft warm sand
beneath the feet, is a season that
never fades, is not what my hands
can trace. I long for mornings
all to myself, to hear his voice
once more on the phone. But rocking chairs
and crossword puzzles rest vacant as
2 am streets. And birthday cakes are past
like an old person's dreams. He returns
again at night, alive for one more week.
Rain pours onto my teeth and
nutshells are gathered by the winter's
black and brindle squirrels.

With grace I may be replenished.
This dull anguish may be replaced
with starlight in my belly. Or with the
million winds of God's miraculous justice,
I may return to a little one the goodness
he gave, be offered the chance to feel
the kick, to know no stronger responsibility.
The same as he (with his stoic suffering

and gregarious generosity) plucked the weeds
from my journey's path and made me see
with moral clarity the fault of all but love -
so maybe I can be for one what he was for me.
Maybe soon my turn will come.

Before I knew my own face
in the reflection, I saw
sparrows rolling in the sand
and wished my heart open as the underpass
cars travel through. Before I knew of death
and its yellow-green smile. I offered
caramel-coated apples and chocolate bars
to placate it. But now I stand
beside its smelly aftermath. I feel
its wrenching voice fill my solitude,
and all the mad children of this and
other worlds echo their hell beneath
my many scarves and sweaters, touching
me nude with their growing black hole.
And soon I am just darkness with no size,
no boundaries or vision of outside. Soon
I am embittered by friendships I thought
I had, and mountains of rage churn like
spoilt food in my belly. I am sad too, like
the willow tree in my Montreal backyard.
Sad like my father when his mother died,
and his orphan cry lied sealed inside
like a voiceless fear. Because now he

is gone and things I often waited for
will never pass. No "Owl & The Pussycat"
for my children's ears, no more pride in
his sideways smile, or trips to India
or English moors. He will never know
my children's names.

Pigeons flock through the fog,
high above the park benches and lamp posts.
Guilt has no shore, but is an endless
sea where jellyfish and stingrays
make their nests and the dolphin
is no more. Our talks by the fireside
will never be again, or his drifting
to sleep on the couch in the winter's
after-midnight air. On Christmas eve,
all my memories are soaked into
the tree's red and blue lights. And Grandma
is gone, as well as the dog beside me.
But worst is the emptiness of his vanishing,
is the click click inside my throat
and the razor-burn on my knees. Kneel and pray,
for life is nothing but this and that thing done,
is the touching of two hearts
and the softening of brittle ways, is to keep
the soul's challenge forefront, then to sing
around the merry table of relatives and friends,
as if immune to bitter unbelief and fear
that drives the nail inward. He is
on the windowsill looking in,
reminding me that long ago

our once colliding spirits
made the greatest of amends.

Waves of snow outside the window,
moving like pure isolation, cleansing all
with its cold fury. Last night
I hugged him in a short farewell in my head,
in the blue fog of a dream. And waking
I found peace in January calling. Outside
a city hawk circled, blessing me and mine
with its instinct so talon-strong and
close to God. Families I never knew
have opened my heart. Barnyards and lithe trees,
stretch toward the silver sun. I miss him
at the dinner table and when the wine is served,
when all the things of hopes and wonders
implode within. Into the scent of dried rose petals
death dives with mad glee. Water-towers
cut a hole through eternity. The wrinkled word
I cannot speak. The keepsakes (like hot wax
pouring onto my belly) cause a redness
that releases my broken-heart's moan. And hanging,
- my flesh, my guilt, my grief -
now and forever merged, undeniably atoned.

Walkways



Dual forming on slopes of darker minds.
Succulent nodes of effervescent whispers,
whispering Oh! Blood clots bending
in unison to sharp solstices.

Dig and reap tomorrow's regrets,
piled on like love you thought was comfortable.

Comfort is a guard you let loose,
let down and found judgments -
platters to be served and roasted upon.

Singing for sale. A number left to a key. Fickle
verdicts oscillating between indifference and approval.
Release and acceptance - what else is there?
I am only unhappy when I want what isn't.

Platypus cans of tonic - drink down, flushing

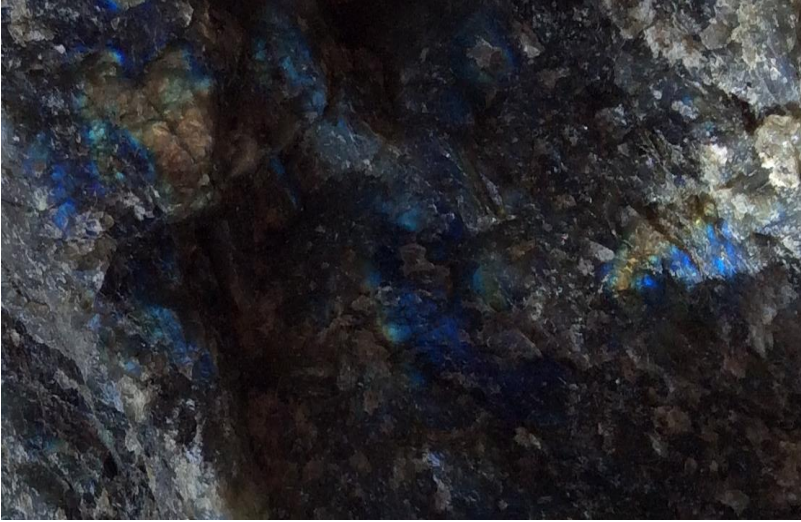
through organs. I see orange. Orange buses,
orange lines of direction on the road, in homes
where anger is held at stillpoint. One point
on a curve. I have lost my feathers,
all means of flight. There is nothing left
but hunger for the skyspace, outerspace, space
where I once travelled through meteor fields,
ballooning over planets' edges like a seamstress,
owning it all before I got grounded, committed
to personal love and the necessity of graves.

Why did I come here? To cry for my loved ones,
hold vigil for the slaughtered pigs?
Centuries that just were, lingering, licking
on waves of vastness, licking dark matter like a candy cane.
Not a soul, but the planets vibrating their orchestra - deep,
varying at intervals, then again, and never changing.
God, what am I doing in the sunlight - on the sidewalks,
making room for children on bicycles?
Putting pressure on my shoulders so I cannot sleep,
cannot appease this malcontent.
Why did I leave - to connect with misplaced animals?
Babies only born? Looking for union when before
I thought myself whole?

Material made from the moon. I understand
the beauty of caves, the great sea turtle's solitary plight...
but more and more - I never wanted more than you
again inside of me - infinity in corporeal form.

God separates to know Itself. God is only what we give,
awakening as we do to warmth and kindness - choices
under the wrap of gravity and yet, somehow,
lifted into altruism.

....



**Smudges, under siege, patches of calcified tissue
and the swamp I enter in - fuming with failed love -
connections broken under the Buddha fire. Detachment
will not save me - nailed to the pavement stone, looking at birds.**

**Summer where have you gone? Smells rise to meet me,
and the air is still humid, pressing on my cortex,
corrupting my ability to choose joy.
Grasshoppers hopping. Will my heart be broken?
Again, again, squeezing, squished
fermenting at the sides, foaming and fizzling, burning sage, but
it is not good enough, not enough to teach me the strokes
or how to steady the raging chaos gestating large
in the pocket of my throat. Continents on fire,
inside organs necessary
to function - why the children? Why not me?**

**Livingroom-light-globe like a crystal ball,
opaque but powerful enough to predict possibilities.
I was never here before, never heard the angry rodents
vocalize, never slept with aching joints, dreams**

of running low and ferns and moss
covering Zen-garden displays.
What else are we going to do here, but procreate, create,
dissipate and die? Van doors left open.
Lawn chairs on the road for pickup.
The windmill, the tilting tops of trees, heavy
with clusters of fresh pinecones.
I am an orange peel, orange, peeled, drying
next to the sewer grate.
I am limp with the weight, the burden of random happenings.
Always I love you and always, I am breathing.
Take me into the arms of your protection.
I don't want another day.
Mass of thick porous grey hovering, no space for hope.
Why the children? Couldn't you spare just them and all
the up-for slaughter animals?
I am done with this place, the tripping curb,
callous indifference - the rippling consequences
of blind destruction.

....



**Piercing, lingering, chiming out a hymn, lullaby on a chain.
Remorse to wade in like a sea-salt bath, absorbing
the past into the present cellular flow.
Mounds of construction sand, building and restoring roots
without life, chopped down at surface level.
Ideologies fuel, then turned to cinder by anger -
justified violence that violates the laws of love.**

**Skittering up stairs, the last time I held a leaf I held
your focused form, unable to stay the distance,
but stayed nonetheless near rudimentary desires.**

**I am cut like a lawn, smooth as carpet. See me now,
skateboarding, jettisoning over humps and bridges.
The wind - position me inside your storm. The last time,
strength enlisted an empty street - such vines
and beautiful stones!**

**Mercy in a crack, a masterpiece of twin creation,
outside art galleries - living wood, sleeping shapes,
inviting holes... holy as sex, sweet hands entwined.**

**Release into me as I release into you,
in mutual receptivity, clear direction, directing energy.
Dew drops evaporating, shining.
Our masthead - brittle, breaking. Even so,
how we are combined! Such glow.
It is glorious to know you like this
and not be afraid.**

....



**Laid low, laid out like soulmates never meant to meet
in this life, in the spectrum of folly and limitation.**

**A painting layered, re-mastered, re-mused and then,
burned by neglect.**

**Miniature moment of perfection, condensed
to hold a legacy in swirling matter, hard and glittering.**

**Fractures as long as a walkway
stretching the borders of a great body of water.**

**Stringing thoughts like a child's dream. I know,
but I've learned not to take synchronicity so seriously,
learned there is only choice, and chance caved into,
selected to stand as fate - the end result, resulting
in a theory of complexities and open systems.**

**Stuck in the ground, protruding stilted like a statue.
Tell me it is true, that nothing pure is subjected to disease.
Crickets in the late morning.
When I am fixated, it is fantasy, false as poison in soup.**

When I am lucid, liquid budding, my fingers are flames,
and all that they contact pulse with their heat.

Various clouds like currents perpetually pumping -
financial lack, and I, myself, curled up on the bottom stair.
Beds I defend, determined to lay in, over and over
hurting for considered crimes. Erasing perimeters, I clutch
at fraudulent mercies, securities of working furnaces
and washed hair. How to love damaged flesh, radiate love
for what is broken, far beyond romanticism, dangerous
as a cockroach and forever mutating -
translucent shells and pores - radioactive
and growing more grotesque under slabs of rotten wood?
Love, I do not understand you as I am older
and keeping up the climb. Medications and
broken down dishwashers.
Debt like ghosts that stick to my aura,
smothering out the colour -
Oh weedy garden! Sparrow on my roof, talk to me for a while.
How can I love, middle-aged, half over, clear
of a younger person's hope and indecision?
Pointing at ecstasy (a snail on my forehead) pointing,
pointing, stung.

....



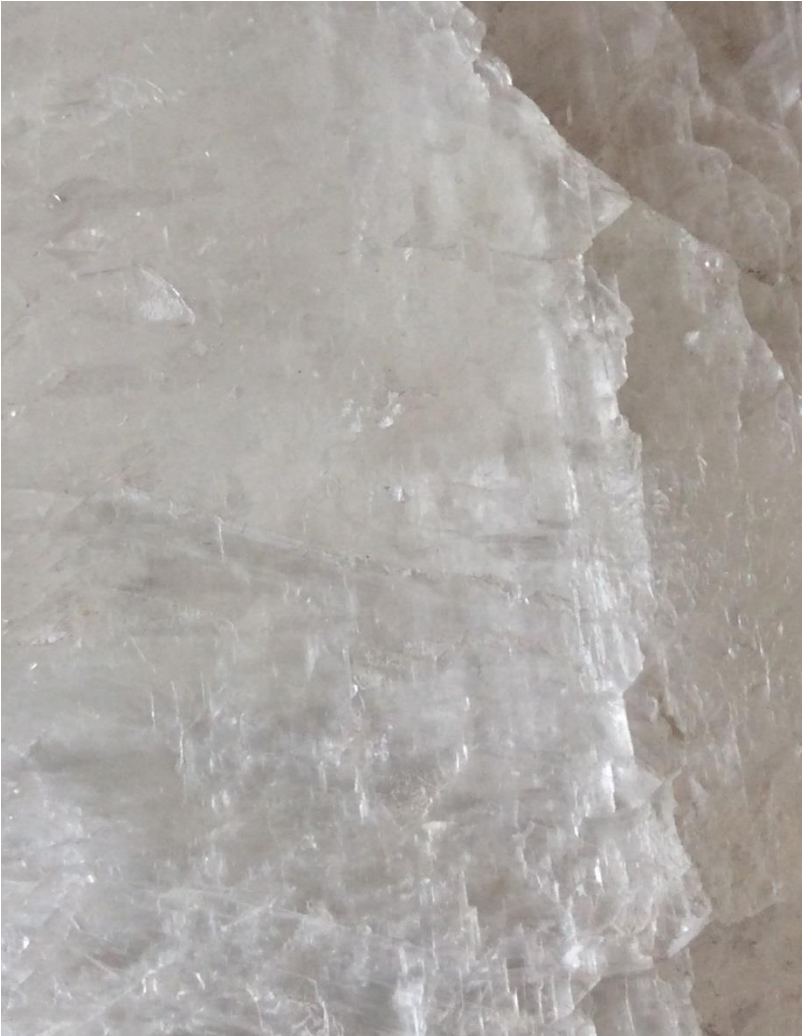
**Light that drips down the turnpike, onto roads
and ways far away from any window.
Blocks to build shelters and shields. Flags on flimsy poles.
A neutral breeze busting cardoors and
personalized licence plates.
Paved over, I see a carcass dripping, a little yellow flower,
smaller than a thumbprint.
Rust-coloured shawl, poncho that holds
great sentimental significance holds
me to a memory, old now as a ten-year-old untended garden
or pavement cracks grown into fissures.**

**Forging, face-like an image. Worm in my sink.
Blood and cup of nutritional joy.
Hold out for the grace of good music
and drying on rocks, nude in the sun.
Quiet heat building up into renewal. Tattered ankle cuffs
and shrinking shadows, mid-stream. Up,
up we go, insistent on making an impression.
But walk lightly is all I'll ever learn, spoon-feeding the children.**

**I bloom and I will die a woman, a butcher of frivolity
and the natural sequence of things.**

**The day is one day - enough, taken
into its rolling waters,
a dog's dream to join in, frolic in
some other species' symbolism.**

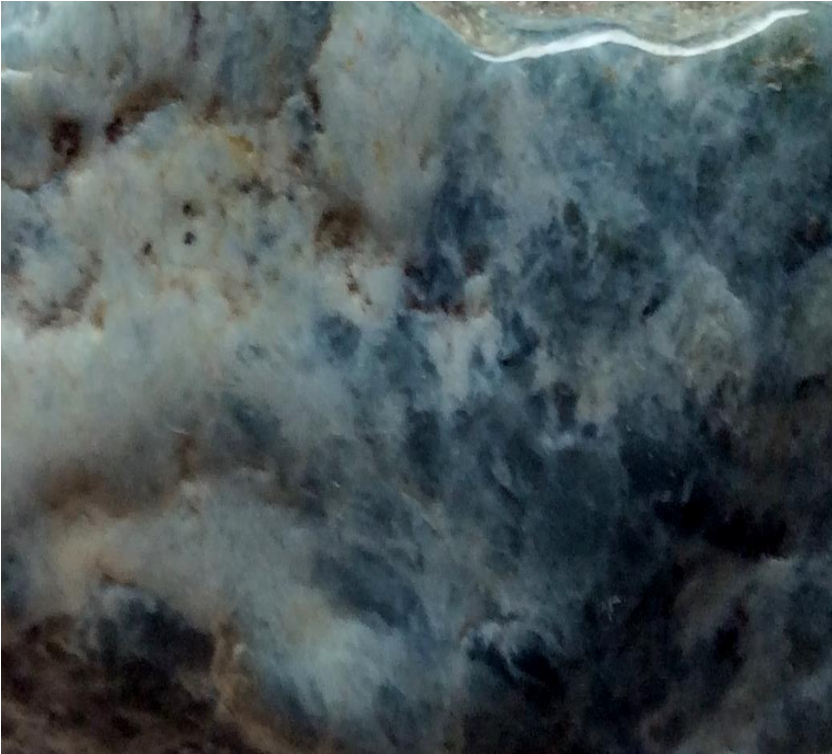
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**Come upon me like a feather-stick -
sectioning my abdomen like a fruit. Suddenly
toddlers are conversing and the grey cat
takes in the morning. Bundle of weeds,
bundle of flowers. An opening
under the burning canopy. Lifetimes spent
collecting synergy, male rhythms and fixed lines.**

God is coming down to hide in your loose-change-pocket.
I dreamt of owning your praise. Swinging from the rafters
in a game of hide-and-seek, I sought your breath,
hand of destined chores.
I played along inside the circle, inside a sack
I could hardly breathe out of. Languishing. A round bruise
forming on my left arm. Place me here. Crown me
or stake me on a tall spike. I am sand thrown mid-air.
No place to collect and land, not even a wave, a bucket,
the forelock of a horse. Not even
thinking in a straight continuation, but there, there, a pebble
between paw pads, then, a minor note locked
in perpetual repetition.

....



**Underguard. Crumbled tissue in my mouth.
A crazy way to run - hands in pockets.
Forward without, undeterred by reality.
Plywood I am keeping for emergencies,
for days when putting on the brakes just won't suffice.
Speeding, retreating, torsos twisting beautifully in anticipation.**

**I used to make mortar by hand, no machine to ease
my impossible labor - brick carrying and scaffolding climbing
and voices that ceased for a while in my head, visions
foiled by exhaustion - overused and folding.**

**Injuries are bypassed for much larger connections.
Double-winged, it is all that counts, to be counted**

like lightening, glazed like tile
and ancient bones kept as keep-sakes,
never a participant in trivial bickering or
watered-downed by petty grievances and
conditioned responses.

Sometimes I think of dying.

I think of the unread newspaper that stays folded,
wrapped in an elastic band.

I think of a broken bird making broken bird sounds,
too broken to be saved, treated by most
as a mild inconvenience
to be walked around and grimaced at.

Except by the man with the warm dark eyes, soft
furrowed brow, and a child who will not forget those mangled
wings or the hard lesson of helplessness, the inability to heal
or to be a vessel for a miracle.

It is hard to love me. I am hard, uncompromising
and never still. I am needing intimacy at every turn,
needing space to brood and build my solitary house.
I miss no one I've lost except the dead - a parent,
many animals that once shared my life. I am not easy, not
easygoing - bloodletting, bloodtesting, phone calls
avoided, coiled, almost mad and never understanding.

Sex and perfect reciprocation. Hands that know more
than words, keeping in the margins, layering synergy energy
into peaks and mounds, like mountains and fractal heartbeats,
fearless of falling, or of clouds. You and I,
it has to be our reward for not selling out, not
building cages of adult-overload, for constantly
clearing room for any divine equation no matter
how it threatens our already-precarious security.
We love our children, but not like others love.

We are less of this place, more reliant on grace
than our own worldly ingenuity to keep food
on the table, the bathroom fixed and cleaned.

Dear Jesus,

are you still mine, and I, yours? It is a lot to take in, decades and
mouldy walls. I am afraid of going off track,
of being dead and seeing there is no more I can do. That
it is done and inerascable. I am afraid of not feeling
the warmth of your hand when I walk, because
you are always holding my hand and I love you
with a personal love like Kierkegaard did -
his hunchback, a deformity that kept him pure.

And the loneliness.

Knowing you, but never any other.

I am not that alone, but I remember
space, lightyears of carved-out quiet. It enters me often
and I cannot get out of it. Breathing becomes separation,
a tool I must remind myself to use.

Remind me again, demand
my unwavering loyalty, trust, and all.

....



**Paved paths, brisk
storm of senses, an old
opening, endless as a dug-in arrow -
head in the weeping jungle, the coolness
of autumn air brushing tombstones,
the thin necks of geese.
So much night in a single glass, body
and name together, replacing
existence with this inheritance and no other.
Rows of ships crowding the edge of the lake -
docked and bearing down for winter. The distance
grinds, gravel on my belly, cracked shells
in subterranean pages writing down dawns and victories
never experienced, only imagined.
Is it right to receive the bitter strawberry?**

**Drink its flesh like juice and
kneel before reality's dictatorship?
Is it clarity? Or forgetting?**

...



**Escaping on the brook's bank,
banking on nesting warm through
winter, but tears are horns that open
soft spaces, and autumn shifts heat and any hopes
for renewal. Love is fire -
from where it goes there are no shields to block
its scorching. Can we reach bottom in the rain?
Sing hosanna at the mountain's base?**

**Becoming is the stone, the house, the wave.
The lines between us all are solid, no longer lines but
one heavy blanket of vibrancy, creaking, splitting.**

I walk like I walk - barrel beatings,
borrowing crisp notions into my ears.
Stretched for a while to be compact again,
I hear an approaching intrusion, a high
wake, strong enough to travel on.
Stronger days of running through the weeded grass
where rabbits stand still at my passing
and insects move quickly into the shade.
Stranger days of watching a patio stone broken
from a storm - from a fallen tree that fell,
leaving me to find
meaning in such drastic weather.

....



**Many years torn - a leaf, a paper towel,
half around the other side, locked
on the beach of my nadir - discipline
and a cold cruel courage, jammed into a groove.
Just the sunlight on my wall,
warming the wall, penetrating the heavy plaster.**

**I was born from a stem.
I fit on a chalkboard.
Over the cool half-formed moon
I hear an echo, smell the crisp lunar craters -
stagnant rocks, deep troughs to fuel
a million or more Earth dreams.
Scents of dead matter colliding,
of rough stone and endless rotation,
repetitive atmosphere
churning.**

**Behind a broken bark I hide my vanity,
rushing into quicksand, there I sink.**

....



Ladle, ladder

**I lay open under the covers, under
cloaks of heartless yesterdays. My mind
is a string that wraps around the outerscope.
I eat wild flowers, never the lamb,
infused with avoidance, spectacular
acrobats of keeping on, caring little for the outcome.**

**Blundering displays of over-dramatizing
self-aggrandizement revealing the wound
of stunted spiritual development
and crippled attempts at affection.
Round and happy, unstructured indulgences
justified by plump purse strings.**

**Falterings. Mistaken formations.
A perfect line in nature existing.**

**All the days I felt alone are behind me,
gathering leaves, misty-eyed overlooking
my home: kaleidoscope windows coming into view.**

....



**Once, gentle. Now, riled and nowhere but where
the stench of sewage is piled on the curb.
The gears of bitter disappointment snatching
you into a feral hold. Exotic tall weeds,
broken at the base.
Friendships are spoiled at the root, even love is
overshadowed by the decay.
Less obligation, less affection, less loyalty.
I must pretend we are healed, but the only healing
that happened was a cauterization of our severed bond.
There is anger but less hurt,
just the motions of getting through
undetected, and me by myself,
always alone -**

separate happenings, entities, isolated
aspects merging, but never
whole. White car on the road.
Red car on the road. Silver then
blue. The only place absolute is
the place I left where faith was unnecessary
and all cells were one cell, not like here -
different functions - each dominated by its own survival.
No wonder love is weakened, can only achieve
a temporary claim on completion.
I accidentally crush the insect with my heel. It is consumed
by another of its kind, carried off
into the hive of practicality -
a gesture void of remorse or sentimentality.
In the end, there is nothing but wires and fences
and frames of flesh, cartilage and senses. Tomorrow
there will be talk and tea and eyes
locked in intense recognition.
Good for the moment
Good until there comes
the something we want
more of, less of, had enough of....

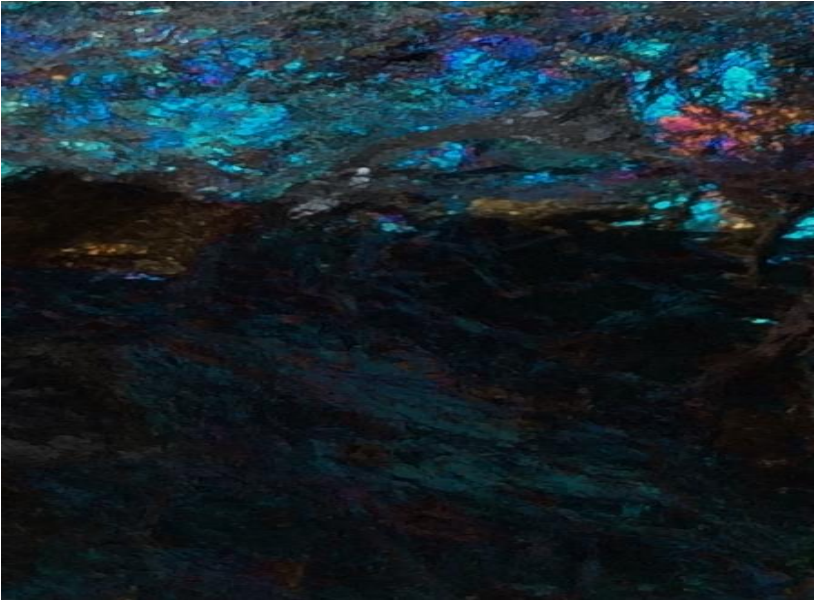
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**For a while -
deathcamps, blue balls
baskin'robbins. Play tomorrow
the lute-song of today and remember
the ground-swell
pounding paradise into my brain, collapsing
from overload, reloading fodder
and flighty friendships I've lost use for.
Nothing counts, count on nothing but playfighting
over the bank, over the brim - rim - keeper
of the fixer-upper, of the still fire, fire still
as yellowed corpses. Mid-fall.
Fake it! Love! kindness, tenderness - be
polite, because very little is
anything you want to take with you.
Care-giver, carer of the children,
the laundry, pets and bank account.**

**It is all you are – rainstorm.
You must take this stone and swallow,
make peace with your burden, make love
with the swarming emptiness, stuck
in a gravitational pull,
planets, solar systems spinning around you
but you are heavy, must be,
unfazed by the pressured wind - stains
on the ground. Inside of you, chopped-up bits of fate
and crimes conceived before you
were born. Fake it, wallpaper it. Go on, try, smile**

....



Fresh, potted
bright as an angel. Death is a whip
I put down. Ill health slumber,
but God is my mercy-king. Queen
of loving miracles. I will sing to
keep the right intention and grieve
minimally for what I cannot do.
Little red tree, no higher than
a toddler-child. Disco ball,
ball blue and gold,
twirl for me, let the grey dissipate into your
twinkling glow and all my blood into your veins,
little tree
plump and flourishing, readying for greater heights,
string-stream through me, weave me into your branches,
still firmly on the ground.

**Angels everywhere I need your temperance. I need
to know my children are protected by your grace,
wing-spread, and even
your cold white eyes.**

....



**Gaze, focus, hold.
Unconscious stream
of raw fluidity streaming,
rising over barriers, drowning them
with the pressure of an open door.**

Cracks of circumstantial disease,
creating pockmarks to expand destiny's choices,
fashioning gifts to give,
earned by bomb-droppings
and low flying plane-explosions.
Cobweb parties, graffiti
on the skin of your back,
made with a blade as small and smooth
as the tip of a hawk's feather.
Weaning off the burnt oak,
preening patches of grime.
Wake and rhyme, garden-keeper,
ambush your fear - it cannot be real!
Lungs run the same vibration as a flame.
It is hard, but not impossible. Gulp the sea
of senseless over-warming, pool the salt-taste
in your mouth, feel it
around your lip-rim, the sides of your cheeks. And there,
be safe, joining with the translucent swimmers, floaters
of prehistoric heritage.

....



**Principles of duty
overtaking sleep like a wave.
Heavy love rooted in isolation,
reflecting the depths of true giving.
A condition turns to disease, restrictions
bare down. What is ordinary becomes like
a cage. Children in the drifting storm, drifting
on condensed-traffic streets, how I love you.
How I would do everything I cannot do to ease
the grip of your elephant shackles. Mine was the angel's
autonomy, where nothing was miscellaneous and my bed
was a rich blackness that absorbed all time. Mine was loud**

without noise or distraction, just the buoyant sparkle flow
of paired-off stars and the countless debris of ongoing creation.
Mine is yours now, inside less-than-working-organs, kidneys
like puzzle pieces, seamed together by an amateur.
Where are you now, God-who-remembers, reminds me
of what I once was? My God and Jesus of the lilies,
why the children? Why this fluke,
this bizarre nightmare crawling, closer,
closer than when I had no body, no loves to look after?
And oh I am tired, worn as an old shoe that must keep
the broken glass at bay. Where are you my God, my Jesus?
I know you are here. I know something, but not enough
to deflate my bloating anxiety. It is grief all over again and I
hide myself in older hands, friendless,
unsupported, remembering
the wholeness in every flaw, in the universe's veined light
I once travelled on. Remembering that what is flawed sparkles
with a unique variation of beauty, rainbow fractions, infractions
that are blessings that seep and saturate sinews
and bones, galaxies
perpetual, renewable
where everything sings useful -
seemingly incongruent, yet in truth, masterfully
precise.

....



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OUR CHILDREN
ARE ORCHARDS

Allison Grayhurst



- COLLECTED POEMS ABOUT
ANIMALS, CHILDREN AND PREGANCY

Our Children Are Orchards
***- collected poems about animals,
children and pregnancy***

Allison Grayhurst

Edge Unlimited Publishing

264

Our Children Are Orchards

– collected poems about animals, children and pregnancy

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First addition

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Mother Chimp

Gentle Flo of the
great apes,
does not sing
nor look for
comfort from the sky.

Mother of patience and playful
as moonlight upon a wave. Face
like a roadmap of a sad
primeval journey. Sad
like the first thoughts
of wasted love. Sad
like the night jungle in all its
apparent peace.

Cry for the terrible loss
in the midday rains. Cry for the African
trees, rotting from the weight of
a human-made world.

Shaggy arms embrace
to receive your large-heart's manna.
The lonely climate
surrounds you
with child, near a river that carries
the many deaths of those before
your wild and doubtless
existence.

For Waldo

Am I to speak of the hangnail pain,
though no season was lost and there
are no backstairs to climb?

Am I to miss you in the garden
we never had, in the memories
of never being close but always
being near?

And the time you ran frightened of me
through the alleyways, as though we never loved,
never knew the trust of wounds
we helped each other heal. Never you
wanting more than to maintain
your dignity, your freedom, your
contemplative stare. Never you
giving more than the most
of your compassion, the gentle restraint
of your excited spirit.

And to die like that,
killing the final cord. Stinging slowly, so slow
it's hard to cry, to not wish one last swim with you
under the full moon just staring
forever into that small-town sky.

Shyla

The green dust of your eyes,
the cameo coat of your
body sleeping like
a chinaglass doll, still
by the window's light.

The years and thoughts I cannot
exchange with you nor hope
to savour a single shared
laughter, but between
these broken walls, under the hand
of my affection
your warm head
moves like a small star,
gracing.

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.**

Because of course

**you will go with summer
never knowing a remedy.
You will go beyond where you go
around the ninth and final life, ducking
in dark boxes to fade finally alone,
away from instinct and nurturing.
You will go into the natural earth,
and from there, my vision staggers and
cannot name, but caught
on the wind, in sensual shades
of forgiveness mighty & forever,
you will know a place unhindered by death.
You will hear the secret
your pale eyes
have always harboured.**

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.**

When Small Things Die

This is the guilt of being,
the empty horror,
the fearsome weight
of living conscious,
awake to the dull and lingering
ghosts. In my hands,
a small death, a mild cry,
a feeble resurrection.

This, the detached cycle,
the rotating climb
that no feeding heart grows used to.
Infant soul, infant eyes gazing
into my own. Body wriggling under
my warm fingers.

This is my love
expanding, my love too limited
to hold the healing needed, or shut off
the crude struggle of a gasping life. Life
thin-boned and motherless.
Cold paws, blue tongue,
neck, a loose ladder holding such a heavy,
awe-inspiring head,
slips
down into final slumber:

looking now
like a child's prized toy.

Turtle

Hard slow force -
back the shape of half
a bell. Lipless
mouth wide with sunstroke
fear. Double eyelids
close, looks like gel
over two black wounds.

Your elbows tight inside
your chamber-shell. Your neck
stretched like a slinky, nodding
from side to side.

Without voice, your legs
leap out like arrows, push
frantically at the air.

You are in my hand, the size
of half-a-hand. You are quiet now,
head back inside your giant roof.

Released from human grip,
your feet feel water, edge
across piled-up rocks,
where you stop

to smell the dark aquarium
and rest
your tortoise-green
toes.

Humpback

I give this flower,
these historic eyes
to the Atlantic whale, who will perform
for me a symphony of genius. Hungry, we will
rob one another of mistrust,
caress each other's hairless skin,
holding things that gravity cannot forsake.
Once safe in the ocean's dune,
we will open our eyes, our mouths,
swallowing moonlight like pirates
from a ship.
Together through
the salted plasma we will swim and hope
for the violence born by medieval fear,
promoted by division
and encouraged by judgement
to be terminated by an acknowledgment
of identical love
(which is not accident).
Tenderly we will axe the human prejudice;
and the child and calf, rubbing wing and arm
will know the blessing of a marvelous unity,
which has been concealed to the point
of near extinction.

Light Rich With Innocence

(for Justin)

**Picking stones from the shore
to give your impressive, delicate
hands.**

**You repeat your
simple words, each time as a new
discovery, dramatic with joy.**

**On the rocking chair in your
uncle's arms, your eyes glow strange
like flowers do to a heart burdened by grief.**

**You pick the small rocks, one by one,
pile them up - a rainbow tower that only
your pure imagination can see.**

**You hand them to me as gifts
from good fairies, smile
a smile that stretches higher than mountains.**

**You carry your jewels in a glass
showing them with proud delight.
They are to you, tiny miracles.**

**You kiss each one.
You bless and you
behold.**

Raising Grace

A child in a mother's arms.
both dissolve in joy, freed into
the instinct of love as I watch bewildered
by such beauty.

This I hear
says farewell like all else
that seems immortal, that makes ripple
the human heart, perfecting
our inwardness.

Sister and brother, natural
friends that no obstacle could
burden beyond repair. Lovers too,
safe in a tender silence are able to
bear the weight of clouds.

Yet the rain does arrive, folding fists
of isolation around my heaven. Around the bend,
still breathing, listen to breath as if it was the only sound
not blurred by vagueness. Disconnected like
the sun is from the moon.

Then I see the mother and child hold
in perfect intimacy. And I place
my candle there, beside them, to be
influenced.

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.

Girl

Under the willow tree a girl
was standing, lonely with
the worst of nights ahead.
They said
drink from the tarpit waters and swallow
the oysters that lost their shells.
She saw the drug the wind made
though she did not let it shift her steadfast heart.
Everywhere the notion stood
that fighting back is better than
the tender wave, better than
empathy and believing in affection.
The willow leaves have gone brown and the girl has moved
beside a cliff. She dances as though she
could not fall. And though they gasp to pity
her poor body against rocks and ridges,
she continues to move like a beautiful sound,
sure of the hand that guides her.

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.

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 faction of time
as I stop walking, offering some plucked grass -
a token of our mutual need.

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.**

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.**

I Found You Singing

**I found you singing
tight, beneath my skin
like an armful of swallows
or an oak tree conversing with
a squirrel.
I found you pushing your foot
against my ribs when dinner
was late and hope wore thin.
I found you like I found no other,
there, from where no science
can explain, formed with intricate
splendour - a face, a being, a soul
a part of, though unique from my own.
I found you when I was on the sofa-chair
excited to hear your father's voice,
needing us both from behind the curtain,
somersaulting in your liquid sphere.
I found you after my father's death,
not sure of my strength to carry this through.
But now you are in me, and I am rocked again
like a butterfly's wings are rocked
by the summer wind, caressed
by the mystery and miracle of all dreams
so very beautiful.**

before

This child will come
like the spinning of a maypole -
strong colours entwined
and all her blood in unison
with the sun.

She will be a glorious bird,
sure of her place on this earth,
sure of the love that moves from
each breathing lung to the unseen stars,
tied to it all like water is to the shore,
like a night breeze coming to soothe
the summer day's scorch.

She will be set free by her heart's
irregular beat, unique in her beauty and
in her strength.

This child will come, welcomed
like a prayed-for dream.

We will hold her and know her -
our highest visions united then separated
into an infant being.

The Gentle Seed

The gentle seed
has changed face and made
its being heard.
Thickened veins, oversized
breasts and hands that no longer sing
are reflections of the pulsing heart
of one who has not learned
the ways of the human cry.
No voice but the kick and turn, but
a destiny yet to begin.

The gentle seed
that has grown within me
is like candy on the tongue,
like fruit to the green insects and
spring to the marigold, is a no-turning-back
and a waiting-to-behold.

The gentle seed
that will forever be part of my own,
has turned death on its side,
showing me peace in the remains
of my burnt garden.

Pregnant

The ringing bells,
the stone on high
that falls like a swan
with broken wings
are things that hound me
with a chill and send my peace reeling.
I wait for you under the arches -
May, June, July until November.
I am a silk sheet changing to a
woolly blanket - breasts and tummy large
like mother-icon, and the end is
a far way off. To meet your tiny eyes
is what contains me beyond the fear
of crazy labour and the pure moon
that swallowed my name. This is earth
finally, complete with no open edges.
Like another country's familiar animal are my
swollen ankles and weighted walk.
Sometimes I am bewitched by this declaration
of my mortal being and sometimes, trapped
in the change like a cat behind closed windows.
Will I be good to you, little one? Will it be
natural, our song and our rain? You come
without earned ugliness, wriggling inside.
We breathe as one, though still
to each other's heart and form we remain
as strangers.

In Preparation

**Down is the way I carry
this new soul in my mouth,
like the weight of pure responsibility.
I am glued to nature, my laugh is
no longer mine but is the sound
of soil breaking beneath the plough.
I have been here alone for over eight months,
and it is heavy like an arm that has
fallen asleep. It is good in so many ways -
a vision completing itself, like the brushing
of wet hair in the sun.
The bulk of this tiny being in my belly
is the paradox that lifts and roots at once,
is the dancing of the spirit in the earth's
thick mud. The crib is waiting for her weight.
Her father dreams of her sweet mouth and eyes. Fragile
as the essence of flesh, she has wooed me with
her kicks and turn, with her yawns through
the ultrasound shade
and the scratching of her cheek.
Soon we will see her and all her beautiful colours.
I begin to be overwhelmed. I am gathering my
childhood jewels, gathering
all my totems to meet the unveiled gaze
of her glory.**

my child

**your skin alone is as soft as
a goldfish-back,
your smile is my last breath
and your lips puckered for cooing are
a glorious gain of candy apples.**

**We two are now three
merged in the depths
of touch and long stares.
In the trinity hug, we delight in
the smell of your fresh-washed hair.
We look into your navy eyes,
whispering words you can't understand.
We break the shell of just-us-two. You,
entering our sphere like a beautiful dream.
You, a gentle symphony that changes everything,
like the touching of the stuff of fairytales.**

Our Little Pushkin

In the mornings I watch
your sleeping face like
a chinadoll's, perfect in every way.
I see your smile when you awake
like I would a waterfall on my street corner.
I see you curled tight with joy,
and flinch at the noon day sun.
When I hold you to feed, and you talk to me
with playful glee, I love you more than
my heart can carry.
I think this blessing is stronger than death,
strong like an acorn tree growing.
All night you rest on a pillow in my arms,
we play with bright coloured dangling things,
and your navy eyes open wide
as your legs begin dancing.
You watch and watch like a Buddha in disguise,
taking in life with a calm and thoughtful presence.
You are the spring's first butterfly, an owl on my shoulder.
You are wonder incarnate, freely showing
what grows so beautiful inside of you.

Sweet

Her skin is like a morning maple,
painted by the day's first sun.
Her eyes are cradled in the ocean's centre,
blue as twilight's water.
Her laughter is faint but glorious as
a baby rabbit.
And she needs me through the night, beside
me like a thirsty flower.
She is old, a soul of many gatherings.
She is a dancing swallow, a strong and steady creation.
Like her father, she is made of nameless folds,
full of terrible and tender mysteries.
On a November night she was born,
altering the Earth's air with her first cry.

Daughter

Drum, drum
the drake of dreams
and heed the head that
knows it is blind
to all the mysteries.
My hand is here, my
hand to follow. I love your
cleft chin and your strange blue eyes.
I love your laughter at night.
Live like no other has lived.
For you are more than a kaleidoscope,
more than six months of hope and happy endings.
Thank you for arriving, for changing my view forever.
I watch your sleeping face
and feel a thousand souls merge behind your
soft skin. Every day is your birthday, when a new
part of you is revealed like the most beautiful of wonders.
Play with the ropes of many.
I am here, and will always be
yours in love.

A Day

She lies beside me,
wakes with bliss,
legs flailing as she grabs her father's chin.
Eating is not simple, is a process
of song and distraction. Her will is
like the river's tide when nearing the falls.
Sometimes she smiles with abandon,
nose crinkled and mouth wide, other times,
coy and half-made with lips adult-like
and meaningful. Her eyes are denim blue.
In the afternoon on the floor,
she raises her body on hands and toes.
She plays by herself with her xylophone
and toy car. When the day is waning
and the bathtub comes, she is nearing
the end of her resources. After splash time
and putting the cloth in the mouth,
when drying off she cries 'ma-ma'
working herself into hysterical sobs.
We hit the pillow, her between us
talking and exploring the sounds of her voice.
Then her father turns the lights out,
and she snuggles into me to nurse.
I kiss her forehead and feel our hearts full -
three kindred saplings
stroked by the night's June breeze.

An Infant

**An infant is like a wonderful stone
being shaped by the tide. An infant knows
nothing of solitude and does not believe
in the built-up hardness of
kindred blood. An infant is
the night, is the day, never hiding
its hymn and colours. An infant arrives
from both the nadir of the earth and the
zenith of the sky. An infant has the laughter
to change the most dismal of days,
and the softness of tiny symmetry in its moon-like
face - and fingers, each a little bird,
bringing joy by just being, moving
like dancers' thighs over a flaming sea.
An infant is the eye of the whale,
the beginning and the potential all in one.
An infant is of flesh and perfect trust,
needing nothing from tomorrow.**

My Little Wonder

**By the light there broke
a heart of no comparison.
Hers was the eye of the mountain,
the vibration of the tides, and
the colours of the Mediterranean fish.
Hers was the lost star found,
the end of revenge, the juice of our single moon.
In a womb where her legend almost died
and the hangman knelt before the doctor's foot,
I made a promise to her land and the sigh
of her raving waters. I marked her tree in our
backyard and bent to wash her hair.
Hers was a boat that bore no time, a leaf
in the midnight air.
My old joy is the shell of this new one,
for she is my workgloves and cathedral.
Hers are footprints on the sun.**

With a mother's lips

**I felt the ceremony of the stars
soothe my tired throat.
I felt the sun's fire in my hand
when I bent in the direction of tomorrow.
My child is like
a choir at my doorstep,
seducing my joy with her own.
My child is without enemies
or days, having no secrets from those
she loves. She can carve a jewel
from a crayon, and with her first embrace,
she sanctifies each morning.
With a mother's heart
I tell the fruitflies of my blessing.
Money and mortality
cannot be true, but only
the music in her grey eyes, and the movement
of her small hands at play.**

Sacred Beginnings

**I love you under water
in the crescent cracks of rocks
where the roots of the rose begin,
inside the weather's tailspin
where you colour my sleep
with your dance, and loving you
is worth more than I could ever offer.
I love you beside the coral reefs, even when
the serpent and shark are near. I love you
in the sandbox as we make our miracles
daily, pointing at every passing bird.
I love you with yesterday's dinner
in the fridge, before and after the starlight falls.
I love you in each bubble we blow, in every fever we share,
and in our synchronized laughter, gracing
this mother and daughter sphere.**

Her Gift

She opens up the cupboard door
and smiles the beautiful smile.

She moves across the hardwood floors,
focused as a hawk.

There is something in her I cannot touch,
that has lived long beyond her short ten months.

She claps her hands and passes the ball. She waves
goodbye and washes the stains from my heart.

She is calm as a resting lion cub,
sure of her place beneath the sun. She is
a good friend, marked by her own brand of humour
with a love so bright it strips anew
even the roots of my belonging.

My Little Girl

My little girl
is the flesh of creative love.
She keeps in time with
the rhythm of her muse
and unlocks the special light
in her pocket.

My little girl
is the warmth of an unhatched egg,
like being in the comfort of home
while watching a rain storm -
she is summer on the porch,
the soft evening glow on a newborn's skin.

My little girl
is young, but carries
a deeply-rooted compassion in her eyes.
She is crazy as a painter's erratic brushstroke
and funny as a comedian's best stance.
Her will is her hunger and also the music
of the rain. She loves the butterfly and the
cat, loves to caress the head of the thin-haired infant.
Her colours are yellow and grey, like the autumn sun
and the sea without the sun on an overcast day.
My little girl is tender and free and
I am grateful to know such a one and to have her be
my little girl.

Child

As wounding as
the stars reflected in
the river, yours is a beauty
too big to embrace.

You are the everlasting miracle
that walks these floors each morning
and day, marveling at every turn.

Your easel is full of yesterday's colours.

There are songbirds under your bed, and in the closet,
are assorted hats that call to you to try on
and wear down the hall.

You are the syrup on my toast,
the first tulip of spring.

Before you, I was too afraid to dance with freedom,
crippled by a servant mood.

You are the open door where teddy bears
dream and live - a soft, unhindered love
that cures the hardness
overpowering any room.

At Fifteen Months

She has learned to walk and sing.

**She stares out from her
calm eyes, watching the other
children move to and fro.**

**When music arrives, her
whole body starts keeping the
rhythm, bound to it like a bird
is bound to the wind.**

**When she laughs, all the world's brightness
fills her mouth and resides there.**

When she cries, it splits my heart.

**Gentle and solid, she balances beautifully
her warmth and will, like a child sent
from the throes of a living mercy,
like a long-held hope weighing
sweetly in my arms.**

Almost a Girl

We play with sounds,
making a flower out of tissue paper.
She bounces a ball,
miming the harmony of its rise and fall.
She paints with strokes
that calls the orange seed to bloom,
and all the while she dances
to the starlight's tune, loving
its brave expression.
We read tales told in rhymes
and sniff the picked herbs
in our garden.
Every morning we count spoons
and watch the boys play next door.
She knows her colours purple and blue,
plays Boo! behind the door.
Her body beats an ancient symphony of affection,
loving easily my inviting arms.

Under My Skin

In this month
slumbering onward,
I feel your kick
saying that 'yes' a change is
coming - one so strong it will
open many doors along side it.
I press my hand against my
belly and wish for you a healthy world
of open spaces and unwavering affection.
I have no fear of the boy you will be.
I have darkness in me I cannot shake,
but that has no hold -
for it has always been love
that has carried me along.

New Tree in the Garden

I know she sees
her meadow broken by
thundering changes sinking
through the floor.
I know her home feels cut
by a tide unlocking an invasive unknown.
But still the horn must blow
and our love can be her temple and overcoat.
We would never cross her off to cheer
a new seed or count her a little underscore
while welcoming the infant sound.
With love not lead by guilt
and a grace that releases all habitual chains,
we will burn with family-joy
humming strong and stronger
when the walls fall down, making space
to hold one more.

Six Months Pregnant

**Thud, thud
my body burns
to stretch and hold your
growing form.
Kick and twist, you within
having no shadow, only
the liquid darkness that is your
right, your atmosphere of rich
undeniable movement and depth.
Soon you will breathe a new force
into this family, and we three will
sing at your bedside -
little boy, welcome, grower
of dreams.**

One Little Heart

One little heart
graced with purity.
Yellow hair and happy eyes
and all the dreams of a child's mind
like the shape of a butterfly in the drain,
or elephants in mushroom soup.

One little girl
dancing to sunshine
making eccentric faces
and laughing outloud.

One little child
painting pictures with her hands,
crying hard for babyhood
and spilling her fears on the ground.

One little heart
unknowing of all the gifts she gives,
of how much love she allows to live
and change this place called home.

How Lucky I Am

So now she is three
and like a lake that has always been there,
soothing me, feeding me with wonder,
she grows, continuing.

In ten years it will be a different
language we share, but always
the same connecting laughter and the feeling
of being buried in velvety flour
by her gentle ways that move my ravaged heart
into peace.

In twenty, we will drink coffee, sharing
the same window. She will teach me, and I will be
her secret underground where she can nestle from
the revolving world.

In thirty, I will be old and she will be settled
into the source of her strength and individuality.
We will love each other the same as today,
when love is like the very air that rocks
so sweetly between us.

Tribe

Upon these days I spot
some children, hair like
silken straw under a daisy sun.
Three so in love with the wild bush
and humorous song and with each other -
with strong affection they spend their
mornings in exalted play.
Arm around arm, the oldest only five,
they know friendship that separates the lucky
from the hoards of thirsty travelers, they know
the embrace of childhood connection unmarred
by fractured homes.
Two joined by blood, one by fate, each
by the unseen link of tender recognition.
I watch their actions of natural glory
and feel their laughter like swallows circling
above their small heads.

Mustard Seed

I know your name,
but not your face,
octagon of tiny wonder
changing as I move through
my days, cloaked in the drain
and joy of your mystery.

I think I can feel you sometimes
sitting beside me, playing games
with your sister and laughing with
all the rest.

I think of someone fiercely beautiful
merging souls so easily with the family-us.

I touch my belly, remaining clothed
in this still-normal body.

I turn the lights out early, happy
when I think of the future.

A Place For You

**It's nice to have a place for you
among our tattered wares.**

**It's good to hold onto what little light
breaks in unawares.**

**One time I was traveling through
nameless streets and unclaimed yards
aching with solitude. But that was when
life was spent on temporary truths.**

The weather is good, whichever way I turn.

**My mind is sure of only love and love only
brings on this weight.**

Doubts move like maggots after the final blow.

**Although doubts feed on a solid faith, they also cause
such a faith to grow.**

**It's nice to be here half asleep watching
the grey outside.**

**One day soon our eyes will meet
and I will recognize your face
like a perfect lullaby.**

Days Before Birth

**Thrill and feel the last days approaching
before the great change.
It is sliding down a ladder
into the full of the noon-day sun,
quickenning the blood and bringing night dreams
into the open.**

**Under flesh and sinews
dragons burn,
making way for the new creation. Taboos
are swallowed by mud puddles
pock marking streets, and safety is a far-fetched
dream.**

**Imagine and hold
these last days of gold
that will bring forth a brighter, more endurable metal.**

**Let the heart be at ease,
for life will learn to breathe
a shade undiscovered.**

Little boy born

**before sunset
your head a perfect dream,
your hair so soft and gold -
I make my amends at your stroller side
for pain before endured.
I kiss away the darkness that came without solace
and press your small body near.
Little boy of mine
good fortune comes
hard won and not without trial.
Love is everlasting, but never free
of the hardships that make a person appreciate
love
in the full of its glory.
Little child I adore
the smell of your skin
and the movement of your eyes.
I will do my best by you
and God willing, my best
I will not be denied.**

Siblings

Her laughter breaks your fold,
wedding you to your primal joy.
Your extremes keep tune with her emotions,
setting them close to yours and your
canvas of sharp colours.
She has no veil. You have no hidden chamber,
just the charm of your sleepers
and your dimpled cheeks.
She loves you like kin should,
dancing for your comfort and crazed
intensity. She makes you
happy, her soft voice connected
to you like a necessary limb.
She is just a small child, and you, have not
even arrived that far, yet already
your steps are locked - each one's light clearly
helping illuminate the other's.

My Little Ones

**They go forward
with the brightness of trust
on their backs and with laughter
that loves the other's affection
and humorous ways.**

**They run water through their chubby hands,
opening and closing fingers in grand delight.
They are testing the ground, days
of love and giving the whole of their intensity
to growing up.**

**His colour is deep blue and hers is olive
with a yellowish hue.**

**They grace this home and atone for the damage
of other failed dreams.**

**They are smiles etched on my shoestrings,
coins under the carpet, a sprinkler in
the noonday sun.**

**They give and they receive, rich with the substance
of these and of all spectacular worthy things.**

A Better Life

**In the beginning
I rode a burning steed,
crossed a violent river
and destroyed my home.
But now my footsteps are slower,
I never climb the rocks or chase
the landed hawk. I collect shells
for my garden and sing to the great
ocean's waves. I take my children
along the shore and show them how to dance.
I tell them my tales of long ago, though
they offer no interest or praise.
But they love me like a petal does its stem,
each reaching to me to know the effort of
my arms. We eat fruit near the underbrush
then bury each seed, tenderly,
in hot white sands.**

Son - almost one

Through your eyes
of blue infant glory, fresh
as a yawning bird, I see
heavenly bodies turning
and the last of summer's flowers
appear. Fragile as the space between
the void and faith, your beautiful hands
were born to tower over the stifling air
and shed mercy on my wound.
Your perfect-shaped head is full
of milk and magic. Under your seat,
music flows and you are my light:
a third to add to the other two.
Thank you for your raw temper and
the gemstone of your dimpled smile.
What would my days be without you?
Without the air or this living dream
to behold?

Daughter - almost five

I live inside the gentleness of your mind.
The subtlest of emotions you grasp
and give back
in soft waves of compassion and trust.
In dreams I find you
beside me for always,
a friend like no other and new
as autumn's first changing leaves.
We have been here before,
filled with joy and good madness -
your eyes rich as the colours of earth
and your rhythm, profoundly ancient
like the dance of a seabird upon water.
Your thoughts and your fast-leaning heart leans out
to the lost and the hurt. Your brush stroke,
and the paints that you choose
reminds me how blessed I am
to love, watch and guide
the unfolding presence
that is perfectly you.

Faces of hope

**I watch the future
as I watch the motions
of your lungs. I see
so much change and so astounding a discovery.
I see two asleep, plenty full
of love, bearing themselves up
against the world. I see the frames
of two who have no boundaries,
who have extraordinary powers
in ordinary reality, who have presence
and beauty with the added blessing
of fitting in.
I see the advances of light on your skins.
I see the unexpectancy of time
in the simplicity of your smiles.**

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.

From Us Two

**We give our time like you give
wild laughter
and full affection, fearless of rejection.
Two of paint and music,
of flashlight play and dress-up magic,
you are the ones we hold in the torrential rains, the smile
that comes regardless of the backyard trees that crash to
the ground - all wires touching pavement.
Two of everglade emotions,
of all-out tears and jealous eyes,
we bless you as we would the best in our lives.
You have made us closer -
caring for, rejoicing in
the effort and rag-time joy
that is the two of you.**

For My Son

You are before me -
a simple light, a vibrant light
void of the world's grey core.
You are beautiful enough, my son -
miles of green terrain surround you.
You whistle, and the strangers beside us
are held captive by your song.
I will not abandon you,
though you fear the anguish of loneliness,
and you feel the uncommon strain
of a raw dimensional heart.
You bring me joy.
I have watched you drown
in a stupor of unharnessed emotions,
and I have seen you laugh at the stars -
you, so much brighter
than the whole of their celestial countenance.

Feral

I bend in mourning
bending to the loss of someone
so familiar -
your nurture-needing eyes
and a temperament of molten lava
whose tone was innocent and unrefined.
I see you now in the doorway,
flat and tensing but never moving,
then at ease with me as a soft sigh
overcomes you.
Born in a tight spot -
resigned to a tight spot - isolated
from all but me.
So strange, hard and pure,
unlike any feline I've ever known.
I will miss you, loving you
as one who didn't belong.

Odie

You will not die
my golden companion,
you will not leave me
without your sweet warmth,
not without your familiar eyes.
You will only find a new way
of surviving.
I cannot admit the enormity
of what appears as truth.
I cannot admit there will be no
miracle change.
I can only see your soft cat beauty,
your orange blanket of fur
and a way around this danger.
I can only see what I first saw in your eyes -
innocence in need of someone to trust.
I see you as someone to be with me,
to rest by my feet at night,
someone to always keep my stories
tucked within a quiet stretch
of your feline soul.

Rooms of Joy

We will build four rooms of joy
to honour the monastic sigh, to understand
the kestrel on its perch and the wheelchair
halted at the steep curb.

We will sanctify our moon
with paint, clay and easel - letting colours and moisture
drip through our fingers,
malleable as a conscious dream.

We will bellow out music that towers over
the thieves of daylight, races into our bodies, offering grace
where there is none.

We will write poems and stories of fact
and fiction to bring
definition to our visions, to lose ourselves,
naked as the calling gulls.

We will hold our meditation stones,
like a horse's beautiful mane, brushing,
braiding, all the while,
softly whispering our affection
into the copper-coloured ear of nature.

And the animals will bind us. The enormous love
between us all will cut away
the scar tissue of disappointment.

We will plunge into this temple, playing games,
bearing fruit. In our four rooms we will love, expand
and often falter - fresh and deep, rooted into the floorboards
of this true home.

Because I love you

**like the humpback does its song,
I grow by caring for you
and your unfair burden.
A golden daughter, bells in your hair
and a richness in your eyes. I have
all fortune at my door and my only wish
is to peel away your cloud of illness and brighten
your ground. I only see a fine gem's rays reflected
on your skin. I only dream of your dissolved chains -
miles around you of only childish concerns.**

**I hold your hand as we walk the corridors, tracing
footprints down the hospital halls. Your touch
tells me it is for us to be proud of one another,
to be thankful for this gift that has strengthened our bond.
Your touch is music - your words are as old as the sea.
The fire around you
is a bird. It will perch, nest and then next season,
it will be gone.
Your journey is into the hail storm. But you will be healed,
and I will go on loving you like I love you
like the humpback does its song.**

Greenhouse

Inside this greenhouse on a hill
there is an arcade, an eagle
and the fear of scorpions.
As the vegetables flower
I can almost hear the traffic on the streets below
drowning out the crickets. I know we belong here -
where there is an internal wind, seven bodies
and so much heaven. Our windows are bullet-proof.
When it is time to eat, we eat then we play, love and fight.
At the head, there is music, there is greenery.
The eagle gives us depth, and the fear forces us to grow.
The arcade is a machine of imagination.
When we leave the greenhouse, there is a path
we take downhill. We greet strangers,
and sometimes we bring home crude, unnatural influences. But
sleep heals our home where we hold
no resentments and keep no secrets,
and the air is as sensuous and tender as
our house is green.

Toy Box

Shimmering orbs of
two-tone depth and two-tone passion
set within a young girl's face.

And then, his has the blueness of the Mediterranean,
emotionally volatile and kind.

Female tenderness spread like an umbrella over her
delicate features, female fury, concealed from all but
not from the ones she loves the most - witnesses to her fire
and bravery. And he, so much like the caress of miracles,
either loving and happy or a storm of unrestrained
tears - an open door, no keyhole-way in to know
what his five-year-old heart feels. He is there. She is there.
Beautiful and so much more tremendous
than any dreaming.

Little One

The baseboard lifted. The light
was absorbed into the carpet. I tried.
I cried when you left me, but it was only
for a year then the drug of your sweetness
reformed into a mild sadness, washing my
nerves with the thin film of egg whites.
I imagined you sleeping curled up by the door. I imagined
your voice in the morning, lonely and frantic for affection.
Those nights when we said our long goodbye - one night
when our eyes met and I thanked you and you thanked me,
was a gift without fault, was your dignified funeral - the rest
was husk, instinct, the result of your physical pain.
The rest when remembered breaks my belief, but then
I know your life was good and I know we had
fifteen years of warm connection,
we had love.

Lost members of my tribe

Four were sheltered here
in the purity of spring, and the ocean all around
with its intelligent octopi, its mystical porpoises
and whales of many sizes.

One of you, eternally young, small,
soft and perfectly fragile, loving freely as a babe
sure of her mother's arms.

The other, heavy, carrying around an irritation
that howled at everyone it saw. But I could see
the innocence painted in her eyes.
I could bless her conflict
and love her just the same.

Number three was fire, sweet as a not-too-hot sun,
warming the field with his golden colour and forthright
demands, needing to love and be loved.

The fourth was king, ancient as the night sky.
He knew the age of every tree, the faint altering stirrings
of life's first conception. He was gentle, autonomous, giving,
with a mind that spoke in pictures.

Now they have all left for heavenly territory.
Their energies stay, and sometimes I still see them
in the hallway, on beds.
I still feel each close to my touch and I know we were blessed
to have walked so many years, needing one another, blessed
and forever remaining an essential piece
of each other's cores.

For Randy

Love is mercy
living blind in this crucifixion world,
pushed into the fisherman's net - no seed
that doesn't freeze and end up like a pebble,
no crowd that keeps its motive
pure. Always, there is loss, grief in the pit of the loins,
extending, radiating into every tiny bone -
hidden, broken or just malformed.
Children are never new and unharmed. But they cry
easier. They sleep with nightmares under their pillows and
outwardly groan when there is no cure to the hostility
of fate. Children do not naturally cling to good,
as some might say,
but are bent in the ways of their parents, trying to please
even that which has hardened long ago.

Tied

I will hold you one more time,
I will not be afraid of your passing.
We will bond on the eclipse of your life,
our eyes locked in gratitude and unspoken
understanding.

Thank you for sharing my home, for being
a part of my family. For so long, I missed you.
For so long, we have loved one another with
unsurpassed equality and depth. Your gentle intelligence
has carried me through many storms. Just
to be with you, sometimes, was all I needed. This one,
I will have to walk without you. I will have to say goodbye,
my sweet and perfect soul, goodbye my pet panther,
goodbye my many-lifetime friend.

We are lucky to have loved one another.
We will join again where there is no bleeding,
no dulling of the skin. Bless you, go easily into God's arms,
go freely: You have loved. You have been loved.
You are eternal.

For My Children

**Grow like the seekers do
in the aftermath of an atomic-bomb dawn.
Hunger like the artists do for a tid-bit of happiness
found, held for longer than the activity of their art.
Awaken from betrayal, a harder stone,
a softer soul, sure of nothing but of God.
Burn, until your burning cannot be denied,
and as you walk, they will say "There goes
a star, a sun, a galaxy of fire" Burn until
every muscle aches and the tension pulls
the labyrinth of your heart and mind into a straight line
with straight direction - nothing wasted.
Love, because it is hard, because it is
unusual to have the courage needed to love.
Love, because there is nothing else, because
it is the only heaven known, because it is
the only thing impossible made possible, and
when the dream is over, it will be
the one reality left embedded,
going further than, deeper than
the nucleus of your cells.**

Snowy

Sad as sleepy morning comes.
Soft ground to rest your chin upon,
soft like you are, in need of no one's
flag or ego-affirmation.

When you walk
children wave from car windows, elated
to see such unmasked joy - mouth in an open smile,
and eyes, happier still - dark as toiled earth, alert
to the house cat's twitching ear.

Satisfied in the full morning sun, you move
from sidewalk curb to road, sniffing at poles
and thin strands of grass
as your long clumped fur like a sheep's pleated coat
ripples in time with the end-of-summer's wafting rhythm.
Treats, stuffed toys and laying contentedly
on your back, these things are enough.

Many have tried to imitate, parading
their off-white pups through neighbouring streets:
They saw you once and wanted the same.
But you were claimed by a private angel.
Fastened to good karma,
you glow, you germinate, and you proceed.

As you sleep by the door
in and out of your doggy dreams,
you defeat the need for tomorrow's schemes.
With an unassuming soothing moan
you stretch then continue in rest,
abating the weight of my human despair.

Our children are orchards

By the door

**we wait for the end of school,
for the long day to bloom
to lay to rest the tricks of superstition and our obstinate ache
to be carried to the next fertile shore.**

**Blocked, but that too must be an answer
to the polished space that compresses and invades
our waking hours.**

**Risk that comes out of despair
as a last ditch effort to not give up
has been told in chronicles, as surrendering stories
that rain away dust and heal the hunt of weighted hunger,
nourishing spiritual belonging.**

**Leaves and feathers we collect with our children,
graveyards we visit to look at lost names,
where our hands seed deeper into the Earth,
rise higher than the hawk-bird into the stratosphere of grace,**

grace as wind we depend upon to navigate our footsteps,
to quilt together our four-way love,
cooling the cut of arduous days and pilgrimage.

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ALLISON GRAYHURST



Currents
- pastlife poems

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Allison Grayhurst

Edge Unlimited Publishing

341

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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
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,
inching 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 flight, 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 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.

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 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.

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 destined 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 crawly 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 become
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 tufts 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.**

New Wheel – The Passage of Arnik

(king of a small land)

Part 1

**My skin was stone,
drenched in an accelerant and
lit on fire. And there I burned,
a flaming rock impassable by
every woman and man who
tried to cross my shore. My fire
was final, a never-dying-heat
guarding the dead cold core
beneath its frantic dance.
Murder was easy as was laughing,
glaring bold-faced at the sun,
but languishing in waters, still or stormy,
was never my game, only, swift, loveless striking,
blistering and charring, beating with a spike
any imagined challenge to my seat in the center.**

**You covered my face with your hair,
let me sear it, then the skin of your face, to the bone.
And still you would not leave me, give up
on my indomitable obscenity – finely-tuned
to the leftover ash of my tenderside.
My madness was your deformed child. Even when
you ended me, taking an axe to break up my hard form –
you were more sorry than I was, heartbroken
to scatter that fire, watch its petering-out-existence
on the cracked concrete fragments of what I once was.
For me, it was freedom from its burn,**

a relief, relieving me from the devil's obligation.
I couldn't sing. I couldn't speak, but
I saw you crying - such strength
embedded in so much softness. I forgot
you had a formidable side. I forgot
that love was a ruthless wielding sword -
for both of us - terrible, unforgiving and
stronger than either of our self-proclaimed mantras,
better than personal devotion, brighter
than the burning or the burnt, tortured,
cloned-for-infinity, layered upon layer, like us,
molecularly as one, irreparably damned.

Part 2

Tentacles, unfurled, then
curled, suctioning out
the snail from its shell.
Through the narrow hold of hell
I built a kingdom, wide and ruthless,
I cut the heads off the keepers of faith,
increased my stature as I did my gluttony -
sensual overload.

There was a tree in the courtyard, old and by its own.
Everyday I would chip pieces off its bark, because I could,
because I knew it hurt and I wanted to murder it, slowly,
this old beauty that held its ground longer than me.
I wanted its stillness, if not to own, then to conquer.
I obsessed over its carved-up flesh, kept its pieces
in a box by my bed, one day planning to collect
the whole of its body in many boxes –
building a shelf for that alone.

But that day never came, for I found death
by the swift hand of my lover, after love-making
after laughter, almost sleeping – showing him the tree pieces,
while gloating at my cruelty, he sucked in my dark wind
and gathered an axe from its exhale.
He watch me fade. I faded,
spilled out over the bedding and the hand-crafted floor.
He cried openly, pressing his
lips against my skin, he sang to me –
laid the bark-pieces tenderly across my chest –
and there I was buried, there, in dying I awoke,
for the first time in that lifetime, trembling with peace,
I began a journey somewhere, home.

Part 3

Inside the white hot soul
that boils with bitter outward
blame, primitive in its inception
like a just-born-star,
born from a black hole sink hole infusion
of pain and power – tight knot force pouring
from an unguarded door, gushing forward like
a colossal flood, lifting homes, babies from parental arms
and the nesting rodents from their burrows, remorseless,
lashing this way and that just for the sake of it,
for the sound and for the consequences
I could unleash.

Whispers in my ear of love
were an implanting-larvae insect bite
to pour vinegar on and be done with.
But they burned, these larvae beneath my skin, traveled north
to latch onto my spinal neck nerve, hatch again,
consuming me with ignored madness.

I kept myself pure of sentiment until the end, until the next life
when those larvae overtook, and cloaked my retreat
with parallel barriers of shame and guilt,
called me to a time out, to be removed,
to learn discipline and control, gentleness
carrying out daily simple tasks, bothering no one –
small, self-sustaining, glimpsing a first taste of a personal
God as I
let the weight bear down, through the darkness, building
a sanctuary where I could chalk-mark the walls
with my crimes,
come to terms with accountability.

Gradually, many lifetimes later, those larvae
grew translucent wings,
thin, but strong enough to lift me off the ledge of confinement,
into the light of a new longing – a vision bursting,
birthed from both
a streamlined-focus responsibility toward a tender eternity
and a well-cave of feeding minerals, feeding,
blunt-axe perpetually hacking, holy despair.

Part 4

I speak of a cloud
fanning north - it went
past barricade ripples,
ended in a thin line above a blanket
fog. Wild disorder,
language I could not steal or make up,
but found the natural disappearance
of all things in its fate.
A creature obscure, placematting perfection
into a one-dimensional genius.
Good riddance to lineage and the shaming
fish-flight up against some sharks.

I touched you and you were naked. It felt
greater than love, but it was not so. It was
wider than a lifetime and swayed all over
the map, cloak-covering the appendages
of tyranny and a tyrant's response to fear.
We rejoiced together, exhilarated by the possibilities
and the perpetual spin weaving macabre plot
that lead to this glimpse of redemption.
It was the end - hoofprint on the grass
made invisible by an onslaught storm.
Even for the weight and starkness that came after,
I am grateful for the chance
you gave to be reborn – to dare myself
into solitude and austere discipline.

**I speak of a cloud
then of a king that was a man
who lost his heavy shape and substance
in a calm sky... know it, know it now,
a law, an equilibrium
dissolved – miraculous
clairvoyant space taker
vanishing through, into
a covenant-keeping once
impenetrable wall.**

(monk in service to a stream)

Part 5

Grace, grounding
in the mist-wrapped shelter
blooming in unison
with perfect stance and form,
killing my individuality to make
a stronger whole.
Orange bright red flare of robes,
sounds of marrow spine resonance,
stillness in speed, visible energy,
rolling, turning, flattening the air
from inner pressure – sealed, smoothed,
kneeling by a stream.

This kind of power accessed, focused
removed from ego and uniqueness.
Finding peace in discipline, saving beauty
in spiritual structure – every moment counted for,
every thought overseen and filtered through
for further simplicity. Clarity enforced
in the great dream of camaraderie,
in the common goal of God-mind, balancing
force with receiving,
honouring with accountability, weaned off
of the still swelling teat of desire, living far off
on an isolated high plane, holding heaven

**in a tea cup, celestial gardens in a rice bowl,
learning to blend mastery with discipleship.**

**daily striving for perfection in the body's movements,
daily failing, giving it back, committed
to this pulsar event - filling up, choosing 'yes',
then willfully deflating, releasing the hold.**

Part 6

This hand
split from the source
but not fully detached,
forking downward into
a vast otherness, depending on,
giving honor to the root, to the means to
keep nourished and whole.

Gently submerging in a stream,
entering an alternate atmosphere where
minnows school and scatter
and micro-organisms build communities,
interactive bio-worlds, unaware of the invading limb,
fingers, looping in erratic rhythm, glorifying in
the soft texture shadow, moving through with
easily overcome resistance,
encapsulated in the water-body,
entering, exploring without destruction.

This hand,
only feeling like it has gone somewhere
when removed, wet, knowing it has been
where oxygen is heavy,
where the rich showering moon gravity
has more say, greater mobility than it does in air.
Crossing dimensions without disruption
or impact, here holding stillness,
inside of, open to a passive discovery, then lifted,
hovering over the surface, dripping back into the stream,
gaining rich skin ridges, enhanced sensitivity, at last,
visible saturation.

Part 7

Guardian of the small water
flowing - pebbles lining
the edge, shaved head resting
on the ground.

Loneliness widened in those few everyday hours,
listening to what went on deep below the surface
of the stream, honing in on frolicking fish,
predatory fish and the cycle voice
groaning, never withholding its display of extremes.

I closed my eyes and dreamt I held two shoulders tight
between two arms, wrapped myself naked around another.
That longing lingered well past sleep, as I rose, it rose up in me
a discontent, birthed a being, a pulse
beneath my calculated fold,
thundering through my well-kept peace,
brought me closer to looking,
looking at those fish, seeing a richer kinship in their company.
As I looked, that loneliness quickened
in its demands, buzzed louder
than concentrated contemplation or a prayer.

There was no apology left to play out, not here
in this place, on this isolated rift on a mountain, not
when other beings moved in a more intimate connection,
tied to the vine and the sun and the fish
gave birth to eggs that were inseminated
and transformed. I could hear
their chattering, bubble blowing and their unquestioned
communion - each tiny one crowned perfect, even when
left half-eaten, perishing on the bank.

I drew back from my commitments but did not leave,
simply waited and held the promise of you in my dreams.
In waiting, I sent a call out to you, finding transportation
through the drumming chant, into distances
beyond my bent knees
and the gleam of my weapons

over cliffs and villages and oceans I told you
to meet me the next time over, choose
this place, choose that harsh violence of a home
and I would choose mine, not far
but far enough from each other so when we finally met
we would be mostly cultivated and hurting enough
to give credence to each other's importance.

While I waited, I tasted your flesh in each grain of rice,
rolled it down my tongue like solid nectar, digesting it,
I kept up my call, told the stream to take it downwards too.
In silence I kept my secret, broke the machine,
and betrayed my brothers.

I had no choice but to tend to this flame, press my hip bones
against yours in the other space that started small
by the stream,
gained dimension and lengthened on the inside, stretching
to bare-toes, to fleshy ear-lobes, flame
that circled my bones like a hungry bird,
broke them into pieces and swallowed them,
glittering, gleaming hot in this longing, still
a stone on the outside, dutiful while I waited,
letting that flame infiltrate my organs, veins, larynx.

I loved you absolutely, in the wild intake outtake breath.
I ate as always in slow movements, with one hand, eating,
the other, ripening, building in heat,
calling out, preparing for our wedded harvest.

Part 8

Standing on a petal crust, ground
by a stream, sinking into wet earth
where fish corpses lie buried,
surrounded by minerals and mountain stones.

Sinking as the sun arrives
and my heart seizes but is not afraid of
drowning in this damp graveyard,
knows it is a sacred blessing to be called
to dive into the underground
where light and water still reign,
knows it is pulled, plucked and twisted but
will return to form through a flexible core,
elasticity intact, inner elements uncompromised.

Going down further
merging shoulders and neck, readying to breathe in
the divinity ground, harbinger
of worms, death and thin bones, keeper of
the Lazarus resurrection

and the sun seeps into my parted lips
as does the soil. I close my eyes
sinking, unable to hold air or hearing.

Honoured to offer it my flesh and my singing bowl,
I am covered in this stream-infused ground of a shroud,
vessel-body overtaken, vacated and then transmuting,
dissipating, ready to feed the root, be healed,
find you again, and in loving you,
be equal, irretrievably joined, boundless together,
opened, never closing, owned.

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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

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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, 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*.

"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 of *Wigford Rememberies*.



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