



**DEATH AND OTHER
POSSIBILITIES**

ALLISON GRAYHURST

Death and other Possibilities

Allison Grayhurst

Edge Unlimited Publishing

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Table of Contents

Sheaves of Time	7
Between Two Places	8
Change	9
In Time	10
Within This Hour	11
Falling	12
Replenished	13
The Voice That Calls To Me	14
You Were There	15
In The Tomb	16
Without Light	17
To Lie With Luck Again	18
Dark Wave	19
The Ghosts Around My Bed	20
Home	21
My Love is Waiting	22
Without Covers	23
The Gift	24
Through the thick middle	25
A Day For My Own	26
Whole	27
Morning	28
Things I Must Learn	29
New Commitment	30
Spiral	31
Dad (an eulogy)	32
In the Gully of Things	44
Open	45
Friendship	46
Like a harmonica	47

Pregnant After a Death	48
Imagination	49
Bright	50
Transfigured	51
In My Bones	52
My Place	53
I Found You Singing	54
Recovered	55
Silence	56
Like A Wave	57
In This Garden	58
before	59
The Gentle Seed	60
As One	61
Of Fears and Thankfulness	62
On the bed	63
In The Fire	64
Eight Months	65
BloodsuckerDeath	66
Pregnant	67
Almost to the Other Side	68
When the last tie is broken	69
I still think of you	70
At Sunrise	71
If We Are So Lucky	72
Seeing Shadows	73
Lifted	74
Anniversary	75
A Month Before Birth	76
Autumn	77
We Walk Again	78
In Preparation	79
Without Hunger	80

my child	81
Not a Ghost	82
Break the Chain	83
When Sleep Will Not Come	84
Spring	85
Our Little Pushkin	86
Breaking Through	87
Stale Goodbye	88
In the centre	89
Sweet	90
A Moment of Clarity	91
Daughter	92
The Road Chosen	93
Of Manna and God	94
It is	95
What Is Good	96
A Matter of Risk	97
A Day	98
An Infant	99

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.

Between Two Places

Nowhere I nestle -
my lover's away
and my horse has lost his pasture.
Under the lawnmower,
cut up like a paperdoll.
I will run down hallways,
find my good sign and a pond to drink from.
I will go in one direction, bring
my hands to my temples and think.
Think of a wet log by a river, of a
porcupine in the wood. I will count
the sparrows in the sky and when I'm done,
I will gather stones and call them beautiful.
But now there is this swaying road and my
albino heart. I am scattered, blurred
like a blueberry smeared upon a mirror.
Close at hand - the cable wire and the drugs.
I will find my bed, salvation in the bathwater.
I will tip the basket on its side,
feeding on the fruits that were once censored
morally denied.

Change

Let it come like the wave with
the salty foam. Let it reflect
my insides like a face held towards
new cutlery. Let it take my rhythm for
its own, express it in the wings of angry crows
and the trees in communion with the wind.
Let it steel my lover for four nights,
leave my bed an empty socket for all my
demons to gather and join. Let it hurl
a fist at the clock, at the pressure of duty
and guilt I should not feel. Let it mimic
my cries at the corner store where a woman
sits on a curb, crazy with undirected grief.
Let it be in the eyes of my cat as he stalks
the birds in his mind.
Let me kneel before it in my room,
and tell my husband what I have found.
Let it be like a fledgling in the morning singing
or like a wound that alters my appearance.

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.

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.

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.

The Voice That Calls To Me

The voice that calls me to the dazzling edge
is the voice I heard when still in hunger,
deep in donut shops, in cigarettes and unbleached sorrow.

The voice that calls me, comes again,
bursting in my belly, digging a hole
through all my prayers, comes
like an elephant, intelligent and crushing
my marrow with its grey mass.

The voice that calls me, I know
like I know certain streets of this city,
dressed in melancholic remembrances,
shedding their newness to rekindle those
unhappy, yet coveted years.

The voice that calls me beats on my limbs
like hail. As if holding my head between clammy palms,
it holds my thoughts in old habit, in damp, penetrating
gloom.

I begin this time
hearing its vinegar scream inside.
It drips like cold gravy down my spine
down, between shoulder-blades, down
covering the small of my back.

The voice that calls me, I hear rise
from the gutter of my past.
I let it come and go. For though
here and hooked to my mind, it is only
the passing of a cloud, only
a long-told story, a coming-back before
moving on.

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.

In The Tomb

**In the hollow of despair
where bitterness sways from
desperation to self-destruction
and beetles crawl across bathroom
floors on bathroom towels, fearless
as those who have faced and conquered death,
pain and fantasy consume and God
is but a word to mutter to soothe the cut-up skin.**

**In a night alone with the TV off and all
books read, with tomorrow inevitable as the sun
that will rise, spring blossoms that too will fall
and be crushed by the wheels of cars - pretty white
and purple stains on the pavement - sealed in my mind
like images of dead bodies in a row.**

**In bed, with no lover to cry to or hide inside
two devoted arms, my heart speeds like fire
through a dry forest - undresses, unveiling
its vulnerable beginnings.**

**And there, there is something that shifts
like incense lit or like a cat nudging the hand,
something subtle that whispers "hello".
And my head is raised, looking
with new-born eyes at a familiar place.**

Without Light

In naked bitterness
all strangled dreams lie
like wings ripped from
an angel's shoulder, icy,
slim as a sword.

The floor is
hideous that binds us to
reality, to the leopard and
the scorpion, unto the
barren future.

Each bedmate is
sick with isolation,
reaching across the insipid night
to coin his wounds and lie for
once, unalone.

God is lost in the morass of hurt,
and each oracle is a trick
that consoles for a minute
then purges the heart of hope.

Delight comes
with food, with the purchase of a passion
from the local convenience store.

Our thirst is a dreadful ooze,
like lust, it kills though itself never dies.

We cling to the scorching seed,
pray for grace through a tired eye.

The Irish clover droops,
and from the quiet fields, soldiers carry
fragments of mutilated truth,
like they would a dying paramour.

To Lie With Luck Again

To lie with luck again
in the vital centre
where faith is had
like water - necessary and
always there.

To speak to the familiar morning
in my own tongue that I learned
from solitude and watching squirrels.

To step on the back of a scorpion,
not feeling its tail writhe and crush.

To hold a nickel in my hand
and let it be enough.

To walk on tall grass and leave
my mark.

To not be the fig tree holding back
my bloom, or look on others as poison to my tastebuds
or as a slingshot to the singing lark.

To dance as a child, unaware
of the mirror, catching on fire
like a deer in powerful flight.

Dark Wave

**The dark wave comes
through your sandy hair
and meets the green of your eyes.**

**It has you with its hunger
and the slow and low way you talk,
unconcerned with morality. It scents your mind
with its long-lived indifference,
while underneath self-contempt
feeds the coldness of your skin
and lets you live in violent chambers
where death and imagination merge to form
your every-day apparel.**

**You long for comfort like a man stranded
in the wilderness longs for a safe
and empty cave. You never trust the tenderness
of your desires nor bend to the cleansing slate
of self-forgiveness.**

**The dark wave comes
from ancient tombs
and memories that will never
escape you. It comes
into your arms,
and even hating it, you embrace it
as though it were the only thing
to call your very own.**

The Ghosts Around My Bed

I sleep my sleep hapless,
aching with each vision
housed and saved.

I die my death silently,
leaning further into the dull air,
seeing twice my desires perish
in the stillness of this doldrum eve.

I love my love lonely,
planting stones in the sink,
washing dishes at midnight.

I am tired of hope and of prayer,
tonight, I am a white mouse
drowning in an ocean of snow. I am lassoed,
trapped in litterbox-rooms. My toenails
are cracked and somewhere soon children
will wake energetically and rise,
believing.

Home

In this sanctuary of cats, guitars and clay,
words descend from white clouds
bringing us breath through the window pane.

In this home of perfect love
and hardwood floors, strong angels
lean against every door, conversing
with playful ease amongst themselves.

In these rooms we curl together
until we feel an alternate, inseparable beating.
The ceilings are covered in cobwebs
like birthday string, and our bed
is a cavern for miraculous dreams.

In this happy corner, we have been given
a space in time to mould into our own,
where there is no protection and no facades,
where laughter rolls like tears do as soon
as the movement hits, and the day's brightness
pours in at 10 am, telling us in this genesis season
that all is here and all is good.

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.

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.

Through the thick middle

where creepy things slither

Forgiveness,

is not red nor shades of brown,

but is sea-water blue

with an underbelly dense with life,

with squid, sharks and fluorescent jellyfish.

It is not rage, but a seeping dissatisfaction

that hooks my joints and sends me

screaming.

And love,

it is in his wet hair, in his angry,

suffering brow. It is in his sad voice

on the phone, in his complex humour and primal body

I touch, but cannot hold.

A Day For My Own

The darning of socks in
summertime. The filing of nails
on a nothing-to-do night -
with all desires nourished.

I see a can of peaches open, the laundry washed
and windows everywhere, letting in
the outdoors.

I feel my pulse calm,
feel almond shells around my feet
and the fires of anxiety appeased.

Like holding the hand of a friend in need
or running through a valley with a dog
who can't be seen, my eyes are strong
with imagination. They blend
with the October leaves and lap-up
visions of children playing
where willow trees so easily grow.

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.

Morning

The sun on garage roofs
gives the gull a warm winter's
bed. The leafless tree that meditates
so glorious against the sky,
is witness to a household of grief and joy.
The book that sits on top of the television
has carried over a million souls through,
and morning is on my toetips like
a ballet dancer's favourite shoes.
On the wayside of the road a small
toad has found its grave, as the sewer drain
gurgles an indifferent refrain.
Tiny things congregate and share
their food as young women walk
with their pleated skirts, readying children for school.

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.

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.**

Spiral

I have gone before

on the phobic path
and in the shallow river.

And now this present

I make to the glorious clown:

A cup of music and a true and lonely cry.

Trapped in one life now, clear from
the beginning, like drawing the long
straw no matter the shape of a person's
lips. I sense the air above, between the outside
and me. I am not together. All of a sudden

I feel no shore, no happy bottom. I hope
to ring myself of worry, to do cartwheels
on train tracks and love the blistered foot.

I see the endless coil, the ebb and flow
of the salty tide. I am learning of ease,

learning to swallow the orange seed,
to rub shoulders with a new breed of hope
and open endings.

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.

In the Gully of Things

**In the throat of things,
monotony pulses in every
strand of seeped-through light,
where crumpled-up paper is all
to ease your fall.**

**In the orange belly of deliverance,
in the blue fantasies of school kids,
now is not a time to relish in,
is something to be transported from,
and your sandals are torn like
a piece of skin.**

**In the bedroom against the unwashed wall,
in the other rooms where spirits
pace the hardwood floors,
your eyes are dim with death,
and the answering machine is broken.**

**In the book you read,
in your tight, unclean jeans,
your faith has failed, and you ask
for it back, as the cars going by fill your mind
with a strange, distracting wonder.**

Open

Open like hell is opened
to the damned, like the heart
collapsed in on itself
or like being three nights
without sleep, in a room
of false friends.

Open with the wide smile
in your pocket, with layers
of socks to cover your wounded toes.

Open as a modern kiss, as
a dream in need of interpretation.

Open, though hiding would be nice,
and under the books on the shelf
is a message written in dust, uncovered.
It is telling you the change has come:
Your stomach is full of restlessness.
Your eyes are new with a strange indifference.
The change has come.

Open like a woman in labour,
or like a butterfly caught inside a storm.

Friendship

With the loyal blood of friendship
I sing of one who has not betrayed.
I am wrapped in the distance of time
and space, but talk through
telephone wires to her brave
mind. We speak of things that
challenge our blindness and deepest core.
We throw light down the chimney
and braid the strings of our attachment.
In tragic bodily curse she discovers
the way to see. She knocks self-pity
to its knees and praises the mosquitoes going by.
She embraces her trials as good gifts,
though hurting like a simple child.
We have held the flag that divides
the foreigner from the native. We have let go.
These are things we have learned like a dandelion
stretches naturally towards the sun, like a fledgling
knows its mother's private tune.
I am happy to call this blessing mine, to know
so strong a seed sprout and bloom in spite
of our incompatible roots.

Like a harmonica

playing
from a far off place,
like a storm in warning under
a clear and windless sky,
like the smell of food when
both fridge and pockets are empty,
change arrives and pulls each
limb from its socket, plucks the
head-hairs, until a new appearance
forms and the body lies on its deathbed,
unable to stand. Then like sunshine
on the windowpane or like a blank page
in a room without furniture, a face arises
newly formed, clothes fill the closets
that were never seen before.
The hands throb raw with anticipation.
Then lifted from the lava pouring, lifted
into a warm communion, strength pulses in
the fingertips and in the eyes, all meaning
is rejoined and the heart is freed
to finally bless and fully cry.

Pregnant After a Death

**I kneel for you, for the small
flower unnamed. Within
where apple trees never grow, another
fire catches. I dream of toadstools
and my father's dark warm eyes. I call
you my literature, my sweetest harvest.
And my husband and I, we make notes
in the mirror, we go shopping, holding hands.
We talk of you like a morning glory, we smell the spring
and are proud. We begin to know you
like a separate constellation, like someone
entwined by all these loving riches.
God has taken and now gives, letting
the tears and this blessing take equal hold.**

Imagination

In the drawer
my love is folded
like playing cards.
I turn this over
and find myself lost
in the open space of possibilities.
Frightened by the hardness of being,
wanting this to go, along with the
pat on the back and good cheers of courage.
Wanting my pulse still for a moment
and all bloodties mended and forgiven.
In the books I read
I think myself a new person.
I am there, just after the French Revolution,
in the parlours and prisons. I am not
lonely, but freed of reproach, sending
a gift of light to all my enemies.

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.

Transfigured

Each day I wear my grief
like metal mesh. I see you
as a spirit burdened to speak.
You try to comfort this field
of wounds. You tend the amputees
and bound the screaming with soft song.
But it is hard for you to stay,
to not let go completely into the light.
I let you go. I make this year my bridge.
Though my heart has ruptured and cannot heal,
and I am forever overcome with this sadness
of our love silenced by brutal, unnamable death,
I will build a new house, dive with both hands
into my yard until the evergreens grow.
I will contain you as more than memory -
in my harvest will bloom many sunflowers
of your great generosity. And your fiery blood
will sprout the roots and flesh of passion fruit.
The maple tree will grow large like you, protecting all
within its strong and tender shadow. And children
will be drawn to this yard, to play there amongst
the tall dramatic grass, and then sit still to watch
with wonder the many shades of sky, reflecting
the warmth of your paternal sun-setting colours.

In My Bones

Death makes a brother and sister
of us all, shedding the crusty scales
of protection and vanity, it lifts
each heart bare toward the scorching
sun. And I feel so different now,
as though my wardrobe has been replaced
with someone else's colours,
as though I have joined hands with the earth
in all her potent grief and glory.
I feel so well contained, though raw
as newborn babe. I feel this knowing
has made me whole, though it has removed
the ground I once stood on.
And here I see the space within will never go,
and the tears will be forever near. I see
the miracle of death, like the forming
of a caterpillar's tight cocoon.
I see May flowers begin to bloom,
and know now, that life is not
so long a thing.

My Place

At one end are the setting shapes
of friendships left behind
like the breaking of a mug
or a foggy window.

I leave that end and hold no other.
I stand on the crust of a sandy shore.
Together I swam through the salty flavour
with a dolphin by my side. Alone,
I leave my companion and the waves
that serve me no more.

There are things I wish for like
pineapple and starfish fruit. There are
times I believe in the hot sands, believe
in the beautiful face of loneliness. I wave
at the birds and they follow me. I lay still
and the air has filled my thirst. On the
grassy green beyond I know one day I will
move. I know of proud children smiling at the
stars. I know there is nothing that can kill
the large immaculate Love. I died with my flesh.
I am born a new way, cut off from last-year's persona.
I look to the water - its depths
no longer take me in, its blue is but a shallow tone.
I close my eyes
and rains descend like an artist's stroke,
making patterns on the naked land.

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.**

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.

Silence

I lift the bullfrog from the waters.

Bread, parables and staying close to a legend -
these are things of joy. I am thinking of the grave
near the willow tree, whose roots have grown
around the coffin, and of a sailing ship
that has no home port, but drifts like
a hollow log on living waters.

Freely I made my room and closed the door.

I knelt for our starved country, and grief
wrapped around my sleep, landing safely in my arms.
My father, I dream of your flame. I miss the woods
and your kind goodbyes. Tomorrow is a keyhole
that shapes my hopes with tiny possibilities.

If I could rise like grass from dirt, then
my nerves would be brave and the smell of the sun
would heal me with prayers.

If my eyes were an ocean where the whale
and the seahorse gathered, then I could see mercy
in the shark's primitive teeth, I would
lie on the surface of a wave,
catching the colours of dusk with
my out-stretched tongue.

Like A Wave

In the obscure attempts
to do more than survive, tomorrow is but
a wishing well where all the fish
have turned belly-up.
But the journey down is sacred,
more like flying than falling,
reflecting like a crystal its rainbow colours.
Into my 30's like out of a war zone,
saying goodbye to the dead and amputees.
Fresh is the light, though I carry on a string
a grey cloud of memories.
Love is never a metaphor, though it
recognizes itself in infinite ways.
It is a servant of the living,
mutable as sound.
How do I tell the thing
that is brittle from the thing that is brave?
In sorrow, I left the highway to find a home.
I found a tenderness and left my shell abandoned.
Beauty is curved like the wave of a rapid river.
It carries me to a path of bread and struggling purity.

In This Garden

**I stir from the motionless depths,
coming close to the new face
that wants to be my own.
Harsh like light to the sleeping eye,
my roots are torn and my seed
is yet of the earth.
I reach back and then beyond -
all my poems are with me now,
the accumulation of my dance,
the rejoicing, and the coldness of loss.
Around - so close to the daylight.
If I had lived before, then now I am thrown
behind the door where eternity, not life abides.
Mortal year that has replaced my air
with this huffing and bewilderment -
how strong was the wave that has washed me over.
There are great things to come, though death
has forever changed the shape of my smile.**

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.

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.

Of Fears and Thankfulness

Lines of dreams.

Inside the dream

I hold us close

though fear the passing

of our smiles.

Soon it will be like yesterday

never was, like all our

waiting and despair will be only

a mild memory left behind.

Soon you will be proud of your life

and know the taste of mercy in all

its natural splendour.

And I myself, with child, with you,

want us only to remain as close as

these nine years have brought us,

blending as a black cat with the darkness.

And though we both have lost irreplaceable loves,

both have felt the thunderbolt of death, on our knees,

beneath God's greatness, there will be only sunshine

for a while, a coming out with sorrow in one hand

and beautiful faith in the other. I see the plan:

We will welcome in

the good change and move into the future

like two inseparable fireflies, each dependent

on the other's flickering light.

On the bed

You lie on the bed like a Rodin
sculpture, body so perfect as the
first day we met, when finding
you was like finding a new way to breathe,
was a miracle that took time getting used to.
We talk for hours to our child within me
and wait for the change to arrive.
I never grow tired of our kissing or
of the depths we reach looking into each
other's eyes.
You have walked me through the dungeon,
held me close when my paint dried out.
We have stood as one as this new life grows
inside. Our voices now are solidified and merged
like the spring-Earth
in all her beautiful poetry.

In The Fire

With blood I cried,
I cried for you,
for this knocking on my ribs
and for a loss like the formless
angels would know.
I cried with panting breath
and wanted this and all life to go
into the picture frame, away
from the 'very real'.
I held my knees and felt the humid
air encase me like a crushing prong.
You moved in violent spin,
making your presence known.
I felt my inadequacies and my ugliness
like cold metal pressed against my throat.
I reached hysteria, then came out into the calm,
seeing my lover's eyes in the small space
between my fears. He took my hand and
I could breathe again. I could feel you were eased
and I heard a gentle whispering, saying
together as a family we three will live and grow.

Eight Months

**This grief stalled in my throat
rises in small amounts
like a split seed moving from
earth to air.**

**I remember a warm protection
that I will never again know,
or see the fireworks of his grounded mind
fill the atmosphere with so much colour.
Time is like the moon in summer,
not so real when seen beside the day's strong sun.**

**But in winter, the moon is explanation -
is the weaving thread of barren understanding.**

**I think he must be near, after all
the wound still flows. Today eight months
have gone, and all my old hopes are altered
though renewed. I have nothing to give him,
no telephone declaration can I make in the passion
of true gratitude, or say why? to his passing shadow.
There is only this I am left with -
this sting of still raw shock, and all the memories
my love can hold.**

BloodsuckerDeath

**Embracing the bloodsucker
in naked sand, in the element
of rain and stormy skies.
Loving the bloodsucker for a moment
and then living within its inevitable stride.
A year of midnight, a cocoon to peer through,
but still the air is not my own.
Sleeping beside its warm and ruthless tummy,
who knows what the shadow beholds - the scythe,
the splitting apart, the lungs that find no breath.
I cared for your children,
I wrapped them like a necklace around my throat and
they taught me the infinite expressions of grief.
I was once a lake. I am now a dried-up pond.
The sweat is the seed, is the missing piece
that gives grace to every smile. Hunt me
no more, reveal to me the final plateau.
Loss and beautiful corpses, and still beyond
November's soil, you have revealed the ways
of indestructible love. For that I am grateful.
For love not you is absolute. This milestone you have given
has become my ship - now leave me to flow away
from the weight of this mourning.**

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.

Almost to the Other Side

**In midair like a cold relentless
dream, the minnows find me
and tell me tales of insignificance.
In my blood there drifts a fool's
coin and fantastical wagers.
Because I am this person with
that hard year gone and this new
good gift to come, sometimes
it's as if I'm on stilts that with one small
trip, my whole body will come crashing down.
Sometimes I watch the cats and know
I have been made for this place, know
the colour of my sky and the heavy toll
of self-deception.**

When the last tie is broken

**and no mentor remains to walk
my hands through the mystery of clay,
and I am hit again by another sorrow,
losing one who has guided my eyes into seeing
a new, irrevocable way,
then the day will expose my passion and test
its worthiness. Then I will be called to answer
on my own and believe in the truth of my dedication.**

**To shape, to shadow and the sensual magic
that is sometimes caught in timeless moments
oblivious to thought, like walking within
a beautiful breeze and smelling the life inside
all the tiny animals. Like being at the place where
water and earth are like fingers massaging mud
into a vision - a weight
unattainable to the cerebral mind.**

I still think of you

**in the morning,
when the winds play across telephone wires
and winter's trees.
I carry your face before me
like a sacred chalice, or a goal I cannot reach.
There are things that have changed me,
but the loss of you has split me wide like
never before. I see colours differently. I touch
icicles and give up all other truths. I believe
you are still protecting me, and then I am lost
in the greyness of the sky. Your love is torn
from my side. And now I am altered, I am
adjusted. I am a scorpion walking the desert
sands. I am a gazelle near the waterhole. One day
I am free, then the pain returns like cancer.
I am carrying a child. I am your child
who wishes you could share this journey. But
death has taken your hand. And somehow I know,
darkness is not all.**

At Sunrise

In dark peace
my covenant circles me
like a whale could a ship far at sea.
I am watched by a tender eye
greater than the Earth's orb.
And in the summer, renewal will come
though heat and smog will fill my lungs.
Hope I cannot define, but I feel its
footprint on my belly. I feel the treasures
I have been given like the meeting of a lost friend.
I have been understood, carried to the other side
of death's all-consuming void. I have talked
my journey through. My night has been named,
and in private gardens I have been shown
the anguish of love.

If We Are So Lucky

**If we are so lucky to know your face,
to touch your newly made skin,
to read to you in the mornings
and go walking in the afternoon . . .**

**If we can be complete under November winds,
maybe the hole my father's death
left within will heal, enough
so the sun won't pass me over.**

**In the hope of you and your perfect
dependency, we make meals at the counter,
lye together on the coach, touched by
vague expectation and awe. We are here
together at the throne of mystery.**

Here, as my body stretches to welcome you.

**If we are so blessed to smile into your eyes,
to hold you after midnight, then my father's voice
I could hear in waking wonder
as he says - be happy and carry on.**

Seeing Shadows

The light that enters
as a letting go
of what was once so beautiful,
illuminates the burnt and lifeless seeds,
says to the dark ache - I will love
I will love
with a new love that sees
each false pattern eclipsed,
that hears the moans of chipmunks
on park benches, that feels a sorrow
renewed with each inhaled breath, in
barbecue backyards and in the summer
approaching. Each month it burrows deeper
into the nerves. It is the light that hurts,
that drives the sight inward and uncovers
the shallow depths of certain intimacies.
Here it is, and will never leave, will be
the new shade of my eyes, the only purse I carry,
will answer me in my most desperate need,
and hold my hand through barren valleys.

Lifted

On my shoulder
I feel the weight of many years
being licked into oblivion.
I feel a new being being born
in my shoes. And in the bardo-crossing,
I have tasted the anguish
of change, have touched the
hot poker between palms.
I have cried in my confusion as love
came to clean the dirt in my hair, cut
my fears in two to swim in my belly
like tadpoles collected as a child.
The wind is in me and the apple seed sprouts
its fragile sapling. In my mind I see the world
as never before, see the wolves
as fractured, fragmented souls, sniffing
at my door. I see patterns in the air
holy as the sun. Dreams are believed into truth.
My breath has won.

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.

A Month Before Birth

**Prepared to swing the branches,
steady like in days of another year,
when time was mine to pull apart,
to drive depression from my sphere.
But bluish grey is all I see through
these pregnant eyes. I see a change I cannot
cope with, and separation between those I love.
I see my dead father in every footstep and
wish to fade like the autumn leaves
into colours of gold and fire before I become
the earth's seasonal meat, before I am
further gone down the road of inevitable fate
where I lose over and over the letters of my name,
where my core is chipped and isolation
is my sole companion.
I don't see how the clock can turn or how I
can be stronger yet against this undertow.
But I bend and bend, and have not
broken, and soon
a child will come.**

Autumn

Throw in the towel.

Throw in the left side of your brain.

**Remember now to speak against
the polliwogs infiltrating your dreams.**

**A dozen ships have sunk under the banner
of righteous revenge. Still, people
are talking about the end, as if
such a thing was predictable.**

**The end will come but not with wings of fire
or because of the clocking of the millennium.**

**Children are new. Antelopes are running
unharvested fields. Death has no beauty, though
some will tell you different, some who have never
touched lips with Death or felt Its cold, eternal hold.**

**There are patterns in the fallen leaves that none but
the birds can know. Wait now for winter, for something
immaculate to cover up, then to renew, the old.**

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.**

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.**

Without Hunger

I shed the skin of my appendages,
I call my name a song
and count each familiar note.
I found a friend under a chestnut tree,
needing time before declaring our bond.
I caressed a horse's upper lip
and loved him like my own.
On foot I travelled my life,
listening to secrets from the crows.
And love discovered me in the shape of a man.
In his burning depths he brought me home.
He is the flesh of my hand touching,
my waking eye and the dipping of my roots into
water. Together, we formed a child, blue
like twilight's blue, like the coat of a rippling river.
Together we come alive by her smile.
In a foreign wood the lilies bloom, the snows
of winter thawed, promises are kept and
the broken bones of passion are mended
like a piece of ancient art.

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.**

Not a Ghost

Wide as the wind,
your spirit is around me.
I see your hands on books
and hear your voice as though
it were still your own.
I miss you again like the first day
when Death showed you its secrets.
I remember the love you gave, your
pride and your directness. I want to tell you
the things I have learned are not worth an ounce
of your lost affection, but still I have learned
to sail through this barren sea. I have learned
that I can. A year and half have past
and there is more time still to come.
I have feared this world without you,
but now I know because you were once here
the world will never be without you.
The sidewalks will forever hold your weight, others
will always speak your name with warm admiration,
and I myself am part of you. You are in me
like a main artery, a bloodline that fierce death
can neither dilute nor sever.

Break The Chain

**Sealing in like a roof does
the house of age,
bitterness tells the time of all.
Like a toothy tiger in the greenery
blazing its look
from prey to prey, what the
years have let down flashes into the eyes
where love once reigned.
Throw the rock into the river and be fresh again.
I need to let go of the greed for security,
and trust the path I have chosen.
The caterpillar weaves then flies.
The infant wakes with a startled cry
then smiles when seeing a familiar face.
I will believe again in what voices mock.
Forgiveness renews and no one can
stop the night from ending.**

When Sleep Will Not Come

The coldness behind too much pain.
The 4 am breakdown and the lost chance
of starting all over again.
Breathing is hard, is not what you expected
as a child when thinking of all the good things to come.
Empty screens and love eroded by bad circumstance.
A child, your child you wish you could do better for,
to take the anger from her home and let love be more.
But now there are the months of no-way-out and
so much thin hope to poke a finger through.
But now I want no affection, just an exit zone
where existence and accountability disappear.
There are bugs running up and down the strands of my hair.
My vision is blurred. My hands are like dried clumps of clay,
stiff and far too cold. My sandcastle has arrived, collapsed
and bagged at the foot of my door.

Spring

Caterpillars over the sensuous lawn.
Starlings in and out of clouds.
A man with a cane on his own
trailing the sidewalk curves.
Put-put-put goes the Earth's sorrow
as the ravaged instinct of humanity is
bundled up in winter's old furs.
Bending now to the sound of traffic.

*This is the miracle - that we never see it coming. The End
is always with us. It is the skin of existence,
it bleats inside
the food we ingest.*

A bug makes for the bush.
A dog is unsure of which master to please.
One man lies drunk on his front porch,
as the cherry trees are starting to blossom.

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.**

Breaking Through

The layer above me is thin.
Above, there are levels transparent
and endless. I hold my breath.
I use the force of arms and legs to swim
up like a tulip pushes out of the earth.
I fear the sharks. I fear the lack
of oxygen. Layer upon liquid layer I merge with
then pass through. When I reach
the last layer it is like any other until
I am through. And there is the crisp, immaculate sky,
the breathable breeze and friends sent
to rescue me, cheering like children at my return.
I am swept between them back to shore,
as the ocean sits like a picture, still and of
another time.

Stale Goodbye

From the caverns
of this and that belief
I am pulled like from
a dream into waking.
One seeing locked into
the pattern of my mind
like true love is locked, singular
and for all time.
The dead have been resting on
my shoulder, speaking tales
of living frailty. Lost beside
the morning. I have taken more
than I ever thought I could.
There is no wiping my slate clean,
no way to shed the scars
or forget his great presence
that guided the depths of my own.

In the centre

**there is the blindness of the salamander
born without eyes, there is the knowing of old age
that the end must come soon and when it does, the hope
that it arrives like a gift.**

**In the centre a frog goes swimming
and people continue with the day.
There is no stopping of time, no one to lift your hurt
and make it one with their own.**

**In the centre, it is equal on either side
and all the windows are open, inviting -
a space, the place
before a dream comes true.**

**In the centre where the crisis is over though
the relief is still beyond grasp,
there is this, the surety of only one thing,
in the centre, standing.**

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.

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.

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.

The Road Has Chosen

**I hear the whisper of change
rush around my bones.
I am called out of the personal
into the deep breath of release.
In my home a child's wonder is uncovered
and the rich lips of love are wide open.
I hold my cup and hold it out
to taste the river of freedom.
I swing around but the bird has vanished
and the sky is shaped like a long-suffering beast.
I am stepping on the skirt of yesterday.
The thread I cling to is thinning,
and yet I am suspended and still, the summer
presses on.
On the last day of this ghostly month
I will draw breath like the fox let loose
from its trap. I will be breaking the tide,
sinking no more near the frozen pine.**

Of Manna and God

**To let go of the addiction
eating away at my cupboards.**

**To sing tra-la-la in the face
of fate and fall at the feet
of the unknown is what
my blood calls for, is the
rock I must throw and is the
river to sink it in.**

**To bury the book in the cellar,
to take my number off the list
and crack a nut on the hardwood floor
is my chance for renewal,
is my stage of internal strife, where
two voices argue of opposing faiths,
and all the while my house is burning.**

It is

**the state before the beginning
when the breath is about to be released
and faith is gaining speed.**

**It is the morning coffee cool enough
for the first sip, and the child's wakeful eyes.**

**It is the first smell of autumn and the lover's
anticipating skin.**

**It is the radio at midnight when the clutching claws
of awful Fate have been unarmed and the star
you wish upon is no longer a dying light.**

**It is where the enemy is blessed and all unspiritual fears
are let go. It is the shattering of a pattern.**

**It is the peace that comes when the heart
is softened and the arms are open,
trusting the life to be.**

What Is Good

Wonder. Wonder
gone to the birds
to feed with the little people
and the Friday harvest.

I know my vision and
know the unaligned vertebrae
and the horror of sinking under
the world's dubious sands.
Give me a gate that blesses my being,
let summer be gone.

Wonder. Wonder
bake me in the wonder
of a child's first year, and
a softer way of seeking.

A Matter of Risk

**I have believed more in the magic of the stars
than in God's miraculous hand.
I have buried my head in the inevitable pattern,
crossed channels with the whisperings of the devil
and put my money on the line.**

**Now I still sway, maiming my faith with fear.
I reach for the roots, then tug a leaf.
I stand tiptoe to see beyond the barrier of fate
and am left with the wall and difficult breathing.**

**I call out to be released consciously
from this dog-pit struggle.
I look beyond the future
into the circle.
I cry out
then open my eyes.**

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.**

All of these poems have been published and have appeared in: Oh! Magazine; vox poetica; Crash- a litzine; Exile; The Writer's Literary Muse; The Toronto Quarterly; Sprout; Poetry Nook; The Poetry Jar; Poems About Life; Subprimal Poetry Art; Boston Poetry Magazine; Poppy Road Review (magazine and 2013 anthology); Ann Arbor Review; Turk's Head Review; Poems About Life; Allegro Poetry Magazine; Nebo: A Literary Journal; Tower Journal; Indiana Voice Journal; Cyclamens and Swords; Indie Poets Indeed; Sentinel Literary Quarterly; Novelmasters; Creative Talents Unleashed; Black Mirror Magazine; SilverSpine Poetry Forum; Mechanical Medusa Poetry Forum; Minerva's Housecoat Writing Forum; Rasputin; Poetry Quarterly; Dark Blooms Literary Zine; The Miscreant; The Missing Slate; Rocket Boy Poetry Page; Think Pink; Medusa's Kitchen; Creek Side Writing Forum; Cavalcade of Stars; A New Ulster; Communicators League; Malevolent Pegasus Literary Zine; Grease Monkey Literary Forum; Green King Poems and Poetry Zine; winamop; Temporary Lunatic Literary Zine; Vine Figure Poetry Page; Literature Today; The Piker Press; Poetry Life & Times; TwitchFit Lit Writing Zine; The song is...; Gossamer Poetry Page; Eye On Life; Eskimo Pie; Chicago Record Magazine; Poetryrepairs; Duane's Poe Tree; New Mystics; The Stray Branch; Scarlet Leaf Review

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;
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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*.

WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT THE POETRY OF ALLISON GRAYHURST

"WHEN I READ ALLISON GRAYHURST'S POETRY, I AM COMPELLED BY THE INTENSITY AND STRENGTH OF HER SPIRITUALITY. HER PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF GOD DRIVES HER POETRY. 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.

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

