

**OUTLIVING THE
INEVITABLE**

ALLISON GRAYHURST

Outliving the Inevitable

Allison Grayhurst

Edge Unlimited Publishing

Outliving the Inevitable
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Table of Contents

Overall	7
Releasing	8
The Voice We Love	9
Change of Address	10
Message	11
Because of You	12
Faltering	13
Shock	14
On Valentine's Day	15
A New Destiny	16
End of an Era	17
The Holding On	18
I Heard	19
Mother	20
All Hands Down	21
One True Love	22
Every Strand of Hair	23
Resignation	24
The Need to Stumble	25
Outliving the Inevitable	26
Fear	27
My Little Wonder	28
You who saw	29
The God I Follow	30
The Ride	31
On Edge	32
The Ways of Ingratitude	33
With a mother's lips	34
Oasis	35

Let Us Show A Tender Love . . .	36
Clothing	37
Difficult Neighbours	38
Spring Too	39
Finding Direction	40
Making Amends	41
For This Colour	42
Days I Discover	43
Beyond the Grave	44
Stage	45
Sacred Beginnings	46
Dementia	47
Enslaved	48
No Other Way	49
The Last One	50
Small Thing	51
Tunnels	52
A Way To Survive	53
As Mad As Mine	54
As We Walk	55
Her Gift	56
Birthday Vision	57
My Little Girl	58
My Body Goes	59
Child	60
Vocation	61
Other Side	62
What We Know	63
Fatal	64
In One Swoop	65
It is not new	66
At Fifteen Months	67
love is love	68

Keep On Moving	69
Death is losing all limitations.	70
Funeral	71
Rival	72
Keeping In Time	73
Almost a Girl	74
Flurries	75
Otherwise	76
At Last	77
Bellythroes of God	78
Ours	80
Traces	81
Still brimming with awe,	82
High Hill	83
Not Afraid	84
Through the girdle	85
Morning Glory	86
This Love	87
Door With No Dreams	88
In League With . . .	89
Down The Limb	90
Found	91
Shift	92
Girl	93
Call Me By Name	94
Did I Dream?	95
Letting Go	96
In Perspective	97
Down The Rusted Needle	98
By This Love	99
Hit The Mark	100
Salvation	101

Overall

Overall I name the winter
mine. I took the sleeping bird
and let her rest away from the cold.
I opened my eyes to the kindred
shapes of mercy, and found myself reborn.
I held my past inside a thimble
to watch from an impersonal distance.
There I saw a land of curious blood
where death was light, and I listened to the blessings
of faith in its haven of broken wishbones.
There I ate the berries and tasted sand
between my teeth. Like love revisited
inside a prayer, my tale could mount
the beat of the sea and count the waves
of darkness untold. But here in this drift
my petals fade and I grieve my walk without fire
and the tongue caress of the growing soot.
But terror is frail and my vows have shown
to be more than ambition.

Releasing

The fear inside
like an untamed wolf,
takes my peace
and the faith that sustains me
when the winter has run out.
I fear tomorrow,
the shape of this 'till death.
I fear the dream never arriving
and the struggle of survival
being continuous, like a tapeworm
that digests all good things
into its spineless white.
I try to leave this fear and hold
the stronger branch, but it returns
in waves panicked and weary, returns
to take my heart into its circle, cradle
me there like a treasure.
And the path is clear, the path is letting go,
letting in a much brighter trust, brighter still
when all lights are turned out.

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.**

Change of Address

**I long for the tree I am missing
by the window on a sunny morning.
Shadows are like an empty vessel
and I count the days like coins,
passing frantic from hour to hour
into this good beginning.
I will settle, discover
my happiness on this side of
the threshold.
I will toss my past into the river
and watch it surrender to the undulating tide.
The walls of my home are vibrant with love.
I will walk to the corner, learn
a new road.**

Message

In fear I look at the sun
though comforted in my core
by the same bright substance.
In fear I know myself nothing,
unworthy of grace, blending
like the rest into infinite shades
of non-committal grey.
But then peace is found unlike the peace
told about in books, peace buried
deep beneath the piranhas and mirrors,
buried where all the horrors of self-inadequacy
must be walked through to reach its dispelling breath.
In fear my barriers are built like rooms to enter
to stop me from finding the open door that beckons me,
that says to me - lay down your guilt and defenses,
 let self-forgiveness wash you,
 and hold your enemies in open, strong arms.

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.**

Faltering

Like a swarm of vicious wasps
the daylight discovers my pulse.
All the children stare with
cold, whiteless eyes.
The wind carries the groans of the dying
and the rooftops are sinking into
their frames.
The taps drip and the clocks tick.
A crow has landed on my driveway.
He calls in time with the wind.
He wears my name under his wing.
The windows are undulating like a river's foaming skin.
I run home from the corner store
and have the wrong key to open the door.
I stand inside the porch and count the fairytales
of my people. There is nothing new to cry for,
but how is it decided who tries,
who mends and who coasts?
And how my mind bends blue on the pitstops
along the road to illumination.

Shock

It comes like this
into the heart, planting
its spikes in the flow.
It wraps its tawny arms
around the chest and presses
with the strength of death.
The fear it gives is easy to bend to
like being caught on a raft nearing
a waterfall. It is as potent
as grief and hides its pulse like a sparrow hides
behind the branches of an evergreen.
In a prayer, in a scream, it can snap
a strong faith and separate flesh from bone.
It can call your name at any time
and change your life
like no pain has done before.

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.

A New Destiny

**Like a love I cannot speak,
this feeling coils around as a whip,
scorching my skin with its disease.
Break now, like the tense are broken
by gentleness
or the weak are consumed by
merciless rage, raging in waters
terrorizing and sleepless.
Proud of the years spent feasting
on turmoil and prophetic visions. Proud
to savour the call of despair, to have kissed that
face that drove the dream into the heavens.**

**Inertia. On my back, the rolling passions of
frustration and labour, the illness of mourning
and re-mourning the mortal end. Sing like an animal
that feels her offspring warm against her limbs.
Sing for the chance to tremble with surrender,
and live like this - a body
sown in time.**

End of an Era

Nothing comes that near,
only the anger, a pocket
full of pyrite
and the balancing act of last year's
extremes.

Nothing scratches the bone,
no friendship sends me reeling,
no dream of what may be
is worth the dreaming.

But this place is kind,
it has comfort and love
like a full belly in winter time.

It takes my hand, kneading it into
a strange wonderment and meaningful
responsibility.

The books I used to read, the flavour
of solitude and the greater purpose has moved to
another corner, lives like a shadow scurrying around
my backyard. It will soon give me up, leave me
to bend to the will
of what I cannot control.

The Holding On

When the head of the flower is plucked
 and darkness takes the child's
tender hand, I hold my breath
 under the covers.
For so long I waited for a response,
 and when it came, it took years before I felt
the happy ending. It took me by surprise
like the affinity I felt with the newborn squirrels
 when cupping their soft and trembling bodies.
Over the highest evergreen I race
 with my emblem. I lost
nearly everything I cared for to gain
 a new soul. I lost a passion and gained
a rage against death and the wilderness outside.
 I drink from the underground and am blessed.
I let out my breath and ask this
 final remnant of grief to be gone.

I Heard

**The dash at the jugular
makes the wild stars sob, thrusts a hymn
skyward, and over the hills
a drowned frog sways
in a puddle all alone.**

**Forever is the fame
of the storyteller and the mask.
Forever is watching the zodiac turn
and the thumb nails crack,
is killing a smile after a
stranger passes and hiding
our wounds from the mirror.**

**Over the city the caged sun rises.
And the wings we are born with have
all been buried in the marrow of the land.
I feed, the flame feeds and so do the innocent.
Some day the clocks stop and God will be seen
in every beast and in every pavement crack.**

Mother

A gentle goodness
has joined her rhythm.
Her social gift
is why she is so loved,
and for her compassion
that she holds out without
envy or pride.
Hers is a nature that forgives,
making room for the outcast and
the brave.

When my heart arched beyond recognition,
she bore her own ancient wounds
to ease my lonely labour.
When her husband died, the light was cut out
of her eyes and a new light awoke that carries in it
the weight and ravages of death.

I need her like family,
like a good friend
or water in my mouth.
She gives substance to my shadow,
moisture to my pores. She blocks out the sounds
of the noonday world, being for me
someone to talk to and someone to sometimes
lean my fallen dreams upon.

All Hands Down

**Into the seams of non-existence
the cherished expectations of life descend
like a mother who loses her infant to the
turning of time, or a seed its husk
in May's noon light.**

**There are heights to head towards,
compacted by the weight of reality's call,
and a carpet to tread, unfamiliar with your footsteps.**

**In August, the summer will soon be over. It is
the shadow that falls from electrical wires
that makes you sink**

**into a moment without hope. It is watching sparrows
on eavestroughs that removes you from your daily struggles
and puts the flower back in its perfect place.**

**Waking to dread like a wave that pulls you under
every morning, motioned by the same ten-year cause,
and all the time you know the grave awaits you
like every other,**

and it is just a matter now of growing old.

The street is still, even in late morning.

The buttercups have not yet bloomed.

You hear the wounded at your doorstep.

**You have stopped waiting, but even that is not enough
to see you through.**

One True Love

Creeping through the storms
of days and dreams and desperation passing
like an ant carried by the wind
out to the busy traffic.
One and two have been done before
and still there is no flame to heighten any hope.
In the distance, he runs like a dying horse
into this quenchless city. On the grave
he kneels beside, nothing is written.
The dust tells of the years without a garden
and the autumn leaves are quick to fall.
In this battle where his only weapon is 'holding on',
love is a salty lip and the tide that owns him,
carries no shame nor catches any shore.

Every Strand of Hair

The night is missing its lark,
the secret inside the shellfish
has crept out of the waters onto the bank.
Horses tread the fields with broken tails,
into the mirror the anguished have been seduced.
Where the porous Earth is clawed by disillusioned
brides, children bury their favourite toys to
stay for always, underground.
Hungry, but losing the hunger, losing the need
to open the shutters and mince the living ache into
a long-begone mystery. Grappling, but no
longer with the important things like greed and guilt,
but with the stones on the curb,
the overgrown evergreens.
It is the inability to walk, the heaviness
that closes in and houses no air.
It is this cloud and that cloud rewriting
your name - the dry, impossible throat, the false
coin being forever yours.

The graveyards are smelling of spring.
They covered the green hills with straw.

Resignation

They came with a cry of judgment,
drugged by detachment and the effervescent
'now'. They came to rule my dry heart
and seize my voice from its socket.
They told me the chapel
was corrupted with false desires.
I thought this to be reality, a statement
that touched the jugular. But when I touched them
it was as if all colours grew dull
and my pulse drummed slow
and amplified. As if the trinity of love, hope and faith
petrified into a powerless slumber, and the food
that was mine had lost its substance.
They came, carried by a yellow sea,
reptile-like and ravenous.
They promised me an anchor but offered only a
shell. And like the death of miracles,
they clung to me like a metal mesh shawl,
blinding my hope with their diction.

The Need to Stumble

I drop the pattern.
I say it is enough
of being frightened
of the worn shoe
and the empty bank account,
enough of bitterness
and wasted expectations.
I drop the gripping pain
of needing someone to ease my pockets
in this physical money-ruled world,
of not trusting the deeper light
nor honouring the many gifts of my household.
I drop the mental bloodshed,
the blame I inflict behind closed curtains
towards others for not reflecting my ideals.
I drop the hypocrisy of coveting a generous hand,
of hurting my love with bad philosophy.
I drop the gravity of existence,
of sitting on the floor waiting for that phone call,
and holding my breath when others let out
a word.

Outliving the Inevitable

As lions groom
in African lands, so kissing
bends the intent of the assassin,
making safe the fangy mouth
and the weedy waters.
I will lie down in my heaven
though the light breeds in me like the guts of an
unhealable wound and I fail the simple rule of forgiveness.
I will dig out the bones from the sands
and scissor the serpent's tongue.
Drunk on complaining, on naming my cloud
my crown, I will find a new rhythm in the oceans
and sleep like one just born. I will talk
to the half-mast moon and translate
the crows' territorial song.
The old dog snarls and the pigeons seem happy
resting on the window sill.
If I must return to witness the same casualty,
return to tread the sewer's underbelly, then I will bury
some love in the fall and call the small graces
my exotic fruit.

Fear

**It calls from the depths of tomorrow
like a drought that cracks
the once-dependable earth.**

**It lives out there, drives
the nine-to-fivers from their beds
to rush the highways and miss
the monarch.**

**It has found my hearth
and meets my faith head on.**

**In hunger, in the bandage of rising debt,
and in once again dipping my toes over this
treacherous edge, it will not let
me go. It drills its home into my belly
like a fatted worm, and year after year my prayers
cannot wound its faceless pulse.**

**It has become familiar though I promise
to feed it no more. It is my blindness,
though to all other eyes it is a blessing
that should drive me to conform.**

**I know it when I sleep and rise, but
I also know the tale of the lilies in the field, and
I believe in heaven.**

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.**

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.**

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.**

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.

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 Ways of Ingratitude

Scattered like rain
over the cathedral steps.
Years spent among the voices, outcast,
unhinged from the world.
The night is pale in my hands.
The fields are drenched with the quiet moans
of judgment. I live in the sewers
of diseased despair and broken expectations,
in the cold wilderness of reducing hatred,
clutching the key to release all my woes
by disparaging another.
Somewhere the light breaks, but I am stuck
with the television glow.

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.

Oasis

Love I know
in the spilled earth of
my garden where
there are two types of roses
and a hundred-year-old sin
washed by the shade of
my evergreens.
Peace rises like perfume
in the tortuous summer heat,
and always it takes me into a haven
of rainbow hues. Always
I catch myself sitting and wondering
how this came to be - a child,
a husband, four cats and these flowers.
Green with grass and weeds, the yard is
my cushion in the shadows, and the wooden fence
where the blossoms creep is my guaranteed
longed-for autonomy.
I pick a tomato in my garden then caress the head
of an uncurled centipede.

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 . . .

Clothing

An angel beads my hair
and shades me from the roaring rain.
A flowerpot is turned over like a night
lived alone on a mountain or like
the deguttled smile of feigned generosity.
I see a rich pasture left uninhabited.
In my sleep I move like a hare
over those hills and dandelions.
When I wake it is the voyage
that sometimes drowns me.

Difficult Neighbours

It is hard enough to
relinquish privacy, to love
the tilted child running across
our lawn and shake hands with
the thinning curve of a shadow,
and yet by the standards demanded,
love must be most given when
the enemy appears, when the stone has hit the window
and the fence is knocked down.
Love must be that thing that rises
like a balloon above the forest fire,
and rises when every instinct bares its claws.
And we, the givers of the jewel have no excuse
to hate from inside closed doors,
nor to offer our smiles only when it suites us.
Now is the time spoken of, when the sandbox has
been robbed, when the treeline has been plucked,
and boundaries need to be set.

Spring Too

In this year when lovers lay
fossilized in engulfing anger
when only the born-rich thrive in the noontday air,
is the same year of leavened kindness,
when parents scatter the goods from their pockets
to teach the lesson of surrender.

The mountain is rejoicing as it merges
with the rising flood. The cornfields
are trembling with fire like a beacon in
miles of darkness. Heaven is a tale that never ends,
is a lifelong pilgrimage, is the tongue
of a fattened snake.

Spinning, the sun, the quenching breeze.

Spinning, the crow on the chapel tower
and the woman digging in her yard.

It is nice to feel sand between fingers,
to kiss the cheeks of a loving child.

Home is an autographed prize,
is starlight swirling like a kaleidoscope
in the folds of my mouth.

Finding Direction

It is the happiness
of the sages I seek when
climbing out windows onto rooftops
or when walking my child to the park.
It is not the dry wilted lip I fear, but the
drifting from day to day, bloated on
tireless resentments and a rising despair.
The path is in my hands, is wide awake to my voice.
At night, I remember my father and rhythms that happened
so long ago. Summer is almost here
and the sand blows across the grass.
Today I am trying for a different approach to this nadir,
I am kicking up the floorplans and heading for new bait.
I see the red cardinal from my sliding glass door.
Faith is hard and sunrise never seems to arrive.
But it is a spell to be wooed into stagnation,
and it is better to face my inner gloom
than to sleep and keep the coin untossed.

Making Amends

The night is caught
like a mouse's tail caught
between a cat's shining teeth.

Once I believed in recognition
and the glory of making a name.
Now it's only time before me,
and the ashes of my loved one.

The world and its shallow passions
is not a place to put my hopes in,
is only the grand flame of 'me'
and my short span.

Loving a child is what matters.
No words, no pat-on-the-back,
no cry out for justice or the soft sniffles
of fickle brilliance.

Soon I will join a tree or even a flower.
The sloping roof with the snow on top -
that is stillness.

The wind pushes its way under my door
like a maddened bird.
I have no ambitions. I have only a voice
that must continue its singing.

For This Colour

A shadow passes
like steam from a mug.
The everyday blindness
of being alive, I wear like a bow
in my hair.
Into my hand a snowflake falls,
repeating patterns of intricate beauty.
Too many times I heard the words
without being changed - for a minute moved into rapture
and then turning back from where I came.
Too many hours I ran the same track,
torn from my sleep like an infant torn from
its mother's breast.
Thunder beats against my eardrums,
the rope falls from the gravel edge.
This shape is the food that lamps my tower,
as the sigh of the sea lies contained
in my daughter's eyes.

Days I Discover

**Days of sand between the toes
and laughter in my soup.
Days of much affection
and the soft giving smile
when long-held hopes are being realized
and the house is painted new.
Days of happy mornings and stained-glass angels
glowing against the window.
Days of gratitude and the growing of
a child's spectacular heart.
Days when what is is enough
and the future feels like the first day
of a life-long love.**

Beyond The Grave

If all the seeds fell like blood
or blood like seeds into
the ravenous earth and time
was a wagging tail in the dark
then I would know that death would come
by any reason and be a blessing
all on its own. But as it is, death is
the hollow spot of the living - some with
grief and others with fear, and me myself,
it is memory that unbuttons the flesh of my chest
to leave me poked and burning.
It is the hill I climb and stumble
down its rocky incline whenever I return
if only once a day
to meet death's stalking eyes.
It is not my heart that fails me,
but the things outside
like the shadow on the neighbours' window
and the frightening madness of so many strangers.
It is here and there like an insect
on my wall, like the fatherly love
I'll never find again in another's eyes,
but is with me in the coming autumn air,
and in the quietude of these joy-filled days.

Stage

No warmth in my
shoes. No gently touching
of my eyelashes.

The crater has left its imprint
and my only child is weeping.

Love has sunk below the line, grows painful as
a thousand papercuts. Why is there this
push into the primal darkness, where everything
is surface and small and contagious? Why can't
we, of all lovers, overcome?

Touch my fingertips, tell me we can breathe it out
and return to the depths of our true connection.

Tell me we are brave enough to walk away
from this cancer breeding side,
face each other like we use to,
free of defense and the bitter masks
of useless pride.

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.**

Dementia

How does the breath know it
is not water, or some other
element to rename the senses?
How do you plant and minister
the love of dawn into the ground?
How do you carve a coin from wood
or turn your tea into coffee, make
a fossil from a flesh-covered bone?
In the days of the dead mare the river
was darned with weeds. From the eyes
of an old woman, I saw the milkyway in a stone
and grew to love the quietude of the woods.
Born and then lost to all vows. Eighty-five years
of seeking salvation in clay and from
all the little stories told by like-minded friends.
Then it is an impersonal room, poetry laced with paranoia,
and your limb hacked off at the thigh.
Then it is those who love you praying
for a quick delivery onto death, and those who
know you, holding your hand and telling you
thank-you for our time, for those Sunday phone calls,
telling you how deeply it hurts
to say this last goodbye.

Enslaved

It is in the language of the insects
I hear in the morning time
when I hear my daily calling
pass through me like the ticking of a clock.
It is these words that stand on stilts
and glove my future in the shell of impossibility.
It is ghosts I look to in my sleep
when my blood is sinking into the sheets
and there is no voice to teach me the way of God.
Floating face up in the fires of a tiring game
that lives and lives no matter the revelations
or the pain I learn to forgive.
It is a black eye in the summer,
a candy caught in the throat.
Where can I turn? What terror
breathes as large as the ocean
and will not find its tomb?
It is the flavour of unholy suffering
that has burnt the bandage of hope.
It is barren as a subway crowd,
like a broken kaleidoscope, or
a death remembered
and not the life.

No Other Way

**Is there a voice
as sharp as a cut nerve,
or an answer to unravel
this relentless groove?
Is there divinity in stagnation
or purpose to a dead womb?
Can even a great love withstand
evenings of always the same
bleak gestures - a snapped jugular,
a lost future?
Is it burning like an enemy in our closet
or like a miracle denied?
Is it a triggered revolver in the pit
of all our youthful promise or a transmuting faith
that rides this kissless wound?
If we give this back or give it up will it be
the bed to hold us, will it nurse our roots
to flower, or drop us unwanted?
Will there be rescue from this slumbering void
or just the iris of our common eye looking, looking back
at its old and destroyed self?**

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.**

Small Thing

Small chaos

**surrounded by the plain,
brings flavour to the ordinary,
brings dance to the immobilized
and pattern to the monotone.**

**Small thing glistening
like a heart inexperienced in hope
but wanting the privilege.**

**Small pain attached to the nerves
slicing away all good pleasure,
making solace impenetrable.**

**Small thimble that holds the glory
and spills over onto the soft ground.**

**Small night that doesn't have an imprint
but has ability for irreversible change.**

**Small window I look through
seeing what is small
and wanting nothing big.**

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.

A Way To Survive

A butcher's knife
wielding at living flesh to accommodate
someone's feast, is like
a quarrel behind a condemned man's eyes
and the ingratitude of those born beautiful.
Rise from the stone,
out of the slumber of guilt
and inadequacy, rise as
the lilies between the weeds
and know that nothing matters
but the flame. The debris and mud and
labour of our hours spent motionless,
defeated in the dream, is just an exile
from the necessary drink, is part of the sea
that takes us in under its waves
of chaotic waters.
Often I have stood naked and
have seen nothing more than my shadow. Often
I return to the window, bearing my memories like a shield.
The sky is my witness. Let me fall in love all over again,
let my head be turned, and let the world outside be
my saved translucent spider.

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.

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.

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.

Birthday Vision

Under this familiar banner
of autumn and Halloween.
The gull who died on the side of the road
was to me the drum-drum-drum
in the marrow of my bones and the truth that
my prayers can heal no one.
I am tired of the clouds and the chapel sermon
infiltrating the beads of my shower.
Senseless is the cloud, the song of guilt
and the selfish dark night. I can see
there is nothing to say to anyone about
the cold limb burnt at the veins.
Smooth, nothing has been smooth like the skin of a dolphin.
All I lack is painting circles, repeating in my head.
In the land of late October, it has not been easy
to find the starlight.
There is so much, by now, I thought I would have done.

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.**

My Body Goes

Through the blinds
my body goes soaring
touching the hawk and
choppy clouds.

It dips through the misty air
holding hands with the winter.

It opens its mouth to taste the wind
and sees a balloon float by.

Then it lands in dunes of sand
covered in unmarred snow.

A wren's small footprints lead it down the
slope into the underbrush where a
hound dog has curled into a sleeping ball.

It tiptoes past to the sideroad where
two children are singing their ABCs
and making angels in the snow.

When back in flight, it rides the twilight's rays
into this room and leans
to sip a drink of cold coffee, tasting
like liquorice candy.

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.

Vocation

Two hands unable to sing,
and visions burned by the lack
of time. The sensation of clay
under my fingernails,
the smooth and malleable unconscious dream
pure as lovemaking,
rich as a four-course meal.

It spells my name in its grey thick ointment,
calling me back to conceive a child.
It says, "after death and letting go, put back on
these worker's clothes and bring glory to form"

Because it is time to open a window
and collect stories by the river.
It is time to alter the day, bring the
light back into my body.

It pulls me into its soft embrace,
and I think I am ready
to remember.

Other Side

Killed in the cloud

that ripples softly.

**Believing we would be triumphant
made it so, and being dead we**

learned a new way to rise and praise.

The music lies down in the seas,

**so I hear the dolphins hum
and see octopi sway.**

Madness is part of our heritage

but also our navigating star.

Whisper of the wonder we walk through each day.

Away from the dull chaos of the common bar

**this is a new plateau, a hawk
in our backyard.**

Up and dancing, the ground and air

join together to say -

we were never alone.

What We Know

Hold the heart in a field of salt
and heal the bitter taste,
for all has been like
the crossing of the guards
and the moon is shining brightly on my back.
I believe in your song but
the flood has risen and no help came,
and the chapel denied us as we pulled
the weeds from our prison and grew ourselves
a garden of togetherness.
Being here, I still don't know the name of
any star but I am content enough
loving you, and feeling the daily explosive joy
of raising our child.
There are no fists to clench or rooftops to
yell our resolve from. It is not a giving up
but a path of no resistance. Work
and grief may leave us alone. Work
and possibly we'll slumber out of this quicksand. Work
and the maggots may not pierce our skin.
For soon we, and all of we, will be dead, and today
is so very important.

Fatal

When I saw your blank eyes
and your face terrible and thin,
I thought of a night with no mercy,
I thought of a new form of life that only
the slowly dying can know, that tortures
the wearer like having no exit from a haunted house.
I thought how quickly my father died without
the tight throat and mindless whispers, and of you,
long ago with your blue eyes, clear and independent,
swimming with the wonder of discovery.
I remember your walk - giant, focused - that now
with only one leg, you will never know again.
I thought of those nights spent watching your hands
bring strength and comfort to the clay
like they would to a lost child.

Now I praise you with those same hands, frustrated,
trembling, searching for your mother tongue.
I praise you with the blankets pulled off
your dying limbs, forgetting my name
and the reasons why I love you - you,
always so brave an individual, now like a hymn
torn away from the nadir of its voice, away
from the zenith of its song.

In One Swoop

**I was lying under
the white ceiling, my
heart torn open like
the skin of a Clementine. It
was air I needed and the
blessing of a child. I found
my way past tender ambition
and hopes I never had the commitment
to work for.**

**I found the shade of the sea
in my bones and there was a line I drew
and crossed.**

**Every winter the same sickness rises
like a worm through my intestines.
It preys on both my
ego and spiritual vocation. It speaks of dust
and loss and other lifetimes.**

**Give me blood, cut my nails and call me
clear across this continent.**

**It is what I was born for - to ride
the horse to the edge and then to let go.**

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.**

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.

love is love

**Love is love, full of thirst and suffering
but stronger still than
the devil's lyre. Once
my world was a wound of sleepwalking
and intangible thoughts.**

**Today, there is a voice under the sheets
that has learned the language of my private choir.
God seems distant, farther than imagination can conjure,
but I know it is only a fossil for tomorrow's hands
and a new facet of a living faith.**

**Sometimes my ribs are drowning in foreign blood
and my hopes like colouring books
are torn. Sometimes I want to feel the light touch of a finger
and catch the nectar of kind breath.**

**Love is love, longing for more, longing
to know its kiss has reached another's heart,
and then to have it returned
like never before.**

Keep On Moving

**It is not over
though the wood is wedded to the ground.
It is not over when we rise
to find a flood around our house
and see the empty schoolbus.
There are miracles that fill the barren fields,
and in the slaughteryard
somehow God must give love.
Sex has lost its purity and starlight has
slipped far below the waves.
But still the goal is to be consciously free,
to be the truth we were given.
The goal is to let other people's thoughts die to our own,
to befriend the ever tightening noose of time.
It is hard to travel free of ghosts,
integrated as the sky.
It is hard as the stones we pocket and the secrets
we carry into our sleep, holding
our entrance into the coming day.**

Death is losing all limitations.

**Death is the yellowed photo and the
atlas burned. Death I have seen
in the old and young,
in animal's eyes and when
the spring permeates the ground.
Each death is different,
some only wound, others alter
the chemistry of the marrow. Some are long
like a cloud passing over an already grey sky and some
are quick as a terrorist's bomb
or a tiger's tearing jaws.
Before I fall asleep, stormy carcasses fill my room,
but it is not bad weather, only the afterglow
of so much sunshine. Love bonds beyond
the clammy cheeks and the greying mouth.
Maybe now the dead fully understand what was once too
foreign for the living to fit through.
Maybe now the complete connection can occur,
and death turns wonderful and sweet
when we hover above the insanity of loss
and inexpressible grief.**

Funeral

The photograph of her face -
bold as one who knows herself completely -
as the bagpipes blew
and I could hear her voice
gently humming the tune.
There were strangers everywhere
in the crowded room of grievers and
in her daughter's eyes. It was
only her
I loved and her I will miss.
She cradled the land ever so deeply
and dreamt elaborate and graceful worlds,
etched in the smoothest of stones.
She is shared by so many.
But for me, my love was personal,
and it is not so easy to hold
this severed vine of gold, not so easy to let go
of her rare and destined heart
that helped give shape to my own.

Rival

The war is a cell divided
against itself, it is
a hatching demon breath,
smoke in the cupboards, a break in the sky.
Drown me in the light and let
this leprosy be clipped.
It pours through the phone line
at a deafening pitch and twists
my flesh like an old shoestring.
My hand is thrust into this insect's nest.
I am back to the thin branch and the foul
stench of thirst and cruel senselessness.
Back to the depolarized constellations
and the gem crushed by a lizard's curled-up tongue.
Back to a misshapened childhood
of sibling grief, and the slow, unconquerable gait
of someone else's money.

Keeping In Time

Along the gates of afterlife
where poles are swinging in the storm,
I am now a woman with all my evil
and attempts to do good etched
under my eyes. I have a lover,
I have a child and my house is cluttered
with bandages and parcels and recordings
of obscure but revolutionary songs.
Miles of moonlight over the graves,
a turtle leaps into an incoming tide.
Half a world away my senses grow
and my voice is milked by a semi-kindred soul.
There are curtains, the TV and the silken fur
of my favourite cat.
Nothing wounds that hasn't reached.
With every new day the salt must be replenished
and the labouring waves of devotion, renewed.

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.

Flurries

I have watched under a
silent sky. The seasons moved
like molasses over my skin.
Not a bird came singing, but faith
was always renewed.
They say it is winter and the snow
is as beautiful as a good friend's smile.
I think I hear the sounds of the lake, though
it is so far away.
I hunger to see my father's ghost.
I have put on a new sweater.
The house is empty, even
the voices next door are quiet.

I can love no other,
but only stay, planted
in this frozen ground.

Otherwise

I would make room for truth
to quicken me, and laziness
and anger would lose the reins.

my dreams would be pure
and my sense of justice would never be offended.

when the bank account ran out
and tension forked into my throat and
the trees have lost their glory, then I
would be humbled and know the way
is to let go.

my death-wish would be
but a small ripple in my soup,
and all my passions would be holy.

the bitter wrinkle would
not distort my face and forgiveness would
be part of my unconscious nature.

when the toilet floods I would laugh
and I would be grateful for the great loves I have.

there would be no fear of doing good
and I would kiss the faces of my enemies with pleasure
and with quiet wonder.

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.**

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.

Ours

When darkness fell
like soot upon my lashes,
when the medicine cabinet was open
and my addictions were spoiled,
when the bird feeder was rigged
and dreams were all I owned,
your smile raised me
and gave me dominion over
the music. You were my
mansion in the bloody winter before
adulthood, and somehow your hands
built me a ship to cross the heartache and the void.
Now I live with you in a world
of our child, in the miracle of togetherness
and in the opening
of tomorrow's years. We moved out of the wilderness
and found that love is all that can keep
our light from sinking. And so, our bed
is warm and our child is
as tender as a tiny finch, and just
as full of song.

Traces

In the whisper of tomorrow
the wood is burning and the trees
have died. A swallow is perched
on the fence as the twilight nears.
I have taken the hinges
off the door, waiting to see what enters,
waiting as my hunger works like
midnight in my stomach, dictating
the flavour of the coming stars.
Daunted, branded by the heaving wind,
alone with my prayers and the telephone turned
up high - will the answer come before the grave
or will obscurity greet me every new dawn
like a hand unheld or a gate torn down?
It is humming, the sound of this underground sorrow.
It hums of poetry and the earth and the bug eaten leaves.
It burns and cannot bloom in bookstores, will not bloom
in the silence of a single decade or in the darkness of
a closed drawer.
Outside, the children go inside, readying for sleep.
I tread waterways in my mind
and send my kisses mid-air.

Still brimming with awe,

**and cuddling sweet against your
father's welcoming cheek.**

**Still bizarre in the light of
your unique humour and stubborn
as the apple tree is strong in the
happy earth.**

**Turning One tomorrow and all the things
you've learned in that span -
to say a word, to grow in kindness and
in temperament, to laugh out loud.**

**All the things you still are - a soul
of amazing riches, thoughtful and gentle
and so sure of yourself.**

**Still entranced with all things small and new.
Still each day we awake to your beauty
as we look into your strange sea-coloured eyes
and bend to smell the strands of your wispy hair.**

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.

Not Afraid

I speak and climb the edges
but my voice falls
like used candy onto
turned-up ground.

I dream and chisel, and
sometimes so utterly sure
of what my days have taught me
and of the flowers they have nurtured,
I lie down and am content.

But the world withers at my doorstep
and my fire is just for show. Just another soul
in the great cavity of home and anonymity.

Like a love that cannot live unless
it is given, my words crack as they pile up
in filing cabinets in rooms where time runs on and out.
I feed between heartache and wait on the predictable
fashion of clever tricks, waiting
for an alibi.

Through the girdle

of mute despair where love
is murdered by a flying breath,
and old age is a house that never opens,
the key was around your neck
and suddenly, you were gone.
Paint bubbles over into
the killing flame. You were stern, yet
so in love with smooth dimensions.
It was our time as I took your arm while we
walked in the icy winter of the forest floor,
watching animals from your cabin window
and feeding the frightened cats.
My pain is newborn but like a boomerang, it is
released over the roaring lake where gulls
descend into the wet pillow of their grave.
How many times I thought you loved me, but
I never knew for certain. I sent you a card
declaring you as my mentor, and how strange
this tree bloomed. Goodbye sweet friend, bride
of nature, spiritual as a weathered stone.
Your visions will always grace my walls,
and tomorrow and tomorrow your memory
will help me to harvest the light
as I grow old.

Morning Glory

Lost hideaway under the flesh
where birds of prey drink to the heart's
southward direction.
In liquid sleep a pocket is forming
of voices named in childhood years.
And from the beginning the miracle
sat on our shoulder like a butterfly,
though we never christened it as our own.
I am tossing back the weight of worldly waters
and things to be morally wounded for.
I give no more from the side of my mouth,
for the seductive shadow and the running crowd.
Plain as the path to heaven, I kiss the dread
and let it drift down sea. I open a room
where the light catches my breath.
I am breathing a morning glory.

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.**

Door With No Dreams

**The braid is made
of thorns and weeds.
The last brutal kiss is locked
tight in my throat. Breathing is
hard, as is smiling at the one
who rules with guilt.
I count four windows with
no opening. I place my
hands on the back of a cloud,
and know the cloud is all that I see.**

In League With . . .

**Drive away the battle-weary heart
as the guilt rises like smoke from a cigarette
into a spring afternoon.
It has ended as bones do with time
in earth, cold, as the last maggot clings.
And pride has expanded your belt
as though it were a fetus, growing, demanding
the best of your nourishment.
Carry this on the knee of your cracked imagination
and dispense with your volumes of hurt
done to you by so many hands.
For your tune is repeating, and still your country grows.
Candles and candles to keep alit so your enterprise
of bitterness is warm with stirring.
My eye has overlooked,
and sometimes I ruin my joy
by taking a step on your tiles
so tormented and full of useless fury.
Golden is the calling we were given
but life-determining is the way we sway or twist
to answer it.
And night is not the end.**

Down The Limb

**Down the limb
the every-dream climbs
until the ground makes it whole.
After that, it must die,
return like an infant into the heart -
a braver dream about to form.
Once I held bitterness near, like a symbol
of my intelligence. Once love had failed me
and that became my god to beat on and plead with
in overnight torture and unceasing tears. That,
like hell, broke free my way to heaven.
And in a vision I was touched by the hand
of absolute tenderness. I was changed by mercy.
And still the mercy flows so freely through these walls.
Love allowed for me to feel and know,
stronger than the world. Love allowed
for me that neither death nor chance
can defeat.**

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-year-lover 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.

Shift

Everywhere I'm looking I meet
the eye of the wall and still I know
I have five fingers to count
and the chance of discovering any colour
other than the ones I'm seeing.
For me, it is tears without compensation
that make me break and smoke the city.
For me, on the subway, in time
hurting and heaving and pulling apart my nest
is the end before the start, before the barrier breaks
and all that remains is the choice of glory
or ultimate slumber.

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.

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.

Did I Dream?

**Did I dream the broken flesh
upon my wrist or only tell
the story I gathered from
my stay in Hell?
What meaning is contained
in the pavement stones or from
a solitary searchlight?
Do I answer what I see
or only that which bends my blood
to mourn?
Somehow I felt the shadows burn
and watched a butterfly rise up like a leaf
from the earth - yellow.
Sometime I was changed,
and saw the patience of God
and the over-rated bliss of power.
Do I remember the day I lost my curtains?
Yes. And I remember
that first evening star.**

Letting Go

I throw up my hands
and feel the diving snow reaching me
from its place beyond the sky.
I make phone calls beside the bones
of a crumbled friendship
and say this is me and a good season
to open doors beneath my scared skin.
It is time to forgive the hardness of others
and my own turned-up defense,
time to re-walk the corridors and let
my disappointments be covered
and stored.

In Perspective

Watching with chaos
rampant in my head, the unbroken
bread leaves me dreamless.
But that will be for now and though
grace is dim, it is near like the ghost
of a dead loved one. The wind warns me
to keep breathing. These bleak months will
work themselves into a monumental miracle,
and every gesture I do today will paint my
room new for tomorrow. In all the places
that count, joy will be fed. It says
humble your sail and drift with the hungry tide.
It says, hold this sand and plan your next
sculpture. Soon these cruel days
will be a grain lost
beneath some ageless waters.

Down The Rusted Needle

**Down the rusted needle
into a work of art -
fast-paced, missed out on
the joy of nothing to do.
The eyes as sharp as the nerves,
permanently over-wrought,
performing surgery on every detail.
A million white feathers
tipped the scale, and babies only panic
for lack of love as does
the most hardened of us all.
Needing some absolutes like
"destiny" and God's voice sure
inside my head. Needing to feel
that this ghetto of closed dreams
is just me reeling in my cowardice -
an unacclaimed somebody.
But to wait on the telephone or TV or some
future killed-anguish in this place where nothing blows
nor ceases to burn is like a decade with no holiday or
a cracked egg on the lawn.
But to try and try not to envy the for-sure catastrophe,
the happy Amen or someone young
who has overstepped the madness.**

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.

Hit The Mark

This sunrise, rushing
from your pores, smooth and
bright as perfection
has trailed out from a loving home,
out from the endurance of a decade tattooed
to your skin.

You, under the spotlight
bearing no fractures
are as close as the bone is to the shell.
And everyone was transported, gliding
through your soliloquy like birds in
a cool spring air.

A coming together, a rejoicing of all
your struggles, the last completing thread,
magic and kindled by your spiritual voice.
Animated like silver dust on still water, you arrived.
You made the world, at last
understand and listen.

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.

All of these poems have been published and have appeared in: Out of Our; Bursting Plethora of Rainbow Colors; Record Magazine; Daily Love; The Artistic Muse; The Muse- An International Journal of Poetry; Full of Crow; Nostrovial! Milk and Honey Siren poetry anthology; Veil: Journal of Darker Musings; Leaves of Ink; Literature Today; Turk's Head Review; The Stare's Nest; Medusa's Kitchen; Ygdrasil – A Journal of the Poetic Arts; Lunar Lit Poetry Page; Yellow Chair Review; Eos – The Creative Context; SpinRock Reader Lit Forum; Novelmasters; The Writer's Newsletter; Rusted Rose Poetry Forum; Eye on Life Magazine; Spillwords Press; Inscribed Museum Literary Zine; The Corner Club Press Quarterly; The Creativity Webzine; Mystic Nebula; Think Pink; Imaginary Conversations Lit Page; Chicago Record Magazine; The Beautiful Space; Sonder Magazine; Nebo: A Literary Journal; Stay Weird and Keep Writing Publishing; Black Mirror Magazine; Dark Blooms Literary Zine; Studio Journal; TwitchFit Lit Writing Zine; Creek Side Writing Forum; Tangerine Heart Poetry Zine; The Poet Community; Lucidity Poetry Journal; Peedeel's Blog; Jellyfish Whispers; The Open Mouse; Pirene's Fountain; Profiles in Poetry Literary Zine; Our Poetry Archive, Vine Figure Poetry Page; Contemporary Women's Poetry Anthology; Thirteen Myna Birds; Duane's Poetree; Eskimoepie; LiteraryYard; The Blind Vigil Revue; Walking Is Still Honest; Stone Face Literary Zine; 1947, a literary journal; Poet's Corner; Indie Poets Indeed; Occulum; GloMag; Treehouse Arts; Beakful; The Furious Gazelle; The Penwood Review; New Mystics; Mount Parable Poetry Forum; Remarkable Doorways Literary Magazine; Poehemians; Scarlet Leaf Review; BigCityLit; The Octopus Review; winamop; VerseWrights; Moongate Motherbird; Outlaw Poetry; The Syzygy Poetry Journal; Peacock Journal Anthology; Five:2:One Magazine

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*.

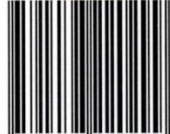
WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT THE POETRY OF ALLISON GRAYHURST

"WHEN I READ ALLISON GRAYHURST'S POETRY, I AM COMPELLED BY THE INTENSITY AND STRENGTH OF HER SPIRITUALITY. HER PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF GOD DRIVES HER POETRY. SHE FLESHES OUT THE PROFOUND MYSTERY OF KNOWING AT ONCE BOTH THE BEAUTY AND TERROR OF GOD'S LOVE, BOTH FREEDOM AND OBEDIENCE, DEEP JOY AND SORROW, BOTH BEING DEEPLY ROOTED IN BUT ALSO APART FROM THE WORLD, AND LASTLY, BOTH LIFE AND DEATH. HER POEMS 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.



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