



RED THREAD -  
BLACK THREAD

ALLISON GRAYHURST

# *Red Thread - Black Thread*

*Allison Grayhurst*

*Edge Unlimited Publishing*

**Red Thread – Black Thread**  
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# Table of Contents

the sub-angels	7
Far and Here	8
How Like	9
A Newly-Patterned Fingerprint	10
Happiness Approaching	11
A New Front Door	12
Shore	13
We Arrive	14
Blown	15
In Front	16
Torn	17
III	18
A thank-you-note	19
Headlock	20
Until	21
They Took	22
Home II	23
Gone Blind	24
Remembering	25
Threshold	26
Freedom to Admit	27
An Act of Love	28
Draw Near	29
What I Shine For	30
One Light	31
The bough breaks	32
Faces of hope	33
First and Only	34
Another Level	35
My Flower	36
Lost Shadow	37

<b>His Glimmer Escapes, Then Grows</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>We Ask For Light</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Insecure</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Forest Fire</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>We Hold These Persons</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Something to See</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>The Bite</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>By The Days</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>The Wind</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Blizzard</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>A Deal</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Wallpaper Stars</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>To Leave This Sickness</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Now You Know</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Liquid Art</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>The Burn</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Pitstop</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>The Day Is Like</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Faith</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>The Luminous Light</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>In</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Where Love Draws The Line</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>The Path Least Expected</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Feral</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>I Will Not</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>The Singular Sky</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>It May Be Coming</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Compromise</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Hostage</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Our Days</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Airtight</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Susceptible Creatures</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>After this</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Promise</b>	<b>71</b>

<b>A Change To Cherish</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Thunder To Cross</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Gifted</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>In The Thighs</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>The Mind That Sings</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>From Us Two</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>The struggle of water</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Five Days</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Another Station</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Exhumed</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>I see the light I thought I lost</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>What I found</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>The Stone</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Regret</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Resolve</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Take This!</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Heat</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Blind Spot</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Without Soul</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Crossroads</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Easter Faith</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Days that dismantle</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Looking Up</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Choice.</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>In My Corner</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>Nothing</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Trap</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Let The Joy In</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Perfect Home</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Tomorrow</b>	<b>101</b>

## **the sub-angels**

**In hand  
under foot  
they sing for us  
but they do not know our names.  
They cry for us  
but will not hold us close  
to let their light in,  
to let the heart-of-the-lizard  
out.  
They are with us  
like candles on the tips of a bare tree  
but they are not here  
for us  
only here  
like a butterfly is  
awing us with its glory  
then passing and leaving all  
as it once was.**

## Far and Here

Far from the small-talk daze  
and this season I long to unload,  
my hands are open  
but numb from the cold.  
My body turns the colour of moonlight  
glowing, hollow, a thing only of reflection.  
My last chance came and went.  
Everywhere power escapes me  
and the place I live is wrought with extremes,  
incapable of toning down.  
In the sandpit of my mind  
the pit-patter of small feet  
goes undetected - I hear only  
the wail of those who fell by the gestures  
of the corrupt and greedy.  
I hear faint and desperate echoing  
like spider-feet moving across a tongue.  
I hear and I am listening to nothing else.  
I am far from a solid core,  
far from the plane ride to paradise,  
far from the sodium dream,  
but I am here  
and here  
I am looking around.

## How Like

How like  
the bright closed door  
and the pockets whose insides  
slice the fingertips.

How like  
the muttering offended  
and innocence so easily lost,  
like the make-up removed from a clown.

How like  
cramped curiosity  
and the hurdle of the legend of the hero  
who is almost always an orphan,  
as if that enormous loss is the only pain large enough  
to make the hero whole.

How like  
the nocturnal shouting soul  
and the half-hour games that burn that soul,  
useless and cold.

## **A Newly-Patterned Fingerprint**

**It's the end  
of my kind,  
the last of my line  
unfolding.  
And then  
all of it will be different -  
both the edge and the enlightenment,  
the things precise  
and the things undefined.  
All that was smouldering  
will be set ablaze,  
and beauty and grace will be overflowing  
like a drip-drop dream pure as reality.  
It is the end - the place of no more new beginnings,  
a place where the perfect light cannot fade  
or grow too bright, where ironic timing transforms  
into an integrated, balanced life.**

# **Happiness Approaching**

**(angst is the awareness  
of our separation  
from God)**

**Maybe working  
the wrong direction,  
working the plain side  
instead of the hard side  
like liberty on my tongue  
and a white line drawn across  
my lips.**

**The line was crossed  
with a thumbnail and a toothpick.  
The line was walked  
before the maple tree grew  
up to be a child's special vision.**

**The dream was broken,  
stretched to destruction  
by waiting too long  
for fulfillment.**

**Somehow drawing  
sometimes passing  
but always reaching  
the indefinable clarity  
that arrives at the moment  
of completeness.**

## **A New Front Door**

**She knows the pull of a season is ending.  
The point on the wall she fixed  
with a solid-eye is shifting like light  
moving through jelly.  
And all the while an ease is finding its way within,  
unfolding inch by inch. It may  
take a season or a few years to bloom  
but her palette has moved to a shade brighter.  
The toys are cleaned and the bookshelves too.  
She moves onward as the lilacs and lilies  
extend up, bold like a wealthy woman's perfume.  
The dread is draining from her system.  
The rain will arrive and she knows that day will be fine,  
with or without shelter.**

# Shore

Moving away from  
directions found  
in the night,  
as odd as waking up  
on a foreign planet  
with multiple moons  
and a different-toned sun.  
But I feel all my madness falling -  
a thousand fears.  
I feel what I found  
by moving away  
from the pain that needed to be  
left behind.

## **We Arrive**

**We arrive at the mountain's artery,  
here in heaven's wind, not bending,  
not drowning but tall as the mountain  
itself.**

**We are intact from this decade-season  
of insects and peril. Grief is not in our  
arms nor is the locust's bitter bite.**

**We are content on this rock, replenished  
by each other's kindness and by  
our children's uncommon smiles.**

**We have lived with this thirst for so long and now  
we are almost overflowing, not wanting or  
tight-throat or quarantined by poverty's  
pickled pill.**

**We give our thanks at this place  
of somewhere over the threshold.**

**We have light, we have octagon curves.  
Everything is lengthening, lifting  
like a hangman's hood.**

# **Blown**

**Blown like a grain of sand from a hollow twig.**

**It is beautiful to be blown.**

**Blown, into the winding forward thrust  
where good happens with the movement  
of each day and the fire-cracker burn  
is a burn of celebration.**

**Carried through the radar-stream  
into an easeful position where  
the goal is getting nearer at a slow pace  
and old patterns are disintegrating,  
remembered but not renewed.**

## **In Front**

**The line in front  
is the line crossed  
then left to rot under  
the blazing day. The other side  
is not to be feared but held  
up like an appreciated toy.  
The way out the door  
is the door your father gave you when he died  
and placed death's rattle under your pillow  
for the rest of your days. It is the door  
that won't let you forget  
how short a season life is.  
The chain around your neck  
is a chain of small but frequent miracles  
that has sustained and held poverty at bay.  
It is to be counted on when the last of the nectar  
has been spilled on the rug and indifference consumes  
the eyes of friend and kin like roundworm, there  
even in the most difficult of barren  
January days.**

## **Torn**

**I know the vines  
that pin a desire to the dirt.  
I walk the miles of compulsive despair  
that laps all light from the stream.  
I sit bound to the spot. In and out  
of days with blood under my fingernails  
and hands that can't stay still.  
Have I not given enough? Have I placed  
meaning in the marketplace or belief  
in the computer-screen throne  
of inner Armageddon? Like a split  
artichoke, my shadow lands on stone and on grass.  
It is only shadow but heavy  
in its dues.**

### III

Framed in stone  
like a relic pressed underground,  
the days are tiring. The news  
is pounding at my brain,  
news of a tell-tale war and murder  
under the bed sheets.  
Mostly I am a tree, solid in my roots,  
proud of my leafy foliage.  
Mostly I am grateful for the working  
light bulbs, for the kindness of others that  
pushes me along. Mostly I am happy here,  
pinned to this abundance of love, not looking  
outside for a four-leaf clover.  
Mostly my level is strong, but today  
as I'm sinking - I relish the relief of tears it brings.

## **A thank-you note**

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

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

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

**Only later did I learn your last name.**

# Headlock

It runs away to the room  
where nothing moves, not from dying  
not from finding its joy.

It was warm, but is now harmed  
and drenched in grief like a child too broken  
to speak or dream  
of flying.

It breaks the base of my heel,  
preventing a hope-filled dance. It knows me  
in the afternoon, stealing the smoke from my ribs,  
the hunger from my muscles and the flesh  
from my gender.

It circles me at night like an eastern cloud,  
cutting the black with its grey, changing the words  
in my dictionary, spilling my love in unnatural oil.  
It is my creature to contend with, the armour  
I have been sworn to carry,  
a twist in the brain that has me soiled, taking cover  
in its inhospitable hovel.

# Until

**the path of darkness  
for you and of self-righteousness  
for her no longer matters, until only what matters is  
this blending of two  
imperfect souls, showing the way  
to self-discovery  
by entwining despair and faith,  
by enduring and then by releasing endurance  
and allowing death and the miracle after death  
to set in . . .**

# **They Took**

**They took away  
the long and leisurely shave.  
They took the dark and sensuous hood  
and peeled it away  
to shadeless bold colours -  
everything bright and nothing  
integrated.  
They took the comforting depth  
and put in its place a bad commercial.  
  
They took the swelling stars.**

## Home II

From the crossed arms  
of an artist  
to the embrace  
of an ordinary connection,  
joy comes in the privacy of this room  
of this inner core  
of four  
chaotic souls,  
roped together, each one linked  
equally to each other,  
each one a supreme balance to  
the other, four in sync,  
like the elements  
that make the Earth  
a living substance.

## **Gone Blind**

**Gone blind down  
the road that leads to  
serenity. Cannot find  
the open casket of my  
awakening or the joy of exile.  
Damned and committing to  
the poorest of temples -  
ruby like a miscarriage  
or a red flag at half mast,  
the spasm of a studied darkness  
emerges in my mouth like a thrill  
worth all its pleasure.  
Everything but the torment is unclear  
and that is my stigmatism, my success  
and my heroic danger,  
that is the sunny day I never find.  
But the foliage of my terrain is too familiar  
to be trouble, though my eyes remain as shells  
where once a glorious creature flourished.**

# Remembering

Climb on board  
where mystery is sharp  
and dangerous. The red light  
flashes on the cold embittered face -  
a pale grey against a rich tone  
of burgundy and black.  
On my shoulders, age and history are taken  
and every memory is pure, whole, experienced  
by the senses, is coming back  
like chaos ringing all around.

# Threshold

Hand over mouth  
holding  
the breath  
in  
because the dream  
is so thick  
it coats your skin in  
its hot jelly until it is  
your only protection.  
It is so full of impossibilities  
and false starts.  
It is the problem  
that never lets loose  
an answer, that never  
bends its back on  
any account.  
Caged in, but in love  
holding hope  
like holding the body of a ghost.  
Your faith must surpass  
death, must embrace  
the end without knowing for sure that there will ever be  
a new beginning.

## Freedom to Admit

Almost dead  
but not afraid  
nor believing  
that death will come.  
Down, past centuries  
with a flaw like glass  
embedded in my heel  
or like each day coming, going  
without release in that day.  
Farther from the umbrella  
farther from the impossible  
shadowless valley  
from where the rich chestnuts grow  
and comfort finds its way close to the  
trembling chest.  
Almost dead  
and never quite  
reviving.

## **An Act of Love**

**A chance I took,  
but then I took too much.  
I passed the hat and  
couldn't leave a donation.  
I dove into the puddle  
and came up - nose scratched,  
fingers broken.  
I came up  
far off from the stage,  
in a remote spot  
where light never goes,  
came up like a cactus in  
a swamp,  
taking a chance  
that bound me  
with flawless inevitability  
to only earth.**

## **Draw Near**

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

## What I Shine For

Smile like a caterpillar  
curled in the light  
and then plucked into bird food  
by an unforeseen flight.  
Smile under siege  
for all the dreams owned and lost  
and re-owned as an unrelinquishable part.  
Smile and deal with what is crushed  
and with what is not  
but instead has sprouted a  
bold beginning - a tree of strange scent.  
Smile but never let it fully out  
because the days spin weary  
and the white has faded from the walls.  
Smile, confined like a pearl where  
it is set.  
Smile and accept yourself  
forever hanging  
from this thin translucent  
thread.



## **The bough breaks**

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

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

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

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

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

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

**God.**

## **Faces of hope**

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

## First and Only

The first time I found you  
at the donut shop with the perfect balance  
of youth and torment  
absorbed in every movement, I knew I found  
an eternal friend. The first time you sang, I felt  
a fiery and surprising happiness.  
The first hug we shared on the church steps  
as the music played below was like a wave,  
strong and soothing  
rippling along my back and arms.  
Our first kiss outside the café, when the rain  
was about to fall, told me there would be  
no number to our days, no greater gift but  
to feel this - our lips once apart,  
now vibrant, like a new being.  
Our first laugh together as we drank our coffee told us  
the depths we shared could be lightened by one another,  
gave us more than important conversation, gave us  
a rope to sometimes swing on and to always hold.  
Our two children born were more than bluejays  
on our shoulders,  
more than any joy gone before, bringing us further  
into one another's arms. Blessed by this indelible love,  
I am here, counting on nothing but on what we have,  
strangely at peace, like the peace I found  
the time I first found you.

## Another Level

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

## **My Flower**

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

# Lost Shadow

When the song started  
and the dream was torn from its socket  
then placed on the sidewalk,  
the light from the window broke  
and in came the lost shadow.  
I saw that shadow but stared it down  
thinking it would only last a short season.  
The shadow stayed, made its way behind  
bookshelves and old picture frames.  
Since then I can't say what is a reflection  
and what is truly bright.  
The favourite plan has burned in the meadow,  
the secondary one has too.  
If we are right, we cannot touch it.  
If we are wrong, the sum of all our efforts  
and discoveries is naught.  
I enter the shadow then I too am left without definition.  
At times there is nowhere else to go but further in,  
further obliterating my clarity.  
That is a grey day for the dream.  
Other days I hold my own  
and count my gifts. That is the day of perfect weather  
when the shadow stays under the bathtub  
and tomorrow is fine.

## His Glimmer Escapes, Then Grows

Plunged by guilt  
then by a heavenly tale,  
he is changed from favour  
to detested obscurity.  
The breeze rises to harvest  
his half-made smile, leaving  
him more sacred, more solitary.  
Science cannot teach him, nor  
do the curfews of other men reach him and seal him  
to the plodding mire.  
He condemns with stubborn confidence the winnings  
of his adversary. Clothed with revelation,  
his tongue will wet again,  
calling forth a new burn, a new morn  
formed beyond his bleak horizon.

# **We Ask For Light**

**We ask for light**

**for the given truth tied to your name.**

**We ask to break this putrid smog**

**and allow a breeze to flow.**

**We ask for forgiveness from the things**

**we see and do and what we cannot see**

**but know are in us.**

**We ask for help when all the help we have been given**

**is not enough.**

**We ask for hope, to gain a tangible velocity away**

**from this stifling mire.**

**We ask for your tenderness, to peel the hardened layers,**

**unblock our view, our way through, to blow**

**this atrophied cocoon.**

**We ask, though we cannot offer more**

**than our asking, not more than our supplication.**

**We ask with all we held onto, dropped -**

**stranded, unclothed and absolutely knowing we are**

**welded to your mercy.**

## **Insecure**

**Blasted white  
like a star - there but not there  
at its true awakening.  
I run forward.  
I cover my lips with a vintage coin  
and chant tomorrow out of sight.  
There are times I cannot keep  
such tension as I should -  
as a petal in my palm, balancing my movement  
with the pull of the wind  
so as not to lose its texture to the ground.  
There are times when the sunlight frames me,  
frightens me, echoing like a victim's misery  
through these patchy walls.  
I am drowsy, excluding hope but not contempt.  
Will I live here, stagnant in this sickness?  
What I need is a bed that does not hurt as I sleep,  
that can endure my heavy days and feed me strength  
from its quilt.  
It is the meat of destiny I am famished for.  
Reclining in my hand-made coffin,  
I value the cold cold sky.**

## Forest Fire

Faltering in this season  
on the hook like a sandpiper  
never sure when the mountain stops  
or if my sedentary position  
is really a bird in my hand  
or a dream I cannot force.  
Where I crawl from ignorance  
and dry despair, my mouth is finished  
with kissing, finished with speaking  
its voice of obscure ecstasy.  
Because it is finished, it is night  
and my plight is solitude.  
I have lost my home  
and clothes of wild colours.  
I have lost and cannot gain  
a chance to govern the crowd within.  
My foliage is painted. My sun is slaughtered,  
but still so much heat remains.

## **We Hold These Persons**

**We hold these persons sacred  
because she is larger than herself,  
beautiful and simple, and he is the deepest moments  
always on the surface.**

**Hers is steadfast and tender,  
hers is fierce and dignified.  
Hers is the kind heart in open view  
and the trust of a one so pure.**

**His is the intaking soul and the outpouring  
of complete vulnerability,  
of defiant vulnerability.**

**His is the heart in someone else's eyes.  
His is a mischievous joy, a gentle hello,  
the hug of a million sages,  
the hurt of a drunkard's unspoken truth.**

**Hers is the rapture of every bird,  
a voyage through a multi-layered atmosphere.**

**His is raw and chiming.**

**Hers is on pressure while soaring a light blue sky.**

## Something to See

By the exit, by the winding path  
the brave and the bleeding have gathered  
like this, they cry out for a shoestring of mercy  
and receive a little more than their worth.  
I add the answers together and find  
no love lacking. Yet, the ache remains, tattooed  
onto the pavement like an empty wallet  
driven into fresh tar.  
And I remain under the cutthroat justice  
of practicality.  
Years of fighting, no more fighting for  
that which God does not want to give.  
Bitter is the paper that has my vision marked.  
I must let my eyes water, walk through and arrive  
like something fresh  
on a foreign road.

## **The Bite**

**It is in the bite  
in the loins, born  
from a deeper urgency  
than the stuff outside the window.  
This season is split,  
it mends nothing and breaks  
only that which has already been broken.  
The rabid sorrow that has no voice  
but lurks like a scream through  
the corridors of the body.  
It has been so long - the same cloud  
latched to our roof, the same cry  
of indignation and then pleading.  
We have held out for release but the pressure  
is locked and we must bear the journey.  
We are left with the many devices of coping -  
sure of God and nothing more.**

## By The Days

By the day  
the evening comes.  
By the evening the  
stars emerge.  
By the clock  
what's not  
of substance falls  
away and this is what  
we carry as one  
along with the dragged-around  
dish cloth and the tomato seed  
we long to (but never) bury.

## The Wind

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

# **Blizzard**

**Blank, clean, unseen like white paper mache  
over a white balloon.**

**The cold days when children hold hands  
over the vent, bodies bundled en mass  
in this season**

**of winter's utmost, with beauty  
and barrenness both -**

**The snow in constant consistent  
movement, moving like in a gorgeous painting,  
itself still, reflecting  
nature's absolute conquest.**

**Showing no favourites - the snows  
gather on rooftops, glide over sidewalks and over  
birds huddled in eavestroughs.**

**The snows that make life surrender,  
leaving us motionless as we should be,  
unashamed of our pure ineffectualness.**

## A Deal

He spoke in half-measures,  
justifying each moral-ill.  
He spoke of relativity and of substance  
in the greed of the superficial.  
He spoke to me under the rooftops  
of the rich, caressing me into believing  
that there was no absolute truth,  
demanding the fingerprints from my body and each drop  
of my worldly self-worth.  
He came to me with gifts for my children  
and wanted my gratitude eternal, my nodding  
and smiling and happy-go-lucky awe of each  
of his earthly treasures.  
He offered me ease without relief and  
a Sunday-morning-only duty.  
He brought me down, brought me into  
his thick shadow for a day. For a day  
he confused my heart away  
from its steadfast meat, fragmented my mind  
at the feet of his brittle god.

# Wallpaper Stars

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

## To Leave This Sickness

I am sick like the bug-eaten rose or  
the old awaiting death.

I have been reversed,  
thrown into the garbage can.

There is nothing to come that will help,  
nothing to hold the two halves of my head  
together. I shout out. I stop shouting and  
silence is what I have.

I am through with myself, with this  
ungoverned agitation mounting and  
hurling at others - then imploding like a thousand thistles  
projectiling on the inside.

I know nothing. Nothing of faith  
and of God who I so love.

The car is coming, the blue beam has  
arrived. I am going. I want to go  
and see myself untrapped  
- me, but not this me -  
on the other side.

## **Now You Know**

**Now you know the honeydew nectar  
spread across the light - like a  
limit - sweet but blurring.  
It comes to blend the black to grey,  
falsifying the true colour, gnawing  
like an animal at its netted cage.  
Now your fate is tightened -  
has no large space to grow or rest to let it yield  
towards strength, but it wanders  
half-made, without proportion, agitated  
like a mind unable to hold one clear sentence  
but can hold terror nonetheless.  
You do not exist the way you once thought.  
You orbit the garden like a predator its prey,  
never entering, never making the move to kill,  
buckled under such tension, the sound  
of your footsteps hurt, revolving,  
devolving down the ant hole.  
Almost decades, you turn from this exit to that exit  
never finding the way out.  
It has been this way. Almost  
you can believe no other. Almost  
your dream is gone.**

# Liquid Art

Warm fluid  
reaching my lips, filling my mouth  
and strengthening.  
I am chased and must  
drink to survive, to gain a flow  
that does not fit amongst all this normalcy.  
It plops like an explosive on my lap  
and won't allow me to forget or regret  
its pull and command.  
Like a ripe peach to the parched throat, it slides down  
and radiates relief to all sections of my spine.  
It owns me as does the rhythm of my pulse.  
It keeps me apart yet binds me as one.  
It is my surrender, my glad awakening. It is my freak show,  
my unhappy necessity:  
    I bite, I swallow  
    and then I am brave  
    once again.

# **The Burn**

**Burnt**

**on dreams**

**I leave you now**

**as a pauper by the wayside,**

**tossed overboard like one**

**not good enough.**

**It sinks in - assimilates**

**the remaining glory and soon**

**all is charcoal and cinder.**

**It is in the flavour of my breath,**

**it rides my spine and refuses to fully**

**consume or to let go.**

**It is what I see when I look**

**into the open sky:**

**No one's coming in.**

**No flower is reaching**

**its petals up for me.**

**The burn is in the way I sing,**

**the way I wait,**

**the way I move my lips to**

**smile or listen.**

# Pitstop

The thorn of  
a hero's anguish  
and noble isolation  
is not a wand  
bearing a secret jewel  
but the whisper of sweet suffering  
that says it makes a soul better,  
braver, ready to do the difficult thing.  
It is the step before spiritual freedom,  
not a destination, but the line of threshold,  
the place of guilt when just before guilt explodes,  
eliminating the essence of its own nature.  
It is the collecting just before absolute  
surrender, the pain in the head that keeps  
every touchpoint tense but never releases  
the flow. It is the finger hovering over the button,  
- a purgatory of necessary importance.

## The Day Is Like

The day is like  
the day before  
the worm arrived  
in a jar at my doorstep.  
Before I took the worm in  
and fed it lettuce leaves and fresh water.  
Before I had something to care for,  
when loneliness was the largest difficulty around  
and isolation pounded beneath my lids like  
a cancer.  
The day is tick tock and as slow as waiting  
for that needed call to arrive.  
I collect the noises from outside  
but have nowhere to put them. I open my mouth,  
but my voice has gone underground.  
The sun looks in on me, but evades my skin.  
I don't hold my breath. I let it in and out.  
I let the day be a blank wall.  
And sometimes a day like today is like  
an empty room and this empty room  
is a treasure.

# Faith

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

## **The Luminous Light**

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

## **In**

**The world is bleating,  
frying and re-applying  
its gruesome coat  
of despicable snares.  
The world is walking in,  
shaving down my floor with its footsteps.  
I touch it like I would  
a balloon. I will not allow  
it to consume or alter  
the course of my aging.  
I will stand and translate the core of this faith  
to my children. I will give them something  
to lean on when the world overtakes  
and the ones out there lack  
even a threadbare mercy  
or a glimpse of celestial grace.**

## **Where Love Draws The Line**

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

## The Path Least Expected

Afraid as the scent overflows  
from the dark and through the sun.  
I am watching you but I am  
bound to the surface like the  
ant to the dirt,  
like numbers to the analytical mind.  
I am bound to the end whenever it comes,  
until I am called  
to give it up and called no more to this Earth.  
Afraid of the sound of the hollow years  
but still myself though I am weaned from  
the miraculous and thinned as a once  
potent drug, still myself  
afraid and bound, holding  
a destiny I never uttered  
or planned.

# Feral

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

# **I Will Not**

**I see the path illuminate.  
I arrive with my ways behind me.  
I am the one who fell and  
could not rise, the one whose hand  
reached out but could not let  
the python go by, could not find  
what I fumbled for in the realm  
of wonderful light, but instead  
moved my family to an inhospitable shore.**

**Slowly, I receive,  
loosening the crusted clay from my loins.  
I will be brave as one following  
the hooded horse, brave as a bird  
extending beyond middle heaven.**

**My purse is wrenched clean, and clean, for now  
is good.**

## The Singular Sky

Move, I move  
but cannot function,  
prey to the wrong timing  
and a host of flaws I have  
not been able to label.  
Bend, I bend  
to the open coffin.  
I am the last one here  
to hold my flag and not let go.  
There is fog in between  
the path I am to follow  
and the life that I lead.  
The sky is singular, but  
I have too many eyes that peer  
in false directions, too many gasps of sorrow  
and empty sides.  
I take  
and twist to and fro.  
Still the light eludes me  
and I am left miles below  
the replenishing groove.

## **It May Be Coming**

**A glimpse  
to keep of a changed afternoon  
like grafted skin to a festering wound,  
like a painful memory  
that will not weaken with time but has learned  
to dig and find the blessing within.  
Looking out - there are possibilities.  
There are strange fabrics in my drawers  
and candy wrappers on the floors.  
I only hear the quiet pulse of infant hope.  
I only feel like turning my head.**

# Compromise

The poison spills  
over the dining room table.  
I held hands with the bringers of blasphemy,  
then pretended blasphemy  
was the way to begin a better life.  
Now only half-tied and half-untied  
I no longer brood, but bear  
a blank stare, folded smooth  
at the corners.  
I won't admit I left my post.  
I move with a wider face,  
in this dull aftermath  
without terror or hope.  
I move heavy-footed -  
the last traces of passion  
sliding between my toes.

## Hostage

Death is here,  
blocking the vents,  
betrothed to this January month.  
It is here and it won't leave.  
It is here like a crack in a doll's head  
where all the bad weather pours in  
and builds until the frame is broken  
and the child remains without.  
Death is not soothing  
but grates like granite against glass  
and takes with it all sense of sanity.  
It severs the fingertips and holds  
the mind hostage in its slow decline.  
It clings like hot molasses, here  
it clings and makes a pit in every  
bright spot.  
Here, death is, ugly death, no-way-around-it death.  
Death riding the back of one I love.  
Death, owning all,  
making no concessions, offering  
no apologies.

## Our Days

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

## Airtight

Trouble is tearing  
across rooftops,  
and the one thing left to count on  
is tainted by self-righteous conviction.  
The blue in the sky is burnt.  
The answer that arrives is conspicuous  
and truth sits on the post unable  
to touch ground on either side.  
Abiding in power, abiding in  
religious hate - all the gates of evil  
are unlatched and the songbird lies  
flat, stiff-legged on its side like  
a mutated lullaby. What is called love is squishy,  
retractable and never a priority.  
Trouble is full and always filling  
the cracks in every open seam.  
What is called good gets its name  
from the TV screen and the golden-calf-god  
of hip.

## Susceptible Creatures

Blending in with the trunks  
of maple trees. Here  
like the shedding of cells  
or growing hair follicles.  
I will not speak today of the poison  
thickening my soup, nor will  
I speak of the weight compressing  
my lungs. For some angels have swarmed me  
and I promised them silence. This dying will be hard  
like choking on a breadstick.  
But after that is through, nobody  
will break me. After that, dancing  
will be made easy, and breathing will mean nothing  
but a gentle flow  
of in and out.

## **After this**

**there is no other.**

**There will be the curtain charred  
by deliberate fire.**

**There will be the food stomped  
between floorboards and the  
smile of faint sardonic recognition  
at all the repulsive and petty senselessness  
that lurks beside every phone call.**

**But there won't be the hanging around,  
or the deep dive into a suicidal quagmire.**

**After this, the energy stops  
going where the devil leads,  
going under the beams of sun  
pulling flowers from the garden  
at rapid speed and cursing the air around me.  
After this, I can outlive any black star.**

## **Promise**

**When the end that was supposed to be  
defuses its eventuality  
and my belly is maimed by fear,  
I will wait, nose to the floor.**

**Sparkles on my fingers and thumbs,  
a tingling caressing my spine - mercy will be mine.  
For in this dark place I am still owned by the light.  
The torn shirt and the broken boots are only glass  
under my foot that must penetrate  
before they can be nicked and thrown aside.**

**I cry but I will not be crushed, for I have all  
who I love secure by my side.**

## **A Change To Cherish**

**The days are changing  
and so is the reliable reflection  
I looked upon under scrutiny.  
Gone is the waste bin of logical stress  
and the appetite that never found its proper food.  
Here is the chair I kneel upon,  
looking beyond. Like all great things coming, change is  
a handful of sand that must be chewed, ingested  
and joined to the bloodstream.  
The old disappears - a dew drop evaporating  
in the hot rising noon.**

## **Thunder To Cross**

**I fell, without colour, separated  
from purpose - a delight to the  
violence of mediocrity.**

**This character I have seen form  
is on exhibition, it has gained  
sanity but lost its genius.**

**The burning bodies of grief  
lingering from house to house.**

**Pollution put under the tongue like cyanide.  
I wore that slipper. I left what I held sacred  
for a more tangible condition.**

# Gifted

Thrown into isolation - no need  
for bread or even the gifts of summer.  
That is all inside you - the Chinaglass dream  
tarnished from age - the towering clouds,  
never far enough to reach - the daughters  
of loveless affection - the painted  
patriarch of absolute control.

Your face has weaved a wonder  
that the piled-up tissues of time cannot  
obscure. For you, hope is  
beautiful. To join is to be  
elevated. But these acts are too large  
for your darkness, too full of God to ever  
own you with anything but longing.

In this way, you are modern,  
destroyed by what you name sacred, diamond  
but lacking all shine.

In this way, you are gorgeous, guided by  
an obvious morality yet struggling with the sly and unholy -  
lightning-struck with an anger that will never free you,  
reaching out  
beyond yourself for what  
even angels are denied.

## **In The Thighs**

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

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

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

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

**Call out to me**

**Call the number engraved into the armchair**

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

**He came. He is**

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

**moving,**

**thick**

**with worm motion**

**moving                    at worm speed.**

## The Mind That Sings

The mind that sings  
the stolen dream, remains  
free from all that thievery.  
I wait on tomorrow, though  
I know life should be more  
than waiting. So I paint  
the cupboards in rainbow hues  
and I speak the hidden part  
to those I love, so no mistakes  
will follow. I open doors I'd  
rather close  
just to trace an answer.

## **From Us Two**

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

## **The struggle of water**

**The wave takes  
those under the drip-drain dream,  
it carries them here  
where language is clearer  
but hope has died.  
On the edge it tosses them -  
from garbage pail to garbage pail,  
a thousand miles sleeping.  
It reforms without stealing - but not  
without a price.**

## Five Days

Five days without belief,  
lost like a pebble tossed into  
a deep stream.

My prayers have turned grey, culled by  
despair - there but not really there.

Every ghost has come in, crowding  
my upper floors. In the wastebins, in the filing cabinets,  
my hands have been scraped  
and there they fell - two dead weights,  
lacking the strength to be lifted.

Like something left out  
of the fridge for too long, my taste has  
been tainted. God is a soft echo in the open air.  
I hear words, but words I cannot formulate  
or beckon to come near.

Five sunsets in black and white.

Five days to give in and die or to hold tight  
to the thread string, the little string,  
the are-you-there?-string,  
to hold on and commit to never return here  
for all my days remaining.

## **Another Station**

**I raced to the perimeter,  
stopping at the dot and  
found the sun half-gone  
like a kiss that never was.**

**I touched the tree and the tree  
did not know I was there.**

**I peeled the skin from my fingers  
to feel a deeper sensation.**

**The line and the ledge and the no-space in-between.**

**The devil is bitter and hard. I spoke to the devil  
and held time with his eyes. But breaking free,  
leaping from the circle - these aspirations  
are growing up, taking long and slow breaths,  
all the while, becoming  
more formidable.**

## **Exhumed**

**Hello dead flower,  
for all time now you will  
be embedded inside of me.  
I will love you, dead as you are,  
withered like a left-out tomato.  
I will cherish you, your deadness,  
your smell and deep dead colour.  
There - the funny shadow on the upper  
wall - you killed my sun.  
You left me here leaking my joy  
all over the sofa.  
Hello my dead flower,  
let be whatever is, let it please  
resume.**

## **I see the light I thought I lost**

settling dimly on my child's cheek.  
I cannot say the way is clear  
or that I feel combined.  
I still hold my hands in my pockets  
and nothing has changed the flavour of my style.  
But I see the light  
like a dewdrop on a windowpane -  
small, easily gone, but visible.  
I know that light though it seems  
so long since it bandaged my body  
with its cotton scent, so long since  
I disappeared into its brilliant certainty.  
I love that light, the one I see - I love its power,  
void of every cruelty.  
I gaze into its small sphere.  
I will let it reach me, rule over these desperate days  
to call myself, once again,  
blessed.

## **What I found**

**What I found is below,  
out-of-sequence with the sun's  
touch and possibilities,  
is past redemption,  
is in my gut, collapsing the core  
of my sanity.**

**What I found is old, like the beginning  
of cell growth, like the first imagination.**

**What I know is that it always wins,  
in the settling moments, in the quiet  
of a noonday stare.**

**What I feel is removed, blocked off by shadows -  
a thousand years behind me.**

## The Stone

The stone drops,  
settles in the sand like a beetle.  
Lovers die  
for lack of trying.  
Children wait like they  
always have  
to be made a priority.  
The sun is swollen and breaking  
on the crust of the universe.  
A fairytale in a box, barely opened,  
but already stronger than reality.  
A last chance stored-up for  
old age.  
People are falling,  
glass doors are ajar.  
Someone is listening but no one  
even smiles.  
That stone drops,  
it is made up of hard,  
unforgiving stuff.  
It stays,  
and the surface  
is its meaning.

## Regret

I should have held it in -  
a nut within its shell,  
prolonged its freshness to ward-off  
its rotting. I wish I kept my breath,  
said nothing until the hallucination passed  
and I was hard again and not so  
revealing. If I could swallow, quench my  
emptiness, restore the day of mercy  
then I would, but the strike has torn, though  
it was meant to mend. And the night moves on  
as sleep beckons me  
further into isolation, lacking the promise  
of rest or resolution.

## Resolve

Burning in the middle  
where the sickness gets in,  
and my expression is foiled  
by an inaudible aim.  
Clouded like a bad fragrance  
soaking into the pours, making it hard  
to breathe. Hard to breathe in like  
a petal crushed into a ball, or like a poem  
with no testimony.  
But I will not be taken in.  
I will forge a path for my energy,  
find new neighbours, something  
unbroken to hold on to.

## **Take This!**

**Greed. Grief.**

**Screaming in the vacant aftermath  
where such a scream contains, then releases  
the toxins, separates the truth from the immobilizing  
confusion of evil.**

**A smoke cloud of charred pride.  
The lie of worry, the torn pages  
of prophecy laid out,  
caught by the wind, carried  
toward God as this scream is  
carried - a boxed burden  
waved high**

**into a dull sky.**

# Heat

**It will take me over,  
toss me like a weather balloon  
and put me on the brink of a high fever.  
It will know me and place me  
in hot water madness  
like a tune just out of reach or a clothesline  
pinned against a fence by overgrown branches.  
It will take me into the drug store.  
I will be spared nothing, but I will feel nothing  
of pain or of thinning. Because  
I was bribed by the demon and I released  
the bribe, and with it, the demon. Because God is with me  
like a black cat who follows me from station to station,  
is gentle and existing with tenderness and solidarity.  
The flies have left my rotted corner, and all that remains is  
this sunflower.**

## **Blind Spot**

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

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

## Without Soul

I felt the pressure between  
my hands, drive through  
my cortex and embrace  
the tip of my brain with warmth.  
It felt like fool's gold, fake  
but still providing glitter.  
I felt twisted with unknowing,  
degutted of all things I hold sacred.  
And that was a coat over my corpse,  
pennies placed over my eyes. That was  
for me, forging forward  
with no significance, with no discernable  
regrets.

# Crossroads

From rumours  
left unsaid  
the day was raised  
and laid out  
like a tablecloth or like  
someone's grand and meticulous day dreaming.

I never opened my mouth to alleviate the  
darkness, but instead I took offence  
at the lack in others, not seeing that offence  
as my own withdrawal.  
But I am changing. I am ending like childhood  
ends, and I am  
not so sure of myself  
anymore.

## **Easter Faith**

**It is not emptiness,  
but redemption. A redemption  
after the emptiness  
that comes with the hope of a blessing,  
after there is no further down,  
there is only up or death.  
It is not suffering that bears such wisdom,  
but the surrender and acceptance of God's love  
no matter what - it is the purity of that acceptance,  
the absoluteness of it  
that matters, that causes the miracle -  
  
playing out like a walk across the sun  
without going blind or getting burned.**

## **Days that dismantle**

**Days that dismantle**

**the thrones**

**of 'may I?' 'give me'**

**and 'I deserve'**

**Days that hold the devil at bay**

**and pinch the flowers off every lapel,**

**of angels under the bed sheets**

**and smiles in the afternoons,**

**of dreams that form, fade, then form**

**again. Days I will try to treasure like a**

**jar full of fireflies,**

**when I will not give in, not**

**give space to the dark pit within.**

**Days that mean more than money, and more**

**than the power that it yields.**

## Looking Up

The ninth vortex,  
a cylinder, funnelling  
the puss from the unhealable wound.  
A point of Juno - tell me,  
you are drowning.  
Your throat is tight, but your body  
is hoping. There is no pain you  
can give that will reduce me because  
I am safe in the pain, and not destroyed.  
But the harshness that eats the colour from  
your eyes is consuming a part of me too.  
I blend with the stone. I die in the shrubbery  
of your fear. So long, winged-worm.  
So long, wind that dust clouds my ground.  
I am ripe for renewal.  
I am solo - past you, past death -  
planting light where once  
there was only blindness.

## Choice.

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

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

## **In My Corner**

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

# Nothing

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

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

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

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

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

# Trap

Hours near the composers,  
full nights healing through slumber.  
The cavity within is like gasoline  
spilled on water, expanding, making rainbow  
poisonous hues.  
Many times I thought I was free, but still  
I was driven by obsession, metaphysical but  
destructive, driven to explore that which cloaks  
a form but never reveals a face.  
Tempted, in an old land, wasting time. Because  
my fountain has lost its theme,  
it drips without flow, without gusto.  
I allow myself to be extravagant  
where I should be frugal, losing  
my energy like blood into the tiger's expanding jaws.  
I allow myself to be reigned by addiction -  
each hand moving the demon-stone, surging with  
desperation, red and pulsing for relief.  
Cold endurance. Cold hours in the morning when  
I am left alone with myself, forced to discipline  
this phantom monster. It is hard not to get absorbed  
in its other-worldly folds. It is hard  
to hold tight  
to my personal religion.

## **Let The Joy In**

**What you gave at an age  
when you thought thievery was long dispelled.  
What was given back was cold and hard as a stone  
in wintertime, betrayal without audition,  
without remorse.  
Click the door, be sure in your sunshine -  
what was lost was never had - purity  
and courage were not on the agenda, never  
graced the soul of one so cruel. Show your  
sword and cut the toxin from your torso,  
look into its eyes and then be done with it forever.  
There is no need to understand why,  
no benefit in an explanation. Everything is choice.  
You chose to lie on the field so Christ  
would lay hands on you in your torment.  
You chose the meditation floor,  
symbols to support your painful transformation.  
Everything else is small. The past is small.  
The grave is small. Only love survives and what is not love  
has no place in your beautiful heart.  
What isn't love, never breathed to begin with.  
You need no protection. You need only  
what you have.**

## Perfect Home

Cut into the light,  
divide it like the months  
spent underground where  
secrets and conspiracies flourish.  
Snap up the fruit before the roots  
are culled, and drink the water  
after a long walk, take in  
and sense the true blessing all around you,  
the blessing of soulmate love, of the vision  
you sought, realized. This is your offering,  
your recording. Weave your joy  
through the stark-heart of survival  
and watch it  
be warmed.

## Tomorrow

I open myself to the obsidian stone.

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

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

Thank you morning for finally arriving.

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

*All of these poems have been published and have appeared in:*  
Buddhist Poetry Review; Fogged Clarity; Right Hand Pointing; cur.ren.cy;  
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Gall Press; Carcinogenic Poetry; Dead Snakes; Crack the Spine (magazine and  
anthology); Boston Poetry Magazine; Kritya Poetry Journal; Guwahatian; The  
Continuist; The Bijou Poetry; Long Story Short; Iron Gall Press; Spilt Ink  
Poetry; Agave Magazine; Smashed Cake Review (Sideral Journal);  
Verse Wrights; Profiles in Poetry Literary Zine; Synchronized Chaos; East  
Jasmine Review; Ginosko Literary Journal; Rocket Boy Poetry Page; Dali's  
Lovechild; BigCityLit; Clockwise Cat; Vine Figure Poetry Page; 1947, a literary  
journal; SilverSpine Poetry Forum; Mechanical Medusa Poetry Forum;  
above/ground press; Eye On Life Magazine; Indie Poets Indeed; Stone Face  
Literary Zine; Mount Parable Poetry Forum; Inscribed Museum Literary Zine;  
Rusted Rose Poetry Forum; The Writers Newsletter; PoetryMagazine; SpinRock  
Reader Lit Forum; The Peregrine Muse; The Syzygy Poetry Journal; Antarctica  
Journal; Minerva's Housecoat Writing Forum; GloMag; Winamop; Dark  
Blooms Literary Zine; Tangerine Heart Poetry Zine; New Mystics; Eos – The  
Creative Context; Cacti Fur; Bluepepper; Dog Is Wearing Pants Literary Page;  
ArtVilla; Lunar Lit Poetry Page; Firefly Magazine; The Octopus Review;  
Dissident Voice; Green King Poems and Poetry Zine; Straylight Literary  
Magazine; Sonic Boom; A New Ulster; The Galway Review; Medusa's Kitchen;  
Upender; Tuck 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](http://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](http://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 UNDUPLICATE THROUGH THESE PARADOXES WITH MUCH FEELING AND OFTEN LEAVE ME BREATHLESS, SHAKEN. ALLISON GRAYHURST'S POEMS ARE BOTH BEAUTIFUL AND DIFFICULT TO BEHOLD." ANNA MARK, POET AND TEACHER.

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



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