



**PUSHING THROUGH
THE JELLY FIRE**

ALLISON GRAYHURST

*Pushing Through
the Jelly Fire*

Allison Grayhurst

Edge Unlimited Publishing

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Only for a time

bodies curse the morning
and find the bulk of their cursing
burned by the awakening of outside creatures.
Waiting, when waiting is not called for,
when what is necessary is to be still
without anticipation, to step into the miracle
of listening - sounds of kestrels circling low, sounds
of territorial squirrels and young robins
flexing their wings. In my eyes, the gulls are angels
arriving face-to-face at my second storey window,
speaking of God's grace, personal, sharp and pure.
For the last time, chaos will have its say
and cowards will rule my playground.
This is the time of great beginning,
a time of the final letting go.
The birds are beside me, speaking in ways
I again understand, while the world is carving
new structures of dread.
This is the time of open palms and no favours,
a time of birds everywhere, singing for me, but not
for me.

By This Light

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

Eagle

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

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

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

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

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

I Leave Whole

**To me the sound was pure as rain -
blending with tomorrow
and the empty figures pacing the hallway
as though separated from their own haunting.
It was the sound of sorrow,
merging the old with the future -
nothing in the palm, nothing shining into the day.
Waking like this - all possessions burned,
and then even further
released. Waking under the seat of the throne -
closer than I've ever been before.
I want your love. I want to taste that joy,
but joy is not meant to be today. Today
is a banquet of fake flowers - flawless, scentless,
dollar store gifts, strategically placed among
the dust and roaches.
I want your love to consume me, to let false love go
so that I know that love bound here is love
bound forever.**

Lost members of my tribe

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

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

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

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

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

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

This spirit is speaking

**How much must I tell you,
with the dark sorcerers seeding my
potted plants and the old ways lost to
new ways yet unfound? How many times
must I twitch at the remembrance
of my cut throat in spring, contain my tears
in see-through plastic and continue to watch
the world go around, without a hiccup?
Acknowledge my fight, my flight into the wolf's den.
I am not a whale, pure as garnet,
nor am I full of your grandeur
and the calm, strong dive down.
I have the blood of a prophet, but not the backbone.
Side-swatted into a long consuming grief
and the world is just the same: Brides and school bells.
How long must I explain? I have lost the contours
of my face. There is a man
on my kitchen floor deliberately, almost artistically,
shaving my fleshless bones. One by one, like that,
I am unformed.**

Three days

since I was found,
panicked by my bed stand, calling out.
They put me under covers. They wet
my forehead but the fever was too bright inside of me.
Words were repeating.
Words were fireflies swarming my optical nerve.
They did not see the vision. They tried to stop my shaking.
They could not know that in the end,
I was left with a choice.
It was in my power to affirm or deny.
It was a light so potent, sharp as broken ice,
demanding. It was strength and perfection
without tenderness. How could that be love? They
were love - weeping for me, making promises
of togetherness for eternity.
Three days since I was found and they've never left my side.
In these arms that hold me, is a devotion
that comforts. I am better now. At last, I am called.

Walks

Birds are always speaking
like fleeting lines of poetry -
these wisps of miracles, dive
into the schizophrenic's mind,
his pathway - slow and unthreatening.
They dive, but only people of the bird tribe can hear,
only other animals whose senses are heightened,
whose souls are twofold - raw and divine.

It is dusk, and love is held in,
made weak by complications and chaos in the aura.
The child rises from bed with dread linked
to her pyjama lace, already crushed by the world
without an inkling as to why.
Cats crouch and freeze - a culture tied to their nature.
Like them, I am tied to my nature in the way I walk -
feet down, eyes up and waiting
for that one angel to look me in the eyes
and tell me all.

Something

fell from the tree,
a fruit to lighten my dense cloud.
Last night I dreamt of a charade that pulled
the carpet out from under the world - deception favoured,
gathered for years and then made a mockery of - deception
with a shocking tongue, deception still, but ruthless in its
quest for anarchy.

Thank you for my fruit, for a better place than yesterday.
Thank you for the hope for survival.
I will step where you send me.
I will follow your lead. And someday
I will find the place I never knew,
find serenity where once
there was anxiety, fulfillment
in the here and now.

Slowly, without reason

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

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

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

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

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

Getting Up

Horseshoe at the bottom
of clear waters. A captain
without courage or altruism -
that is the tale, the slender pickings
of yesterday.

The bridge has been crossed, never to be crossed again -
death is verified. Dancing happens, but there is no joy.
Forward, moving, vocal cords crushed. There is nothing
to be done, the dog-star has shifted to another galaxy.
Nature has won and killed
the mighty astrologer. In the end, there is only choice.
There are many skeletons and ingrained unhealthy intents -
much suffering and purging without God,
feigning rapture without God,
pretending that there could ever be ecstasy
without God.

The only gift left to give is acceptance.
The woodchips are piling. Walk
away, towards
a path forged by loss, built on faith.
Walk, and just keep walking.

The oceans spill into a cup.

**I drink from that cup and approach
the gathering of ages and
salty burial grounds.
For me, I remember a time before friendship -
I held anguish, frustration,
anticipating the arrival of my tribe.
I waited for one who knew the same meaning I did
of sacred sexuality, death and grace.
The landscape was huge, but my people are now complete.
Somehow we have gathered. Over the years,
we've erected pillars
on neighbouring streets to see if others would recognize
our colours. Some came near, joined, but after a while,
they left and situated themselves
on the opposite side of the theatre.
Patterns increase. Wounds are given priority over love.
Fear becomes a discipline
and loyalty to another merges
with the sickness of self-denial.
The oceans spill. But there are certain things
I will not drink. I was born for a different music.
Love will win out. God is greater than the world
and all the people
world-bound, world-committed.
There will be arrival, the fruit of permanence.
Yearnings will be eased
and my tribe will see, finally rejoice in
its expanding form.**

Almost There

Almost every death
will revive me, unhinge
an opening in the soft part of my throat.

Almost every darkness
when burrowed deeply enough into
will hit the light.

When there is no going back, only
a letting go of all that was and all that was
supposed to be - then the paper will finally be burned,
then the addiction can be kicked, and the pounding
of the slaughteryard screams will transmute
into a softer, more bearable rhythm.

Almost every border crossed will lead
to a new land. In that land, the gift
of belonging will come. There will be raspberries
and grapes on every corner. Someone
will say your name.

Impossible, Only Possible Way

**If you can make me better
than this bag of rage.**

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

Alone

It is your calling,
your call to mend what has been undone.
It is your age of darkness that must move
into a renaissance, your murder of reality,
claiming a fantasy for a home,
tangible at last as this grief has been.
You are stubborn, stronger than the grave, noticing
the track has ended, but continuing just the same.
I can't be that strong, not now with the desert thieves
of anxiety circling nearer. I can't listen to your valour
or even hold out my hand.
But time is blind to the baggage of yesteryears.
It is always seeing for the first time,
unblemished by dues, tolls
and sometimes prayers.
Our time is what it is - a tower made of mirrors
where the dead and not-so-dead
leave a lasting impression.
It is your open season, though, for now,
I have lost my trail to follow.

A day called blackout

A ship in a park - useless
except to jump on and explore.
Stones instead of eyes.

On the salty ground I pressed my face,
thinking I was pressing heavenbound,
thinking I could be saved by an inadequate past,
by people who lack the warmth
for breakdown, the courage for abandonment,
and the need for love.

Thinking what was old and used could be renewed,
or that my wanting it so, could heal
and make such feeble loyalty
solid, almost real.

The Gift of Fire

Your pale cowardly stride,
hiding from intensity as though it were a pathway
out. Your miniature thumping soul,
bereft of courage or compassion.
You chose to seal this circle of darkness
and kill the daybreak. I want
no part. I want to burn the clocks, wishing
we never met, wishing I never trusted
your dysfunctional loins. But I did.
You graffiti my house with your emotional
crudeness, trading in my clothes to pay homage
on the altar of your fears.
I pray I have no connection.
That I walk this edge focused only on God
and the gift of this difficult awakening. From now on,
you are nothing. My rage is reborn, re-directed.
My pain is a fire that will warm me,
warn me for the next time.
No one will touch me until they make it through
that fire. No one will know me.

A Good Perspective

**The bed broke, then the ceiling.
Like wings spread across a grave,
I felt both the mystical and the grief
strung out on the binding powers of synchronicity,
hunting my childhood pictures, setting flame
to all that brought me security.
I have no use for revenge. I shape my anger into pity
and my pain is rolled flat across my body -
softer, smoother, thinner,
merging with my skin, almost
comfortable.**

More

than this place
where the town is burning
and the people
are stepping over their best friend to find escape.
More than this goulash of undirected intensities,
boiling hard without a lid.
More than self-preservation at any cost,
than this toxic avoidance of any
growth-demanding issue.
More than love left to die - discarded
into a burial heap.
More than a wild disease, spinning
triumphantly, hot and lethal, pouring over an already
shredded wound.
More than faces
with no yearning for connection
with God.

Golden Eagle

Awakened from my dying
on the barren hill.

I speak my mind, and I am pulled off course,
rejected in my honesty,
as though I had no right to drum my dream,
as though silence and the undercurrent of resentment,
confusion and blame was so much better,
as if clarity was a betrayal - too much to ask,
too much to give.

But that is the name on that package
and it belongs back on the shelf.

That day of lower energy is over.

That was the rainbow from the wrong event
that soured when ingested, that left a pile of soot
on my doorstep. I am ready to release

what must be released,
ready to be unattached and unafraid.

The zenith of my sky is open
and I feel something soft and perfect growing
in my pocket.

pause

**Like a rattler buried in its sleep
this season has come, treacherously lifting
from a thin layer of sand.
Grief has come, guilt has come, rage has come,
peace has come.
The promise of flint is over, let alone the fire
of soul healing security.
Miracles arrive, never in the way expected,
sometimes slowly, in small amounts
until you realize something merely accepted
was what was wanted all along.
Darkness was my addiction, but I am done
with cantering through those hills.
I am a tongue, moistened by letting go
of the chocolate bite. I don't need a song of joy,
only a way
to carry on.**

Entrance Door

You stand at the entrance, robbed and dazed,
alone with the rain.
Your school is poor, much like water on a grave,
it cannot restore the yellowing clover. But I believe in you,
in the parting of your eyelids and the outpouring
of your creativity.
I saw your eyes, written with the depth of the wind.
Your sorrow is not easy,
but the power of it within you
will play out into an unimagined liberty.
A longed-for communion
will possess you and bring you barefoot out of exile.
I don't know why this disappointment must claim victory
or why joy and intimacy
were not open mouths, parting, to match your ageless purity.
I don't understand the burning, the collapse, and why
the Earth is so hard. But I understand you,
and what a blossom of magic you are.
You are meant to know this sorrow before
you can be happy. You are meant to dance out your grief,
your rage, the incapability
of others. Balance yourself here. I will help you.
I will kiss your hand. This is not random. Disaster is yours.
But the animals know, and I know, you are close
(so very close)
to the last release before
resurrection

Interval of Parting

**I will keep quiet
when my sea is sucked into the sky,
keep quiet about my hundred
strokes that take me nowhere, quiet
about my anguish and requiems.
We will be different - for now, we will
not know one another so completely.
For now, I must go it alone, my struggle hidden
except in prayer and solitude. I will build my own nursery,
bandage my wounds until they are no longer visible.
I will sleep close to the angels, feel my only safety
in their ethereal arms.
I will turn even further to God, depend
on only God to love me fully
and see me through - through this wilderness
of leghold traps, of paper promises
and cowardly predators, through this funnel
that tightens and seems to have no end, through, without
showing the damage of this fishnet, without you,
you who are going on your own journey
and cannot help me here
any longer.**

Out of Time

I lean out the window.
There is no breeze, no people
on the street. Everything feels wanting,
even the birds with their first morning song.
Cover my eyes. Build me a shell, a desert
where I can wander in without encounter.
I am tired of seeing. I have no need of friends
or of enemies. Only of lovers, pure family,
where trust, tenderness and truth hang paramount
and there is no messy aftermath. I have no need to outline
the disease of the world, where cowards
burn their campfires and spiritual challenge is avoided
at the cost of love. I am tired of grieving
over a miracle that never was.
I will toss these stained clothes and buy a new wardrobe.
It is simple. I know. It is the sound
of a breaking wave or of a dog, finally, let off her lead.
I build this pain a private place. I outlive my past. I am
without issue.

Speak

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

When we land

it will be like the pilot ejected from his plane,
finally touching soft ground.
It will be a handshake that means forever,
many seasons of ripe cherries -
an evergreen growing in the basement.
And all the stars will sing “kindness eternal”
like a summer beach without the crowds or looming sharks.
And happy will be our hands swinging from trees,
made whole again by the healing act of honest love.
We will walk briskly. We will be smiling. Miracles
are born from the emptiness and
the longing for ancient beginnings.
Blue Jade under the pillow.
Our animal shapes, rising internal.
When we land, we will smell the nightmares evaporating,
senselessness will have run its course.
And all that we lost, and all that we never had
will blend in beautifully, transcended
by this direction.

With Power

**Nothing with power arrives
either to heal the beast of karma
or to stand like a tree, gorgeous
in its sturdiness and tree-green aura.
Nothing of substance hits the mark,
no river of strawberries, nothing
to give measurement to the moon.
Just shadows - some with healing potential,
some with hope potential, some just standing,
staring into my window, then
walking away.
Nothing to feast on, no hard rock to climb,
no peaceful laughter filling my lungs.
Is it always going to be this grey and uneasyful?
Is this my new dimensional metaphor? Water now.
Water and the power of
continuing on.**

Saves

Clear as the contented painter's hand
putting down the brush . . .
before there is happiness, there must be loss,
memory, potent and unchanging,
ripped of its noble character to become something
mere and stupefied.
There must be the coffin, the loneliness,
chaos that wins out over the light.
Before the infant is held with pure joy,
there must be the mother
brutally aware of all life's fragility.
Death is the focal point of life,
giving substance to an otherwise flat surface.
Love cannot banish despair,
yet allows faith to grow side by side.
What once was glowing has rusted,
and the sensuous stroke, strokes
with sliced off thumbs.
There is no way around it, before
the ever lasting glory, there must be blood -
blood that drips as though it were hot wax,
blood that drips then reshapes
what is known as only flesh.

**How does a seed know the sun
from beneath the earth,
but by the warmth?**

**In the waters, there is a gift of coal and ice
merged like a soul awakened to its chi -
bursting out from the stomach lining, curator
of gravity. Balance and propriety, bulging forward, a visible
mystical entity in need of surgery and of wonder.**

**In the waters where hair follicles rest on a sandy wet floor,
where there are things that have never known the sun,
fear is eased by compassion and there is no downfall
that cannot also be a redemption. There is the water
and a swelling fluid force that is ever-so-fragile,
but committed to emerge, no more a tide against itself
or a happiness that cannot be embraced.**

**In the waters, a water-flower has risen, a bit of weed
with glow-in-the-dark leaves, a colour the fishes know.
That flower will find the air, find a way to express its birth,
sowing forward.**

Time does not

**speak
of the fall of sages, of how
their once passive journey led
to madness, of the hail that crashed
into the corners of their eyes when their pleas
for mercy were lost by the sound of the plummeting storm.
Time does not give life back to what has died
or even heal the grief of ghosts pacing
through the morgues.
Time is a shadow that envelops us all - it is
hope and despair combined.
Time is two lips speaking different words,
two hands unable to hold each other,
frozen in the spilt blood of alienation turned
to indifference.
Time is bone - breaks everything but suffering.
Time keeps its secrets, undoes the work
of gentle faith. Time is a tale-teller, making us believe
that nothing has meaning, making us forget that it is
only time.**

Covenant

Legends in the snowdrifts
of soulmate saga and the artists'
struggle to stay alive. Gospels in
the house of manna, sleeping,
somewhat blessed, always true.
I put my robin on the line, held it
to the cat's mouth and waited.
Through the window I saw a prayer
almost answered. Jesus, stay beside me,
hold my hand as we pass one house and
then another. I can feel your breath change the air.
I can trust you, smell your skin and be protected.
Everything depends on you and I
staying close, my back against the mirror - my face
only reflected through your eyes.
I will sing in your ear, be ready for the deep-sea dive.
I will love you first then radiate that love. I lean
on your shoulder, and I will stay this way
forever.

To Be Brave

**Round, loose, seven months after the funeral -
shells on the carpet, hands in movement - back and forth.
The zodiac's thigh has nothing on me. Games played
are games lost to the heap of hell once made.
Robin Hood is at my doorstep, his laid-back courage
is now part of my scheme. Take no enemies.
Have no enemies. The end result is all smiles.
Thank you for telling me. I have to shed this defeat.
I have to pray and pray, and then again
I am so broken, and even that has to be embraced.
Faith is a gift to wear around my neck.
Come to me, be with me,
allow me to unlock the true syllables of
my calling.**

Take

Your welcome mat is removed.
Take your cold, determined blasphemy
and seal yourself in your tomb.
Take the memory she had of your loveliness
and mutilate it, mutate it into your true face -
a hundred still births, lined up with all eyes open, dead,
before even beginning.
Take the grain from her garden. Take her cat while
she is sleeping. You can take
and trade her trust
to pay homage to your psychological sickness,
but you cannot take
the strength from her star, not the creativity that lulls
then sparks on her breath. You cannot take her rhythm,
her house where love and God come first,
where there is no deception,
no blood on the sleeves. You cannot take her beauty,
not her vow to stay open
to future blessings. You cannot take
the way she is committed to make good with her grief,
committed to emerge from this,
inextinguishably proud, in service, more perfect,
more saturated with love than she was before
you came and you took.

Just before

Before I say goodbye to bitterness
and the slug that crawls across my living room floor,
let me hold my breath, holding thoughts
of the executioner's rope
sleeping very little
until morning.

Before my grave is exhumed and the daffodils planted there
are carelessly removed, let me thank my every nemesis,
the silence, the autonomy of being underground.

When I am halfway to the surface, let me keep my eyes
on the sky, never turning back to see the place
abandoned, never regretting the companions I found,
though they were roaches
and other crawly things that only stuck around
to feast on my unprotesting flesh.

As I say farewell to my six-by-six hovel
let me release the leaches that latched on
to my every side.

Let it be over with completely.

Let me rise from this pit like a child does from her bed
on Christmas morning.

Taking off my hood

**It is only bad weather.
It is only what it is for
some reason, for this light to one day flourish.
I will sit with you in the storm
building a bridge away from this wound,
never caving in to the cruelty of incompleteness.
I will rub your ankles back to life so that
you can walk. I will buy you new shoes.
We will be cleansed of our defeat, be renewed
by one another's touch. Our love has lasted and so
we are far more blessed than any exalted hero.
We should be dancing. But for now,
let us walk. We will be lifted.**

World

Around

**in the vast cave where
the entrances and exits were lost long ago,
where the only smell is stale bat dung
and fungus is carpeting (hanging loosely from) the ceiling.**

**Home is not a place I can find outside
this enclosure. It calls to me - a vision
that falls in my lap
like a tangerine, that slips into oblivion before
I take a second bite.**

**There are only apparitions here. Apparitions that haunt me
but have no idea of my name.**

**Apparitions that sit beside me on the carpet, have
conversations then fade into meaningless fluff.**

**Happy at first I was to meet them, with their pretty pictures
and well-rehearsed spiritual words.**

Happy I was to love them like a firefly in this dark kennel.

But my birthday came and went without much fanfare.

And I am waiting still for the darkness to end.

Lesson Learned

My voice through glass
all summer long, mixing
words in my belly, saying only
grunts and other sounds that hang in the air
like the greyness before a storm.
I should count myself lucky and be a circle,
complete onto myself, quietly curving,
constantly joining, never sharp, never full of angular
weight or anger that can barely stand.
I should just learn to not be real, maybe
see a psychiatrist for all my pent-up disappointments,
for the way I want to shake the unshakable sea.
It is not worth these mornings of isolation, not worth
the split of an otherwise musical love. It is not
good to crave justice from a jackal or blame the jackal
when justice is not served. It is not right to hurt in my bones,
drag this knapsack full of iron, and spit my blood
all over the pavement.
It will be a challenge to learn detachment
where there should have been
connection and accountability.
I will not be connected, but be sweet, swallow
the stone in my throat and close the shop
with a smile.

I have to push deep,

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is all God.

For Randy

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

Tied

**I will hold you one more time,
I will not be afraid of your passing.
We will bond on the eclipse of your life,
our eyes locked in gratitude and unspoken
understanding.
Thank you for sharing my home, for being
a part of my family. For so long, I missed you.
For so long, we have loved one another with
unsurpassed equality and depth. Your gentle intelligence
has carried me through many storms. Just
to be with you, sometimes, was all I needed. This one,
I will have to walk without you. I will have to say goodbye,
my sweet and perfect soul, goodbye my pet panther,
goodbye my many-lifetime friend.
We are lucky to have loved one another.
We will join again where there is no bleeding,
no dulling of the skin. Bless you, go easily into God's arms,
go freely: You have loved. You have been loved.
You are eternal.**

A Way To Joy

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

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

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

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

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

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

When That Day

**The joy will come when these chains
are loosened, are finally
crushed by a blow from an axe
on a concrete floor, flattened,
nothing but metal, to step over, sweep up
and carefully remove.**

**The joy of that day, when relieved from the weight,
from the sharp-edged gravel in our gloves
and from the ever-tightening twist in our loins.**

**The joy when we sign out, shake this water
from our lungs, stand without tipping,
when we can look at each other,**

**know we are on the other side now -
death, illness and poverty**

**have not separated us, have not set fire to our love,
but instead, have merged us, all things
natural and unnatural, merged**

our broken hearts, so, though broken,

**they could keep rhythm. So on this day when joy arrives
to relieve, we will walk uplifted**

down this path of sweet salvation

holding hands, holding and never afraid

(that one or the other) will let go.

I see

I see women

finding home on the wicca altar.

**They are good women, warm women,
smelling of frankincense and rosewood.**

**They are woman who tend to the sick, commune
with the souls of animals. I love these women,
their methods, so much like mine. But I am not like
these women, wedded as I am
to the pure Christ of Jesus, sibling to my highest octave.**

**The one that flushes through me, bringing waves of clarity
to every depth, every torment, every
aspiration. I hold hands with my Jesus. I lean against
him when the hot winds arrive. I press my heart into his
and I feel the peace and certainty of life beside death,
of the greatest love beside the greatest responsibility.**

It Just Moves

**The house is cold without you.
It has a strange rhythm,
an echo without a voice.
How to sleep, drink coffee, grind
the work-a-day toil, cast out by death,
dumb now in the stillness of your absence,
how?
Because you have always warmed me,
calmed my erratic, overcharged pursuits.
Because perfect closeness was ours - my stomach
is split, my forehead is tight, folded. Forgive me.
Cherish me still as I cherish you - let this not be
the end for us. I see your half-closed eyes. I kiss
your forehead. O love! It hurts! It is all unreal.
How can it be over? How can I emerge from this
hollow? I wake and you are gone.
I see you everywhere, but you are gone.**

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

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

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

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

Release Me

**Chilled in the village
of frivolous searching.
I walk to the corner store,
withering in the grey-tone light.
I thought I was meant for purity
for something to sink a holy tooth in -
but there are tiny living beings on my bookshelves,
oil spills in my garden, and bodies, everywhere
talking, picking up stones, putting down stones,
even children with mutilated souls,
everywhere - alone, alone - the avalanche
of isolation, the flood of self-preservation no matter
the murder weapon. Kiss me. Rip the zodiac
in half. I am bored with this unending night.
I am through with the sleeping pills and the chakra chant.
I'm through with holding time, karma,
through with being subjugated
by the pull and tug of these unbreakable chains.**

If I Get There

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

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

No Ground

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

Chapel

I hold the air.

**I am without control. In this chapel I walk
with my father and the others I loved who have left
for a new journey. I walk with the parables of their souls,
imprinted on my throat, in my belly,
everywhere where there is eternity.**

**I tell my father of my shell that has cracked in two,
of the burning of the elements and how I miss
his brown eyes, his protective hands and lop-sided
smile. I tell him, thank you
for the poem you gave me when you left, for the dreams
and all the anguish, challenges and reconciliations
we shared. I tell him, thank you for loving me so deeply
as to change yourself,
as to let me be a catalyst for your peace,
for your soul's reward. I tell him –
I will never get over the pain
of losing you, the joy of having you,
how much you loved me,
showed me the generosity of God.**

**In this chapel, I walk with him,
I hold his hand. I am still his child. I am still
only one.**

Meeting

I blend under the covers
to drift by the songbird
though I never reach the songbird
with my mind or my eyes.

I can only melt with the mirror, a strange being
blessed by freedom
but not by much else.

And here I hover - outshone by the beautiful sound
I cannot capture, replanted in a foreign soil,
a death warrant, a challenge of rapture. The angels
have called me. The dark breath has answered me.
It is not enough, under the covers, listening, crushed
by the morning light - my pattern unraveled as though,
for now, I am only shadow.

It is not enough to remember you,
to have touched the miracle and for a moment, to have
perfect belief. Because there is chaos in wake of this beauty,
there is a fall on jagged rigid ground after the swim through
synchronicity, there is the dead bird, broken by
heartbreak, held in my hands, nothing
but hollow bones, and a picture I owned
but lost, of you and me, in black and white,
aged in love, so long ago.

How To Chain The Madness

I will start small,
just a little hole
to plant my herb.

I will regain my equilibrium
in tiny doses, under the covers,
when the children are asleep and even the bride-to-be
has eased her nerves.

I will head slowly in the direction I was sent,
inch my way out of this dark valve, not worry
about the weather behind me or the harsh
possibilities ahead. I will play my instrument softly,
take hours to eat one fruit.

And in that place, I will etch out a rhythm I can keep,
and this form of chaos will at last be clothed.

Seeing

I begin a new line of music
to hold the frameless parable.
The room is there
where the field mice nested,
where the insect broke its wing
and still found a way to fly.
Points of power on my walls,
scents in my basement,
a bread basket in my hands.
My wholeness increases, months after he has been gone.
I breathe out my fear and listen to the sounds falling
like flowers, watch the butterfly
darting past the bus shelter, beautiful among grey matter
and Monday faces.
Mythical are the letters of his name saying goodbye,
saying the past is gone and this day belongs
where it is.

Hands Open

I will not glide down this street,
continuing to catch every sharp corner,
blending in with the slush and snow drifts,
no better than the last of autumn's fallen leaves.

I will not be pulled into obsession,
sucked down into the footprint of expectation,
waiting on potential that may never be.

I will not leave my house to voyage
on the substance of an idealist dream
that gathers no ground, but offers only the pain
of shattered sunlight, is only a seed too soggy to sprout,
is shape without nerve and muscle,
smokes but can never burn.

I gather the gifts of unexpected visits
and long-held long-proven love. I need only
to breathe to know I am blessed, freed of this false-war,
freed to be at ease in this uncertainty - myself, strong enough
to release my pet from its cage
and equally accept the fear, the peace
as it goes.

Months Before Resurrection

In the sea, I awoke,
wet, under the sun,
taken into time by
the lord of anxiety.

Grief and instability covered my skin
like the suction of an octopus'
tentacles. It held me, carried me down
below where the pressure is unbearable,
and strange fluorescent creatures thrive.
I landed on the sand-smoky floor, without
a spoonful of oxygen, murdered by an immutable force.
I died that day, chained to the nadir of my zodiac -
once a living woman, now chewed at by tiny mouths,
soon to fossilize in this wet, unsentimental grave.

Change of Destiny

Finding you, frozen in the spring,
low and diving into the audience long after
the curtain call. You were fire, now you
are an egg, cold, dead as a sandy hill.
You are a weight drowning a beautiful bird
that wanted to show you his home in the glorious mountains.
You were hope, now you are dread,
circling a shadowy vicious form.
Sometimes you return, and the day seems to open into joy,
until the next, when you drop all symbols of attachment
and dismiss every longing gone before.
You were once a dream, a way off this floor.
With you gone, I have no idea where to turn -
defused of purpose.
You once owned me - the mail carrier
and all those expectations.
But you were just another pause on my journey.
Clothed in gold apparel, with promises to curb this famine -
I cannot count on you to fulfill.
When I see you, you are small,
still inviting, but without a home.
There will be another that sings to me,
but until then I must remain as I am,
vacated of intention.

For My Children

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

Remember

Remember the end, for it was the ripping open of innocence and fairy hope. It was a necessary falling, a compacting of all the extremities, a slicing off of unworkable dreams.

That end towers within you and remains a pinnacle of freedom. Though freedom is sometimes harsh and cold, it is also the only place of true attachments. And so, there are so few, but enough to sing about. It is worth that year of difficult breathing, worth the reformation of your core. That ending has now ended. You hold your own. You are remade and powerful. Child awoken to the world. Child, still as beautiful as when you were born - ethereal, holier than us all.

Before I Go

Before I go
and put out the campfire,
offering my condolences
to the abandoned child,
I will let my grief go first.
I will dispel it as energy
gathered between my palms, then blow it
like seeds of transformation out of my blood
and into a happy beginning.
Now I will go. Summer is here and my sorrow
has lost its footing. I will make a collage of
my crashed expectations, peel away the crust
until I unveil a flower.
Talking is useless, right now, only moving matters,
walking away from an impossible situation,
releasing the ghost to haunt its four corners,
releasing my failure
to create love.

Who?

Who hides the shape of the sun,
sleeping in fear with ribs more
than broken? The war, the half-heaven
half-hell syndrome of the spiraling bird,
spiraling downward
in an array of glorious plumage.
Who cries as beautiful as a song,
longing for the uncommon, a lamp
of soulmate proportion? Whose cry will be heard,
received, altered like fire is altered
by water and water is altered by fire - the old burn
extinguished, transformed into something light,
capable of rising upward, spreading
across the sky? When will God give us air,
take our hands and run with us?
God, we are waiting for you
to knock on our door, we are anticipating your footsteps.
Show us something of destiny. There is more here
than what is whole.

It is time

**to let individuality out,
and not be smothered by the material plain.
It is time to labour on just because
there is a circular motion to all things
and gravity does not have the last say,
because human compassion is limited, but God's is not.**

**I saw the key fall into the gutter. I fell
down the top flight of stairs. Mosquitoes blinded
my hunger for the deeper truth. I am ready
to not be ashamed. I am ready
to stand in the centre of my peace, live
as I was meant to, seeing
lack and disappointments as gifts
in spite of it all.**

From the days

Walking and turning
from the days of cous cous
to days of anything can happen.
Once sealed in summer - the four of us
on this ride, flourishing under a brutal sun.
With September flushing in, hurling our
backdrop out of site, I wish for
the world to be a fountain of easy flow
and the hard mast made of stone to lie
flat and serve to stabilize our stance.
I know these things are like necessary money
that we have so little of - but grace
is our bread and we face the drumbeat
whole - holding one another as doors opening, closing
lose their meaning.

Pathway

The power
and the moon and the bride
ducking behind snow banks.
Weather, may I have you to own,
be reborn in the dead afternoon like
a hawk that circles the windless skies?
Sleep, with all the dreams and shapes of dreams
tucked in your mind like precious stones.
I carved you out of grain. I stalked your elusive
steps, looking for you at each corner. Down I went sliding
into open houses searching for your seed, but your seed was
a balloon I could not catch and my child-grip is short, as are
my obsessive desires. Too far down
is the raging river's floor -
I am carried off. This time I will not panic,
but sink and imagine I am growing gills.
I will relax the burning
in my mind and enjoy the end and then give in
to the continuous flow.

Colour comb the light.

Secret is the stone.

**I am listening and I can hear
the pattern of its speaking.**

**Twice I dreamt of fireflies,
twice my dream labour came to naught.**

**Blind in the grand scheme - signs
that never manifest,**

**and my pillow has a hole in it, big enough
to hide my emptiness. I'll stare at the stones -
veins of emerald green, patches of sherbet green.**

**The morning is calm. Morning is best loved
alone.**

I let go

of my will, fantasies
of perfection that make
life my enemy. I let go of things
already lost, of water flooding my ship and
of the dead dolphin floating by.
I let go again of my desire
for unauthorized miracles
and accept the gifts I have been given
as a light over the ocean, guiding me,
marking me a 'someone' to find.
I let go of old photos and unclear stations
on the radio. I let go and embrace what
is living, knowing this is just fine,
knowing I am always held close
in God's engaging arms, knowing
I must let go

Done

I am done
with the breaststroke of infernal lies.
I am done with the twitching eyes,
people without boundaries - hard things
like crossing graveyards, hesitating
intimacy. I am done with money.
I am through with platforms and curls,
with the forceful devil and things that make me feel
unsure. I see the spring
and it is waiting to throw me
a rose. I see things, and I am done with
the loins of the zodiac, through with eastern gods
and western hopes. This is me, standing empty -
fields on either side. Drown me in this solitude.
Take my blood and make me
a monastery.

Field

It doesn't matter what field
you run on, or who has your shoes.
All that matters is that you keep moving
over the hardly visited terrain where garden snakes
and mosquitoes thrive. None of them will kill you,
only blister your stride and then
you will be free of the field, free of running.
You can rest on a wide small hill - look out over
the sky and know you made it - barefooted, bug bitten
but accomplished. You said your prayers
of forgiveness, blushed at your own anger then let it go
as you were running through that field - more
ethereal than not, more heartbroken than not.

You ran (yourself a miracle) emptied, hurt, but
persistent. And now, the hill is your home, cupping
you gently in its surrounding breeze.

Where I Fit

In the hourglass I see a cloud
that greys the city. I see people at their
art shows, theatre shows and antique shops
blowing on their blankets in hopes of holding off
winter, in hopes of never looking inward or upward
at the purity of faith and the starkness of deep tears -
people who love their clever words, and their
commitment to no spiritual responsibility -
earth wearers with earth minds and blood
that does not flow but clogs the nestled spark of glory
endowed within us all.

I light my bed with the golden rays of bliss and intensity.
I am not walking on this floor. I am not as alive
as the garden growers or the children
who lose themselves in play, but I will
not align myself with the intellectual superficial
or harness my self-worth to their dreary looks
of 'yay' and 'nay'.

August 2

In this place of light and brooding, I smelt the
grapefruit in the morning under the August sun.
You were born and I miss you. Over 13 years of loss.
The day you left at 4:30 in the morning,
I felt nothing in the taxi but the sheer slap of horror
that held me for seven months, degutting every reality
that balanced my blood. I remember your hand -
feeling the thick knuckles, the same I felt
when I held it when I was a child,
safe, because of you and the confidence of your grip.
I remember holding that hand, cold,
without flow or sensation, for the last time,
knowing it would be the last time,
knowing you would not be my father like that again,
but be a memory that would change as I changed -
taking a life, as it now has, of its own.

The door is

**The door is the light,
is the beat that hums through
my body. I cannot find its source
or grasp its inspiration.
I can only vaguely feel that it is not dead,
that it is thin and thinning.
The light is the door I cannot mend
or reach for under that canopy when the storm has hit
full force, and the hammer
drives down.
The light is the door
that has no lovers. It is a psalm,
a one-way ticket to wage a life on.**

Love is not a shell

**I tell you I am waiting for a new friend
to share these beautiful riches, to feel
safe with and to feel whole.**

**I tell you I am waiting for new and
permanent members of our clan - for all of us
here, striving for rich connection and finding
that most people will only go so far, most people
blend in without steam and then move on, on to where
the demands of intimacy are minimal and accountability
means making, defending, excuses.**

**I tell you I am happy for those who walk with me, and
my arms are open. Food is on the table.**

By the edge,

**the fire drifted from the sands
and all my tribe bit the bolt
hard. For life was hard,
and our ceremonies of perseverance,
of letting go, and of holding on
were all we had.
Shadows and senselessness walked
across our movie screen.
I put it all in our backyard -
the carcasses of mourned dead animals,
the memories of betrayal and grief, people
that never tried and those
that tried but just not hard enough.
I put them there and buried them close to the fence,
behind the evergreens, near where the sandbox used to be.
I told everyone tales of 'true blue'
and the phone would ring
and then it would stop
and everyone of us held hands. We prayed.
We knew this was just a time of scarcity and soon
it would be a time of plenty:
We knew the joy of loving one another.**

Walking

A grain I throw
in the water, floating, ready to
sink. I see you - thin as anyone
must be living on such an edge - tense
and tired of holding your breath. So many years -
a raging prophet, flailing your limbs
to keep the barnacles off, to keep the ones you love
close and to keep your mission in perfect purity.

These days the summer is dried spit on the pavement.
It opens my eyes to the struggle everywhere - pigeons
waiting for water, children running up the dry incline,
facing a bridge, the great restructuring.

You, riding the gilded wing - love is like the Earth's dirt,
necessary, elemental, and its smell, saturated with memories.
I love you: Sometimes it is easy.
Sometimes I am a woman in God's funnel cloud,
bending back to look, but seeing only storm.

Where Corpses Lay Unburied

**With you, it is never elemental,
but full of sick layers of manipulation,
youthful but nasty-like selfishness,
like a rotted worm-ridden fruit undamaged
on the outside.**

**With you, truth is blindness to everything
but your desires. Friendships are hard and sacrificed
easily for the competition's prize. With you,
there is no backing down, just push push and the tarry
bullshit of your unattractive smile.**

**With you, closeness means that you must lead,
control each gesture of omnipresent sky.**

**With you, death without God is majesty,
and everyone around you is only a pawn
in your many twisted, immature ploys.**

Bare Essentials

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

All the Light

All the light from the beginning
remains - even as long as time
and then, continuing on so that distraction
and fears blot out the exuberance, and sometimes
nullify with the dark chains that bind us to the funeral
ground, to the alcoholic's breath and to the child,
too abused to even cry. That the sacred chalice
gets ripped like a paper cup means nothing, because
the light from the beginning remains with the intensity
it was born with, remains and cannot be removed.
And the light between us - sliced cruelly like a cow
into thin fragments for consumption, like that cow, still
has a soul, somewhere hovering in happy pastures, loving
all the while, like in the beginning, when it was born -
beautiful, knowing only its first intake of breath and
the sweet nectar of its mother's protective warmth.

Illness

By the time the snow stays
and my lips are dry as a left-out orange peel
you will be better, your legs will be running
and waiting to ride down snowhills
and feast on hot chocolate and candy canes.
By this time next week I will look at you,
and feel safe again, knowing the angels have healed you
and this month-long desert
with its snakepit and ruthless thirst
is far behind us. The mansion up ahead will now be
our home, where love and ease reign and mercy sleeps
under our pillow. You will be a happy boy,
again bouncing joyously into my arms. And I will hold you
without hurting, knowing
God and goodness
are real.

Holding Hands

**Because I know you and the glow
of your many lives' rhythms
behind your big heart concealed, revealed
beautiful in its purity . . . because you are part
of my inner tribe - a specimen
of beauty and undefined rich sentiment -
I will never judge your secret vulnerability
or soil your openness with sarcasm,
but instead I will promise you comfort,
a beach of sunlight and solitude -
a mother's love where God takes part.
In spite of the cold kennel
cruelty out there, you will get through -
as one strong in joy, as one wedded
to charm and the virtue of forgiveness, sleeping
without nightmares.**

Our Love

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

Will you?

In the end,

your love was not rich enough -

**was a heavy but surface love, never a defending love,
defending despite the threat of a spinal break.**

**Cool now. Almost cold as a thief without remorse,
the stars that are falling are always falling
onto mountain peaks, into reservoirs, falling without
the angels' consent, falling, breaking the sky like death
breaks the heart.**

**The toll was paid. You sleep with grace under your pillow,
but not passion. You've loosened the roots of the tree.**

It will never make it through another winter.

**Will you miss your shade, your safe and magical place,
your look-out tower?**

**Will you miss the scent of the phoenix feather,
those deep waters that once felt like home?**

Forging a map

to lead me from
this private drain where faith steals
in like a toothache. I will uncover
a different dimension of faith, faith
that has no invested outcome, has no
burdensome wounds. Years of the pigment
plucked from my beating chest, years of desperate
expectations, liquefying my organs, walking
as though I mattered, feeling brave against the world.
This faith will have no words,
projecting into tomorrow, will have no 'me'
in the mix, but be just faith hovering
like a ring around my Saturn -
it will grace me while I am sleeping
so I will have strength in the day.
It will not carry the weight of guilt,
regret or self-defeating sin.
It will be a flood, eliminating the insides
of my house with one clean sweep. It will rise
in me, and I will give myself wholly over to it -
not even a fragment left of
my former needs.

The Permanent Matter

**It does not matter -
lessons learned, reasons
unraveled and understood.
It doesn't matter -
ceremonies of release, truth
that holds the key to the golden "moving on."
It doesn't matter when the heart
is stuck in the afterflow of dead dreams and
the fire at the window
(that compressed all longing into one single flame),
is still the fire at the window,
burning galleries of scorch marks
across new and sacred hopes.
It doesn't matter - making up one's mind to be free,
building a pond that holds the perfect fish (the zen fish) -
tranquility and gratitude mixed in easeful equilibrium -
watching the movement but still discordant,
missing something that refuses decay or fruition,
missing the deep breath of peace, the faith
that all is as it should be,
and to never know how long, how long
it will take before anything ever again
matters.**

I Dive To Rise

I give it up - the racing dread, erasing
the good from my garden and the dawn from my eyes.
I give it up like a heavy stone
that once tied my sailor's bones
to the earth. I dive deep into the salty liquid,
healing as I let go of the weight,
the power, the need for control.
I give it up - the undone deeds of expectation,
the ability to swim or breathe or feed on blood and bread.
I'm done with planting and days of endurance.
I'm done with mouthing platitudes of hope and guilt
that shouldn't have been mine to bear.
I'm done with self-pity and the wages of truth.
I give it up and dive deep into the watery belly
where no footprint has ever been. Sleeping is the same
as waking is the same as staring at the minnows
and piranhas head on - the same as growing gills and talking
without sound. I give it up and give to get
a way out of these decade-old barriers, a way away from
the quarter moon heart and the vices
I hear every day like corpses rising
among the vulture birds, voices that have hands
frantic, with no where to go . . .

between my fingers

I feel the vibration of deep dives
and hard climbs, reaching plateaus
away from flesh and air.

I ease the split with closure,
heavy flesh squeezing tight
against more flesh, and letters that speak
only the necessary truth. I am through with money
and other ridiculous creations.

I've decided that it is solo or it is nothing -
that there will always be a lack and always, inspiration.

I found myself a tunnel, wide enough
so it looks like flat land.

I found myself some seeds that would not grow.

This is the stuff to work with.

This is hard and it is wonderful.

Between difficult places, I long for war,
but know what I really long for is connection.

I know that a wound of loss,
a wound of deep disappointment, is really
a sugar bowl.

King dead

**like the guilt on breath
that shows itself as anger, with spite
and immaturity - shows itself as heartless
as one who refuses hard responsibility.
Hopes impaled, left like a twitching
insect not even recognizable as the once
beautiful creature it was.**

**Far away, I will run, but this world is made up
of so much pain and hardness. Where are the soft people,
souls willing to sacrifice their own blood for
a taste of true togetherness? Where are the warriors
eating out of paper bowls, not afraid of the messy
forward or the ego-erupting aftermath?
Dead: heroes with crossbows and days of answered
prayers: dead. Help is an old woman without a cane.
The light that holds me is losing its thunder.**

Where is the light that holds me?

Otherwise thinking

that
grinding and binding
the wrong things would bring
the blood of transformation
in an age of elegy and time that has no master
except for eternity. Deep with fear
but deep with courage,
and riding on horseback close to the cliff as though
summer was nearly over and everything
that is now, was before, is not
wasted. As though effort alone was a doorway
to a richer heaven and drowning
would teach me how to breathe
underwater. I hold. I obey the tides.
Sand is in my throat but I am still speaking.
Love comes but not perfect. Love is a boat
with many living on board.

I go to the crosswalk

**I leave my bread crumbs on the other side.
I am waiting for motivation, for a clarity of purpose
that I once owned like a beautiful stone
I sunk under the St. Lawrence rapids.
When I was a child, I watched those rapids without fear,
stood close to the edge and never wondered
about the slippery underfoot,
never worried about the shadflies arriving
like a plague of river insects
or about my loneliness that turned
into a ghost companion comforting me
in those grey Quebec afternoons.
But here, in this riverless realm,
I cannot place my hands down.
I cannot stretch wide enough
to feel whole. I go to the corner store
and hear answers that only
I (and the birds) can hear.**

Your voice

is always frantic, shooting like bullets
randomly into the air. Your eyes are electric,
tottering on insanity's indefinable edge. At the corner,
I see you. Myself, wanting to avoid the face
I once believed in, wanting to slow and vanish
before you lift your head and see me -
bright and unaware of the hesitation I harbour -
pounds in my pockets,
I have nothing to give you but trite formalities
and the illusion of ease.
I have finished with you long ago.
I have been raised up
from my desperation. I carry my lamp, fuelled
by a trust in something better.
Your son, like you, has a beautiful smile.
But in no way can he hide
his drowning - lingering for years on fear's full shore,
serving his dark mistrust
and the cockroach he keeps under his bed.
Bless you both. Bless you
for the green grass you tried to grow.
You reached, but never far enough to make a difference.
I have no hatred. I have no longing. I have only
forgiveness.

Shedding

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

I Can't Land

**I can't land on these jagged places
of secondary love - voids and steep staircases and
darkness always hijacking spaces on the floor.
I can't change the lack of water
or the narrow airwaves of hope. God
give me the final dream, let it arrive now
and bloom. I am tired of waiting, of planting
my sage and calcite, of healing only to let go.
I want to hold the beautiful fires forever, know for certain
that heaven has hatched and there is a tale to tell
out of the grey zone.
I want to be at ease in the mornings, catch
joy in my mouth, graced, no longer longing
for a place to breathe,
but to be just this person, myself -
a poet, proud.**

Go

Go and buy yourself some candy.

On the broken road, walk and move
from one swarm of bees to the next. Go

suck on death like it was a jube jube

and kill all devotion and loyalty with your need
for acceptance by even the squinty-eyed and nasty.

There's a horse on my lawn, but no one will mention

his name. I know his name and I know the light that

touches his forelock. Go, it is not your horse. He is not

your companion. He knows me because we bless

one another, we have lovely days together and we do not

betray them. But you, you

are empty and have no belonging here

where my fireflies roam.

You have no horse to love and who loves you back.

You have the movement and the desperate need
for approval.

You have your candy. Now go:

It may surprise you, but blood

is on your hands.

Cold

on the high hill where there are no mirrors
or sea for millions of miles. Grief underlines
the logic, saturates the stillness from
up on that hill where you have no duties, no identity,
no dreams. Up there, it is all reality, looking down.
Possibilities are relinquished for facts
and the bread in your knapsack
is all you brought to see you through until morning.
Connection is lost to you. Even the ladybug is separated
from the leaf it rests on, and the sounds
of eagles in the distance
circling ever nearer are just bird sounds and bird business.
On that high hill for now, away from your emotional
element, staring into the monastic ever-present sky -
love is just a word like other words
such as 'dirt' and 'cloud',
certainly not something
to fight for.

More Than Commitment

**We see the bend
and the gulls in full motion
outside our door.
We feel the moon in our mouths
and foolish dreams
drip down our inner thighs.
It's time to relinquish
our boat on the ferry docks, relinquish
our dearest pet at the graveyard.
It's time to know the yellow lands of late summer -
let the air into our home and let the lock
on this sanctuary be broken -
to open more than possibilities,
more than a Sunday-hope.
We see the bend and we say goodbye,
out of the funnel
and into the luminous sky.**

It Arrived

**It arrived like a knife to cut away
the wound, perfect on the outside -
a miracle of unworn proportions.
At first it was high and bright,
a little less than magic but so much more
than simple bread. Soft, sweet, somewhat
urgent - it pulled you from isolation, helping you
release the deep betrayal that fused to your insides.
Now like summer, its happy season has passed,
and the dull breath of neither-here-nor-there
has arrived. He never calls, never needs
just to hear your voice.
You are unsure if you even like his smile, his style
of polite irritation and control.
Ear to the ground, settling with lack
until you make a decision -
one last effort to receive the miracle in full,
hold hands with someone where love is mutual,
something of passion
to count on.**

He Must

Bleak and thirsty, the child leaves the church steps
away from his mother. Older now, like a fledgling
facing a cat, he must learn when to take flight.
He must learn of such things as predatory eyes,
as the impersonal hardness of fangs and of heartbeats
that fade into nothingness, into the wind.
He must walk to the corner,
stay in the schoolyard by himself,
speak his tongue to the stupid and the mean.
He must stay pure in his burning for heavenly muses,
not become hard in order to hurt the soulless souls
or to defend from the blunt weight
of giggling cruelty. He must
take to the woods for awhile, alone with the elder trees,
block out the abuse in the lunch room -
seeking his kindred confidant
(for now)
in the unnameable stars.

Wounded

The sun does not bend
its rays to ensure it reaches
the deserving child, but moves
through all seasons oblivious to
its gifts and hazards.

Still prayers are heard and sometimes answered
with an overflowing 'yes!'

Sometimes angels are asked to reach down
and bring daylight to the 2 a.m. dark, to honour
the burial kick and ring the warning bell.

Sometimes soulmates are photographed.

There is no magic outside of God - there is
no love that remains love without faith.

The horizon is cut like an umbilical cord.

The Earth and all its land creatures, all its air and water
creatures, are moving. I am tired of feeling
but not knowing,
not touching with my tongue
the language of the trees -
beautiful synchronicity.

On Solid Ground

**Beyond the chiseled-out hole,
beyond the seed that died on fertile ground
and the inseparable mourning doves,
meaning will be restored, maybe never grasped,
but down deep the turbulent waters will cease
and the chaos that reigns where there should have been love
will only be the surface coat, will be a storm
outside that cannot touch me in my house
or scratch at the scar in my open eyes.**

**Meaning is here because I choose God, and in doing so,
I am chosen. God will be more than just my rescue,
will be my Kabala spelled out in simple form.**

**God is now the pin
in this gloomy bubble, the reliever of senselessness,
the groom that dispels any doubt.**

**God has provided me a horse to sit upon -
here with my companion there is a loyalty between us
that no despair can swallow.**

**There is a connection that grows, that I know
angels and other heavenly creatures
will rush to defend.**

being here

The unhealable past is sealed,
floating away like a helium balloon.
The city flinches and falls to my feet,
and I will not need to touch its ceiling anymore.
Simply, I will keep my secrets,
be at peace with the darkness, knowing
my breath is still mine to take,
and grief has found its perfect spot to settle
and no longer control.
Everything that has died has been buried.
The moon paints a womb and the pulse of hope
sings like it hasn't sung for years.
Signs and symbols do not matter,
only what matters is that which races then stops;
reaches, tries.

My hands,

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

I was not a bird

or a bride

**but wedded to the thick masculine
thighs of war, a priest of the dead -
myself a small idol that gathered a
kingdom of followers. I had but one lover,
a soul drenched with my own - long hair
and pretty eyes, a man of calm devotion, while
I enjoyed my blonde hair soaked
with my conquered enemy's blood.**

I enjoyed the cries of pursuit

and the galloping of hooves on foreign sands.

**I was not driven by the robe or the snake charmer's
deep throttle. I was fresh, never a victim of fear,
writhing with rage like a piranha plucked from the waters.**

**In the daylight, I was whole. At night, my lover
kissed my ring, my arms and forehead. We made love
with everything left to give to only each other -
two, dying young in a tent, just
before dawn on the brink of battle, never ones for
soft goodbyes.**

On The Overpass

I will wait on the icy throne
as midnight steals my shadow.

All of this is thread
and ceremonial bell, pure pain, an inspiration
that will never come again.

I will wait on the bed, staring into crystal fragments
cured of the hot weather, but still poisoned by
time and how it never stops in spite
of commitment or intensity, in spite of how it makes you
wait and not perish from simple feeling, and how
the house breaks down and happiness is arbitrary, flowers
for a while and then
falls.

Growing Up

Walk and find

**the courage to continue on,
wading in the stream before you.**

Walk and blend with people

**who are not like you, who contain
their nightmares in a jar and hold them out only
to project on to countless others.**

Walk and rise from the bloodwind,

a little to the left, a little to the right,

rise from the blinding grief of heartache,

from the dull and nameless faces surrounding

**your golden aura, rise and find kindness where there was
once disconnection, rise and find appreciation
in the pockets of the sad and confused.**

Walk this day

like you always do, driven by a higher calling,

affected, but not overcome, sleeping little

in this holiest of holy lands.

Not Friendship

If I speak to you now
when the hammer has hit your throat
and your breath has become bone - lightweight, almost
fossilized, would you believe in the miracle,
would you kiss the shoulder of responsibility, eat the loaf
you were given with great gusto,
stop pushing your cart of distractions, stop
and see.

August is around the corner. And no spiritualist's spell
nor week of Sundays will change the face of nowhere.

Letting go is always in my veins.

Letting in the emptiness
and not being afraid.

If I speak to you now,
it's just to let you know you are forgiven,
the smoke has cleared and all my expectations have long
since died. It's just that I feel for you.

And I need you to know
that I am not, will never be
your enemy.

Karma

**You walk. It has been so long,
centuries wasted on grudges and bread crumbs
you should not have kept.
Evil tows its sleigh through the cold afternoon,
barren as peace without connection. You felt
fire, illness, drowning, then
the grave, and still it did not stop the hardness in your eyes,
not the strength of your fears and the lies you
told yourself to carry out your filthy betrayal.
Crafty in your emotions,
locked in the realm of paranoia and mistrust, you walk.
You mean nothing to me now. At least, it's what
I wished for. At least, I can say - "It's alright"
And it is, though I dream of our connection
and know the wage is high.
Though I cannot erase your remains
from my moving spokes - I will find friendship
away from your eyes. I will see you one day and feel
nothing.**

Cocoon

We spent the day in our cocoon,
away from the tricks and trades of
worldly mayhem. Just us and the rain
outside, blanketing us in rich privacy.
There was dancing and dreaming and summer
ahead with promises of keeping the poltergeist crowd
in a cloud over there, menacing but never reaching
the burn on our brows or our gathering intimacy.
There was the breathing in, the strengthening of our truth.
There was daylight plastering our walls
with a hope we haven't seen for years.
There were paper airplanes and charades, falling asleep
in each other's arms . . .

Holding Out

A hundred years of fire and prevention, never enough
to crawl out of the pit, flesh-like, but made
of a shinier substance. Never the ticket,
never the fountain base repaired,
leaking like a broken skull,
nightmares of the phone breaking just when
I have something important to say,
nightmares of treading water,
swarmed by watery prehistoric things,
of being blown apart and not dying,
not resting, seeing love
ineffectual, and God - so far away.
Days of the world having its pulling-tugging say,
and my tongue pulsing with a swelling thirst,
waiting to be swept clean
of heartache and these despairing sensations,
waiting without a photograph or résumé,
just the summer still ahead and my children, so beautiful
that I want to be happy.

Saturn on my back

**The fear I fear may never be removed.
Trading bottles and cans stolen from the garbage heap, solid
in my purpose, but with no fulfillment, longing for a faith
stronger than my dread: For if God exists, God exists
everywhere - for all things singing
and not singing, for every soul striving
to meet tender perfection.**

Everything turns

to betrayal and back,
to tainted forgiveness and the green bread
rising on the shelf, covered in bacteria.
Everything falls short of wonder, lasts only moments
until the toothache, the heartache, the slug inching
its way across the hot shadeless deck.
Everywhere is quicksand and venom from the ones
that claim they love - burnt hairs on the head,
a chipping away at the sacred bliss of true sensitivity.
Everyone loses the game, reaches for a glimpse
of angelic feet and receives one solitary teacup handle
glowing to show the way.
Everything is waiting on death,
for death's drop from the dream.
Everytime it is the trying that counts,
the heart willing to release its hardness, again,
jump out, look up and serve the ball
(gravity and all)
to the faraway stars.

When This Is Over

**At the end of the day, the pears will be ripe
and the ones I loved and died will float before me
in waves of growing beauty.**

**At the end, when all of this leaves, then I will breathe
an owl breath, still in my tranquil sky.**

**At the end, I will find you, thank you for this sick chaos -
myself, a garden, hit by a massive storm.**

**I will give life again to the little birds, insects that have no
use or concept of glory. I will return with you
to the Buddha waters, happy to know so much love.**

**I will walk out my door and there will be summer,
early summer, and you and I**

**(though bruised and that much more
world-weary) will walk into the warmth:
ultimately loved, unequivocally whole.**

All of these poems have been published and have appeared in: Both Sides Now; Abramelin; Gloom Cupboard; PoetryMagazine; poeticdiversity: the litzine of Los Angeles; Kalkion; The Furious Gazelle; Nomad's Choir Poetry Journal; Decades Review; Bigger Stones; Chicago Record Magazine; The Entroper; Boston Poetry Magazine; AWS Publishing; Far Enough East; The Idiom Magazine; Verse Wrights; MadSwirl; Junk in July Poetry Zine; Pulsar Poetry Webzine; Setu; blackmail press; Eunoia Review; Eye On Life Magazine; The Poetry Community; Minerva's Housecoat Writing Forum; The Penwood Review; Green King Poems and Poetry Zine; Dual Coast Magazine; Viral Cat; 1947, a literary journal; Indiana Voice Journal; Synchronized Chaos; Black Poppy Review; Cavalcade of Stars; Inscribed Museum Literary Zine; Cyclamens and Swords; SilverSpine Poetry Forum; Dark Blooms Literary Zine; Indie Poet Indeed; Ygdrasil – A Journal of the Poetic Art; Stone Face Literary Zine; above/ground press; Venus in Scorpio Poetry E-Zine; Hello Poetry; Mechanical Medusa Poetry Forum; The Stray Branch; Section 8 Magazine; VerbalArt; Mount Parable Poetry Forum; Malevolent Pegasus Literary Zine; FoxGlove Journal; Whispers...; Literary Yard; GloMag; Siren; Prachya Review; New Mystics; StrangePOEtry; winamop; Sacred Chickens; The Neglected Ratio; The Galway Review; The Miscreant; Novelmasters; Excavation; Subprimal Poetry Art; Imaginary Conversations Lit; The Sandy River Review; Creative Talents Unleashed; CharyaPod; Duane's Poe Tree; Dead Snakes; Poetryrepairs; The song is...; Temporary Lunatic Literary Zine; Sonder Magazine; The Chaffey Review; The Packington Review; Now Then Manchester – Word Life

Reviews of "Pushing Through the Jelly Fire"

"This, (*Pushing Through the Jelly Fire*) is my second favorite book of poetry by Allison Grayhurst. I have it in paperback. I read a lot of poetry across a lot of blogs but Grayhurst's work stands above the crowd and is of tremendous quality. I highly recommend this and *The River is Blind*. Her quality of writing is of a high standard and never ceases to lift my spirits as I turn pages in paperback or kindle," *Bruce Ruston*, poet, photographer, founding editor of *The Poetry Jar*.

"Another Grayhurst masterpiece, Allison's work has inspired me to continue creating and reading poetry," *Ann Johnson-Murphree*, poet.

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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www.allisongrayhurst.com



“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry combines the depth and dark intensity of Sylvia Plath, the layered complex imagery of Dylan Thomas and the philosophical insights of Soren Kierkegaard, taking the reader on a fearless journey through the human condition, delving with honesty into death, grief, loss, faith, commitment, motherhood, and erotic love. Grayhurst intertwines a potent spirituality throughout her work so that each poem is not simply a statement or observation, but a revelation that demands the reader’s personal involvement. Grayhurst’s poetic genius is profound and evident. Her voice is uniquely authentic, undeniable in its dignified vulnerability as it is in its significance,” *Kyp Harness*, singer/songwriter, cartoonist, author of *Wigford Rememberies*, Nightwood Editons; www.kypharness.net

“Allison Grayhurst is the Queen of Catharsis. Her poems are like cathedrals witnessing and articulating in unflinching graphic detail the gritty angst and grief of life, while taking it to rare clarity, calm and comfort in an otherwise confusing world of deception, mediocrity and degradation. Allison Grayhurst takes the sludge of life, and with fearless sharpness of eye and heart she spins it free of maggots with the depth of honour and passion. Allison Grayhurst's work is haunting, majestic and cleansing, often leaving one breathless in the wake of its intelligence, hope, faith and love amidst the muck of life. Many of Allison Grayhurst's poems are simply masterpieces booming with thunderous insight begging to be in Bartlett's Quotations, lines such as "I drink necessity's authority." Nothing is wishy-washy in the realm of Allison Grayhurst. Allison Grayhurst's work is sustaining, enriching, and deepening for the soul to read... a light of sanity in the world. As a poet, Allison Grayhurst is a lighthouse of intelligent honour... indeed, intelligence rips through her work like white water,” *Taylor Jane Green*, BA, RIHR, CHT, Registered Spiritual Psychotherapist and author of *Swan Wheeler: A North American Mythology and The Rise of Eros*.

“Her poems read like the journal entries of a mystic – perhaps that what they are. They are abstract and vivid, like a dreamy manifestation of soul. This is the best way, in prose, one can describe the music which is ... the poetry of Allison Grayhurst,” *Blaise Wigglesworth*, *Oh! Magazine: Ryerson's Arts and Culture Voice*.

“Grayhurst’s poetry is a translucent, ethereal dream in which words push through the fog, always searching, struggling, and reaching for the powerful soul at its heart. Her work is vibrant and shockingly original,” *Beach Holme Publishers*.

"Allison Grayhurst's poetry appears visceral, not for the faint of heart, and moves forward with a dynamism, with a frenetic pulse. If you seek the truth, the physical blood and bones, then, by all means, open the world into which we were all born," *Anne Burke*, poet, regional representative for Alberta on the League of Canadian Poets' Council, and chair of the Feminist Caucus.

"Read at your peril. You will never look at this world in quite the same way again. Your eye will instinctively search the sky for eagles and scan the dark earth for the slightest movement of smallest ant, your heart will reach for tall mountains, bathe in the most intimate of passions and in the grain and grit of our earth. Such is Allison Grayhurst. Such is her poetry," *Eric M. Vogt*, poet and author.

"Grayhurst is a great Canadian poet. All of Allison Grayhurst's poetry is original, sometimes startling, and more often than not, powerful. Anyone who loves modern poetry that does not follow the common path will find Grayhurst complex, insightful, and as good a poet as anyone writing in the world today. Grayhurst's poetry volumes are highly, highly recommended," *Tom Davis*, poet, novelist and educator.

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

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

WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT THE POETRY OF ALLISON GRAYHURST

"WHEN I READ ALLISON GRAYHURST'S POETRY, I AM COMPELLED BY THE INTENSITY AND STRENGTH OF HER SPIRITUALITY. HER PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF GOD DRIVES HER POETRY. 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 UNDLULATE THROUGH THESE PARADOXES WITH MUCH FEELING AND OFTEN LEAVE ME BREATHLESS, SHAKEN. ALLISON GRAYHURST'S POEMS ARE BOTH BEAUTIFUL AND DIFFICULT TO BE-HOLD." 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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