



THE RIVER
IS BLIND

ALLISON GRAYHURST

The River is Blind

Allison Grayhurst

Edge Unlimited Publishing

The River is Blind
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Table of Contents

Deep Breath In	7
Body of Water	8
Needle	9
What face?	10
Back	11
Train	12
Now I am Two	13
I see differently	14
It's been months	15
Our Time	16
Now you are	17
Intimacy	18
Time like . . .	19
Attached	20
Lament	21
The Bells	22
Dance	23
Rest	24
Fidelity	25
Why have I died	26
long ways and no ways	27
Waiting	29
I go inside	30
Bowl of candy	31
I turn the corner and	33
Desires traversed	35
Seamless	37
Edified	39
Will you keep me	40

Box	42
Claimed	44
It starts	46
this prevails	47
Myopic	48
Open Valve	50
Our Light Cannot Always Burn Whole	52
Grace mightier than Natural Law	54
Cropped	57
Yes	58
Surrogate Dharma	60
Structures I pretend to own	62
I wait for you	64
Matrimony	65
I heard a poet say	66
Called	68
Plastic	70
Sanguine	72
Quagmire	74
Little Bell	75
Broken	76
Thirst	77
What it is I want	78
Find me	79
Emptied	80
Without	81
better	82
Stay	83
I would not thirst	84
Linked	85
Something found	86
Rapture When Walking	87
Coiled	88

Myth	89
Trickle	90
Changing skins	91
Madness like Medicine	92
Do not define me	93
Too Long	94
You Would Not Have Me	95
Moments Before Merging	96
Like Clothes, Concealing	97
River	98
At the door	99

Deep Breath In

Just what is it - a savage distance that swells
between myself and freedom. Shackles and blocked
horizons. The smell of urine and rats like oracles eyeing
my feet, nibble away at the miracle I have found.
I will wait until evening when everything is quiet, wait,
then claim my desire, plugged and unwholesome, fermenting
like the sweet blood of a star, expanding in the blackness,
slaughtering the quiet space, the nothing space of just being
still. Still, I know nothing of, as these thoughts uninhibitedly
dance and drape across my spiritual, blessed awakening.
Bless the golden morning, an arm uncovered dangling
over the edge and fingers, strong and brave as magic.
I've lost my taste for distractions.
Just what is it - to live at full capacity, on the verge
beating, violent, powerful and patient
as unrequited sex.

Body of water

Death is a stream I must undress
to enter to know its cool wetness in every
crease of my flesh, melding with me like an
expanse of skin. I've been waiting, moaning
at the dilemma of existing - ecstasy and nights
of bedding sleeplessness like a lover I cannot release.
You love me in the cave, in the lightless kingdom
of your melancholy and your rage. Lift me now from
this drowning. I feel sick as though all my air is gone. There
is so much weight inside of me –
the choking, the squeezing out
of my mortality. I cannot stop.
My head aches like a locked room on fire -
chlorophyll all around and mid-day is a serpent
emerging from between my toes.
You let me burn the incense.
I burned it, and I cannot breathe now without those scents
to wade in and soothe my despair.

Needle

Would it be power or the soft faith
of idolatry that brought you empty-handed
upon this Earth?
Because your history is poison to my heavier
heaven, I should be running parallel to your great
evolution, but I am not.
Your moods are total, obsessive as fungi -
growing shallow until everything is blinded
under your curtain. I used to love you - the facts
in your brain, your anti-cultural immaturity, your freedom
from the process. You, only tied to the result. I used to stay
up all night, half-a-human,
fumbling through books for a deeper
education. I used to be becoming, not this hard
calcified thing dependent on your reflection - a slave
to your dragon, to your brutal needs.
You used my brokenness to mould yourself a follower.
I followed you, but now that
is over.

What face?

A moody afterglow - the error of thoughts, hopeless when it comes to laughter and the power of worship. On the table, there are self-deeds, failed revelations, kneading and prying wide a soul that doesn't want to be recognized. I want you to allow me this success, to find the flavour of your eyes, shape them with tools and my thumbs, to press the flat hard edges of my palms against your cheekbones, press and form the cause of your pride, your loneliness that seems so important to maintain. Curled toes and chins, your chin is becoming, shifting from strong to soft. You are neither masculine or feminine. You are privileged - to be so beautiful and uncommitted to a single way of looking. Look. Your hair - long or cut off? In real life, there is no perfect symmetry. You are bold, accurate - your nose and the lines around your mouth is my contemplation. Let me know you. Be courageous. Let me pry, split and mould your inner workings until it is clear (for both of us) as love.

Back

Carelessly moving from place to place
but changeless as a brick under a porch
and strong as that brick: A taste
of stagnation, purified by the bonds that have kept
you from fulfillment. There is heat drying
your light, dead things that have been making
their way beside your immaculate arms.
I have been trying to
lift them with my hands. But my hands
are made of thin glass. And these things
have thighs and impenetrable open eyes, looking at you -
wondrous lover, missionary of the current. It is only them
between us, between the wall and the way out.
Take this mortal thinning and give nothing to regrets:
We sing for each other and you are free. I feel it
in the sparrows lined along the roofline and in
your tired features morphing into winter branches -
richer brown, moist - like just before
a spring bloom.

Train

Kneeling on the train tracks: Resigned to this dangerous meditation - a risk of steel wheels on flesh and flattened limbs. Kneeling because I cannot move or adhere to the voices in my head singing of an intimate shower, a transmutation of my solidarity and how I see my special self - love from everywhere singing, dwelling in my sleep which is never sleep but wide-awake dreams and turning from side to back. Kneeling, I hear nothing coming, but it will come - heavy, unstoppable, driven with pure intent. Kneeling until I can claim this destiny without shame, stare at the treasure of hands and lips and touch back, until I weep my centre raw, until I carry nothing but the moment, love again - sadness, shadows, unwashed hair, desperate desire – until I can sleep and stop kneeling – head neither turned up nor down. Kneeling, hearing a distant moan, a vibration – inevitable as this kneeling I must but I cannot not yet not yet let go of.

Now I am Two

It is this way, togetherness:

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

**The snow falls like rain as the afternoon moves
without time, our hands pressed as one,
lips and then, something better. Always
miraculous, unexpected, awakening. Always
us, vanishing and then re-emerging with these things
of harmony and friction engulfing our scent and path. Soon,
the tiger lilies will bloom and being
just us will be made difficult
with the children gathered in our arms. But this 'difficult' is
whole and adds to our liberation - making coffee, laughing
at things shared and only ours.**

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

I see differently

**I see things differently,
like lyrics and shades,
differently than the cold pale mouth
of worry and intellectual revelation.
I feel things differently - what was empty,
just background,
a faint perfume, is now sharp, suffocating,
expecting so much from my guarded solitude.
I walk differently, hesitating at the sound of birds,
watching lines in the clouds, a child angry with
her mother and the small cracks on the sidewalk stone.
I sleep differently as though I never do, remembering
each hour passing in the depth
of daydreams not sleep dreams,
not resting, but rising, my breath, my flame, living
and musical.
I wake differently, never tired, but full of throbbing,
heavy beating
and the spring is almost here, trapped
in 'the-moment-before', in the power of painted hair
and earlobes caressed and kissed.
I love differently, like I've never loved, demanding
the wind, the desert, a vigil of remarkable intensity.
Love, lacking
dilemmas. Love, like a place to play, playing,
then laying flat out and waiting for
rain, a hand, or stars.**

It's been months

since this shell's
collapsed and I have been intoxicated
with this hard joy of immediacy and a world
without blunder or hesitation. It has been irritating -
to feel this hot longing in my gut,
reflecting on nothing, worrying about
nothing but the smells around me,
the power of pale hands
too close to so many faces -
the long black rope I climb and climb and love like
my only wardrobe. It has been months since I left
that heavy weight behind. Guilt
is something I've outgrown
and my blood feels poisoned
by this strange alchemy.
I know it is not female or male,
but saturated with desire and burning and swelling -
not in flashes, but constant as the pulsing sun.
The unsettling of this surprising
heaven - the knowing that I can look no further than today -
seeing both like an insect and like a god -
breathing through the terror,
at peace with the terror and the thousand lifetimes
it took to get me
to this place, unbound - sliced in all the hard places
and so. and so.
explosively, barbarously
connected.

Our Time

One time, gentle as
an easy friendship, singular,
melting waters together.

One time, hard as
sobbing exaggerated,
a comet touching Earth.

Two times, small, awkward,
fleeting as an image in a cloud.

Four times, sure, obvious as
resurrection - touch narrowed, concise,
an album of exact sensation.

Last time, a being was born
from this authority, ecstasy became heavy,
exploding a thousand golden flowers.

Next time, I will stop counting and be like time,
there without an echo. I will be a painter, a beggar,
tied to the taste, venturing closer, closest, but
no further.

Now you are

**Were you the jealous seeker?
Always annihilating intimacy, but craving
a pulsating communion? Were you stuck
on magic and the stagnant fallacy of control?
Were you pinned to a savage terror,
hating everything that made you feel - trees, a follicle of hair,
the smell of summer approaching?
Are you through with that now? Covered as you are
with deep eternal connection -
limbs and kisses, words and no fear
behind what might be opened?
Are you through with the angel armour,
the denial of touch, your secret superiority?
Are you on the balcony? It is still a long way to the light.
People are mostly ghosts and you are always desperate,
full of instinct, shunning, and the comfort of solitude.
But you are through with make-belief, with yourself being
a rock of brilliant hues. You are through. You are accepting
all that stands here - love. trust. fierce truth –
made again and again
by such brightness.**

Intimacy

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

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

Time like . . .

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

Attached

Ride on, suddenly departing
like a magician - basking on
the threshold where you kneel and spill
your secrets into the mud.
You should have stopped, before your body
grew in stress and your mask like pale lips turned
greyer, unintentionally drained.
But on you went, instead of speaking, you ran
forward, smelling of silence, intoxicated with danger,
flaming high with your own deceit - a vibration
to reckon with - your regret finally torn
like the inside of a coffin
from hands that refuse defeat.
I was behind you, always facing your back.
You painted yourself a target and drew me a lie. We all
lie, you said. You promised me nothing but the shallow rush
of living in your glorious and destructive
wake.

Lament

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

The bells

The bells speak of a hurt
that is mounting the circumference
of a life, mourning the death that splinters the arteries,
the hip bones, each vertebra. Begging to the stars to tell
a colossal fable, a majestic myth
to solve this boring condition
of being here, away from the infinite sky, swallowing
mounds of dirt where many others have had their footprints.
Speak of woods, and of creatures that love but cannot
laugh. My lover, I am freed from the concrete
chamber - you freed me and helped me find
an arrow. There is ringing in my ears and a sorrow
triumphant, clinging to me like barnacles.
It is what I have chosen - to not pretend and to kindle
a primal inspiration. Desire like a ceremony -
days of meditation long past, but trances and
swaying and throwing words out, guttural,
epidemic with desire, those days are here.
On the roof, hands at my side. Hurt in my ankles and
in my teeth: A snake is in the front garden and
I am watching it.

Dance

Inside a fleeting redemption;
subterranean stones stoning
in ice-minutes; tenderness splintered.
My brain has formed a different
diameter - better without love, without
incantations and unprofitable rituals.
My hands have hollowed out the kitchen, pillaging
spoons, pots and sponges. This is no
communion. Here, no priest can enter
these floors clothed. Self-pity received in
a little container - opened and disposed of
but returning in mouldy residues. My legs
are hard to lift, hard to remember to own them like
I do these hands.

Things I pretended to be
are gone. Choices have failed to strengthen.
Faith is a ghost the light shines through,
cannot be articulated, has morphed into a caricature
of past ripenings. How I wish I could close my eyes,
release myself from the weight of being.

I could ride a train, take it across the border.
I could be like the young woman who fell - was she
dancing on the bridge's rail and forgot the distance? or
simply bloated on drugs and insanity's youthful wake?
How strange that her asymmetrical face
and lithe beauty remain, so you think of her
as one of the fortunate - because of the fall,
because she fell while dancing, and you have forgotten how
to surrender.

Rest

Softer than foam

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

I make a mould of your footprints,

hang them over the washing machine.

I climb the scaffolding

fearless of my natural fears -

lifting mortar into a pale, bricklaying and laying out bricks
to seal a song, ready then

to pull out of the quicksand and feed you
in your darkness.

Pooling flies

in the jungle of your fragmented emotions.

What you cut off will never grow on its own

until you splice a branch of your bones and bind it fresh
in a ritual of rejoining.

You were born devouring splinters. I cannot change you,
but I can rest my hands on your shoulders, help you

to trust the feeling of family. I can stay,

give you a fork to eat with, make it soft,

and that soft will intoxicate,

thread a cushioned contoured protection.

It will stretch around you, satiate

with womb-like warmth.

Fidelity

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

Why have I died

like Icarus? Or like cotton candy,
dissolving in lukewarm saliva?

Five weeks without pay, and
the weather is morbid,
plays upon my skin like fireants.

You took what I denied and changed
what was paltry into paramount -
my feet pressed against your calves, lifting
into the pressure, just
to have a choice.

Why have I died? My neck cut
against the broken window
as a resolution to my determination to see beyond the pane -
repeating like a recurring dream, developing a wider lack -
lush pulsing, possessing your sternum
where I rest my panting will upon.

I am dead. Can't you see my decay? Can't you see
the violence expanding in my throat?
How have I died? before nirvana? after the bliss
of a mother's faith?

The sparrows come close.
They know not to fear a dead thing.
They land on my foot with its multitude of intricate bones,
tendons and memories of backyard earth.
They look around, peck below where still
remains some warmth.

Once I fed them - minuscule fledglings
fallen after a storm. Now I am over.
I do not eat. I do not feed you
or anyone anymore.

Long ways and no ways

Out of phase with the frame others are drawn to. At last,
illuminated, released from artificial expectations.

You will not correspond or accelerate into my atmosphere.

My magic is inward, and the gravel you picked
up and misplaced, rolling it over your lips
to find a perfect indentation, I have held it too –
for moments at a time, swinging in the wind,
fruitful. But I know that is not my natural practice or
a possible habitation for me.

I must stand behind boards with
the spiders, while you are sunning -
an artery of pearl-like significance,
attentive, lubricating glory, improving
your already abundant harvest.

I will not make you flash-cards to categorize my plight,
or give you the pulley cord of my broken development
to pull and make use of. I am not a substitute
for a makeshift wedding ring.

My only protection is to give up. So I give
you up. Your glorious atlas open, appealing to the otherwise
immobile crowd, but not to me.

I've left the track, left this road

I picked - for one year I have been walking and have met
so few believers. It has been inadequate. You
have been fraudulent and have unknowingly plagued
the thrusts of my yearning. Energy matters:
what doesn't fit doesn't graduate
into a tangible weight, will never be
sun or iceberg.

Long ways I have loved. For hours, I have kissed
the bridge of your nose,
conscious of my fixation. In my bed,
I offered you supremacy.

Now summer draws me away, tells me this work is done,
asks me to go forward, to map and mend
a child's ragdoll that fell overboard
where the ocean stretches on and keeps
no hidden crevices for toys or wounds.

Waiting

is secondary, serves
to sustain the illusion. Better
to bathe in the molten heat, dig out weeds and pay the bills.
Better than pretending the chalk drawing won't fade,
that the overalls fit and the twirling webs glittering
in the sun do so solely for beauty's sake,
not as nature's balance
to its otherwise invisibility.

Formations, adrenaline - geese call
as they split the undertones of sky. It is better
to have no fences, no boundaries actualized
by the mind's pride, no tangible hopes
of personal importance. The sidewalks are torn up
and there is nowhere to put my feet. I don't believe
in waiting, being patient while aroused.

Once upon a time a child's voice
was all I needed to save me - once there were scooters,
pigtails and baseball caps. Damn my world
for changing, for making me ready, but falling behind,
insufficient to nourish this latest being that has arisen.

I will not wait, not be killed daily
without knowing climax or the aftermath
when nerves stop scurrying and there is quiet
enough to collect good memories.
Better to partake in war or to crush anthills.
Better to be left in my monastery where the brick walls
have a shadowy sustaining glow and my lover's heart
is walnut strong, drained of expectations,
giving, yes, but rudimentary, self-contained.

I go inside

to hide
from the wind and
the windy things the wind brings
like popsicles, icicles
and cloud watchers on their backs
ashamed to speak without symbols.
I retreat from the rocky mounds where
toddlers hold their picnics and the cardinals
rest, oblivious of camouflage.
The daydream that sustained me all last year
has weakened in potency, now is just a fleeting habit,
a camper's terrain I travel to, flooded,
swampy and putrid, fraught
with the imagined memories of sing-songs and linked torsos,
clogged now with pestilence and unrealized connection and
the stars. I still see them overhead,
ordinary, insignificant - never astounding enough
to bleed cosmic capacity into my dilated veins.
Veins waiting to be juiced, to be breached
of their thin-layered confinement - myself waiting to be more
than a catalyst. So many reasons to keep moving,
but none impregnate my spirit, none immerse me or
insist that I take up arms. My arms.
They are hanging, tingling. They are not
me. I am in hiding, away
from the wind and the windy things
the wind brings, part of the pile of the undeclared, an
illegible signature.

Bowl of candy

It falls and it dies, dried
blood on a tombstone -
palliative care, parallel petals
of varying hues. Leaning against
a concrete pole plastered with posters of faded
dreams, dreaming their last gasp - ambulances,
lawnmowers, bird sounds - feeling the sun's
rough tongue circle and slide with moist intensity
over the sleeves of my new jacket.

I feel the civilized crowd, absent of judgment,
crossing streets, side-stepping grates. What does it mean
to be disguised as a butterfly or hospital nurse? Pacing
the torrid tea stores, listening to the woodpeckers, wishing
I could be so industrious. But
my hands were made heavy and
I continue dragging my head like a rock, lifting it
into the sky, over airplane tracks,
and vegetable patch gardens.

Sorrow is open, festers like boredom,
breathing an unmarked passage
through my vascular system. Wobbly and wanting only
to be taken, to let my thoughts be devoured
by survival and sensation -
one more week of salt without substance,
to be a mole in a wave

of fragrant calamity, to awaken in a bed with hands
covering my chest and trembling in the shower stall -
walking, walking - vines and the roots of old trees -
whistling in my ears - flint and enlightened temperatures,
silver and worn. How does everything enter?

Am I the sea? Am I a balcony or a rooftop?
Away from this place, I will never be pardoned or at peace.
Maybe this is just wilderness and burning,
but never once did I know stagnation or
was I afraid.

I turn the corner and

**someone has been here, picking up clover,
invading front lawns, rebelling against privacy.
A rat's corpse as slender as a leaf lies at my feet.**

**I kneel down to meet it and I am stuck, retrieving
information about decay, the smell of a flattened skull
and the effect of dehydration. I get up. I walk
around not over, and butterflies are moving. They are
wrinkled energy lines, producing abstract patterns near
sturdy bushes. All roads are shattered
if I look closely enough -
mini-fault lines of labyrinth tubing curiously crushed
like the nutshell is under my heel.**

**Summer is almost beginning -
heat encroaches and people smile
untrustworthy but predictable.
Dogs are minerals of volatile emotion
which they never struggle to conceal.
The moon is still in the sky. It should not
be there like it is, a half-faded stamp,
pale on blue, larger, closer
than the obvious sun.**

**In my fantasy, pine cones are eatable. There,
there is courage enough in every relationship
to feed the demands
of wedded intimacy. And I can sketch tall, yellow weeds.
I can even paint
the striking space between them like dialogue.**

**I can carve the curves
of a sitting brindle squirrel, carve
where the tail meets the spine
and the spine, two twitching ears.**

**In my mind I am actualized, verified and seen,
vague dread is much like a pebble tossed and lost
under a parked car. Anytime I look into another's eyes,
be it a hawk, child or mild foe -
there is the colour of wet river stones,
a healthy delirium, the feeling of faintly floating
through deep-breath ministrations, into
puzzle-piece convergence.**

Desires traversed

There are lines that frame me in negative expectations.
There are sweet tufts of weeds
I would like to pet like a kitten.
And eyelashes that spark a gentle nostalgia.
There are too many eras
walked through, never to be re-entered,
and remnants of lore and legends
like pigeon droppings on pavement, washed away by storm.
I have grown too used to the drapes being closed,
to all mannerisms of my fugitive vitality being ignored.
Saturn is a vacuum, galactic in its weighty substance
and in its cold temperature push -
condensing my liquid garden into impenetrable ice.
A tightening in my intestines. Shoelaces undone and left.
I eat the seeds I am supposed to discard.
I am beyond knowing if
I am broken. And oh the circle of things! Up the escalator.
Colour-coded stars. A dermal abrasion.
Things conspire like sunken feet in the mire
unwinding of doom. Archaeology I cannot speak of,
guaranteeing a false result.
Straining to sound a faith that will cleanse.
Distances crossed, to point to and witness
the handicap of being a single being
amongst a kaleidoscope of organic tapestry.
Shifting to let go, to imagine archangel
power and not have it substituted with
a neutralizing force - a force that stops the growth
of artful transformation.

There are hills and hallways that draw me to their altars.
Little did I know that dreams too long waited on
become waterlogged, that suffering is not
a stigma or a banner to flaunt, and love,
is mostly about honouring inner limitations,
challenging them to consolidate, regain momentum then
unequivocally be breached or be immutably restored.

I am dissolved into this squeezing, into denying
the little that I know that quivers precise,
deconstructing the intricate
solidity of greed and hard resilient walls.

Orbits are barb-wired.
Countdowns counting, dictating short spurt breaths.
As my tendons stretch
only in my imagination. And these doorways become
sunsets I stand straddled across.

History is a hyena, grotesquely curved,
pulling down royal constellations.
I have learned that peace can be a pyre
where loins burn exquisite, can also be a dishonest maturing,
where desires are reduced to fruit fly annoyances,
where coming to terms with reality
is a step toward entropy.

Little did I know that bodies melt with their spirits -
more than dead houses or gloves, defining one tick, one
conjoining of fibers, pulsing a fingerprint, pulsing
one lifetime possessed.

Seamless

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Edified

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

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

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

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

Will you keep me

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

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

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

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

But there is more straw on my veranda
than there are stones, more I must conquer to gain.
Outside is not liberating. It rides in
on a limping mare and severs me from holistic learning.
The eagles arrive never asking for remuneration,
but they are useless
as they stream through rainclouds.
They never own anything -
not the cliffs they claim, not prey, and not their offspring.
So will you keep me,
now that I am ambushed by your requests,
thoroughly excavated - liver and marrow - no more,
now that I am gone,
and I have given up every potential shore?
Will you play on my step,
keep me from running, from fading headlong
into a banal madness, keep me
from becoming roadkill, dust
in a never-ending duststorm?

Box

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

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

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

The box is handprints on glass, fingers drawing biological notes. Open. Each time time has no bearing. Each time venturing, the box is a blade, contracting - multiplying an adrenalin spectrum. Each time excessive sensitivity expounds, actualizes, there, flushing. What is given, returns larger - corners are lifted, four-sided confinement collapses as two fibrous silhouettes gain height, hum tangible, hold steady and then mutually unroll.

Claimed

Yesterday I stayed on the hammock near the shaded cliff,
watching the two-folded yellow flower.

Bodies are not bodies but conditions
of unique collaborations.

Desire is there like a distance that must be crossed,
fuelled forever by lack. It is
salt, and like salt it loses its parameters
when boiled, plumbing up and seasoning
a stiff grain.

Organs pump at alternate rates - organs as rocks
damming the current. Desire claimed as a quelling
of self-contained essence, a sweeping clean of virginal
magnificence, cloistering what is left on an island
where roots form in fleshy sand.

It is only me rolling out this loosened rubble, falling
on reptilian ground where camouflaged creatures keep pace
with higher footprints, crush those footprints
with sharp crusty toes.

I want to die between clouds, want more space
to swim in, a supermarket of strawberries to count
and mount like a mattress.

Tongues jet out, mapping words, keeping quiet
about their other erotic duties, canceling
what should be claimed,
masking it in tinfoil so it will shine.
It will shine but it will not ripen.

I was curved on this cloth between two trees, in a state
of capture. There I understood that what sorts itself out is
a blank statement, ghost suns and eruptions
that speak like volcanic tickings, spawning uphill - epidemic.
I understood that if there ever was a chance
to unlatch myself from fate,
I would take it.

That I am damned, already a busted instrument -
splintered dark-stained-wood piled remorsefully
on somebody's knees.

To hell with being uplifted.
I will never know sky, or the bliss of a boat on open waters.
I will stay on this swing, transmitting
my cellular weight into images - dehydrated
instead of plunging,
angry instead of forgiving, intolerant of the mediocrity
that swirls around my expanse of space like a broom,
hurling up into the atmosphere what should be collected
and brought to waste.

The truth is, I can't co-operate with the soothsayers.
Because the truth is, lying there I understood
that what is final, eternally claimed, is the colour red,
broad-leafed or bare of leaves, it makes itself known
like rising bile, enters
like forced medicine that pockmarks the belly-interior, rises,
leaving bits of itself behind, enough to doctor even
a resistant inherent chemistry.

It starts

**like precipitation, infusing
iron seeds that rest atop the ozone-dome
and flourish. Somehow I am coming to terms with
churches I will never go back to, and last-year's friends
who own creative nobility but fail to nourish.**

**It is starting, culminating like a blood clot,
anchoring me to my drive, wringing out my squishy insides
until they are parched, until the robin's song
registers austere.**

**Escape happens in the morning,
wading through yesterday's debris,
fascinated by scars and euphoria that comes
opening airways.**

**Can I conceive of a crime that will not haunt?
There are rules to follow, bones that fit into sockets,
sacred formations that must not be tampered with,
and speeches spoken, brave enough to own on paper.**

**Biting is war; be it biting on silver,
gently marking areolas, or lacerating wet teabags.
I forfeited what I thought was a shield, sure it was
more than only emptiness swelling. It was
a birthmark, nihilism reclining over my pre-destined zenith.**

**There are things that start then overtake.
They emerge pure as children,
touch ground and vaporize. August is hard.
In that critical heat, everything that wavers between worlds
gets erased - splits up into two categories
of corpses and lifeforms that take celestial flight - ends up
where water sinks or where water concentrates,
either way, falls
but does not flow.**

this prevails

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

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

**Holding is indefinite. Years counted are like ivory
appropriated, but at what cost?**

**We lift up our shirts, place ears over navels,
dwarfing any future with instinctual immediacy.**

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

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

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

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

Myopic

There is too much to say
and nothing to do after it's been said.
Commotion kills my throat,
starts like a heat-wave, anticipated.
That is a discomfort I frequent.

Others form techniques that neatly construct
and dispose of information.
They define symbols that filter light,
use three letter examples, harming no-one
when they disappear.
They do not strain in the depths, but grip the depths,
then let it go.

When I try to swallow what's core,
it lodges between my teeth,
swells my gums, overextends my jaw, until it malfunctions
like the rest I covet, inadequately burning.

It would be good to combust, be direct as ambition, cut
an indispensable horizon from a deflated balloon.
But I am free and I choose to fizzle,
I choose these backwards repetitions - pressure
that is purely exhale. I don't know how
to point without pushing,
how to relax vertically as a willow tree,
or be like a park bench -
offering considerable comfort to those
who have walked too long.

I find myself fixated first on detail,
spending long sessions with my microscope, discovering
blooming atoms, food crumbs, enthusiastic correlations
of the tiny to the oversized.
Then I find myself bleeding out their definitions, running
to theatres where I can be stimulated
by abstract reflection.
I enter a clear understanding with half-closed eyes,
willfully smudging lines, numbers, concise melodies.
Others are sufficient, contented to observe
elements moving, sometimes rotating,
immune like strict realism is
to crazed impressionistic form.

Open Valve

I see a small tree
or a bush grown tall
where animals congregate on spindly branches,
lift up on their hind legs to nibble at buds.

I see the tip of a steeple pierce the skin of the sun,
liberating a liquid radiation, a voluminous spell
of brutish creation. More still, found in smells
and in houses with decorated front doors - a smorgasbord
of captivating elegance to consume.

I hear angelic chatter, a high-pitched verbosity,
dimensional sound, enveloping, filling those places I walk by
that even ghosts have abandoned.

The forest floor I am captain of
is embroidered with fine strands of rooted hope,
carpets made to curl toes on, made regardless
of other fruitions pillaged, fountains frozen, or children
discovered emaciated - jaundice seeping into their mouths,
tainting tangles of youthful hair.

Looking up, looking down, coalescence clings to bark
like clay-mask granules. I am building on this forest floor,
spreading out like a legion of detached twigs
fallen over corner curbs. Like them,
I am proclaiming artistry in the natural-norm,
gratitude for subtle ingenuities.

I see a way to effectively engage, disengage my body
from sticking to aluminum walls. I see a way to remember
the vegetables I planted, the wilderness that rises not-yet
to my knees. I see what it is that shields my sanity
from a dangerous rupture. It is air,
birdprints waxing the sky, delightful overflowing,
so overflowing
that it drowns any recollection of downpours, defusing
currents and currents of catastrophic cold.

Our Light Cannot Always Burn Whole

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grace mightier than Natural Law

What if eternity was marked in a mirror,
and we lived there like animated ornaments,
reproducing each dot of matter as reflection?

Especially love

drilled into the furrows of fear, or love
withstanding betrayal by latching firmly to devotion?

What if what we perceived as solid is itself artificial
and that true existence is elsewhere, is a multi-layered
holographic construction coating our reality?

As if death was the overture of our lives,
rooted in continuance and
not defeat.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cropped

Incessant noises, beating
down my glow - airplanes and dogs
voicing their aggressive anxiety. Too much
space to fill with disembodied eyelids - except to say,
I am better off knowing what to hide and with whom.
Everyone I talk to insulates me, be it in vast or narrow
confines. I don't need to suffer
or hunger for what is not mine
or for an intimacy more accurately labeled illusion.
Animals walk by me and I am drawn into their interiors.
I am drawn to look through the physicist's window
and laugh at certain logic used to dismiss the ranks of God
and creatures that gallop, burn-up in back alleyways,
escaping definition.
I don't know if sand is like stars, but it is a fragrant research
to find out, fumbling with layers, branching out on tiptoe.
It is a pistil attracting pollen, a prescription
to illuminate grief and cherishing.
Just as when faced with illness,
the superfluous gets skimmed,
it is essential to honour the need for certainty in all forms
of love, it is essential to see that which struggles
always ends up shivering in its bonds, eventually learns
that letting go is a prerequisite before achieving threshold,
before the welling up, the grand unshackling groan
of a peace-inducing
implosion.

Yes

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

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

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

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

This is our alchemy stripped of ethics.
This is us as a curry powder-and-turmeric mix, mixed,
we enhance one another's scent and tone. Yes,
I will stay with you, stay with our patterns locked
in perfect spiraling aberration, stay on side streets,
on wet park floors,
under our green roof, stay with you,
holding with solidarity our sunken joys,
precarious compulsions, dandelions or maggots, holding
a constant means of God-given
restoration.

Surrogate Dharma

I didn't think I would get lost
or be chained to a contractual victory.
I thought a grain would grow,
become a solid garden. Fires would come, then
firefighters. I would be testifying about
the worth of what survived.

That is not what happened. I fell prey
to the propaganda of affirmations,
to the volume of control I could contain.
My dream dropped out of me
like a miscarriage. I hoped I could forget:
Tie my shoes, zip up a coat
and kiss the shelter I have. Bridges here and there -
they are not mine to travel.
Vinegar keeps getting injected into my bones,
replacing the marrow with
its potent clarity. Do you see? I am getting older.
It will be over
and I have to be able to say I served well.
My mouth opens and folds like a fledgling wing.
People pass - each one a violin note, a digit, a reluctant
panting pitch. Conversations are ash.
I don't like living in these elements, my neck
stretched up into the dense middle
of a monsoon. Let me climb,
dragging this dead beast behind me.
Let me live where my father went to school,
on a Himalayan peak.

I am not a petal. My courage is fickle, it fortifies or fades,
dependent each day on mutual obligatory infatuation.

I can't keep pretending:

The sun is strong. The night is strong. I am not stronger.

I am in this hovel with my lamp, tasting metal
of varying textures -

rusted, gold, and other star-erupted symbols -

greeting obscurity, broken toenails

I can't be bothered to trim. How many rooms, my God?

How much waiting and walking, and the fish?

I could be a fish. Make me

one of those - sliding about, weaving

with one full-body stroke

through a lush intricate terrain, mastering

a juicy undergrowth.

Structures I pretend to own

Organs flayed

Nightmares understood

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

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

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

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

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

I saw a strawberry swallowed,

progress from being a fruit to being

a taste-bud treasure. I was engulfed in vastness,
cultivating a pattern.

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

God loves most things with a sense of humour,
with an unexpected discharge. Energy cannot be
damaged, but it can pulse too quickly,

get caught in a tachycardia loop,

be confined to a fixed pathway like a spasm, repeating,
stagnant in its activity. That is not love.

It leads to heart failure, lacking

arousal, inflammation, surprise. That is a condition where
sludge is formed and purity is suffocated, and all and all

it is not very crisp. The result is not creation,
movement only, not breathing.

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

I wait for you.

**You come
with catechisms, rising from
cracks in the over-used parking lot.
I'm not sure of the cost of this anticipation,
staring at you like a sage stares through a window.**

**You come while I am in this gestation
and you coat my palms with your touch
like hair conditioner, smelling almost artificial.
I would like to eat you to see if you are real.
I would like to seal you in a jar,
lick the tip and cliff of your prized Adam's apple.**

**You are here and talking, and your words
are like lard lacing my tongue.
How I keep watching and waiting for you to use me,
to pour me into a small capsule, ingest me like a remedy.
I have skin-dived into a torrent wave for you,
my creases and crevices drenched
in a salty fire. Weld me now fully to your form.**

**I can't remember what it was like to be converted.
I just remember this waiting, hearing you enter my house
when the cats are sleeping.**

**You are arriving again - this time,
glacial, annihilating, gorging on my submission.
You pace my carpet with otherworldly steps. You come,
touching bookshelves, dog toys, the clothes
I only wear in private.**

**I watch you from that carpet and continue
paying my daily homage. I am waiting to know
your attachment, wanting your warm fingers
to conclusively enter.**

**Give me this bond and
I will give up my agitation, give you
absolute permission.**

Matrimony

I have been taken on as your lover. I will not deny it any longer, taken into a divine, subterranean refuge where my lungs separate with a sharp divide, squeezed apart like playdough, and that is not all that has been conquered or dismembered.

I trust this burning bond, but I am hardly keeping pace, letting all other responsibilities go, paying no mind to the traffic or to the baby squirrel at my doorstep.

I have been tagged your concubine, marked now with an irrefutable identification.

I am not in this body anymore, not like I used to be. I am flowing in and out of atmospheres, contained by dark matter into the surge of these succulent prayers that claim the wavelength of my individuality.

It has always been - you on top of me, me over your back, finally both of us abandoned to the pressure, moving in sync, blasting out a ferocious harmony.

And the crows, on treetops, never letting me out of their sight. You and them and dark wingspans cloaking the shell of my brain, causing an explosive beat, a ricocheting rhapsody - always just you and me - together, retreating from time, gesticulating our revelations, gyrating on beds, on cushions - scarves loose around our necks, force-feeding each other, promising this and that, and the sun. In my eyes, your sun, your legs beside mine have become mine. It has never been any different - I've been a fool to think it has - this tugging on my lead. Love, so much love, our love, is sweet, murderous.

I am trying to understand but I don't know how.

Tell me, I am listening. Expand everything then crush it in tight, blindingly bright, pinpoint.

I heard a poet say

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

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

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

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

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

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

Called

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

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

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

I have walked with him up and down the beltline,
rubbed his toes when they were tingling, ran the bath water
for him, filling it with lavender oil and sea salt,
and all through this, he never stopped glowing.
Once babes and now teenagers, depend upon his care.
Ceilings have cracked and collapsed over him. It has not
been easy waiting for that commission - at the window,
watching cars and cars and fire trucks go by, going into
other years, years that are not stars but swell like stars,
combust like stars, illuminating a voice,
his voice that cannot, has not
shut down.

Plastic

Plastered with glue,
sticking like betrayal like a spider's eggsack
to a branch. I watch your gorgeous
pontificating, watch you mourn just a little. The injury
rips only part of your body, fragments you.
Grief becomes a tremor,
an uncontrolled twitch under your left eye.

Everyday, I journey to the drug mart, handle
bread and vitamins in the same hour,
thinking of your music,
showered by these harmonic intonations
of your irate loneliness.
I will never get clean. I knock down garbage bags,
pocket unsharpened pencils,
buy myself some tea, thinking today I will let go,
rid myself of your domination,
purchase a splendid fantasy to replace
your magnetism - saw at roots, trust
the broken staircase and climb.

You have been kind, when your thumb strokes
the back of my neck or when you let laughter escape
from your stoic eyes. Money
has never been my brimstone or firewood –
there or not there, but always with the fragrance
of just-skinned leather. So
you see, that
is not what I want you for.

But I do want, and not just a portion of your stamina,
not just a gasp of deep disturbance, but to be at the vortex
of your desire, the one you rely on
to rebuild your toy train set.

It is too much, picking up shampoo bottles,
looking at lipstick. I know it is too much - these yearnings
that beat and these necessities I need
are the same, but you

are still in my mind
pushing, ploughing through and through,
saving me a plot beside your plot
beside the potpourri covering a stranger's grave.

Sanguine

One small awakening to accept
acceptance - a lethargic arm on my shoulder
weighing down. Air that is security
has never been my ocean.

I have never been able to trigger kinships
in a field of sunlight. No light
has more volume.

I am content in places where my imagination can reign,
where definition is arbitrary, redundant,
and not very useful.

I tried to love you, dive into your trachea, show
you the substance that enriches my cells. But we have
different vocations: I make windows. And you stand outside
with your scales of distraction, participating, socially at ease.

You have grown tall, wedded as you are
to the world's expectations.

What once was lean, marvelously eccentric,
has become typical, robust
as an animated ideal.

You gave up your awkward insecurities, replaced them
with suave affection and loveless sex. You are not warm,
though you feign warmth. You know how to act -
teethset in alignment, and your apparel - clean of cat hairs,
with the appropriate amount of ingenuity,
just enough to generate interest but not alarm.

Old people are getting older and dying,
they can hardly believe
it has come down to this. They lose their lovers,
have appendages aching with weakness - fingers
that cannot move on cue to stroke a cheek,
fingers that want to flesh out, plump up,
become tantalizing again.

I have taken you with my fingers,
awakening the soft space between
your naval and groin. I have laid across,
massaged every ounce of need
into the vulnerable region separating your hipbones.
And I would go further.
But you have no natural shade,
and it is too exhausting to keep toting around your wares.

You supplied me with inspiration. The postage is paid.
I must move closer to the edge of the road for you.
I must make room,
walk past, surpass, enter
my Rosewood red front door, without.

Quagmire

Coming down, knowing now
that everything known is blindness,
deciphered speculation - constellations out there
that spin, conjoin, burst and create
are mesmerizing but lifeless - into the future,
out from the past - the power is menacing, somewhat,
and somewhat stale, stagnant, just 'happening'
like storms happen and the rising of the moon.

Rain on a leaf or an orange tabby chasing a shadow is
accessible, pleasantly startling, metaphysically invasive.

Many serious intellects are left crawling
from the lack of sleep, from acquiring
too many codes and smug victories.

We are small, inside this body of God - a city,
drooling with arrogance and inquisitiveness.
That is us in motion, devouring
the zenith and charting out mysteries.

But things get caught on other things. Dead butterflies
can still glow - behind clean glass, inside Berber-carpeted
buildings, all fluorescent lights and classifications.

We can point and name and even think
that energy starts and ends, forget that everything
is circulation and that life here is simple.
It would rather copulate, raise offspring, than count stars.

Inside this body of God, we are cupped
in fluid boundaries, by instinct, by undeniable emotion,
stronger, yet part of, cerebral musings.
We feed from the Earth and we get hungry.

We have these telescopes, our catacombs of understanding,
but we also have pilgrimage, crust, heartbeat, dying,
soccer fields and song.

Little Bell

The bell is amputated from its string.
There will be no more ringing, no more
afternoons of speaking my confidences,
smoking them out from my private interior, onto
lips and into this stark atmosphere.

Love is not a digital emergence where pixels collide
until a picture forms or where music is made that has lost
any deep throat imperfection. Around here, I wear medals
I don't deserve, earned when my ovaries
were engorged with helium and I was trying to stay tethered,
to build myself a honeycomb of golden protection.

I don't know how to worship. I am too heavy to float
like some I know who find purification in fairy tales,
like some I drift from and back toward - but that drifting
is not burning, not a sacrificial bullet
that leaves a bloodstain of legendary proportions,
that turns everything into a symphony, never stops
electrifying the loins as well as
the imagination.

I am on the street and things are moving -
ten gulls circling in the sky, two bluejays in a tree,
and people I say hi to, smile at so strong
that for a time I am distracted
from my solitude. For a time I am sure I can understand
this side of the spectrum that is mine -
pallid tones, no more ringing,
love that loves at full capacity, experiences
the melody of joining, then is cut, dangling,
before it finds
lasting symbiosis.

Broken

Breaking bonds and bonds
that are breaking in spite
of efforts made and lifetimes of
glorious connection, in spite
of promises to never part and always be
like tall innumerable weeds, keeping alive
no matter the challenges to growth. Growth
once so great, celestial forms descended, joined
to contemplate and just listen.

Catapulted into the future with no way back,
into another lightyear spinning, picking up pebbles,
putting down shoes. Hoods and earmuffs, locking
eyes with the cold, locking tight with the bluegrey anguish
that breeds explosives inside the flesh of my tongue,
but is buried too deep beneath the tastebuds to ever emerge.

Pinecones retrieved from the spat-upon pavement,
to add to my obsessive collection. These pinecones
remind me that I too have dropped, naturally, from
my source - laying flat on an unforgiving surface, unable
to dig into softness and sprout.

Breaking bonds and bonds broken,
adding a slight shock of unpredictability
to an otherwise stagnant formation,
adding a wider scope, or memories
to later inhabit - small fields
where there is no viable substance,
only leftovers and
open space.

Thirst

Mapping out oblivion, putting
lines where there are no lines. Like the small moths
that live all year in my closet, nibbling at clothes
I forget to wear,
making a feast with what has been discarded -
I feel connection, but only at one end,
like cutting eyelids
out of clay: Finger-made eyes that cannot see,
cannot approach my trembling body, gaze over it
and crack the distance.

Entering this thirst like entering a church,
climbing wide stone steps,
being bombarded with that floral, incense smell, or
like warring with a round whitish eucharist wafer,
stuck to the roof of my mouth.
There is no garment to keep me warm,
no thistle to swallow, scarring
all the way down. There is only the afterbirth of this thirst,
void of the fattened wail, shadow, the kind
the TV traps in its frame.

How am I to dissipate this growing, encroaching wave, rest
like before, when my mouth was not so dry, rest
on a raft, my head leaning over, under seawater,
conversing calmly and feeling one with
schools of curious but contented swimmers?

What it is I want

To die this death and not be reborn,
to exit this tepid wake, be stopped
from forming and maturing in this blistering purgatory
of unleavened bread, not be a DNA strand, mutating
perfectly fine habits, or disrupting rituals to count on.

I cannot count on staying adjusted, same
as the everyday banker or any other grownup
whose disappointments have been diluted by the memory
of endearing acceptance and arms that reach
from behind so that all weight can fall, so that shoulders
can loosen and kisses can be established.

I want to tear at the tendon heels of uncertainty,
be simple as a dog in a happy home with dark eyes
and easy affection, be someone not sucked of colour -
sharp hairs protruding from every pore, a poor
collection of broken rocks that no bricklayer
would set his trowel down for and gather.

I want to be exposed as a lit lighthouse, as a mother
dealing with her temper-tantrum child, be circled,
again and again, entwined, tightened hard around,
clenched, wanting
only this tension, stillness, awakening here,
before the plummeting pulse,
before the movement of ecstasy, wanting nothing else
more, ever again.

Find me

Can I see it? Gravity like glue
or something more substantial like
the sigh of a sick child. Find me like
an open tulip, smooth, tangible liquid. Find me
like science is found enhancing the faint glow of
an almost-faith. I am reeling with need, chosen to bend
into this desperation as hips bend forward,
seeking the electric dimension of togetherness. I must be
an oversized squid under deep layers of ice, unaware
of such things as galaxies and weather -
breathing in my cold hell,
shipwrecked in this cavern of isolation. I must be unable
to love - impatience burrowing into me, past
muscles, touching the skin beneath skin. Yielding, I am
yielding to its mouth, subterranean pressure,
feeling the anxiety of knowledge
that disinfects each particle until
it is made nude, until it is like a knife-tip to the cornea
or a standing ovation given to all that swells to capacity,
pushes even further, then explodes.

Morning is beautiful. I am planting.
Will you find me, honour the primrose
on my veranda, maybe even snip one,
take it to your table and dream of a voice
other than your own?

Emptied

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

Without

A country lawn immaculately pruned,
extracted of weeds and anthills and the dead bodies
of its once small inhabitants.
It is nourishing to sing. Some
confuse music with water, resist the stark call
of your harsh features and quiet undertones of control.
Some don't like to sit on lawns, would rather be on
a compost heap, digging for eggshells or even half a fruit.
Some need to dance when they should be standing still,
unable to earn medals or be garlanded with
authority's praise. Tadpoles in a bitter pond –
sperm that cannot grow feet or claim a grown-up form.
They flush out of your system. And every flight they attempt
is arrested by you, you who are surface smooth with smiles,
but underneath, you are stretched cold rubber,
cracking like those lines framing your chin,
or like a flame to a tree,
you crack moist-with-life digits into splinters.
You should let the mad-ones go to India,
trace a path up Tibetan mountains.
You should be pleased to see them go, away
from your boarding school,
not there to tug your pierced ears or point out
your visceral smothering of the gentle dreamers.
They will go anyway.
They will stand in front. Not because they want to
but because they are not soldiers like that,
forming their destinies
in boxes. You can stay in corridors, make trenches
by pacing the patterns
of your congealed thoughts. You can be anyone
you want.

better

**Strips of clouds,
pink-grey like a snail snatched
from its shell. So many days I waited, waiting
like that snail for permanent protection, waiting
as an activity to delve fully into.**

**Nirvana was coming. I saw it traced
on the dated sidewalk, etched on the curvy luster
of a raccoon's still spine and in the devotion
of the rock dove waiting for its one decided love.**

**Nothing was ever enough to saturate my yearning.
Even for a moment, to remember a time before birth,
before the furious fluttering engine ulcerated
my stomach lining, or before my sanity became a soft noise,
fading. I could hear it like a basic desire I was forced
to forgo - sex, unquenched - like that but even
more. Like a crinkled cloth left on the subway floor,
I waited - dry, malformed, avoided.**

**The basement air is grooming me for an alien awakening,
maybe fluorescent, possibly ordinary, but better than
this sitting, tipping sideways on a broken chair.
Salt lamp on, a little fireplace or miniscule sunshine shining,
crumbling between my fingers, waiting
no more, moving at last
to another corner.**

Stay

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

I would not thirst

**in damp places, a voice
exterminated, unable to thrive. I would not
spend hours rubbing the luxurious surface of eyelids and
label my longing 'hallucination'.**

**The body of a tree like the folded skin
of an old woman's belly or thighs once moulded
in sensuous smoothness, speaks to me with throbbing
distinction - centuries of living wood, and furniture
is all I own.**

**I would dig and drop a new geography, build an island.
I would ink fruit - a mango, one berry - and never
colour it in. I would not be this passage
of demolished dreams or like the guitar
that is hiding bones in its hollow. I would keep my hands
together, laying the rest of me over your accepting body
and press - clutching a pending exuberance
then becoming a laser, accurate with mutual crescendo.
If the onion was eaten and this gasping storm
would pass, I would not wear my housecoat or ask
to stretch my legs. I would fumble but
I would not thirst**

Linked

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

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

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

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

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

Something found

Babyskin and bare,
these roots protrude from
the steady earth, assaulted
by squirrels digging and the sleet
of nocturnal phantoms.
Breath, I need to breathe like being
touched and not so alone, received
in male waters and a female sky, accompanied
by tirades of kisses, kissing jellyfish and crows.
I need to move my eyes slowly across piano notes,
type each sad circumstance, shine my injury like
a just-bronzed statue and wait to be collected.
But the salt is fresh like thunder, entering my mouth,
making its way dryly down my throat and I am tired
of bitter happenstance that is boundless
with surprises, never
worthy of a relieving smile. I am centred in this silence,
anticipating a hunt or legs I can conjoin
with my own. Flowers are small.
I can hear trains in the morning
when windows are stubbornly closed,
when I am walking and it is dark,
and the space around fills me with the ache
of unintended solitude.

Rapture When Walking

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

Coiled

Keep it. Always.
Well built, like literature.
This birthplace and then, into
the weighted wind. I am scarcely
bearing it, palpitating, counting
palpitations, high on this kundalini drug. Today,
I will say nothing, be elusive as a shy-man's smile.
I can't stand the crumbs. Eating for nourishment only,
one grape, this fabric - covering, menial, not warm.
I can't plant daffodils in January. You know
everything I gave you was purely accident,
not meant for you to treasure. How else can I be beautiful?
How else can this legend not be broken, but be a masterpiece
in your eyes? My tree. My front crawl.
I need to lead, callous with my intentions.
Because there is more at stake
than the digging up of remnants, more than
you and me and this mortuary of foiled ambitions.
On the couch. In the bedroom. Armpits, ripe and enticing.
You built a city. I entered. But this is my ecstasy.
There is something growing. I need release,
space to expand my fleshy torment. Damn you.
Gleaming like a little sun, gorgeous
and calm, edging out so many possibilities.
Damn you. I want to descend from this height, leave
these messy corridors, not needing you, not needing
your fire opal tongue skimming my skin,
pointed deep into my chasms. You are barricaded
in convention, denying everything
we are supposed to die for, everything,
you promised, we would,
together, own.

Myth

It is not the same as being limited
by loneliness, these feelings of broken fidelity,
abandonment. It is not enough to germinate
in this grief, pleading for a picture
of better times, appealing to
memory, sentiment, knowing
I could be wrong.

Those days, married
to your insatiable outpourings, ecstasy
just to listen, to share our minds - walking
on streetcar tracks at 4 a.m. and never sleeping.
I carried you like a book, wilting always in life, but never
when mingled with your stature. Between us,
nothing was spoiled, not soft either.
I was delivered by your high forehead and
by your crazed emotions. I was celebrating.

If it was only
paper flowers, a painted-on sunrise or
imagined completeness, in that time, I was
devoured by my own individuality, stripped
of my conditioning, a person to reckon with, lean on -
whole. I was so much better than I am here, as I am
salvaging a heartbeat from habit,
marked by a used-up destiny,
just me with these crippled hands, bare feet, no mentor
to merge with, nothing
to follow.

Trickle

It takes rich waters
to feed your body. Your body
is a neighbourhood of curvy undercurrents
where people smile but the sidewalks are
frozen. You own nothing pure. You would
like to shed yourself of femininity, yet still
be seductive as ouzo - licorice, clear, burning.
Murder, knowledge, both are too absolute for you but
being found like a rare coin, that would be special,
something you could sink your teeth into.
Instead, you are a trophy beside many,
on a shelf, in a corner, lack-luster, cramped, barely legible.
Your belly has hardened. That
is supposed to be a good thing. Not for you. You,
who craves honour, never wanting any effort or desire,
unmatched, unmet.
You are not ready even for a mirage -
your body drained of its natural oils.
I would feed that body. I would consummate with you
and bear you twins. Even that is only a platform
and not the means to travel. Because
it takes rich waters to feed you,
and this thin-stream garden hose
will never quench you or, you know,
make you happy.

Changing skins

Months behind my eyes, splicing nerves, bonds,
virtues that have kept me solid.
As I look, my desires are dilating,
taking more in, red with surrender
and wanting to germinate but not here,
not beneath this sheet, but in the breeze,
to grow special, purer than a weed, expand,
not interacting with the elements but part of
them, geometrical, saving space, knowing passion like
a labour - confined to a pattern, somehow
boundless. Joy. I stand a virgin in your honeymoon.
I am made up of sunsets and dreamy afterglows. I am
putting this on, demanding as intoxication, kneeling in this
costume, assuming I am dependable, but
I am not. I should close these shutters, marry
a soft genuine smile. I should care more. So much
that is done is done, fatal, heavy as a hanging. If I could
dig behind my sockets and make a window, I would. I would
walk away, but lust is water, and more than lust
is worth every star.

Madness like Medicine

I have waited for you
in the hours before the bursting dawn,
smelt your metamorphosis in the
open refrigerator, while you slept,
knowing nothing of your own power,
blistering, lifting through the sheets -
flesh crying out, laying over a door that will not open,
a door that gleams like a set of false teeth, with an
unattainable aura - gleaming Venus with plump
breasts and a lustful smile or Zeus with his absolute
authority, dominating your backside, your frontside, even
the interior plane of your strangling moods. You,
I have poured everything down the sink for,
not eating and not
anemic, but waiting - at peace with my jealousy
and my impatience. Will you hand me your slumber
of self-defeat and bitterness? I am not a dove.
I have slaughtered millions. I have waited.
Are you spreading, gathering, ready to be stripped? Still
sleeping, my lover, tight in your exile? Still brilliant,
but only in dreams? It is time for a shower -
to claim your nakedness.
We have no use for memories. We are lavish and
you are bare and brave and you do not believe it,
but you are ever so strong, at the moment just
before perishing, exposing
your warm, undeniable
seed.

Do not define me

**Do not define me
as a woman, or a wheel
of rolling curves, with lipstick
in my pocket and perfect polish on my shoes.
I am not interested in shoes.
I carry this body with two breasts
and I have born and raised children
like a sacred treaty between the unmarked countries
of time and infinity. I have loved with two arms,
lived with thoughts of Schopenhauer in my sleep
and nurtured the orphan pup. Do not define me -
my sexuality is not confined to the tender receiving sigh,
not to the congregation of gossip and giggles
and the making of apple strudel. I do not knit,
though I bow to the knitters
more than I do to the intellectuals, and gossip bores me.
Talking bores me unless it is about God or the many ways
we are given to love - children, animals, art.
(Lover's love I only speak about in poetry, because that is
private). Do not define me. I would love to be
straight lines, proudly hanging, perfectly clear.
I would like to be brutal. Women can be brutal,
can be like a smile -
gloriously giving, razor sharp, androgynously
beautiful.**

Too Long

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

You Would Not Have Me

**I would have taken the whole of you
in one hand, guiding you
through the pressured caverns of
a multi-layered release, and not let go
until your anguish was exposed and then relieved.
But you would not have me,
immune to my inferno and my skin
electrified with desire
for you to hold me, tuning out a rhythm on
my clustered nerves. You would not have me,
not slice such intensity with your tongue, not offer ease,
just a little ease, to my rising frenzy. And you,
stoically contained, flirting with a superficial smile
and with those blind to your tall form. I could have
freed you into the depths
where ugly things wake to a surprising beauty,
glowing with rapture, like a last breath
before surrender. You could have
been mine.**

Moments Before Merging

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

Like Clothes, Concealing

**Framed like a deer's head trophy
or a t-shirt that says 'I have been there'.
Archangels know you in the asylum's corner,
all frantic hands and wild eyes - empty as stillbirth.
The vanity of caring filling you with bile,
filling you with rotted fruit. Cyanide
on the table. You will take it and be sad. You will
shut all the doors and bear the darkness as you do,
descending into the winter months.
You can hardly speak anymore without wondering
what you are doing - speaking, fostering
loose connections, habitual pleasantries and what-not.
Why not be naked and not bother with the result?
Why not kill all hope and just pray?**

River

I will run my breath across your eyelids,
go to you, trace the edges of your hands,
finding infinity inside your torment. I will
drift into you like wind and you will not mind
my lips like a concentrated shadow on your skin,
darkening but leaving no weight. You will let me
be inside your picture, a background to your lyrics,
softly at first, I will heal the red in the whites of your eyes.
I will release my wardrobe for you and you will be the mania
that I climb through to reach tranquility. I will
cup your flesh and stretch you through this intimacy because
I own you as you own me and it is not a bad thing, not
blasphemy or anything
to fear. It is your hands, mine - these
poignant burial grounds that have been excavated,
these days of standing close, depending upon the ease
of our mutual exposure. I will speak in your ear and you
will step into my voice
like stepping into a river.

At the door

strenuous circulation, eclipsing slow knocking
for a faster ring - two times, ten times - no number
is sufficient to enlist satisfaction.

I am fatigued but not maturing, still devolved,
using sluggish generalizations with ingrained attitudes
of defeat - owner of tedium and isolation.

I circle the entrance, attempting to widen what
I trace but there is no way in, no probing
magnificent enough to fracture the tight curve,
and my spirit is different than it was when incense
eased my fixations. Chapter books
are passed over. Details do not help nor
do the angels when they sit beside me as they are now -
their hands over my neck and waist, and their low voices
humming to keep me swallowing, to keep me
from being swallowed: Nothing has changed
since I was 16 and I left my home. I circle - my tongue
a witness to the locks upon the gate. Index finger, thumb -
their dexterity and desire circling,
wanting sensual ownership, malleable distances
narrowed and overridden, wanting to be
crazed with fullness, to turn the lamp on and read,
not have impatience rack across my flesh like it is
like surgical lasers and flashing letters I do not need.
Because I need
a way in - to clean my house of this disordered ignorance,
to dive across the equator, burying myself in the heated air -
become an instrument of refraction, drilling into
unheard syllables, taste what's inside this closed-off cavity
and be received.

All of these poems have been published and have appeared in: The Brooklyn Voice; Elephant Journal; Misfits' Miscellany; Leaf Garden Press; The Foliate Oak Literary Magazine; Out of Our; InnerChild Press; Taj Mahal Review; Whisper; Tophat Raven; Chicago Record Magazine; Anchor & Plume: Kindred; The Weary Blues; Ayris; The Kitchen Poet; Bare Hands Poetry; The Muse - An International Journal of Poetry; Collective Exile; Blue Lake Review; Split Lip Magazine; Triage Monthly; Pocket Thoughts; The Mind(less) Muse; New Binary Press Anthology; Dead Snakes; The Writers Newsletter; Wax Poetry and Art Magazine; Tic Toc Anthology; Jotter United Lit-zine; The Voices Project; Guwahatian; Jellyfish Whispers; Peeldeel's Blog; The Undertow Review; Napalm and Novocain; Bold Monkey; The Drunken Llama; Rusted Rose Poetry Forum; The American Aesthetic; Kind of a Hurricane Press; Scars Publications; Creative Talents Unleashed; Winamop; WritingRaw; Cosmonauts Avenue; The Miscreant; RoguePoetry; Calliope Magazine; SpinRock Reader Lit Forum; Rasputin; Change Seven Magazine; Think Pink, Pink.Girl.Ink Press; Occulum; Viral Cat; The VGP Literate; Of/with; Your One Phone Call; Indiana Voice Journal

Reviews of "The River is Blind":

"Allison Grayhurst's poetic prose is insightful, enwrapping, illuminating and brutally truthful. It probes the nature of the human spirit, relationships, spirituality and God. It is sung as the clearest song is sung within a cathedral by choir. It is whispered as faintly as a heartbroken goodbye. It is alive with the life of a thousand birds in flight within the first glint of morning sun. It is as solemn as the sad-sung ballad of a noble death. 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. *The River is Blind* is a must-read," *Eric M. Vogt*, poet and author.

"Throughout *The River is Blind*, Allison Grayhurst employs reiterated tropes of swallowing and being consumed, spatial fullness and emptiness, shut-in, caverns, chasms, cavities; angels, archangels, blasphemy, psalms; satiation or starved. With a conceit of unrequited sex as "my desire", nocturnal emissions, awakening in the morning, the poet lives at capacity, uninhibited, dancing," *Anne Burke*, poet, regional representative for Alberta on the League of Canadian Poets' Council, and chair of the Feminist Caucus.

"One of the best contemporary poetry books I have read and my favorite by Allison Grayhurst. I have this book, *The River is Blind*, in paperback and find I come back to it often. I am very impressed that her poetry just oozes quality and in all ways gets my mind thinking. If you read poetry I highly recommend it, if you also write this is a great way to spend a couple of hours soaking in the quality and subject matters. The poems are spiritual and uplifting and I have never found any of her poems to be dull or depressing nor ever too hard to read. More life affirming each time I read one and I am always glad to have done so," *Bruce Ruston*, poet, photographer, founding editor of *The Poetry Jar*.

About the Author



Allison Grayhurst is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Three of her poems were nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2015, and one eight-part story-poem was nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2017. She has over 1,125 poems published in more than 450 international journals and anthologies. Her book *Somewhere Falling* was published by Beach Holme Publishers, a Porcepic Book, in Vancouver in 1995. Since then she has published fifteen other books of poetry and six collections with Edge Unlimited Publishing. Prior to the publication of *Somewhere Falling* she had a poetry book published, *Common Dream*, and four chapbooks published by The Plowman. Her poetry chapbook *The River is Blind* was published by Ottawa publisher above/ground press December 2012. In 2014 her chapbook *Surrogate Dharma* was published by Kind of a Hurricane Press, Barometric Pressures Author Series. In 2015, her book *No Raft – No Ocean* was published by Scars Publications. More recently, her book *Make the Wind* was published in 2016 by Scars Publications. As well, her book *Trial and Witness – selected poems*, was published in 2016 by Creative Talents Unleashed (CTU Publishing Group).

Collaborating with Allison Grayhurst on the lyrics, Vancouver-based singer/songwriter/musician Diane Barbarash has transformed eight of Allison Grayhurst's poems into songs, creating a full album. "River – Songs from the poetry of Allison Grayhurst" released October 2017.

Allison Grayhurst is a vegan for the animals. She lives in Toronto with her family. She also sculpts, working with clay; www.allisongrayhurst.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT THE POETRY OF ALLISON GRAYHURST

"WHEN I READ ALLISON GRAYHURST'S POETRY, I AM COMPELLED BY THE INTENSITY AND STRENGTH OF HER SPIRITUALITY. HER PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF GOD DRIVES HER POETRY. SHE FLESHES OUT THE PROFOUND MYSTERY OF KNOWING AT ONCE BOTH THE BEAUTY AND TERROR OF GOD'S LOVE, BOTH FREEDOM AND OBEDIENCE, DEEP JOY AND SORROW, BOTH BEING DEEPLY ROOTED IN BUT ALSO APART FROM THE WORLD, AND LASTLY, BOTH LIFE AND DEATH. HER POEMS UNDULATE THROUGH THESE PARADOXES WITH MUCH FEELING AND OFTEN LEAVE ME BREATHLESS, SHAKEN. ALLISON GRAYHURST'S POEMS ARE BOTH BEAUTIFUL AND DIFFICULT TO BEHOLD." ANNA MARK, POET AND TEACHER.

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

