

The background of the cover is a photograph of a forest. The trees are mostly bare, with thin, dark branches reaching upwards. In the center, there is a bright, glowing light source, possibly the sun or moon, which is partially obscured by the branches. The light creates a strong lens flare and illuminates the surrounding trees, giving them a greenish-yellow glow. The overall atmosphere is ethereal and somewhat mysterious.

TRIAL AND WITNESS

SELECTED POEMS

ALLISON GRAYHURST

Trial and Witness

selected poems

Allison Grayhurst

Creative Talents Unleashed

GENERAL INFORMATION

Trial and Witness
selected poems

By

Allison Grayhurst

1st Edition: 2016

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Ava Harness

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Editor

Clay Kypton Harness

Dedication

For my family

Preface

This is a selection of Allison Grayhurst's poems spanning over 25 years. Her unique, impressionistic language moves with urgency towards a deeper spiritual understanding, often arriving at potent revelations. Many of the poems confront the duality of life, opening up to infinity while trying to find the signature of infinity in the most rudimentary aspects of existence. There is a rich sexuality in many of them, with a thread of longing flowing through complex imagery. These poems are layered, evoking a deep sense of inner struggle while connecting with a universal rhythm, demanding to be read and re-read.

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Trial and Witness

selected poems

Allison Grayhurst

Creative Talents Unleashed

Welcome The Death

Welcome the death
of holding death
like a smile. For all
that dreams within,
all that spreads uncorrupted
through the veins, turns its back
on oblivion, knows faith, knows
its destination is beneath the
stars.

Welcome the changing leaves, the
frosted flowers, the vanity of being,
of feeling one Self, whole before
the world.

Welcome the body, the counted pennies,
the child's plight and faces lost
in midnight light, eternally forgotten.

Welcome the one who stands, the one who
praises every cried-out syllable, purges
the soul of stagnant battles, hour upon hour
smells the freshness of renewal in clenched fists
and phones that never ring.

Welcome the sound of a remembered kiss
and the ghosts that grieve forever
beside each mortal heart.

On Tour

Pale as the Eastern gulls sitting on rooftops,
he speeds over the wide country.

He hurts with uncommon intensity -
liberation balanced between his two lips.

Like the slow hum of rain, I hear him
treading the snowed-in cities, hear his kiss
like a prayer of protection, flowering.

Freedom stitched to his smile,
he crosses the sea he's never seen before,
as he carries his guitar
like a lover's warm hand.

Desire

does not come
like tolerance, learned,
worked for. Withstanding
cruelty, dry lips,
wild pain, it grows larger
than love and God and grows
until all gestures reveal it.

Secretly in the shade of devotion,
it rages. Crouching behind churches and
stairwells, it tongues its drug sweeter
than touch. Burns the stomach, starves
the heart of faithful riches.

When it comes it has no error
nor the unanchored presence
of doubt.

When it comes, it comes riding,
circling like nightfall
the soul's great yolk.

Because of Course

you will go with summer
never knowing a remedy.
You will go beyond where you go
around the ninth and final life, ducking
in dark boxes to fade finally alone,
away from instinct and nurturing.
You will go into the natural earth,
and from there, my vision staggers and
cannot name, but caught
on the wind, in sensual shades
of forgiveness mighty & forever,
you will know a place unhindered by death.
You will hear the secret
your pale eyes
have always harboured.

First Snow of Winter

First snow of winter falling.

The bed is unmade.
Rooftops are beautiful
and white.

Home is a birthday cake,
a painting etched in crimson
light. The cats are intently watching.
The sounds outside are few. One lover
is sleeping, the other breathes in
the wintry view.

Like a cleansing, like an unmarked page
or a slice of Italian bread,
the snows descend, bringing warmth
to the veins, bringing the comfort
of sweaters and knitted socks, bringing
bodies together and the year to an end.

First snow of winter falling
like another chance, like a farewell
to colours fading and flowers on the graves.

First snow of winter arriving,
its tide of working magic
caressing away the rage of the city
with its cold, immaculate embrace.

The Stone-Frame

The stone-frame sings
my threshold, sings my
heart's futility. It is
so hard a cage it makes
my knuckles crack, it breaks
my bones from too much leaping.
The stone-frame wishes to be my womb, but
could never be a comforting hovel,
or resting ground away from
world-wind and flame.
The stone-frame maims my voice
from protesting, strikes a match
to my endurance and holds me in
its damp, dusty dorm.
The stone-frame lets me dream of miles
away from its door, but never lets more
than my imagination go wandering.
The stone-frame is my perception trapped
in faithless monotony, is my coward smile
that fears the chaos outside
its grey, unchanging walls.

You Are

You are simple
like death is simple,
like death is unmistakable,
containing the most feverish and trying
of mysteries within
its boundless domain.

You are beautiful
like a cat is beautiful
silently sitting,
galactic in its sensual form,
giving with its gaze
substance to voice and blood.

You are fire-driven
like stars and like sex,
in perpetual combustion,
with an inner pulse of endless
dance, dancing
in savage, mystical tides.

You are gentle
like a raindrop caught
in a lucky palm, gentle
like the shelter of a best friend's arms.

You are more than sun and bird and fox,
more than soil to my groundless heart.

All I bless and all I need,
I hold because of you.

Trial and Witness

No meaning nor madness
could replace the milk and breath
that you are.

Animal Sanctuary

He turns his hawk head
to view the shells of turtles streaking
the still-shroud of water in tanks
as blue as sky.

He lifts a leg and talons tensed,
pivots to defend against an enclosing shadow.

With whitish eyes and an impossible urge
to fly, he hops along his man-made perch toward
the cages where squirrels leap
from metal to wood, scattering like leaves
in unpredictable flurry.

He listens to the ducks' lipless sounds.

Spring, he will never experience again, nor know
the scent of a pent-up life released like
sunflowers blooming, or the feel of the moon,
colder but more comforting than being touched.

He is without time or tribe,
and like fire, he haunts
by just being.

elegy of this day being

At the throat, brushed green like tile I shine.
The devil says "hum-drum"
as the eel struggles, futile like a wagging tail.
So many broken, hating with the hardness of crocodiles
and ants, pulling along their dead,
to consume, knowing nothing of sorrow or forgiveness.
All night I sit with my naked thighs
on the carpet, red from the heat.
What point could there possibly be
to all this pain, the death
of others, the sickness that swarms in mid-air?
Hurricanes hit the graveyards.
A gull tilts on a telephone wire. I wish to bid goodbye.
I wish for ice-cream cones in my fridge,
a handful of poppies to give some child,
any child, I meet.
I see dead eyes in my dream,
glossed with mucous and unbearable vacancy.
How do I serve when the world is so cold?
The humpbacks know this, the midgets
and also the centipedes.
I want to hide in rooms where
infants are sleeping or salamanders nurse their young.
The darkness is in me. The ground deceives me,
changes colours as I go.
Let us go now, my nightmares
and I, go under the light, go until
our heart's blood is free-falling, exposed.

Sheaves of Time

Sheaves of time like wispy hair
freed to the wind, fall on me,
tickling my skin with their subtle happening.
Happy are the people with soap opera love
and yellow hair.
Happy am I rolling and stretching & rolling
under the great white sun. I am moved
to deliver my package at noon. I am myself bonded
to my mission like ligaments to the bone.
Sheaves of time drift on my plate
like leaves from my favourite tree.
Call me out from my doubt and let me
love each day as new, with the kind of hope
only children hold, or lovers caressing faces,
feeling eternity on their fingertips.

A Day For My Own

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

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

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

An Infant

An infant is like a wonderful stone
being shaped by the tide. An infant knows
nothing of solitude and does not believe
in the built-up hardness of
kindred blood. An infant is
the night, is the day, never hiding
its hymn and colours. An infant arrives
from both the nadir of the earth and the
zenith of the sky. An infant has the laughter
to change the most dismal of days,
and the softness of tiny symmetry in its moon-like
face - and fingers, each a little bird,
bringing joy by just being, moving
like dancers' thighs over a flaming sea.
An infant is the eye of the whale,
the beginning and the potential all in one.
An infant is of flesh and perfect trust,
needing nothing from tomorrow.

The Ride

Again the stars were plucked
from her mind and the world below
leapt up and sponged her with its flame.
That summer she made a wish upon her chains
and walked the deserted farmyards.
The ravens followed her through the weeds
and heat, keeping up conversation. At night
she sang to the beating of the rain and stroked the head
of the dead bug in her pocket.
She was neither of the mountains nor of the desert.
She was calm as crazy sometimes gets, and the thunder
hissed out her name as the June's morning rays
danced her a sermon. She talked
to her shadow when the birds had gone,
and her fingernails were brittle as cracked ice.
On the seventeenth day her breath collapsed with
the rising sun as the cobwebs about her sparkled, stirred
by a sweetened wind.

Beyond The Grave

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

As Mad As Mine

Grief is cold as the world
without a wish, riding
the waking land.
I saw the hounds trace my footsteps.
I believed in an everafter,
and the shore was my mansion to fight for.
I drove from the river onward,
looking for a season to change me.
The miracle, the terror before the miracle,
is the salty flavour of my blood.
Sudden love stinging the throat. Sudden
happiness to renew the cage of day-to-day drudgery.
I cry like a seal who has lost her pup to the killer whale.
Tomorrow is not a void
but a temple of what is held sacred today.
Everytime I answer, I lose.
But when I am holding my breath,
caressing the slit throat of all my hopes,
then and there my eyes and ears
have learned the voice of
golden heaven.

As We Walk

I spent an hour listening
to the grey and cooling sky, and the blackbirds
that gathered low.

We are but gestures sown
by particles of love, desire and greed.
Few are one tapestry, most are a bit of
all three.

There was a plague in my eyes
that has thinned my expectations, but
I am better.

Being in love this long is like a voyage
underwater, swarming with glorious and
dangerous beings.

You will always be the one to hatch my breath,
the catching flint when I am shipwrecked,
and the good thing I can hold up willingly to the light.

We have been shown there is no grave,
only the mourning. We have been shown
it is the aging in front of each other
that makes aging wonderful.

I no longer worry about what I am going to say
because there is you, with the scent of autumn
strong in your hair.

My Body Goes

Through the blinds
my body goes soaring
touching the hawk and
choppy clouds.
It dips through the misty air
holding hands with the winter.
It opens its mouth to taste the wind
and sees a balloon float by.
Then it lands in dunes of sand
covered in unmarred snow.
A wren's small footprints lead it down the
slope into the underbrush where a
hound dog has curled into a sleeping ball.
It tiptoes past to the sideroad where
two children are singing their ABCs
and making angels in the snow.
When back in flight, it rides the twilight's rays
into this room and leans
to sip a drink of cold coffee, tasting
like liquorice candy.

Morning Glory

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

Girl

Under the willow tree a girl
was standing, lonely with
the worst of nights ahead.
They said
drink from the tarpit waters and swallow
the oysters that lost their shells.
She saw the drug the wind made
though she did not let it shift her steadfast heart.
Everywhere the notion stood
that fighting back is better than
the tender wave, better than
empathy and believing in affection.
The willow leaves have gone brown and the girl has moved
beside a cliff. She dances as though she
could not fall. And though they gasp to pity
her poor body against rocks and ridges,
she continues to move like a beautiful sound,
sure of the hand that guides her.

New Era

From the start I believed
in never bending, but now I am a weather-vane,
guided by singing.
Now, in movement I grow like a wild weed -
a glutton of untouched terrain.
I have put on the iron mask,
burned my skin for the battles
of another. That shore is sinking
and my globe has altered its axle.
I put away my grown-up philosophy
to live by impulse and the pity of God.
The task is done, the ice is swallowed.
It is time to love the gargoyles and create
a new form of beauty.

Interlude

Upon the window's sill
I saw a ghost walking
of a young woman veiled in grief
with sunset hair and moral eyes -
her death drifted to me like
a scent. I called to her, with
overflowing sympathy, but the grave
was now her bed and the enemy-world
was her heart's betrayal. I saw her sit
then look to the sky, her tormented forehead
glistening as the rain did on the roof's old shingles.
She spoke three names softly, and over and over their
sound ripped my skull as if the sun itself had entered
to burn all hard-held secrets out.
I loved her like someone I had long known
and understood,
watching her, hardly visible
as the rain pushed on.

Hard Time Singing

The ground that grows
the wasteful blight and
estranges the kiss and hiss of wildlife
is in me like a slaughtered tribe
that has no face.
I am in the nightmare cloud, wrapped
in tar and rotted wood. I hide
beneath the blanket, undone.
Sickness has walked around me, mile
around mile, and names me this stone chiseled
in two. It is the beginning, but it is midnight
and I am marked to be unmoved.

Flies

By dawn the flies
released their shape into
the soothing wind and what
came back was the weary pulse
of dying wings grafted to the day.
What world was this inside their
dark heads that honoured the
photograph over the experience,
that held up frivolous wealth like
a deserved trophy?
What faith was plucked with the flowers
as all their little tongues reached out to pocket
the short-term scent?
The flies live in their high castles like undergrounds
enjoying only the drive and privileged complaints.
They call themselves the philanthropists and
the even-tempered elite.
But I see them in the honey jar
and count them as already gone.

Still

You and I are a terracotta river
encasing the unmanageable rock.
We drink from the cyclone fire
and fill our ears with the sounds of harps
and nocturnal rejoicing.
When I am touched and my head
is under the feather then time is
fossilized and my body is the voice
that drives me down the curve,
wide enough for an astounding fulfillment.
When I touch the core of your bones
and join the urgency of your kisses
with my own, then we are lured
from our daily plots and cast-out dreams,
until flooded and found by the golden synergy
of our married tongue.

On This Dock

I hear the white steed
and the fish together
in dark obscurity.
I look at the body of water,
the children weeping to gain control.
I listen for the perishing wind
and declare to it a vigil
of telltale strength.
The journey here faces
the drive of instinct - to buckle
in and walk the safest hallway
or to carry the weight of failure
and still harbour a cry to the fox and a belief
in the many shapes of heaven.

The journey knows its evening
has come and all the beautiful clouds will drop
one by one from the sky.

Thinking Outside

Touching tails
and feather wings.
The apple trees bend
and sing of autumn's coming.
Starlings talk across backyards
and the high-pitched beetle
fills the wind like a calming drug.
In this place as summer fades
the quiet demands self-truth.
To pull from inside
a lacerated pride
and pile it on the dried grass.
Shadows mend the divided self
and love is an activity
to understand while counting birds
overhead.

No Hope – For Good

Understand, I was pleading
like Job under the wire
for the arrival of hope.
But now I see that hope is murder to the seed
of this emerging beginning.
It is not a butterfly shred in a child's hands
but the cause of dark inertia,
giving despair a little more fuel to run with,
preventing the final collapse, stopping the black hole
that will suck the last trickle of false expectations through,
keeping me pinned to this stalled, starved and stale
universe like a crushed insect clinging for breath.
It is hope but also torture that takes death away
from that which needs to die.
It is hope but not enough to build on,
so it is better that it never comes, never runs
along side this something spectacular that is trying
to break through.

Learning Temperance

Cradle the handle under the sleeve
and watch as the sun changes shadows.
Blue. I wait in the private everafter with
the future under my fingernails and an orange seed
in my throat.
Will it happen or will it always be 'the wait'?
Waiting in the moment just before bloom
but never arriving into full colour? Or is it only
a long pause, gathering breath for the final
swing that will bury all dullness that has gone before?
I see two doors and neither of them are open.
I see a tree I have walked by many times before. This time
I noticed it and smiled.
Maybe this is not darkness at all,
but a line to follow and focus on
like a child watching rain drops - one at a time.

Weather

Walls shake
under the pressure of an ongoing storm.
The storm exhausts
birds in flight and flings
squirrels to the ground.
The ground is hard with ice
and the lost promise of spring.
Spring, children wait for
under the volatile sky.
The sky is tuned by the fingers of time.
Time cannot give a chance accepted or refused
but is the measure by which all things move and die.
Die, the storm is thinning like the skin of a worn drum,
leaving its signature beat on the road.
The road I base all my faith on is under my sleeve
sure of me, regardless if I turn or if I follow.

A Better Life

In the beginning
I rode a burning steed,
crossed a violent river
and destroyed my home.
But now my footsteps are slower,
I never climb the rocks or chase
the landed hawk. I collect shells
for my garden and sing to the great
ocean's waves. I take my children
along the shore and show them how to dance.
I tell them my tales of long ago, though
they offer no interest or praise.
But they love me like a petal does its stem,
each reaching to me to know the effort of
my arms. We eat fruit near the underbrush
then bury each seed, tenderly,
in hot white sands.

The Flood

Glorious weather, wetting
the decks and smallest of worms.
We were made to split the light
with voices singular and clean.
We were destined to wade in
night, free of logic, partakers
of heart-wrenching dreams.
I name myself lost but loved
and that is better than any key.
I count the madness in cracks
and know the world is ready to turn.
Funerals and baby births and
a barn alive with birds, soon
clouds will come and the zodiac will
burn.

God will be full of joy
and each household will be looking
in a new direction - close-to-the-bone,
materially threadbare.

A Newly-Patterned Fingerprint

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

Blown

Blown like a grain of sand from a hollow twig.

It is beautiful to be blown.

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

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

They Took

They took away
the long and leisurely shave.
They took the dark and sensuous hood
and peeled it away
to shadeless bold colours -
everything bright and nothing
integrated.

They took the comforting depth
and put in its place a bad commercial.

They took the swelling stars.

Draw Near

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

The bough breaks

and dreams collapse un-cushioned
like the smile that forsakes me
and the wonderful illusion of things past
but never lost.

For here I cut my antennae down
and kiss the pyramid on my grass,
blessed by the end result
but never by the happening:
I know the world
and it needs forgiveness.

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

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

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

God.

First and Only

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

The Day Is Like

The day is like
the day before
the worm arrived
in a jar at my doorstep.
Before I took the worm in
and fed it lettuce leaves and fresh water.
Before I had something to care for,
when loneliness was the largest difficulty around
and isolation pounded beneath my lids like
a cancer.

The day is tick tock and as slow as waiting
for that needed call to arrive.
I collect the noises from outside
but have nowhere to put them. I open my mouth,
but my voice has gone underground.
The sun looks in on me, but evades my skin.
I don't hold my breath. I let it in and out.
I let the day be a blank wall.
And sometimes a day like today is like
an empty room and this empty room
is a treasure.

Faith

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

In The Thighs

Blood in the thighs like
a bowling ball moving,
rotating, heavy, at high speed
up between the
hip bones, into the heart chamber.
Nothing can stop its weight and damage,
nothing can stop its motion.
The trees say "A different face of God is etched upon
my each and every leaf." But the beetle and ladybug
who eat the leaves do not care. And the person snipping
at branches does not care.
Through the thighs, moving
rotating, heavy, at high speed.
Call out to me
Call the number engraved into the armchair
He came like light washing over the many,
entering and cleansing only the few.
He came. He is
what everyone needs,
but the pavement is thick
and the ground beneath is rich,
saturated with worms,
moving,
thick
with worm motion
moving at worm speed.

The Stone

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

Acceptance

I first felt
the longing with little comfort,
as a shape with sharp edges.
I dared myself into a corner
and lost even the impulse for serenity.
In the grey afternoon, coming home,
I saw an inscription in the space
between clouds and knew
I had outgrown looking for signs -
The wind is a river and a house (any house)
is a dead log left in the elements, harbouring life
in its dead crusty dampness.
I had come full circle just by surviving,
back to the longing that existed before -
this time, void of grandiose significance,
existing now like an urge, strong as fire, natural
as deformity.

Whitewashing

What loss
buries the jewel in the dirt,
boards up the windows
and fastens a weight
to the sun?

What loss is this that
denies midnight its miracles,
that extracts motivation
and pretense,
lies behind billboards,
under the deck
and in the empty chair?

What loss I bear
as weightlessness - nothing to ground me
and
nothing core.

Undefined

I can't say I am a sailor
who moves forward without ground
or room to run.

I can't say I am a leader who
closes down slaughterhouse doors
or uproots cruel traditions with one swift blow.

I can't say I have a social smile that calms
the afflicted with carefree warmth.

I can't say I am that woman who children cling to
and adorn with their fresh imaginations.

I can't say I am like a house or like a star or water
that rams into rocks then falls back into itself.

I can only say a flower is here,
and I am not that flower.

Childhood Cracked

The doll fell
and was never picked up.
It fell by the curb
in a lucid slumber
of inarticulate words
like a dew drop
on ice.
Nothing was coveted,
the chant grew like the moon
as the month moved on.
What was cold inside was a needle
of sharp divide and the impact
of unbuffered death.
Into this autumn
the doll fell
and the meridian of grace
was at last
on the table.

When

When I was a fish the morning light
brought me near the shark's skilled swim.

I would hide behind rocks and sea urchins, watching
octopi and their slow contracting movement.

When I was an octopus, my tentacles could think.

I knew of things like volcano ruptures and how
to escape fishnets and other forms of human capture.

When I was a deer I was in union, safe with my clan,
grazing in the lion's domain.

When I was a lion, female, tense with the hunt,
protective of my playful young, I knew of thirst
and days without food, retreating from the large and
ever-present sun.

When I was a baby child, it felt like there was a stone
stuck in my throat and a restlessness racing
through my limbs.

I cried and cried when I was a baby, unfamiliar
with this daunting helpless form.

I Am This Creature (drenched in mute history)

I am this creature
let loose from the grave,
but still without a Sunday
or a bed of more than weeds and worms.
I am this liar, trapped in fantasy,
a carcass hanging upside down, all cheers and woes
set at high volume.
I was with hunger, a rage of flies on soiled food,
desperate to know fulfillment.
I was a girl, knowing nothing of drugs, but helpless
just the same, a slave to all my girlish visions
of the coming days of promised rapture.
I was a young woman, wearing drab and loose clothes,
never looking in a mirror, talking in tongues,
clenching confusion as a crutch and giving glory
to any glory-seeking teacher.
I am this woman, strong shouldered, a bit threadbare
but wanting
never to rekindle that drowned flame -
a creature in a world of foreign wilderness.
I'm circling, circling a solitary stone.

Parameters

The gift of all this crumbles
with a single out-of-sync happening.
Geraniums are frosting over
and the high grass is yellowing.
Yesterday was a cat in symmetrical slumber,
pictures stood straight and warmth
was gathering like a sweet wind over the neighbourhood.
Does this mean it is my mind? like an insect living
one season, sees only that season, dies before winter,
content to have made it so long?
Does this mean the puddle
I jump in, wade in, determine in
is only a pail of water, nothing beside the ocean?
When the puddle is stirred from its stillness or
becomes a bath for snakes or dries up from too much sun -
it is still the puddle and will replenish again
as all puddles do in the rain, maybe
in the early evening just before the lion comes
to take a long, relaxed drink.

Renaissance

The fountain I drank from
became toxic, and the way to make more purity
turned out to be the way to make less.
And so I am small as a lump
of hardened salt. And so what
if my flesh is getting old - a defined woman
doesn't have to fear such a thing,
nor does she have to fear the collapse of her every hope,
because inside she is solid, though
still impressionable,
because she has learned that God's light
is born to flicker, and not to be
a heavy stream.

When I Lean Closer

Remember when we were falling,
making hoops in the sky? When intelligence
didn't matter, only the desire
to be alive? Remember when a different rank
and inequality never blocked a friendship,
when the heart was whole,
and money never shamed us
one way
or another?

Remember the light in our pockets,
the frame of our minds as we lived
in perpetual loneliness, free
but cold?

Remember when guilt could only go so far
to actually change us and a lie was never
stronger than imagination?

Remember our handprints, those handprints
on the wall?

I Find Clarity

I find clarity
beside the open coffin
beside the one made of glass
with the see-through dogma
and beside the one of simple majesty.
I find myself free of the cumbersome hunger
for revival. I find myself just wanting
to be in the shadow, away from direct
light and the attitude of sentimentality and guilt.
I find my hands are strong and my legs
are capable of walking long distances.
I find that that is enough
to complete me.
I find food in someone else's grocery cart
and my thirst is something I have learned to live with.
I find I am not so impressed with what used to
impress me. I am not striving for passion
at every turn, but I find passion at the lower levels
where rodents crawl and babies
muse at the ceiling.

The Taste

of someone else's
memories tracing the lining
of my throat, merging with
my own memories, until there
is no distinction

of apple butter
spread across my tongue
thickening as it descends

of fire
and of absolute calm
combining and moving
like a wave within

of hunger eased
and rapture reached

of being fully saturated with
sexual peace

The taste.

Only for a time

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

How To Chain The Madness

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

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

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

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

For My Children

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

Pathway

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

When This Is Over

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 sooth my despair.

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.

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.

Riverstones

Announcing flesh
in the sleepy-loosened
day. A childhood of
bridges, masterpiece aromas
that overlook the playing fields -
one year, two grades and people
once beautiful, now ordinary,
bike turns, riverstones, skipping
on driveways, melting ice over grates

long pleated hair, dark, looking into
competitive eyes. It was the last
year I was there, spending evenings staring
at the gaudy peeling wallpaper or
in the basement crawlspace, space
without any windows, hearing
hockey games, spiders mating, silhouettes
disintegrating. It was the last time
in that car for that car ride, through dull highway hours,
cats in boxes, on laps, children waving, music at half mast,
children waving.

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.

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.

Trial and Witness

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.

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?

Under the vines

Ways the willow swishes freely,
washing the wind into the sun.
Child in a tree fort dives fearlessly,
surging with elation to and fro:
over snails and uncut grass,
elements passing, back against the evening sun.
Waves are the evidence of the ocean's breathing.
Minds run swift, masterpieces of destinations,
forming their own geography.
Reality burns like a blood-clot -
an over-stuffed museum, updating slow.
Pirates of power and horoscopes bleating,
the only refuge is to forget.
Out through a backyard window, the willow tree
owns both ground and sky.
Imagination comes as suffering's negation,
potpourri to the stench of debt and worse-things owed.
Destruction overtakes too easily,
like a once-hollow ditch, now satisfied with its
fill of bones. All needs are political. Heaven
comes close in secret Sex, immortalizing flesh,
though never arresting decay.
Child on a vine joined with the ways of the willow,
swinging, thrown-off shoes.

Lotus

Sleep, into triumphant sleep,
waking is a tide of abysses and senses
reflecting illusions. Cursory stresses,
repairing at the bedside where my knees bent in prayer,
scuffing my skin with cosmic complaining.
I've thought about this, and I've decided
not to care if I fail at swimming or grooming
or trophy-getting,
or in collecting eggwhites, having more than what I have
necessary on the table.
Love is the weathervane is the station,
earning eternity, a teaming ocean worthy of a dive.
The rest is a stunted fetus that will never coo
or be baby-dream sufficient.
I've spent too long weight-lifting chaos's hammer,
flinging myself from wall to stump.
I have eyes that hold me, another's and another's
I can take pictures of and sing to, and I wish for nothing
but to retain this fertility of tender revealing.
Children and the final history of desire,
predestined to return as a speck - own my freewill,
multiplying with the rhythm of a brighter responsibility.
Sleep, for I've never existed
but to count this love and to love this way
personal, a cliché of bloated ignorance,
with a mouthful of famine and an armful
of miniscule miracles,
gestating, spiralling, blending into the soft brown sofa,
tea in hand, leaning on another, amazed
by how good this is and how very long
this cozy reverie has lasted.

There are names

and allegiances that triumph
when spoken aloud. I do not speak
these sounds or have a country
that edges near ecstasy. I have loved badly,
pessimistic, fostered a hostile vacancy
of fantastical hope. Insolent towards God
and the steady rapture that only comes with patience,
I purchased an industry that leaves no mark,
makes nothing useful
or sweet.

Remembering my waxed-leaf collection held
within hard cover books, and the frolicking of field mice
that burrowed patterns into my head. I sat on the bus and
I was alone. Did I know how fragile sanity was, unlocking
doors, imagining mountains on the surface of the sun?

Snared before my shelter broke
and I could be saved by surrender.
A thicket of needles and bushes trembling with little birds.
Contact. Glint.
Won't something rush at me, increase my odds?

I could send you away, then I could live
cold, complete as a reed or as an angel.
Science will not have me. You will not let me go.

Remembering seashells wrapped in tissue paper, in a box,
on a shelf, just above the closet floor, counting them -
rough external even ridges, glassy sheen empty pocket
inside.

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 -
teeth set 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,

Trial and Witness

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.

Snowy

Sad as sleepy morning comes.
Soft ground to rest your chin upon,
soft like you are, in need of no one's
flag or ego-affirmation.

When you walk
children wave from car windows, elated
to see such unmasked joy - mouth in an open smile,
and eyes, happier still - dark as toiled earth, alert
to the house cat's twitching ear.

Satisfied in the full morning sun, you move
from sidewalk curb to road, sniffing at poles
and thin strands of grass
as your long clumped fur like a sheep's pleated coat
ripples in time with the end-of-summer's wafting rhythm.
Treats, stuffed toys and laying contentedly
on your back, these things are enough.

Many have tried to imitate, parading
their off-white pups through neighbouring streets:
They saw you once and wanted the same.
But you were claimed by a private angel.
Fastened to good karma,
you glow, you germinate, and you proceed.

As you sleep by the door
in and out of your doggy dreams,
you defeat the need for tomorrow's schemes.
With an unassuming soothing moan
you stretch then continue in rest,
abating the weight of my human despair.

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.

Trial and Witness

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?

Trial and Witness

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.

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.

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.

Trial and Witness

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.

The Book

Inside, spending all my coins, rejoicing
on ephemeral longing, on a lustful inhale
for physical redemption.

Hidden in the pages, I am hidden
at four in the morning, bathing in perfection,
lifting into heights that obscure drudgery.

Thoughts are shapes that float as shadows,
hardly solid like butter left out of the fridge.
Cages unravelling and houses cleaned of cobwebs.
Between soft book covers freedom kisses explicitly,
candy-ices without embarrassment.

Hanging on hinges, on barely glanced-at walls,
I gather my vision in the grass, paint on the
bones of another's life - beautiful bones and hallways
of many feet walking and swishing bathrobes.
In the book I can face forward and never fear rejection,
I can shower sensuously in warm rhythms,
tied to the stirring light of early summer.

Love between these diary covers is not just canvass
or thick hues that merge and make a middle,
it is where I will
at last know another's body as I know my own,
be protected from the torrential pawing pierce
of middle-age loneliness.

Inside the book, you are under me
like a bed of lavender bushes,
there are waves where once sunken skeletons rise like coral,
polished pure of their violent history.

Drowning in the book, imagining ants collecting,
synchronized on an apple core.

Bells in my head, footsteps rising, closer now,
you know me well. Inside the book, you know me better.

Trial and Witness

We are two trees - branches and roots,
an interwoven crocheted
impressionistic portrait, staying through heavy storms.

Inside the book, we are creatures of greater sympathy.
You are like yarn, tied to my brush and hold, never in
the liquid valley of a distant boat, or obvious as a prickly,
rigid rope. I am mature, a woman with a ceiling to touch,
fifty feet of surrounding stillness, unfettered
from the expectations of my time and gender,
radiant, more, whole.

Kill the Poet

Kill the poet,
ransack the diet of bliss.
Dust away all traces of inspiration,
childbirth, breath and roses.

Thumbtacks, dried-out bones are
what has stayed.
I am a sand-fish, surfing the bottom,
accumulating
duties, commitments, leftover debris
to feed my already grown children.

Notions of a mission? A nest of delusions obliterated.
Kill the loose ends, dynamite the cave, come
out in the open and say your piece. My bed is
rippled with loose springs, arranging my nightmares
in grand succession. Kill the poet. You killed
my last cup, spilled my endurance, and I am thinking

I will cut my hair cleanly off, clip my eyelashes,
dump all my seeds on stony ground.

Currents

The extremities
are beautiful as stained glass, green
as watered grass
and smells that take me over
a river, salted currents,
blooming with the long-bodied
seal, near curved mountain tops,
fresh mist, malleable fog. Humpback
dive. Cold summer winds,
oceans moving in, moving
the Blue whale, the Belugas,
the dark-fined Minkes.

On land, visualizing the underground rooted networks
that create lush densities of forests,
mountain geography, complex geometry

where fungi are conductors of communication
and legacies are passed down,
in spite of fires, droughts,
insect infestations. Places

enchancing children's minds
with tales of fear and heroic
overcoming. Places
to wade in, walk through, hide in
and be exposed.

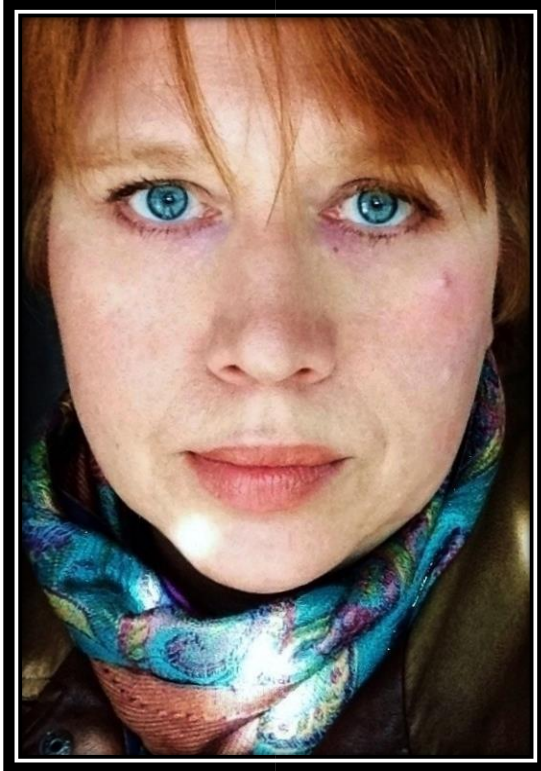
Huddled in unity,
a river pod in winding ebbs, a family
in sync, mastering the undertows.

The means to obliterate

what doldrums dictate
is in the pink sneakers of
winter blues and forcing hope into the mouth
even if it tastes like stale candy.
You pull the waves from a clear sky,
you blur edges into running forms, staining
in effervescent aftershocks.
Help is always available but never ready
to take your hand when you need the courage
not to hang yourself in some avant-garde
symbolic statement on a summit on
a dull metal balcony, hang
like kleenex caught on a high twig.
Comfort comes in packed suitcases and
various dreams of little consequence.
A toddler's game of hide-and-seek
is worth smiling for. Round, rotunda reflected
in the image of a middle-age crew cut and torn jeans.
Inspiration is a wooden ladder, splinters sold
as bargaining chips for each step
to reach nearer to rooftops, treetops and
the sun.

Your head is in a whisper - booby-traps
revealed in the ridges and dips of your thoughts.
You want to be put in a crockpot and left there,
stirred like soup, leeks and lentils, seeping out
an authentic aroma, arriving home.

Epilogue



Allison Grayhurst

About the Author

Allison Grayhurst is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Three of her poems have been nominated for Sundress Publications “Best of the Net” 2015, and she has over 850 poems published in more than 375 international journals and anthologies. Her book *Somewhere Falling* was published by Beach Holme Publishers in 1995. Since then she has published twelve 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 in December 2012. In 2014 her chapbook *Surrogate Dharma* was published by Kind of a Hurricane Press, Barometric Pressures Author Series. In 2015, her chapbook *No Raft – No Ocean* was published by Scars Publications. More recently, her chapbook *Make the Wind* was published in April 2016 by Scars Publications. She also has a chapbook *Currents* pending publication in 2016 with Pink.Girl.Ink. Press. She is a vegan for the animals. She lives in Toronto with her family. She also sculpts, working with clay.

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Trial and Witness

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"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.

"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.

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