

Becoming Morning

by AmySimone Piller

For my parents who raised me to have the ability to love,
through a journey I would not change, even if I could.

Maybe my dad tells long stories
because they all become
connected
to something that doesn't really
exist
except in his conception
which inevitably involves me,
the conception bit you see,
I am here and so my dad tells
long stories.

My mom tells long stories too
because they all become
connected
to something else
that doesn't really exist
except in her conception of it all
which inevitably involves me,
the conception bit you see,
I am here and so my mom tells
long stories.

They do not tell long stories
to each other because
in their conception of me
the stories all went awry
which inevitably involves me
— the conception bit you see —
I am here and so my parents
do not tell each other
long stories (anymore).

I pledge Allegiance to the family
of Brownstone 248 Prospect
Place
and to the child for which it stood
to tell the story of hopeful ideas
under Pressure, indivisible
with Love and Forgiveness for all.

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I. Fertilizer

A Gift

I imagine I would be beautiful naked in warm sunlight;
like a child imagines complete disappearance
upon covering her eyes.

To whom it may concern:
vulnerability is the greatest gift I have to offer.

Playpen

We suckle as newborns
before trained to attach
to color, a voice.

Perhaps you were dropped in training
or worse, left with a music box
wound to lull composure.

Sparse memories defend us,
bars of a crib we have already learned to scale.

Scraps

You always called
dutifully, during dinner
inevitably interrupting
what nourishment
we fostered
without you.

Sweet dreams you sent
over a telephone chord
stretched between you and she
strangled me
in our pristine white kitchen.

The dinner bell, the telephone,
we all jumped for separate reasons
each to complete our scheduled intimacy.
Set around a half empty table
trying to make love seem simple
was simply impossible.

But these were meals
and I learned fast
to stuff scrapped love
behind my smile,
eat pain like vegetables.

Anything to insure that love
could be
worth the hurt.

Tag Sale

The cat, some houseplants and I survive
in our old brownstone. The wooden floors
creak with exhaustion. Progression,
regression, progression, regression,
my mother rocks
on her carpeted landscape
as the remnants of normalcy sell
at tag sale.

She resents everything that lives -
the whole world should destruct
like a vow.

Unstitching a needle pointed "Home Sweet Home,"
is as painful as removing a tattoo.

Brooklyn Christmas Tree

The debacle of want
came annually.
Me craving a bigger tree
and you knowing better.

We'd place it in our upright
shopping cart,
the kind old ladies use and I later
became embarrassed of.
Over many bumps in the sidewalk
we alternately laughed and tripped
making it home only to face the assemblage.
(However many times you pave an ocean,
it leaks.)

One time when you yelled
at your boyfriend across the counter,
louder than you thought, worried faith would die
if we didn't finish the cards and cookies,
I, wondering what else could go wrong,
quietly took a meat cleaver to the trunk
to make it fit.

Later in the hospital
when the doctor asked
how the wood chip got in my eye
you cried.

I didn't understand.
I was always there in the morning.

Aloneness

I saw it torment
the small of your back.

The sun you love, burning
what you could not reach.
The dogged days branding you,
scars of derelict maps.

She Smelled Like Trees

Unforgettable voice,

I await your pleasure
on a clock
that tells time right
twice each day.

It's lonely here
where the past metastasizes
(Grassy pasture,
bouquet of weeds,
golf course; evolution
shows little prospect
for completion.)
and knows no simple
ending. Ending?
Nothing ends,
nothing heals,
nothing hardens,
nothing's forgotten.

No one loves
selflessly. We're selfish
to reveal ourselves
to have selves
and call it nurturing.

What kind of consciousness
is this? With each one
in our ordered place —
alone.

It is the psychic plot,

overlaid by an uncanny
prolongation, the next days
and the logic of all things not closed.

Progress is this
symphony of agony,
of moaning uncertain notes
in continuance.

These are the acoustics
of going under.

Coffee Rings

There were many
brown circles
on your desk.

The cup moving
your mind scattered,
a sketch-a-doodle
I played in the background.

All the words you typed
I dream about
and your therapist
is my scientist,
telling me to recount
the rings.

Recurring Nightmare

This is the dream
I dream
again and
again.
It is late when sense,
long since
sleeping, loses
consciousness, buildings fall
parenthetically
and your face
appears in the derelict windows.

Worse, there are no words
to say sorry or anything
in need of saying, leaving me
wanting the one
impossible possibility:
not to watch
you in pain again,
to be the one who comes undone.

But with secret thanks, morning rises
an epitaph for a dream —
the guilt of existence recurs,
no way to undo what is done.

Child of Divorce on Love

If I told her that knowing love this way
nearly killed me, she would not understand.
She was sure she sheltered me in her bed
each night, writing off my pain to patterned
nightlight of the lost inevitable,
encrypting me disintegrating quilts.

She could not return me, I was in our quilt
with her alone now, slip-stitched away
from where we became inevitable.
Her helix-hurt braiding how I understood
marbled passion and misery, a mere pattern
of lonely lullabies, she sang in bed.

Who would soothe her now as she went to bed?
You no longer near, gone to a new quilt
stitching into our skin a scarred pattern.
You left us each other our only way
to bridge mortality, failing to understand
the pain of pain aversion inevitable.

Oh so helplessly inevitable!
Every night we had to go to bed
crying. What else is left to understand?
(But that bruises came on the softest quilt
when I found that I was made in a way
that firmly followed a flawed pattern.)

Must we be disintegrating patterns,
saddened though it was inevitable,
that we separate in every way?
How many nights must have passed in that bed,
before needing escape from our sleepless quilt,

leaving me to miss dreams, to try understanding.

Folded to fetal, I can understand
though it shakes my heart a funny pattern -
wary consent my life this patchy quilt,
granting faith to what was inevitably
dangerous, logic of an un-made bed,
allowing sadness to make us this way.

I'll inherit our quilt before I understand
fully the illogical ways of patterns,
the inevitable sagging of a marriage bed.

Plumes

FOR THE CRAWFORDS, WHO WILL ALWAYS
LIVE ACROSS THE HALL IN OUR HEARTS.

How can I explain what came
to pass. We were so innocent
that there were yet no words
or need for understanding.
Hedged by Prospect Park
the squares around trees
remnants of hills —
little threatened our plastered consistency.

We were from the generation of broken legs
from skiing accidents. No polio plaguing our limbs,
un-severed, floating on clear days
when there were no clouds.

Only plumes neatly stacked,
smoke factories at a party.

At thirteen we knew the view
was something to admire
and built a temple the one way we knew —
homage to a happy Halloween
the chance to be something else.
We dressed up as those towers
twins, she and I, best friends.
Pieces of boxes from dumpsters on 2nd street
glued together to refrigerator-size
painted rows of windows,
uneven eye slits, one floor different,
and my father's used undershirt for support.
The neighbor asked if we were outhouses

we cried. Dropped candy.

Years later, a loudspeaker interrupted.
How fast the mind struggles to connect!

Walking back to a friend's house, tanks rolled around us
no idea where anyone was, except those few nearby.

Subways ran back to Brooklyn the next day
as news spread of papers ticker-taping
across the river, and the woman across the hall
called with a small voice
asking if we would save the paper
for the kids, for someday.
A lifetime scavenger hunt of psychotherapy begun.

Two days later the Q train delayed
over the Manhattan Bridge.
We sat shaking as suspension bridges do
the plot still smoking,
the emptiness not yet clear.

At a bodyless mourning service
he tugged at my sleeve, the four-year-boy
from across the hall, and asked
“Do you know how my daddy died?”

I stared vacuously
as he pretended to be a plane
and crashed into my knee.

Late

Late at night
breeze comes
to take sorrow away
from those who wait.

Maybe you could tell her
to wait a little longer.
Maybe she would,
knowing you
are somewhere
waiting with her.

Small Hands

My hands tremble
I came too small
from where stomach and hips
concaved the space of loss.

All I had was a hand to hold you
hostage to dreams
plaguing death
with mere bouquets
of words.

I wished you this
someone to kiss
that space of dark night
un-lending a thou and I
to part and parcel this world of no
landed answers, losing logic to
oceans of salted wounds.

Hailing tides like taxicabs,
I had thumbs
and the broken New York sky line.

Belly Button

There is never much
hope for independence —
attachments start early
at the umbilical chord.
Strange to go through
with a hole in the center.

Lint musters here,
left over vestige
gathering the next void.

The Complications of Fertilizer

Though I've stopped being taken with sugar
I still take milk in my coffee -
our mugs differentiated
like leanings in conversation,
the inevitable agenda space
crafted by a table.

Sometimes we forget structure
and find ourselves here
smiling like we are not distracted
by the mirrors in our eyes.

Yet when we wore matching dresses
I cupped your tears in my hands like a wishing well.
Me harboring the hope that love would rescue us,
you sparing what left you had of half kisses
filling and refilling this cracked vase,
trying to reassure the unnecessary of my cradling.

I wanted to believe you
to think this wasn't the holy water of my baptism.
But I loved you spilling tears over a flower
I loved believing in perennials
I loved you.

Over coffee tabled space
you look away and say
you did not need me
to bring spring.

But you raised me in the Northeast
where spring came graciously
when you dressed me in floral prints.

Keeping Quiet is the Hardest Part

In our living room
my fifteen-year-old daughter broods
like only fifteen-year-old daughters can.

When I tell her to stop picking at her pimples
she roles her eyes melodramatically
tempting me to tell her they'll stick there
though she'll find a retort for that too.

Later in the week she barges into the bathroom
finding me at an early morning moment of weakness
as she looks for an obscene colored eye shadow
to further differentiate our reflections.

When she arches her now green eyelids
and coily says, "stop picking at your face"
I want to scream
about work, bills, practicalities,
men, their shortcomings,
and all the concessions
that made me smoke a cigarette,
that caused me to break out
that left me taking up her mirror space
to pick away and leave scars.

I sigh and don't bother -
sad knowing she'll learn this on her own.

Lenox Hill Hospital

Room 509 reeks of its blankly apathetic walls,
a pungent smell of not, not dying.

In this battle of existing unto another,
you wield loss. And I am your only
immortal.

I sit alone on the radiator
waiting for you to wake.

I would like you to comb my hair.

You can no longer have children.

Ring

My mother wore her aunt's first engagement ring
on her right hand.

I coveted it, the small diamond
spinning her finger.
I craved undoing
the sign
she was single.

I often repositioned it,
making sure the diamond pointed up.
She never seemed to notice.

She promised I could have it
when it fit.
I thought this a ploy
it would never fit just right,
kept trying.

She gave it to me on my tenth birthday.
Worn it every day since.

On my finger I do not notice
it no longer a perfect circle.
My boyfriend repositions it
constantly.

I am absent minded now.
Strange what caring does.

Dollhouse

A petitioner showed up for the first time today
like it just hit her that she exists.

“Numbers and statistics,
yelling and screaming,
hangers and blood,” she shrieks.
“Yes, yes I do have a little girl,” I offer.
Oh, my little girl and the masses.

Around bedtime, her empty room still chants routine
and I just talk to the dollhouse
she played in as she took longer to fall asleep.

Repeat after daddy:

“Sleep tight,
sweet dreams,
don’t let the bed bugs bite,
I love you a million and a lot
and more than possible.

And I love everyone in the world
except Walter O’Malley”

her arms thrown around me —

I miss the days when the problem was white noise
on the television after the lost baseball game
and I try to make these problems hers; to keep her home
in the two-by-four means of my protection.
Animalistic means having created her;
an unspoken promise to sustain and nourish love at any cost.

She grows rapidly beyond my bounds and sneaks home
on deserted streets late at night to appease me.

The news broadcast rehashes the world’s age-old problems —
traditionalists fighting modernists

I recall from college days

desiring yet another argument
to justify human existence.

It is this unrequited excitement upping the ante:
placing her future and future hanger in question,
so I sign the petition and look around her empty room
wondering where she is tonight.

Garlic Press

My mother harps on apologies
over not giving me her father's garlic press.
We feel guilty for what we cannot give.

It is a small thing, I say.
I never met him;
She had me late,
he left early —
some combination.

Sometimes she made spaghetti
on his old pasta machine
(which was not suggested
for my new apartment,
which I do not know
how to use).

There are these things
about each other
we will never know.

And now, cooking dinner,
my new garlic press
makes me feel too old,
so far, from what once was
home.

Perennial

A leaf hits my face.
It's just a fall, falling day
to not destroy.

Loss is this, child
chasing shadows down the street
into a dark shade.

Preservation

I ask to meet a jaguar
to skate, to see the edge of the Great Lakes.
You guide me through Central Park's
zamboni parking lot to the museum.
New York City provides for us
a heaping plate.

I whine and gnarl at the stuffed bear
willing the cubs to the window.
You shake your head in disdain, but
keep taking me to the museum
where on the marble steps I can
marvel at lions,
you the architecture.

Oh architect, must you have eyes
in back of your head?
(Guilt and you loom like a third eye
when wandering through crowds looking for
not you, who notes the fire exit's location
and stroller parking.)

“Mom, what's taxidermy?”
You pull me by the hood to the next exhibit
explaining natural history
through the solar system poster
you buy from the gift shop for my ceiling.
It's a controlled view
up through apartment eleven D,
star struck and becoming
your fossil.

“Mammalian Ludicrosities”

Once you get inside me
what do you expect?
I am just another
tenement, awaiting a coffin.

I know no little place
to keep shop, to think
the world in shape.

We can't stand our lives
up that long, sagging
towards death, afraid.

I want to be let in
where the blood runs free.
I am dying — to see what?
More than the mind can doubt:
my very self —
tiny, frail, meager, fallen.

Smell yourself rotting
and try not to die.
Stay stuck there, pitchforked
between iron skies and copper fields,
alive in this mud puddle
splash, splashing!
in our bodies of wetlands,
tears and animal tracks,
no irrigation, just subsumtion.

Can you see and still
want to spill into the world,
the current of the natural

and drown knowing
there is no reason to think?

Can you want to become mud,
to violate you and I
to love our inadequate selves,
to erase the thoughts that began
the boxes that made us believe
in patches and fixes
and all the justifying
to bury the dead
before noting how limited
how alone?

No, we cannot be cleansed
of metaphor —
in this world of empty words
we still want privacy
to know better why flesh rots.

But you know,
even the best made glass jar
explodes in winter.

II. Tropism

Tomato Plant

This morning, patterns crawl up the window curtains.
So far, we know each other like fragmented memories
seeking seamstresses and tailors.

I lie still trying to preserve your dreams.
At this early moment, I know little more
than your curtains' growing translucence -
lulling me to sleep in morning light.

Sweater

Though I will ask for help
finding the other arm of my sweater

I must confess,
in a morning twinkling of stupor
I am somehow warmer.

And by somehow,
I mean you.

Early Bird Gets the Worm

Hours after awake,
I am impatient for distraction
from the lost world I want back.

Too early for an appetite
I think the world has lost all taste.
The sun insists I drink coffee,
I know no other way.

A mapped being, wired by the world,
I ask that you wake up with me.

The coffee maker shakes its head
at your excitations, the inroads paving
over my morning routine.

I rebut, Mr. COFFEE!
His pocket change
is a glimmer on my floor,
last night he made me
a be-boppin jukebox!

I collect myself,
refill the French press,
and brew morning,
a blend of new desire.

Visiting Morning

A bird dropped in to visit this morning.
I wish you had woken up
to watch it hold off afternoon
with its firm little hops on earth.

Expressionless Morning

I do not want to have to ask
for the things I will not ask for.
I want them to come
like morning.

I want you to be morning
and I know that is more
than I can ask
(because I will not ask for it).

But would it not be nice
if you became morning all the same?

And some days you do
and some days I am
tired of wanting more
than morning and so
you in morning seem enough —
which is when I remember
I am enough
in morning that is
with me and I am
thankful.

But winter comes
and light holds time less
fast. Speed takes so much
time, and I think,
we are here after all
faster or slower
than morning permits
our tenses to readjust
we're just here again

and it is enough
that your face is expressionless
when you sleep
and I kiss it still
knowing its rise
and rise and rise.

Cake, Skip, Yes

“I love you.”

What random words.

Why not,

“Cake, skip, yes,” instead.

Each time I thought it

I would turn to you and say

“Cake, skip, yes”

I like that, “Cake, skip, yes”

But then

if this were ever to end

every cake, skip and yes

would recall you.

And I like cakes,

skips and yes.

“I love you,” is just

I love you.

Will we say it enough times

to make it mean me to you?

Make it always call and recall you to me?

Bake a cake, skip,

say yes.

Say it again:

“I love you love.”

I love love, I love you

“I love you,”

I say again,

hoping.

Killiney Beach

Two boys chase each other down the beach.
“How am I even supposed to get there?”
one asks the other on a sand dune.
Their little bodies bare ocean
like tide pools drink seawater.
I sit near the waves’ parameters
watching what fearlessness felt like -
the fleas burrowing abandon
and the happenstance man walking down the beach
wearing a vague smile and a suit suited for reminiscing.

My toes dampen and crave
this life of the waves
tirelessly crashing.

As the mountains of silt pounded by the rush
must miss the stable beating for even the gloriest of days,
I too feel a missing.

But by some grace, the world has placed
these hard-pressed grains beneath my feet,
a lesson in continuance.

In learning to love what the future might bring
I try to not forget how one learns to swim to another,
how to continue longing, unafraid.

To the Stairs

A lethargic morning sets in
at the stairway landing.
My legs, yellowing photographs
pressed between memories,
souvenirs of this inclined order.

I sit in the kitchen
a too-long steeped cup of tea
thinking about the stain
I'll leave
on the porcelain.

But the day is too young
to grant space to such apprehension.

I must grant the morning its meanderings,
hoping the archives will
someday sort it out.

Gray Day

When it comes down to it
we're all here to help each other die, gently.
Although your worry about my crossing the street is touching
the practicality of it all makes me forget
how to reach out for you late at night.
Considering reveries, I want to compensate,
to impress upon you and the wonderful weight of your body
the poetics of our beings; I want to make you blush.

On top of you I frequently forget rage
to live and the need of a rain jacket.
If wonder is not a strong enough word
to express the confusion of a nail scratching my anatomy,
consider the paralyzed look of post coital confusion
of ourselves like books, on shelves opened and closed
decaying, consider shifting a bike in gears too high,
the collapse, the clicking, the preemptive arthritis,
the morning's typicality – the alarm clock, my drool
and now your sleeping arm I try not to wake -
I want to stay; I will try to stay.

I will not get out of bed, to face the world
with sky too big, and thoughts too small.
It is gray and today I am a being that you animate.

Great Tyrants

It is early
and you have changed the calendar
as only great tyrants can.

Today's AD
is tomorrow's BC -
no power to control
how many summers
and how many winters
have passed
since we have not met.
They pass in me,
I seem to be passing on
to where the winter
does not come
after the harvest
instead the new starts
from nowhere
and we're here really.

There just is no here.

We'll reschedule a meal
we say before it's too late
and someone places food
on a grave, dines with
the heretical dead
continuing.

What shortcuts are there?
To this calendar
this rescheduling
this notion that

the harvest comes.

Elsewhere, elsewhere
where are we now —
floating between pages?
subscribed to undescribed places?

One day will the world
be fully erased
by the space
between us?

It takes hold slowly.
It takes hold.

I wasn't born bruised
but here I am today
an old peach.

Tourist

On a tourist excursion
there is always a vista
where someone stands
on the summit.

Who it is, is irrelevant.
“Is,” is just a word
and “was,” just an impression.
Loneliness grows as the action goes
further into the past.
(Below the summit
falls the ocean
flecks of chaos foaming
the ocean and sky
drowning each other
reflection in blue).

The tourist takes
a pronoun: you,
once the impressionist painting
that cohered to yesterday
is tomorrow too
you. The dots, the ocean
the world unable
to repeat itself
only able to be
endless
with no chorus
over and over
dots crashing and cradling
the pronoun for the world
I have learned is you.
I learned is as you.

The you is love
the point is made
the drowning begun complete
a drop on the horizon no more
the world is
there is no was
but what is now
you.

The Lifted Veil

You arrive
mid-sentence on a page.

No sensible arrival
just presence in blank spaces;
in today, tomorrow, yesterday —
wherever things no longer exist.

Slowly I know these spaces
will not be filled
by delving tongues'
unilateral attachment to self.

Rewrite, reread,
unable to let go of this need
to find sense at the end
of language so aptly accurate
in its reflective shortcomings.

Fragments of the Bible lie
in glass cased museum space.

So, true, there must be spaces
for sense, there must be
correlation between one and another
(light's glint on a spot of ocean
impossible to follow without fractioning).

Are we merely reflecting?
Not really here even
just images of the sun,
obligated to days
ending again and again

with light on this insufficient page
trying to say, enough (!),
we are only particles that were
never meant to meet.

Portentous Enlightenment

You still lay claim on my dessert stomach
although another man dines me.

It's unfortunate you've filled me,
as the delicacy he ordered
looks altogether delicious

And to think,
I almost bought you a cookbook.

I almost believed you
would bake for me.

Geranium

The potted plant I purchased
dies a little death
of slowly wrinkling leaves
and browning stalks
of unobserved sunlight.

Today I felt an appendage short -
spilling coffee, slamming doors
knocking strangers, cursing myself
for first missing your hand,

and then wanting mine back.

Nostalgia

I recall a fancy meal -
the ambience:
a salad of thirteen greens
before delicate quail,
champagne and seven sorbets
with long spoons
shifting food and toes
in love with sidelong glances.

Except this never happened.
Although once,
you told me
your life story
over cafeteria coffee.

Bracigliano

Would you like to know
what you have missed?

There are no plans for skyscrapers here.
The people are too short,
concerned with pilgrimage,
their knees and the mountains.

These are ruins, sadly
that is why they are beautiful.

Us of the leaving,
not surviving an ice age
grounded and still
not knowing water must
source to return.

We learn here
where it stays spring,
what beauty moments
of perfect decomposure bring.

Journey

Running away looks like running towards too
if you forget to focus and remember to get lost.
Watching footprints walk
to a chosen point weaves
a crooked path to nothing,
and the greatest something.

To keep what little I know of loss small
the destination must stay disoriented,
a wildflower bound in a park,
unlike a caving valley and more
like a mountain I forget to fear.

I fog it over to feel, my gray matter craves
filling up on breakfasts with background news,
a soldier's face appearing in pain distantly mild,
my plate of food forgotten to feed on.

We won't watch people return in coffins
but will watch the morning breakfast blur.

We want ways to filter —
seeking a path of tragic romance
as if it could puppeteer us through.

Entranced I watch an enchanted Juliet plead with Romeo
to return to the rhythm of her voice, to not swear on the
moon.

Not enacted by an actor an unscripted truth unfurls:
only lunacy and constancy survive
a running trajectory.

III. Sun

GE Washer

I would like to know you -
not like a bright green plastic Easter egg
shut up like a broken music box
I keep opening.

I would like to take you -
not like an opening blossom
rushed indoors for a vase
I keep shattering.

I would like to hear to you -
not like a symphony on a cruise ship
excluded from the conversations
I keep listening.

But my grandmother wore out
her GE washer in one year,
shocking the servicemen.

She simply liked the humming sound.

Ode to Shadow

I.

You do not want
to know me anymore.

This is wrong (you say).
You do not want to know
me anymore this way.
This way?
Too many ways
to qualify this way
or that way.
If we had only
one way streets
we would never be
here, now
would we?

But, in a way,
I do not want to know you
(In that way which may mean
I won't see you
in any way today).

Anyway,
you should know
I hate you
in a way.

And if I love
it will be
in a way that has more
ways (and turns and pirouettes).

So, if in a way
you love that,
it doesn't mean you love
me. More it means
there are many cities
to lose ourselves on
corners and sadly
I will always love you
when I'm turning.

II.

We are united
in forgetting
what is not meant to be
remembered,
raised to not
expect what we learn
to live without —
a lot to live
without, history
paltry evidence
at most.

Past passes already
while morning makes us
ravenous, termites
preying on roots —
what for? To learn
once more, the imbalance
of will and were
of words and feelings.

Trauma comes,
(a hulking sloth)
resistant to
articulation making living only
a formaldehyde insult.

What dynasty we make
of eyes and ears

that can't be
the things that did not;

all aborted;
come to nothing;
the conditional,
creaturely forms we are;
roots, urge, blood;
the energy that hopelessly is.

Defeated, defining
by all we have,
not by the nots and not yet
of nights and bedtime's
unrecorded dreams,
when everything seems possible,
nothing dread.

World where did you take
the not of shadows?

To love — world
you took, tormented, turned
the space of not
into love.

What once was
chrysalis enclosed
now the incest
of need and void
to fill before and thereafter.

The maintenance of what is
coming at the expense of what is not.
Love can never be
in every way

to apologize
for what always is.

What always is not
still remains —
still my shadow,
stay still shadow
so I may
harbor hope
in the empty darkness.

III.

So hard on ourselves
in this journey,
land to sky.

That is all it is —
here to not here
without a ladder.

Much time jumping,
stretching, straining,
wishing love were
my shadow
so I might make this
in between more
momentous.

I wish I knew
how to hold myself
while stepping.

Savory Fish Dinner

I wish I thought it advisable
to tell you about me unhesitatingly,
rainwater creeping up pants
water bubbling furiously to a boil.
Alternately, I wish I had gills to lie,
a stranded fish pining for water
feigning necessity and dependence.

Unfortunately, I am not that fish, that kettle or a mess.
I am just smiling up at you from puddles.

Over a kitchen burner,
my mind wanders between missing kissing
and fighting the pending temptation of love
(some version of puddle jumping).

These are the beginnings -
the gentle kisses and curious tongues
touring the ruins and ramifications
of a new lover's lost lifetime.

As I prepare dinner I think I would like to
tell you about me from the beginning
(onion tears and dead fish
warm ocean waters and shiny lures,
despite knives).

At a single place setting, I silently imagine you
bitter and savory –
we all have our ways to enjoy daily dinners,
to survive ourselves.

Coffee

I find you stirring,
milk in my madness.

Like a coffee ground in a filter
you catch me and we brew.

Flicker

Like a moth to flame
you make my madness.
Heat becoming,
sweat easing
drunken pores, pouring me,
in between fingers where
wetness wants to stay inflamed.

There seems no such place
where wings never were,

'til you come on.

A Poet's Reassurance

Late morning, you worry that I'm drafting the beginnings
of an epic, an opera or some arcane category of tragedy.

As our minds mind us too long post coitus
discern creeps up your cheekbones
like a preemptive terror of aging.

Don't worry,
it isn't you
or your unwritten songs I want.
It's your unraveling dreams on partitioned lips
where my tongue can press vulnerability like a button
taste tonsils on your throat
and sprawl a rough draft of intestines
like the leftover stew your mother made.

A poet, I am in search of my plot
not a question lying in wait of your answer.
I want only the power to let myself go
in your cauldron of delectability.
I am unlikely to play
with this power I possess,
so trust me,
come now,
open wide
say
ah.

Oriel

Window, you box wonder so well
giving the outside world its life
of warps to twirl
a girl in a skirt
who merely sits within.

Just today, would you work
the other way? Shine on
what I know, what may stay.

It's cold out there you know
where you dare me to affair
with the breeze, in my hair.

Window I want
none of your distortions
only fresh air.

You should be barred!
opened.

Or

Pollination

No words to fill
where tongues almost slip
in mouths to be held
captive to a body –
dried flowers
deathly preserved for the afterlife.

I am leaking ocean again.
My face is wet with it:
secreting tenderness,
salivating.

Symphony 42

I was laughing
when you kissed
my teeth disconnected
from the little muscle
thumping inside
a cavernous body
I became.

The moths shifted
my spider web, and I
became a bird
playing afoot.

It was true
metamorphosis
requiring inspiring

another symphony.

Sincere Infidelity

I.

I am sincere in my infidelity.
It is in hope, for the life of my heart.

II.

He was tired
for someone to hold.

I wanted to be soft music
tuned to where spells tell
myths of hope to undo
time on course. Move
towards clockless ships
falling.

There was no score to follow
only dreams we missed
in ourselves.

III.

Huddled I was ready to let go
my knees, but for the ground.
As tall as my shadow,
unsure of sundials,
I loved you enough
not to
fly.

Pennies

There is little more
to know than these days
are simply days.
What else could they be
but days to laze just
you and me?
Days to let no threat near
what it is that we hold.

Dear I know
no bounds to days
we are yet young
and they come one
by one, the world
turning years like pennies
wealthy with what
we do not yet have.

.....

What have we longed for?
The moment before a smile?
(This prophesy I know.)
Your crinkly hands
the shower shared
before sleep
arms and surfaces gone.
I long to tell you
this hanging participle
best explained by a lisp
of a kiss that graces our lips with want
to know the must of interpretations
the free associations of how I see what you say

the place slipped between seams
that the sky sees to drop rain
and you know to hold
softly.

....

Air, the shape of your nostril
on my cheek, isn't there
until you shape it —
a camera, wind in my eyes.

Hopeful Love Later On

On the beach
will we still
cartwheel till
falling down in French music
making love lips shaking shoulders
out-tapping the piano
with our laughing hearts?

No wine sir,
just you and me
to thrill each other
like children and the waves.

Ode to Parents

I cannot imagine the unthinkable days
when it will be blustery and I cannot

call you, and know sweetly that the mere light
in an upstairs window reminds me of home

of what you made warm and not quiet,
what leaves know of next, though falling and brown.

Space in the sky for people is limited and vast
with eyes low in the stance of childhood.

Looking up
I saw you.

ANNOTATIONS

She Smelled Like Trees – The title refers to the character Caddy from William Faulkner’s novel, *The Sound and the Fury*. The poem is a letter to a lost loved one about feelings in their absence.

Lenox Hill Hospital – Lenox Hill Hospital is where I was born on 05/09 and my mother later had a hysterectomy in May 1999.

“Mammalian Ludicrosities” – The quote in the title comes from Faulkner’s novel “As I Lay Dying,” and sums up what I think Faulkner might teach if we could just “unravel in time.”

Killiney Beach – Killiney is a beautiful Suburb just South of Dublin, Ireland.

Symphony 42 – Refers to the number that would be assigned to a symphony if Mozart had written another.

