

# **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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 coyly 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.



