

# *Front Porch*

I remember  
The night I couldn't sleep  
I remember when I almost drowned  
Almost—it feels weak to say  
Most people strain for the surface  
But my feet sought the bottom

I was sitting on my bed  
My hot pink, over-sized night dress  
Drooping around me like a melted popsicle  
The lights had gone off hours ago  
Still, I couldn't sleep

On the bunk across from mine,  
You turned over and kicked off the sheets  
The night was stifling

You hadn't been asleep long  
If you were asleep at all  
And me, I'd been up all night  
Playing my Ukulele in the basement  
The same five chords I'd learned that summer  
Wishing I could leave the hostel  
Wander down to the river  
And listen to the geese tell mocking tales

Quietly, I tiptoed 'cross the room  
And stood by your bed for a moment  
Your long hair spread in waves across the sheets  
Like spilled milk, firelight, or coral

Sometimes in the evenings  
You'd let me play with it  
I always undid what I'd done

Just a whisper, barely  
Your name sounds strange to me  
Did you hear it? I can't tell  
Should I speak again?

You stir and I stand closer

“Can I have a hug?” I say  
“What’s wrong?” you ask  
I’m scared. Scared of the surface above me  
And the bottom—too far to reach.  
Breathe.

I slept with you that night  
Your bed was way too small  
I pretended to breathe—or tried  
And when I lost sight of the surface  
And couldn’t touch the bottom  
I laced my fingers in your hair  
Something real,  
Something there

I remember  
Biking to your house in the winter  
My fingers were cold  
But I could make the ride in minutes

I never knew your house  
The color of the paneling  
Nor the color of your car  
Just the porch lights  
Always flickering

We’d sit on your couch  
Eating cheap sushi with wooden chopsticks  
Watching comedy shows I didn’t care for  
Because I loved being with you  
And I’d stay much too late  
So I could fall asleep on your shoulder  
Watching through closed eyes  
As the porch light flickered

I’ve called you far too many times  
Now, each time I dial  
I hesitate  
Your voice on the answering machine  
Sounds foreign and exotic  
I think of the geese by the river

I remember  
Sitting with you on the bank, just talking

Watching the lights of the riverboats  
When you told me what others think  
Doesn't matter

But now where the porch light once flickered  
It's dark  
And I remember  
I was drowning ...

I remember  
But oh how I wish  
I could forget

# *Snow*

I knew when you said  
You needed time  
That some timeouts don't end  
And so I didn't dare to hope  
But perhaps I'd stoop to wonder  
What amount of time  
Would be enough

When the sands  
Of each eternal day  
Hardly seem to fall  
And the weeks  
Are composed  
Of those first seven periods  
Before there was man  
To make time

Still, somehow  
You need more

What effort could I give  
Short of recreating heaven  
Short of turning back the clock  
Short of giving  
*Everything*

If there was even hope  
For reconciliation  
I would bear  
That slow progression  
Like the slow accumulation  
Of the snow upon the ground

Until that brilliant morning comes  
When the final snowflake falls  
And all our past injustices  
Lay buried  
In the snow

That time  
When timeouts end

When time itself  
Breaks  
Upon the abiding eternal  
Where progression has no end  
And hope alights the future  
*Surely* then ...

The stars are wide awake  
As I meander past your place  
But the brightness of the falling snow  
And street lamps, filtering through  
Make it seem to me  
Eternal dawn

And all around me,  
As I walk,  
The  
snow  
accumulates

# *Echo*

Frankly I've been wond'ring  
Bout that old cicada tree  
The big one in the front yard  
Where every spring  
The cicadas would crawl up its bark  
Cling to the rough surface  
Sprout their wings  
And leave behind  
A hard, empty, shell  
An echo of what was—  
Of that beautiful hum  
The cicada's chorus  
The dynamic static of spring—  
With the intense stillness  
Of pending change  
They wait in their encasements  
Until, sprouting their wings,  
They take to the air  
And leave behind  
A shell,  
A perfect embodiment  
Still holding tight  
Still clinging  
To the bark of the old climbing tree

Sometimes I feel like the cicadas  
But more often  
I feel like the tree  
Haunted by echoes

Of empty cares and hollow days  
Dead weights  
And memories  
Still holding fast  
Still clinging on--  
These weightless loads I carry

# *Cemetery*

*Cemetery*  
It sounds  
Like a final pronouncement  
A betrothal  
A promise  
A plea

Say it again  
*Cemetery*  
And again  
Say it until it no longer sounds like a word  
Until the meaning is lost  
To the sound  
*Cemetery*

Standing still  
Stalking stones  
A man and woman slumber  
Silently  
It sleeps  
Upon a stilted crag  
Or slipping down  
Soft river banks  
Buried in the shadows  
Of old imposing steeples  
Or sequestered in the churchyard  
Where weak men come to rest

And somewhere  
Someone's whispering  
Hush now  
Is it God?  
He tells you something you can't hear  
But feel it.  
You will know  
In the way you know a word  
Without knowing what it means  
Because the sound of it  
The look of it  
The feel of it  
Is right

Is lush  
Is somber

*Cemetery*



# Oversized

My overcoat is much too big  
It droops down to the floor  
It keeps off all the rain  
And is warm enough, although

Sometimes a chill creeps up the gap  
Between my arms and sleeves  
Sometimes it catches and it snags  
When I quickly try to leave

Sometimes the lining's itchy  
Sometimes it's much too hot  
But I noticed when it's all just right  
I don't give it any thought

Lately life's been wearing  
A coat that's oversized  
Nothing's going perfect  
Everything's awry

First, I couldn't see my friends  
Next, they cancelled classes  
Temples closed  
Housing changed  
With plummeting finances

To top it all I lost a friend  
When I already felt alone  
I was stuck behind  
While everyone went home

School became a struggle  
As did social life and work  
And while trying to keep balance  
The balances just broke

Was school really that important?  
Or should I call my mom instead?  
And without such constant deadlines  
I could wind down before bed

My wedding will be simple  
But the planning stress is gone  
And perhaps I will find focus  
On the secluded backyard lawn

I miss my classes terribly  
But my professors, they still care  
And my friends I loved to talk to  
Pick up the phone—they're there

So,  
when life puts on an overcoat  
And everything seems dim  
Perhaps,  
My blessings are just oversized  
And I'm still growing in