

Shards of You

Wake up, I said
and you did not
and I am having my worst nightmare.
When I wake up you will wake.
Something unfathomable will be undone.

Meanwhile I take care not to rearrange
the shards which remain on the bed
the dresser the walls the floor
the bra on the desk, the phone by the lamp,
the makeup in the drawers on the sink on your eyelids.

These are where you live.

Other things that ached inside of you
were not intended for the world to see.
Once, you smiled at your reflection in your fingernails.
Take care not to look away, you might have said.
Now is when you get to know me.

The Origin of Making Sense
for Maddie

Your first language, adoration—
not a single word of deprivation.
Your second language, yes and no.
Your third, the tongue of younger twins.
Plain old English was the fourth.
Your fifth, cat whispering.

Next, the fury,
followed by the language of the world,
which not a single person knows.
The origin of making sense:
wondering why, and
letting seeds be planted.

Who wants to know
that the ones who fed you
were right
and wrong?
You had to leave to find your way back home.

Your seventh language, one that's
heard and felt and churned and
finally spoken by mouths of the suffering
before the mouths are lost.
You heard their names.

Your name was heard.
Your first language adoration.
Your third the tongue of younger twins
you raised with the help of your mothers.
Every cat knew your name

now carved into stone,
some useless shrine
or the sweetest alter in the field,
never to completely fade,
but never to be newly known.

Blessings for the Soles of Your Feet

When the storm rages from the inside out,
may the spring water quench
your thirst for more.

When she is gone
and there is nothing left to cling to,
may the soles of your feet
sink into the muck
until they find solid ground.

When the storm rages from the outside in,
may the lumpy couch cradle you,
may the stovetop steam envelop you,
may the bubbling within the pots sing
like lullabies you heard in the womb.
May the frayed pot holders
which your mother had worn
protect your knuckles and palms.

When the blankets are too heavy
to throw off the bed,
the floor too cold,
the sun too bright,
may you feel the welcome,
accept the gesture of the sunlight
where it leads across the floor
to this new day.

One Eye Closed

I want to tell my preacher
that I am made of leaves
which breathe the opposite of me,
and so is she or he.

I have no preacher.
On my way to the transfer station
my foster mother speaks to me.
I watch the trees pass backwards,

like how she watched her life,
one eye opened to the distant past.
But, too, one eye closed to the now,
head turned away from her decline.

She said something like a prayer
each time she woke.
To her, a body just a body.
Her memory, diffused oxygen.

I don't know if she prayed for me.
I didn't tell her she was made of leaves.
On my way to the transfer station
she reminds me that even leaves mourn.

I want to tell my preacher
that the crows circling the sky
beyond her window never landed;
that they were made of leaves

which float and fall and feed themselves.
There is some cleansing, at the dump.
On the way home, alone with myself,
trees still pass backwards.

Blessings, on Every Occasion

On your days of shipwrecked loss or wrenching abundance,
When dread or love swoop through your walls,
May sweet music echo through your bones,
the kind that makes you cry and wish for more.

May someone always stay close by,
whose touch you trust to wipe your salty face.
May your puppy stay steadfast to you and yours,
no matter how grey or crooked he grows,

May you leap, fly through the days
with the softness and daring of a baby sparrow,
may you explore with the strength of a brown bear,
the stamina of a turtle in the sea.

When your children's voices shake with fear,
or rage, mere impatience, or severing pain,
may your arms remain open to hold them dear.
May they stay close, even if they turn away.

May you be protected by the ancestors of ancestors,
who are protected by the sheltering clouds.
May your father's smile abide in you,
the memory of your mother's sure hand clasp yours.