

## Waiting for the Tsunami

Mid-dive, mouthpiece secure,  
flippers in synch, the boat above  
bobbing gently, the mast a silver glint  
beside the sun -

An Alaskan quake sends tremors our way  
forcing: an early end to snorkeling, hotel  
evacuation, an uphill drive with all the other  
shoreside evacuees.

Nowhere to go, cars parked end to  
end, waiting out the tidal wave.  
We make a party of it, sitting on car  
rooftops, sharing

birthday cake (for Tad) and stories  
of where we'd been when the whistle  
blew; above it all, no sense now of  
being vulnerable,

though just a year ago, I walked  
the hall from parking lot to hospital by  
my father's side; his steps were small  
and tentative,

he stopped to rest every couple yards.  
I was strong, steady in my gait, a step or  
two behind but ready with hand at  
his elbow, knowing

how he hated to be dependent,  
knowing that's my inheritance, that  
some days this genetic pride makes me  
feel superior like

today, a mile from the ocean, chased  
by a tide I can't control, warned  
of a tsunami I don't believe  
will ever come.

## Noticing

Myron needs to be taking meds.  
Or, if he's already taking meds,  
he needs to stop.  
Myron is talking.  
He is always talking.  
He doesn't miss a beat.  
You could say,  
he doesn't miss a thing:  
the page 8 news, the most  
recent Guy Kawasaki blog, how  
Solar City shares are trending,  
what's coming to the Met, odds  
on any Sixers' game. He picks up  
every signal. He notices.... well,  
everything, you could say.  
You could say.

But I must say he takes note  
of nothing, really. Not one  
thing. Like how that cloud,  
that stunningly white  
cumulus cloud, is rimmed  
with gray. The skittery spray  
from the sky-high falls  
we can't yet glimpse ahead.  
The dip in the silent pool  
ten yards to our left where  
a fallen fern is settling in.  
Air that threads a density  
of green heat, to make a breeze  
smaller than a whistle.  
Not even the amber gloss  
of bare shoulders – mine -  
lightly pinked by exertion.

Here are we, in steep ascent  
above Hawaii's coast, deep  
into the trail, the surf  
a distant, steady throb,  
and Myron is talking,  
not missing a beat.

The two o'clock sun sharpens  
its penetration and still  
Myron doesn't notice, he  
does not see or listen,  
doesn't sense a thing and  
for no reason at all  
I think of Susan, our friend,  
Susan, undergoing  
radiation treatments  
back on the mainland.  
I think of Susan while I  
am here, with Myron, hiking  
the Na Pali coastline,  
and he and I are noticing  
and not noticing  
all the world around us.

## Vengeance

Rain batters the house  
of Diego Ortíz;  
rain strafes the white  
flowers of the yucca plants  
in the hills above.  
Streams of anguish  
darken the arroyos' banks,  
wash the mud with mud;  
draperies of tears shroud  
the plain red dirt that  
has rusted with thirst  
for so long.

The rain, thinks Diego,  
falls too quick.  
A drowning man, he would  
seize the black tresses,  
loosened from the sky  
on her calculated whim,  
that whip the air like tails  
of mustangs on the run,  
that fill a dry and empty  
ditch with fury. He would  
crush the white flowers  
with his callused hands.

There is a storm above  
his house, and all because  
in the name of her gods  
the crazy Isleta who is  
also his woman prayed  
for rain, prayed for  
obliterating  
rain.

## The Music Madness

*Fergus Falls News, 1916: Bertha H admitted to Hospital for the Insane...  
A petition was filed by her husband who alleges she sits and plays the organ  
all day, that she is melancholy and mourns for friends who are still alive.*

time is not measurable  
not divided into hours  
days or minutes here  
but reckoned  
by meals, footsteps in the  
hall, the change of orderlies'  
shifts, the fall of  
the moon behind the trees  
fifty yards outside my window

a churchbell rings

though it has been so long  
I remember you, friend  
I remember where you came from  
from silence, pure as the cold  
that prison, isolation

from creamy white planks  
lithe and lovely six-inch slats  
smooth as satin pillows

they cooled my fevered fingers

my fingers: their  
gentle strokes and pressures  
releasing notes like nettles  
that nestled in my ears  
every one a shock, a bright  
surprising pain

a liberated sound that morphed  
into silver into mist into  
fine translucent air

and retransitioned  
into sunlight into fire into a  
golden weave, a muffler  
for sheltering against

to evade the loveless truth

though it has been so long  
I've safekept you:  
hidden  
in the silence in the cold  
isolation like that  
from which you came

a church bell rings

I reach for you  
a cherished voice  
like velvet now  
unwrapped in this deep freeze  
to keep me warm  
with remembering

## Committing to Impermanence

You and I, Thomas,  
dragging a stick  
through fresh concrete,  
sketched a perfect heart.

TJC you wrote inside  
and handed me the stick.  
AKH I wrote below.  
Then you took the stick

again and drew a deep  
plus sign between our  
bold initials. Our love  
inscribed to last

a lifetime.

Things are different  
now. I am with Gerry,  
and I scrawl on  
the sidewalk where

it's old and cracked:  
a misshapen heart,  
scribbly, lopsided,  
etched with a child's

bright pink chalk.