

Nikki's Park City

on TV she saw soldiers carting trucks full of groceries
and weapons tremendous creaking impending dust
she imagined her house on fire trying to get rid of
her housemate who took crotch shots on her kids' cell phone
living in the high desert woods her construction worker boyfriend
at home in New York offered her a world ripped open and honest
between us all just barely dinner time

a torment of listening and questions into that a torrent of frosty
light she tells us *I don't wish anymore I let kids' fish die*
in the bowl their orange scales
like furry sweaters
we rock bumpy upon the road cold air breathing
and far away over the ocean in the hot land of soldiers
and gunflare and explosion
sharks cluster around coral flowers
we're looking deeply into falling snow

words in air

the games of a teacher her demanding sagging scores
by now beyond joining surrounded by juggling
boxes of tax receipts balanced remarks on the page
planning lessons and endless students' seats filling up

the filing end run of chronology trilogy what if it's all arbitrary
letters and documents of the deceased
koi swimming streamers of algae floating mud museum
mint plants volunteer lemon rind soaked in oil

always threat of financial pressure who gives up gives in or won't
at this point the space the alphabets the beach glass
the rim of fog lifting a movie script in production
as one person walks solitary not speaking the others so animated

last trips in between absolute covering a career trajectory
practice isn't clear some occult cognitive college bureaucratic scrapes with
nothing special any laboratory manner and received a neutral review
with revelation at some stage leaders filtered response of silence

could it be performance of dance of the alphabets photographs
no way to know perhaps a joke an apparatus of the particular
trekking so necessary to make this connection a chance at anything
a shot of wistfulness missing some key ingredient

not knowing where to begin so never beginning or picking up
in the middle an active point of prizes and publications
skills and interpersonal typed notes delight interest and conversation
everything about schools and children and predictions and whatever names

BOOKBEAT in Fairfax, CA.

I wonder about the people who have stopped here in hopes of stumbling across
some understanding to change their lives...the world a -glitter of coolness
as we are trapped in music before Christmas
Chris Izaak soft crooning steel guitar hillbilly twang
December rain that gray all day like the British Isles

Are they looking for books or craving the chatter of others?
swapping stories in this little leftover Hippie town
where the young girl making coffee
and an older bearded guy talk about the same woman they know
she has cancer she is very sick
and they all will pitch in to help her husband...

Recently Judith took her own life and I haven't reached out to her husband Ray
while I said hello last week in another bookstore
as he was wandering the stacks thumbing pages of philosophy
crime novels and poetry I imagine he is overwhelmed with grief
all the people she knew and all the questions
we have about why she was trapped
and why the people and books and artwork she loved that couldn't console her
why she shot herself the day after Thanksgiving in her garden
that she had given great attention to cultivating
children and a richness for compassion and ideas
and knowing that the Buddhists say your death will change nothing

she asked to speak maybe she didn't speak
she wanted to read maybe scream
but she wrote:

*water suspended in sun
a cobweb of grey light
spreads over green dampness....
run alway with the silence....
memory and hope fuse....
a world that gives pleasure to others*

A man with toddler twin boys and girl a bit older
tells her Daddy she wants to read
that's what you do in a bookstore
read and touch the pages look at the world and words

a sad-looking woman in dirty worn wet clothes browses
through some bestsellers and while no one pays attention
she inserts some neatly wrapped candles into her pocket

I need a dictionary and an atlas
to understand words and the shapes of land

and how we speak forgiveness

Nina's Story at Feather River

after he saw that strange light
he told them in the hospital
his car flipped off the road
and he got out he dragged himself up the ravine
his insides bleeding
and he hitched a ride to the emergency room
to try for life

you tell me this while we're not really safe anymore
by these cliffs and rivers,
how we know when it's okay to reveal how good it is to have friends,
how you loved to travel with him,
and although now you have someone else
when had you never thought you would meet another
and in the shimmer of summer by this ravine of light
miles from our homes I wonder how it is to survive
the disaster of death's heartbreak
and how you needed to travel alone, for a while returned to a tropical place
you had visited together, then managed to shift back into the States...

they say there is meaning for us in everything,
and I wonder what I've done to deserve knowing all this,
while you were telling me about losing the love of your life
I was holding a smooth stick, shaped like a dragon or a snake
shaped by whatever made the courage to go on

a crow yells from the rooftop flapping strong stretch of wings
we should look at our three dogs in the yard
as orange light bounces off an airplane and sunset clouds
the dripping water through rocks and bamboo chimes hanging from trees
the dogs sleep the move around and restlessly as the hummingbird hovers
over planets the slope of wings and July wind drifts
nothing exactly what we would like but what of it?
there's nothing to tell: the airplane surges west
the crow flying away at dusk

someday all of it leaves
tulips and sunflowers
a large dinner fish
that plate of tangerines and creamy Italian cookies
photos of turquoise umbrellas
farmers churning curds of cheese
a wall of brick and ivy
the sweat of people some earthy and sweet some awfully stinky
like mildew and mold
humanity swearing
blindness the wearing
weathering that funny way we age
so full of mystery waiting for the guests and trees
full of warbling afternoon birds
so all of it ends
we never know what will happen next
laundry and paying the bills for certain
all of our worries
all gone