

## Heart of the Matter

Just one more day  
in the grind, in the bind,  
and the voice in your mind  
seems to whisper,  
“Never let go”

Try as you may,  
you can't rest in one place,  
your heart seems to wander  
no matter how still your  
feet stay

Late, late at night  
the process unfolds,  
it flows and it grows  
through fingers and toes  
'til it reaches the heart  
of the matter

The blank page inside you  
longs to be written  
your heart spills its ink  
on the landscape  
of life

Through all of your foibles,  
your fallacies and farces,  
the path in your heart is still  
inky and wet

Freshly drawn, slightly smudged,  
but still good as new  
patiently, quietly nudging you  
home

## Shiny Things

The newness wore off  
like an old penny you put  
in your pocket and forgot  
about, chasing the next  
shiny thing. You didn't  
mean to lose interest, but  
there was so much to see and do,  
how could you be expected  
to stay in one place, to hold  
this moment in your gaze for  
any longer than you did? The time  
you had was long enough,  
enough to create beautiful  
moments, explore cities and  
beaches, soak up the excitement  
and agony of being alive, until  
you weren't, until the plane  
on which you flew was no longer  
part of the world the rest of us  
call home, and the shiny things no  
longer distracted you, for  
everything was glimmering and  
whole, like you

## Trespasser

The well was cool and nourishing  
and deep, but years ago  
in an act of courage and  
defiance, you moved the heavy  
stone across the opening, allowed  
the thorny branches to grow over  
and around it, so that no one  
could disturb your tomb, or drink  
its healing waters, and you turned  
your back, confident that the thorns  
would do their job to keep the trespassers  
out, but what you could not see in your  
rage and self-hatred, was that the thorns  
and brambles shadowed you in your  
exile, shrouded you in your attempt to be  
invisible, shrunk at your valiant effort  
to fight them back, grew thicker and  
stronger, shielding you from the world  
of your creation, until that day when  
the thorns pressed deep into your  
flesh and you finally tasted the sting  
in the back of your throat, and it was then  
that you knew the only respite left was to  
return to source, and there in that ancient  
place, you tore back the branches and  
brambles, bleeding and broken, but it was  
too late to care, and you uncovered the patient  
stone, waiting for your return, and there  
as you wildly plunged yourself into the waters,  
as if returning to your mother's womb,  
there you realized that the thorns you fled had grown  
out from the belly of your pain, and that you,  
you are the trespasser, bathing in your own  
well of salvation

## The Leaf

A red-gold leaf floats to the ground, and there  
I pick it up, hold it gently,  
flat in my palm, a mirror of my own hands,  
lines and veins, delicate and strong,

lines that cast the story of the journeys we all  
make, to the precipice and back and, for some, to hell,  
where we may stay a while, take up residence in our suffering,  
until we either persevere or perish.

In these lines, on this path, these hands stroke children's faces, twirl golden strands  
between fingers, touch cheeks at night, through tears.  
In the dark, these hands, solemn and life-giving,  
belong to my mother.

These hands clumsily fiddle with a lighter, shaky and desperate,  
light the cigarette, flip this way and that, dangle the stick of burning tobacco--  
with an air of confidence, and yet those lines betray the longing for one more tomorrow--  
as ashes fall, unnoticed, to the ground.

Crackling against my skin like the rough and delicate fabric of the leaf, this path for once  
becomes a burden, a stifling presence that keeps me from the joys of red-gold leaves on autumn days.  
And so, with the hands we share, I crumble the leaf, release it to the wind,  
a weight removed, a crumbly, red-gold burden of the soul.

A leaf floats to the ground,  
and there I pick it up,  
and there my life begins

## Nana with Rose Petal Tears

Rose petals, like teardrops,  
fall softly to my kitchen counter,  
surround the vase where the wilted flowers  
droop their heads in reverence to the  
stooping, plucking, pruning

of Nana tending to her roses  
crouching in her gardening shorts,  
as I play in the field behind her house,  
searching for rabbits' nests and pulling out  
my dollhouse to set up in the quiet patio shade,

of Nana sweet and fragrant as the roses  
that she tended, bare legs exposed, a rebel  
of a time when women wore only skirts and hosiery,  
bustling about in her slippers and shorts,  
cultivating an escape from everyday life

of Nana's hair, soft between my fingertips,  
like rose petals, as she lies in bed, life gradually  
slipping through grasping hands, ice chips, greeting  
cards, and tear-soaked tissues encircling roses  
on the bedside table

of my Nana who never cried, at least not that I  
can remember, but if she had, I know her tears would be  
rose petals, cascading between dreams and  
backyard memories, sweetly-scented and multi-hued,  
formed together into one final bloom