

## Don't Forget the Night

Before dawn  
when dark is still lingering  
in peaceful silence,  
a single hawk  
rides the morning air  
just above the treeline.  
He slows and settles  
on his branch,  
like the whispered utterance  
of one simple sentiment.

Not "Good-Morning,"  
too soon.

Not "Farewell,"  
too final.  
more like "Don't forget the night,"  
whispered as the sun appears  
like a conjured magic trick.  
The fledgling rays unfold,  
blasting light through the treeline  
demanding a blessing  
from the sky.  
The little hawk squawks  
once more his dissent.  
But, it's not enough.  
The new day starts  
without contrition.

## Southern Charm

Turns out, southern charm is my greatest weakness.  
The accent, the gentle politeness that drapes  
its friendly arm over your shoulder, and makes you  
feel like you're the only one. For every girl like me,  
a southern belle is the most magnificent dream.  
I followed the pine trees to her neck of the woods.  
She lives on the edge of a golf course where the sun rises,  
as it always has, and she walks in beauty  
but lives squarely in the past. Her craving for adventure  
quelled by familiar smiles, welcome obligations, and abiding  
outstretched arms. Accepting the embrace of memories,  
#30 All-American, living the best life of past praise  
and present grace. No surprises. Fewer risks, and none taken.  
Her gentle kindness held me like a home. We laughed  
until we cried, shyly avoiding each other's eyes.  
Her hospitality unsurpassed and, my desire stayed fully masked,  
nobody has ever taken better care. She cooked for me:  
sausage and eggs with a teaspoon of grape jelly on top.  
All the while, her soft voice revealing the history of her sacrifices  
with the poise and gratitude of a poem. Labels of friendship,  
and roommate hiding any "unnatural passions."  
All those southern secrets, and stories of what might have been  
poured out with morning coffee, followed by a pathless walk.  
Beneath the daylight moon, a snow-white egret and a great blue  
heron watched me swoon. No remedy. No regrets.  
The slope of her shoulders level with the fact  
that what people already knew about her was enough.  
She's the one who gets down on the ground, and wiggles  
through the dirt under the porch to capture the abandoned,  
imperiled kittens before they succumb.  
Southern charm has love enough for everything and everyone,  
but her own heart lives in a cage, and I cared for her more than  
she could claim. Now we live our lives in separate places.  
Good ole Southern charm is nothing without patience.

## If (K)not for Love

If not for love,  
we wouldn't make mistakes,  
take no wrong turns,  
commit no crimes of omission,  
sing in perfect pitch and harmony.  
If not for love,  
we could see clearly  
and follow any path.  
Justice would prevail.  
But love ties us up in knots,  
and breaks us down  
in the dark.  
Dreaming about love, we can't help  
being tempted by its promise.  
Greedy we swing and miss.  
We jump and fall,  
and when we lose  
"mistake" we call.  
Yet failure stops us not.  
We crawl, and brawl  
and want it all, at any price.  
If not for love,  
loneliness would have no name,  
and a broken heart would have no pain.  
Flowers would grow but never bloom,  
and I would not have met you,  
if not for love.

## Pardon

You are a poem  
to me  
not a person  
who will let me down  
as you change  
with the seasons  
dropping your leaves  
like a tree  
and then becoming  
a bird in that very same tree  
making a beautiful  
nest with your leaves  
until you fly free  
and I watch you float  
and soar  
(until you have flown away)  
no rejection do I feel  
because you are a poem  
not the woman  
I loved  
and lost.