

moving sometimes breathing

red

walked around I saw unrecognizable faces it was hard
to say where I had come from where I was going somewhere

clouds drifted to no endings no walled-in boxes at the theatre
I saw the times and idled past behind me an hour but really

we can both agree you're much farther ahead when lost I write to
draw a bridge a light across the dock but my screen froze

so now I'm stranded in a wave of faces I tried to follow the ending

unclear so I keep this map maps leave me nowhere
to go a bench to sit on wooden grey-brown but I turned away with the

note the goodbye you gave me maybe I'll check showtimes again are the seats
red bold red is a fire it grows larger and heavier I grow smaller and softer

my pocket contorted the map into folds as useful as stars in waking
morning I protect myself from searing intensity not from much else but I

am trying I told you it's hard remember you wore a red dress well I never

wear red never a dress when I find the theatre again I won't
even sit down and roll along with the film I have places to go not

really I only have to keep away from all the sharp glass only you
know how it is a hand reaching out miles away at the movies they use those

big plastic letters to say now showing like those big wooden letters kids
excitedly paint their names I lost mine I met someone with your name

I'll walk. demure riddles.

don't fall into temptation: miracles are like the pennies found face up
in the gutter: value ambiguous. when words weigh ten tons jettison yesterday

and tomorrow: one a frozen clock one too much. into the ossuary.
the present is just so, so pray to the higher spirit. days. weeks. question

and walk. the haberdashers sell blue robes: wrapped in
plastic and smiles: wear the hood and hold your hands high

breathe in the homily. *don't sin.* who are you? I don't walk the alleys
of Shangri-La. my thoughts ruminate from [hell]. from the [heavens] all that is seen is

clouds upon clouds: lay on the grass watch the matinee wait for the star act.
and then a crazed tempest: quizzical-truth

close my eyes to the [bad] and look inward: a supplicant to the higher
spirit: each life worthy: my beliefs always

breaking apart and coming back together sometimes at the hopeful
seams. or hopeless. sorry. deep apologies. *I'll pray for you.* some harbinger

set out on a voyage. I will hope: but I cannot direct, nary am I a conductor
I know nothing. all that is [good]: a baptism in the lord's natatorium:

swim just long enough and emerge a new child. the regatta to the
island-destiny of [salvation]. you higher power: believe in me.

here where the easiest way out is to deliquesce: have faith.
the waterfaling reads me a prayer: convalescence written

rough as bark: hypocrite: it's okay
sinning in a world where dichotomies prevail: seriously. hallelujah.

amen. to the lambent hopes hiding in internal fears: your pendulous words
never laid out the start. principles of a [religion] with no answers. the real experience:

a whippoorwill calling its own name into the oblivious night:
there is nothing [?] to hold onto. the [right] buried five feet

four inches in the necropolis. the [wrong] stirred into the schnapps
served cold and brisk from the robed disciple

the point of divergence

During our stroll through convalescence, we deployed courage to endure the hardships thrown at us like cigarettes flicked out the windows of speeding vehicles. I remember staying awake with you on those nights when the ceiling fell, when we spoke in silence and gestures, a language all our own. Blue eyes watched animated movies on blanketed nights. White cotton feet danced to the hits of the decade. Voices sang as sharp as the pain our parents wore under smiles.

It was a fairytale half-written when the pen exploded and ink cascaded in rivulets across the page. The rooms that once held us, now square boxes shut tight. I pull out home videos and photo boxes and immerse myself in our capers. When you evanesce to the disinfected chambers and the sickness inside you, I swaddle that photograph of us holding each other, wearing oversized baseball caps. Somewhere in the quixotic pigments, I look for the precise moment when even in your company, I felt burdened by loneliness.

I remember a school-day. The art teacher had explored straying in dreamscapes. They told me you'd slipped in the wet, muddy field, that an ambulance had taken you. I wanted to curl up in the black curved lines of the pages I'd emptied into, find solace in the mistakes I didn't erase.

How is it that now short messages sent across a phone or an unseen picture of us online leave me unfazed? As routine as the autumn leaves shedding from trees, I walk at my mediocre pace through some unorthodox masquerade wearing warm, I'm fine smiles. I tiptoe into a small space, a room called mine, and reminisce about our steel-strong sisterhood, wondering whatever happened to those too-big baseball caps.

Now, we're tiny handcrafted paper boats laid out on a moving stream and I don't know how to be your sailor: the uniform doesn't quite fit. I want to run home and tell you, yes, I've got a clean white book and we can start all over, here, take my hand, isn't that enough, why isn't that enough.

gentle heart beats

they say how do you know you like girls you've never
even kissed one: you're a virgin: I know

she gives me a million reasons to smile: I've looked
into brown eyes as beautiful as a trip to heaven:

she laughs: passion pounding with every single heart beat
every single word: she speaks: her body next to mine

soothes and softens my skin: slows time to a saunter:
like a flower girl walking up an aisle: when I see her

my heart stops just long enough to remember why it beats: I
stay up thinking: about every second minute hour with her:

about every word gaze touch breath: feeling her chest move
up and down against my side until both our eyes close: her

head on my chest: you don't understand:
you don't understand how she makes me feel

that she's molded out of pure diamond: how that's entirely wrong:
she's far more precious than anything imaginable: to sit with her

and trace her skin with my fingers: to follow every curve of
her face every jagged scar every soft wrinkle: I don't question

if I like girls: I only question if one day she'll hold my hand and
look into my eyes and whisper those three words and draw her

finger along my skin: I only wonder when I can hold her forever:
I only wonder when now will come and she'll be waiting for me

like she's known me her entire life: she said she's not interested:
she's not looking for anyone right now: maybe it's not her:

I shouldn't dream of something that I don't have:
but I breathe every time I see her.

misdiagnosis

my grandma asked what was wrong. asked what girl has such trouble breathing. asked why she had freaked out so much.

i held my pink blanket and inhaler and thought thank goodness i can breathe. thank goodness.

my favorite color was pink surprise. pink backpack i carried everywhere restaurants movie theatres

car rides. pink shirts and sweaters. painted walls. a pink blanket with ruby-hued flowers and crowns "princess"

written into the fabric cursive letters strung together like pixie dust. the only thing i brought to the primary care center was that blanket.

and my mom. it was past my bedtime. my grandma was visiting she stayed home. just my mom and i

waiting. televisions on the walls. tabloid magazines on the side tables. my mom picked one up read about

the latest celebrity gossip affairs the "d-word" i twirled the blanket in my fingers. sucked my

thumb. rubbed my fingers along the fabric mesmerized by how it changed colors from quiet pink to fiery red.

they called my name a lady with a clipboard a white room white walls no windows a thermometer in my mouth questions

clipboard her eyes on the clipboard only on the clipboard. a stethoscope on bare body "shhh don't wake up my heart"

open wide aaaaah numbers and words on that clipboard. what's wrong? looked at my mother. my eyes my fingers on

my pink blanket. absolutely nothing she's fine. look at the numbers the words look at the clean white walls listen to the thump

thump thump of her heart. "but i don't know how to breathe" "tell me how in case i forget" "why can't i see myself"

an inhaler. journal two or three times a week. calm down.
take deep breaths. you're fine. write more. just take it easy.

my grandma was sitting at the counter when i got home. my inhaler
my pink blanket my mom i never used that inhaler.