

Fall

Autumn is a guillotine this year.

Friends drove down from the mountains:
aspen leaves were gold for a day, they said,
then dropped, fell like the dead,
blanketing the ground before
the snow comes to bury them.

Temperatures dropped like a lopped head,
had no legs to get up again.

Geese fled, cutting the air with chevron swords.

Tomorrow, a blizzard may threaten,
erasing landscape under a white shroud,
or we may live with skeleton trees for months.

Autumn is a guillotine this year,
when we need her to slow her blade.

Seven Times

I fall in love seven times a day.
I see You pay for your street parking then glance
at the meter in the spot next to yours,
and it's clear you are spying for a chance
for random kindness in the world,
to good-samaritan the extra change in your pocket,
if the meter is begging for a ticket without your intervention.

I notice another You in the coffee shop window
sitting down with a book instead of rushing
through the line and out the door,
because you're friends with early mornings and don't mind,
in fact really enjoy, seeing the sunrise with a book in hand.
An actual paperback book, bent along the binding to the page
you're reading, pressed upon the wooden table top,
so I can't see the title or the author but I imagine
it's a good book and you're smart and pensive,
a kindred soul looking for humanity
everywhere like me.

There's a You I work with but don't really know
who always says hello to the security guy in the lobby,
greeted him by name and asks after his kids—
which makes all the strangers, the hundreds and
thousands without names passing on the street,
less anonymous, because you cared enough to learn
that guy's name and chat with him every day,
and I bet you give him a Christmas card with a twenty in it
so I love you.

I see another You jogging during your lunch hour
without music playing in your ears,
because you like to see new parts of the city and
listen to each block's self-made music,
and I would jog with you to the city zoo and laugh
at the monkeys who are so much like us when
we were young and still monkey-bar climbers,
and why not just go climb a tree together in City Park
because we are in love and kept young by it.

When You--another you--cuts me off on the drive home,
speeding and in a hurry only to be stuck
at the same red light as me one block up,
I forgive you willingly,
because maybe you got swept away by
the song on the radio rocking a mean guitar riff, or
your boss just yelled at you for a mistake he made, or

your mother is sick in the hospital and visiting hours
are running short for the day, or
you really are kind of an asshole but
you weren't always and won't be forever,
but today you're twenty-nine and self-important
and aren't we all?

So when You roll into bed next to me
after dinner's dishes and kids' bedtimes
have been wrapped up for the night
and you've finished that last email you had to send today,
even though we're tired and barely found
a few sentences to spare for each other
in the midst of the busy and distracting all,
my heart is practiced in opening.
I roll my head on the pillow toward you,
say, "Good night," and rest my hand on your immobile chest.

Spinning

Hope is the thing with
is the thing
is
tattered and torn and battered and
born upon winds and bad weather
feathered into cloud shapes
cirrus and cumulus and cumulating
like a stockpile of
dynamite or despair--black hole opening
in a heart or is it a blossom
opening like
hope like
a flower in a garden gone to seed
growing on its own in a place
given to weeds and reckonings.

“I feel more like”
you were saying when I interrupted
“more and more like
I’m spinning”
Me too! my damned interjection
“spinning out of”
aren’t we all spiraling,
centrifugal force throwing off
everything
“control.”

You finish and I fail to ask:
why? Or are you
okay? Or
take your hand just
take it in mine just
take a chance
to be kinder, quieter,
falter in silence
knowing silence has
its own horizons,
but time is too short
and I’m assuming I must be
unassuming, must not assume to
be helpful be good be welcome be
glory be;
now all we have are
bygones—
unmoored moments,
the detritus of memory.

The Grammar Between Us

I can't parse you,
fail every time to translate
the tenses of your gestures:
past continuous,
 present perfect,
 future conditional.

I try to diagram
the sentences of our symbiosis
stretched over years.
Could I compose,
 would you mind,
 a poem to articulate us?

Forgive me; I am not fluent.
I falter with pauses,
find impossible any clauses
to capture
 the grammar
 between us.

If I draft a new language,
will you edit it to shreds,
these threads stitching me together?
Might we author together
 a better sentence,
 punctuated with possibility?

Or: a different effort.
Let me parse you without words,
conjugate your body,
press your spine
 down in the dark
 into past and instinct.

May my hands meander,
write forgiveness on your skin,
compose a moment with you—
intention and touch, shiver and bind—
 find velvet heat,
 and find it again?

Reach beyond words;
beat back resignation.
Make room for joy.

Lesson of the Old Rock

The cracks are passages:
is the lesson of the Old Rock.
She is veined and pocketed by quartz and mica,
divided by ages into two halves of a whole.
Moss and lichen lace her underbelly and shadowed sides
like green garlands of time dressing her for dinner.
She split eons ago, by the slow encroachment
of water, ice, and earth-shifts.
Now I can pass through her heart
and come out the other side.

Her fissure delivers me each time, again, into the world,
making every day I visit her a birth day.
Traveling through granite chasm, I am made new;
she strips from me the old clothes of my sins,
like confession. Or like the atonement of Jonah,
complicated and born of storms and necessity,
leading to small shade in a desert, worm-consumed—
and I am sun-burnt prophet-skin, thin and peeling and peeled,
tender with bared nerve-endings,
while my heart remains storm-tossed and fish-nibbled.

Breaking and broken, my heart is slashed-at and cracked—
for disappointments run deep as earth's core;
the deepest is me, knowing too well
what ruminations and regrets I've mined.
But this is where the passages open and
the path is laid, step by slow step,
solitary stones of heart-crumble marking the way.
Tread deftly and lift your gaze to see wonders
on struggle's road—enchantment deeper than dim magic—
which is to say, love.

In time, my heart will echo the silhouette of that
breach-boulder, sublime earthen mother;
I will be divided—a chasm will rend deep through my heart's core
until you and everyone can pass between.
I will pull *myself* through the path, walk a passage
that kills me dead, paves the way for resurrection.
O fool short life and troubled living! You
will slip like water through fingers, like air through
split rock, and my calamitous heart
will beat on although in two, its pieces
calling out to one another a contrapuntal chorus,
a freedom song.