

Come Home

I read a line about soft skin,
heard a song about the night.
I'm learning not to fear; I'll teach you, too.
Come home and we'll drink ourselves silly
and laugh each other deaf.
We'll spend entire days in quiet libraries,
in antique shops, gazing in museums.

Come home and I'll tell you everything I've learned:
how the ink smells when it seeps into my pages or my skin;
the quick, light sound of a fountain pen, and the bleeding words.
I read a poem about a mattress,
heard a song about a bird.
I dreamed and dreamed you but never said so.
I sent myself in small envelopes but they never reached you.
I tossed and turned in the cold spaces and
for all my wanting you haven't come back yet.

I waited for a while but now I'll just say it:
Come home.
Come home.
I am powerless and I cannot stand it.

After Fighting

We make dinner: in your kitchen there is hardly room for two
but we make do and wash pans to cook with; thaw the chicken.

Frozen peas clatter in the pan like poured marbles,
skate across its surface: lively, verdant pearls.

Tonight I do not play the music; tonight I do not dance
or sing with my microphone spoon,
circling around you.

Tonight I watch the ice melt, see the peas unfreeze.

Pushpins/September

UNO

I got drunk
in a dusty, dozing town no one's heard of in this hemisphere.
The *cenizas* had settled over everything—
a fine gray dust in our mouths
but I never thought,
“This is what a volcano tastes like.”
It washed down easily,
sip after sip.

DOS

I wept
thinking of the sea lions and the barbecue,
the only hostel with a decent mattress,
the *kiosco* boy who'd asked us out for drinks;
thinking of my neat front yard and my
brother's thirtieth birthday;
thinking of the sun warming the streets of Rome;
and how I was alone.

TRES

I left
so many of my moments there
when I boarded the bus.
And something in me cracked,
broke like the bone of a bird—
at thoughts like “back when” and “once”—
I can still feel the shards shifting when I think
in disbelief, “Never again, never again.”

Buenos Aires

We've been apart now
nearly as long as we were together.
I've been remembering
those sunny walks down crowded streets,
lounging on the grass in the park,
how I missed you when I went away,
and arriving at the terminal and seeing you
was a homecoming.

You were my home,
no matter how reluctant I may have been
to admit it those first few months.
But God, how I came to love you—
furiously, wistfully, tragically, joyfully!
And how I thought I knew you,
even your darkest corners
and your sickest secrets,
but I read your other lovers' letters
and learned more.

I envied them—still do—
the time they had with you.
Ours was cut so short I've nearly forgotten
even your simplest features:
your breakneck pace, your racing pulse,
how your voice would rise and fall
like verses of some unsung hymn—
dots on a paper, fingers on keys.
You sang and sang
and at night you were quiet, perhaps thoughtful,
but relentless when I couldn't sleep.

You gave me no relief;
I'd wring my hands
and grind my teeth at night
wondering what you'd ask of me
tomorrow. You always demanded more.
I should have hated you.