

## Not Even You

Hands and feet bound,  
in the steel bed of your truck.

When our eyes meet in the mirror  
you speed up,  
skidding over dusty washboard.

In this love,  
I learned to listen  
to the things that are not said.

It is a fine art, perfected in my family.  
We find love, we understand, at any cost.  
We dig it out of the dirt like a worm.

When you leave my body in the brown grass  
at the side of the road, I realize

I have never let anyone go

not even you  
not even  
you.

## Peddler

In the belly of the valley,  
dark and green,  
I measure my life in loves gone wrong.

hitched to me like a cart,  
clumsily, steadily carried.

There is the one who passed too quickly,  
just flashing green eyes, laughter.  
When I get close enough to touch it,  
it slips through my fingers like water.

There is the one that I broke.  
A pile of perfectly preserved pieces  
of blue and white porcelain,  
stacked up gently  
with a promise to repair.

There is the one who didn't see me.  
Crumpled me like a piece of newspaper to be burned in a fire.  
From inside that fist I squirm, I ask why, I never rest.  
I make myself as small as she did.

There is the one I've tried to preserve,  
wrapped around me like a blanket,  
a little too tightly at my throat.

I imagine one day  
I will fall on the doorstep  
of a new love,  
sweaty and stained. I imagine  
they will gently, with care,  
tell me  
I can't stay.

## Thirty years from now

I saw us thirty years from now  
sitting in silence and noticing  
everything,  
how big the ocean is,  
how long the last flowers hold on  
before winter.

Piles of mail, what's for dinner,  
the same shoes in different sizes.

Our two tiny selves stuck together,  
gentle and sure,  
unnoticed.

I don't know if it is because of this,  
or in spite of it,  
that I let you walk away.

When I close my eyes  
I am standing with my toes  
curled over the edge of a canyon,  
leaning over the possibility  
that you are gone.

In my dreams I hang  
like a carcass in a butchery,  
swinging slowly with my chest arched upwards,  
a hook through my back, bloody and sorry.

In the morning I am a shell.  
I sit in an Adirondack chair, knees to my chest,  
noticing how the chips on the rim of my coffee cup  
hold stains like memories.

I should have held on,  
white knuckles around your forearm,  
our two tiny selves stuck together,  
gentle and sure.

## Choice

*for Gladys Kennery, who died alone, face down in the snow.*

I break from writing,  
slide on my boots and step outside,  
wading through islands of mud and snow.

I am looking for signs of life and death.

A birdhouse nailed to a tree,  
a clothesline brought down in a storm,  
curled up like a snakeskin.

Wet limbs of knotted applewood,  
forgotten fruit left hanging.

Smoky fog slides through the trees like an old lover,  
once known but now barely touching,  
on its way somewhere, anywhere but here.

For just a moment I consider the choice  
of solitude,  
safe and hollow,  
just the sound of my boots crunching in the mud and snow,  
walking out to the barn at dusk,  
picking out pieces of wood to burn.

## Love comes back

Is this the way love comes back?  
angrily, full of grit,  
like squeezing the last bit of water from a cloth,  
my insides wrung tight like a rope.

I always imagined  
it would gently return,  
like seeing Venus  
out my car window while I drive,  
heroically constant, superior, holy.

I hold up a shadow of myself  
in the window,  
papery thin, stupidly supple  
a body somehow gripping the wheel  
and disintegrating at the same time.

This is the way love comes back,  
rising in my throat,  
coarse, acidic, untimely. I peel my  
eyes back to the road  
and drive on, Venus glaring brightly,  
joyfully.

This is the way love comes back,  
hurling ragefully  
from light-years away, demanding  
attention, demanding you dissolve  
just a little bit in its light.