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Leaves

*It's easy to believe that  
the leaves live  
for that glimmering glorious flash of life  
Raging, verdant, throbbing green, full and thick  
Glistening with dew  
On those early summer mornings  
As they welcome the sun,  
drawing it in triumphantly -  
Yet slaving away all the time  
Working furiously as the sun  
beats down relentlessly  
They slave, night and rest  
come too late and stay too little -  
No, I believe they live  
for that glimpse of freedom  
Dry thin and brittle they  
leap to the sky  
and dance the whole way down  
playing with a gentler autumn glow  
As they slowly descend  
Sometimes caught in a friendly sportive wind  
Sometimes waiting awhile on a branch  
Sometimes delayed by a conversational shrub  
Until they finally reach their destination -  
laying on the ground as the days grow  
darker and colder.  
Trampled by passersby and utterly forgotten,  
they relax themselves into the earth,  
reflecting upon  
all their hard work this year.  
But secretly,  
they treasure that greatest moment -*

*of fall and dance and freedom.*

## Family

I've learned how to learn  
moment by moment.  
That was us, she said,  
hiding Jewish friends.  
I want to know, she says  
What the Stasi had on us.

Moments. I learned not to ask  
the questions that can never be answered  
the reasons her parents  
my never known grandparents  
hid from the world.

But they had a world once  
When and how did it disappear?  
Nobody knows  
and so: the pain of displacement  
is lost  
in the pain of children  
and guilt  
and division.

My love floats above me and above the globe but:

Berlin's pain so huge it swallows each contributing soul.  
Yes, we've loved you and no, we don't know where to go from here.

## **The worlds of my grandparents**

My grandparents came from worlds that have ceased to exist.  
I reach into memory  
I reach into history  
And my fist comes out empty

They came from the world of empires  
The world of Austria and Ottomans  
The world of argument of submission

My grandparents came from the world before the world.  
I never knew them, I never will.  
But I know they came from a world long gone  
They fought and suffered in it.

## My Moons

And in the todays and in the tomorrows  
and in the mornings that linger  
the evenings that fly  
and in the unforgettable moons -  
collecting like children's artwork  
and school papers  
in the attic of my memories  
and in the basement of my thoughts -  
the moons that guided me home  
in lonely winter and in lazy summer  
in all these days,  
under and above all these memories  
and all these moons  
I try to remain.

And these moons that linger -  
of many colour and many shape -  
Orange, hanging low, soothing and delighting,  
a gentle melody of autumn dying and summer laughter.  
Silver, huge, suspended high above,  
promising fervid nights of ecstatic inspiration,  
and of solid soothing friendship.  
Yellow and soft, cat's eyes moon,  
watchful and waiting, too often unobserved,  
the moon that shows up unexpectedly yet oddly welcome  
in all its sneaky truthfulness.

All these moons and more,  
watching over my nightmares and my daydreams  
Beloved friends, unchained from space and from time.  
Helping me to remain, as me, in now and then and yet to come.

## Nighttime contemplations, on a loss

And why not spend a bit of time  
enjoying the quiet and solitude of night?  
The night sharpens each pain and yet  
carries the awareness  
away from the ache  
until you merely watch, floating

watch the hand that writes,  
the arm that trembles  
blistering against the cold  
hair flared in hopeless attempt -  
yet no cold is felt  
watching  
from the shapeless night  
watching from outside the window  
the form inside  
the form writing  
breathing  
being

And how strange the futility  
of the human body  
the hair that raises against the cold,  
to no avail.  
the yawn once useful  
now hidden for fear of giving offense.  
Our brains we pride so much  
no longer able to navigate our bodies  
around the neighbourhood.

What strangeness this body watched  
by body watching.  
Inside and out at once  
the flesh and the shadow -  
which is more the real?  
back together a moment  
the watched and the watcher notice  
the bare winter branches  
lit by the streetlight

Golden against black december sky  
still yet ever reaching  
joining watcher and watched for a moment  
all, stuck bright against black

isolated pricks of light  
within the sea of dark that pushes  
oozes, smothers  
glimmery forms defying  
a moment longer  
the same all, yet all separate  
the watcher the watched the light  
separate yet not we cling to our forms as long as we might  
anxious for the night to reveal  
our glistening glory  
and our slick isolation

the night will do this to you  
reveal your loneliness in a world of dark  
but just one hint of another gleam of light -  
and suddenly it is all the same.

The walls are empty.  
white, a few stray scuff marks.  
I long to cover the walls  
with colors and forms  
to ward off the empty just as  
a body lost in the night  
pushes back against the empty ink creeping over.

Yet in these moments, this is all that matters -

the light, the form -  
hand moving, shoulders shivering,  
blanket rustling -  
Branches swaying, squirrels dashing,  
snow dancing on the wind  
form and movement are complete,  
no qualification needed.  
Against the night, this is life -  
It is now and can only be now,  
And so it must be enough.

Against the night, there can be nothing else.

A few shriveled leaves still cling to the branches.

A breeze rattles them about.

Yet they are determined -

They have clung there through fall storms and wind-rage,  
through December snows and the icy cold that freezes them in place

Through all this they have clung

A small breeze will not topple them.

Or is it the tree that clings to the long dead leaves?

The wind picks up, the dance quickens.

Through it all, form and movement while the night waits.

And what else could we want to be?

### **The world before the world**

Geography was different.

Eyes were different.

We met and smiled and knew we were safe.

Now we know nothing

But

The ones who smile back

are just the same

and so we wait, wondering.

I think, though, that you are wrong.