

The Road to Homer

As the brief night lifts its gray blanket
My eyes drink long draughts of wilderness

The road is hedged by granite crumble and rock slab
The flora is white lace and purple garnish

Peninsular waters of cold turquoise flash sunlight
Off the wings of a blanched low-soaring seabird

Waterfall strands plummet past the height of skyscrapers
Down mountain mammoths my sight can't keep in frame

Clouds in highest climes perch on peaks
Like egrets on the shoulders of elephants

The spires of this cathedral are green tangle-trees
Snagging my soul on their branches

My throat is thick with gasping
I am diminutive and wide-eyed

My senses are swallowed
By the ample world

If civilization drowns in the ices we melt
I will come here, become a bear,
And feast on salmon and honey

Caterpillar Girl

Daughter, did I step on you?
Caterpillar of my heart
With your spiny sensitivity
Feeling for the world's
Hard corners and soft edges
Inching along
Bristly-soft and vulnerable

You taste and test
And button-hunt and press
And press and press

To know your power
 Build your defenses
 Arm yourself and
 With charm and glances
 Disarm us

My foot falls heavy and large sometimes
 My beak-like words
 Peck and threaten to consume
 Your still-soft self
 I am sorry
 I will do better to protect for you
 This world-sized, lifelong
 Chrysalis

Your wings are readying
 Present and developing
 At times dampened by sorrow
 And the everyday betrayals we adults visit upon
 You and all child-hearts

Inch along still, growing girl
 Travel and transform
 Then
 Spread
 Lift
 Ascend
 But perch again
 Near
 I'll tame my steps yet

Sandpaper on Silk

Life is sandpaper on silk
 Snags are inevitable
 When the beautiful and the rough
 Rub against each other like lovers

It isn't the sandpaper's fault
 Ontologically speaking
 It has its place, can make
 A hewn log as smooth as...

Silk too has its attributes
 A fragile beauty which
 Falls like water, whisper soft on skin
 (Though I'm not sure the worm's perspective on it)

Life is the terrible disappearing space between them
 The unraveling of fine things
 Brought too close for their own good
 Balmy summer temperatures meet ice caps
 And all our polar bears are left drowning
 Lives march to matter more than gunshots
 Neighborhoods divide along fault lines
 Of difference and indifference
 Mid-life crises leave children
 Half-orphaned every other week and holidays

How can we contain our contradictions?
 How do we reconcile
 Peace and power
 Romance and reality
 The Just Cause and the just flawed
 Without tearing up hearts or
 Lobbing off heads in private jihads
 Bloody and holy and now?

Life is sandpaper on silk
 Or a junkie's temporary ecstasy
 Or a flaming marshmallow--sugar turned to ash

Sun Salutation

We rest at night under star shine or cloud cover
 Forgetting
 The sun is always mountaineering

Our sun makes a repetition of ascents we suckle on
 Like a baby at the breast, hovering hummingbird at blossom
 We sip and sup the sun assuming
 She will never tire, always return

The golden orb sits herself upon the horizon
 Gathers her breath
 And begins her climb to the peak of the sky

Only to descend from her zenith
 To a rest she never reaches
 Finding yet another day to scale
 And so she clammers on
 Delivering again to us
 The gossamer goodness
 Of her warmth and illumination

When the world turns cactus on us
 When our atmosphere burns toxic with vitriol
 When life is a live wire that snaps toward our hearts
 When our minds lay the lash down on our own backs
 Then let us look up
 The sky is the firmament
 And we are living upside-down

So in the morning
 I will sit under the caress
 Of the sun's side-slanting first rays
 And consider my small self
 I will watch the sun Rise
 Gather my thankful breath
 And proceed, breathing

Leaping with Esther

“Who knows whether,” or so the story goes, “you have been lifted up
 For such a time as this?”
 A question, not a statement:
 Who knows whether?
 For there is God's grace spread abroad in the world
 And then there is consistent stupidity and even
 Dumb Luck

I for one can't tell the difference
 Most days are through a glass darkly
 And no clarion Christ calls to me
 From the noise of my circumstances
 God visits me like light skipping on water
 My life briefly blessed by
 A ripple that makes me blink
 And but for my watering eyes
 I might not know it was there

Such is the God I know and love
 Better by the contours of my longing
 Than my faith

So, "Who knows whether?"
 A grand Maybe, a glorious Perhaps
 Holding familiar uncertainties:
 Dark Humor and Bright Pain and "Who knows whether?"
 A plan exists, things come together for good
 Or
 We are simply spinning unhinged in a fathomless sky

All we know is Esther
 Writhed in great anguish, risked her very life
 For permission to throw a cocktail party
 She must've read the Psalmist who penned the 23rd:
 Yay though I walk
 "Fast for me."
 Through the Valley of Death
 "If I perish I perish"
 Thus she dressed in her best,
 Prepared to gamble on her best guesses
 And charmed a way for her people
 Out of holocaust

The Jews weren't annihilated in Persia after all
 She thwarted schemes; they didn't perish
 But their defense went on the offensive
 And the almost-annihilated became annihilators
 Esther spoke up again and
 (Please God, in time to stop the wheel
 Of blood feud revenge cycles from turning)
 Decreed instead another party
 To turn mourning into dancing
 Replacing war with a holiday
 (Teaching us not to fight for salvation
 But to dance for it)

Esther I think had a wicked sense of humor
 A gallows humor
 And God seems to have a gallows humor too
 Giving us the gift of just one certainty--
 A certain death--

Then spinning a Resurrection tale
We are invited to believe
In a scarlet thread and a golden dawn
Thorny crown and crystal throne
Bloodied crossbeam and rolled away stone
God is Absurd
Which is perhaps why I--the only way I could--
Believe
Only in a dancing Jester God, a Jokester with the Perfect Prank:
To love us, each and every fucking one
Alleluia