

The Apology

I am not like you. I am not the way you were.
I tell myself this as if I am pure,
as if I am immune to your
disease.

I am not like you. The way you were weakens
my heart, makes my fingers turn white.
I erased your footprints with thorns
and alcohol.

I am a byproduct, a victim of your lavishing,
getting my shirts pressed and writing
poems about your rubber checks
and old cars.

It is not right that I compare you to what
I have become, a self-seeking centerpiece
that nitpicks about cigarette ashes
and broken windows.

It is not right that I should censure the
tree from which I fell, that I should
compare thee to some perfect
specimens.

I have none of your favorite coffee mugs,
no faded bowling shirts, no framed nostalgia
propped beside the phone that
never rings.

I am not like you. You were a soldier.
You believed in God and did good deeds
for the needy. You worked double shifts
to cover bad checks.

I am not like you. You raised four children.
You candled chicken eggs to pay for
Christmas presents. You sang to me when
Grandma passed away.

I am not like you. But sometimes I blame you
for what I've become. Sometimes I write not
about what you were, but what you weren't.
For this, I am sorry.

Mania

I don't want sleep or meds to slow down my rapid-fire thoughts.
This is gonna sound weird, but knowing how the world was made
and how it will end is such a high.

It makes me frantic about earth falling out of line so I slam my foot
through the sheetrock because no one understands that there isn't
a fucking thing we can do about it.

I hear the music of the Sirens wailing in the back of my head at three a.m.
trying to lure me like a shipwrecked sailor, trying to seduce me into
studying auto parts or organ transplants.

But I can block out that drone with my own song of truth.
I have discovered the *Truth* from within and I put it to music
that caters to my insatiable spirit.

Doctors and so called wise people don't know how to meditate.
If they did they would know that soon there will be no cars,
soon we will need no hearts or lungs.

Books of learning will crumble like old scrolls. Our brains
will open any doorway, any portal, because all we really need to do
is think at the speed of life.

You could fill me up with Lithium just before I get to The Third Eye.
The world with all of its simple people and these holes in the wall
make me so tired.

You tell me about the brilliant people living in cardboard boxes simply
because they can't sync the lyrics to the melody.
They can't tell a priest from a whore.

You tell me my mother will be gone someday. You tell me tales until
the day she dies but none of it calls me back, like the Sirens on a distant shore
who sing and anoint me with a memory of this euphoria.

I will recall the unmistakable thrum of this manic beat
and I'm going to want it back.

The Settling

I exchanged the milk for one with a later date. You asked what difference a day could make. You should worry about the dust on the chair legs and I'll worry about the age of milk.

It's the way the light shines that gives things away, the floating of dust in the stillness until it settles on old wine glasses and window sills.

When you hold souvenirs up to the light, you can see where the dust settled into the Lake George coffee mug or the crack in the Orlando shot glass.

Whether it's soil lifted by the wind or the thinning of tissue, it just keeps changing form like energy that moves from the body to the flower.

It is my detritus with a memory of what I once was and what I will become as it travels from a flake of skin to the maw of a hungry mite.

In the abandoned railway depot a generation of commuters and ticket agents settle onto the wide planks and into the bottle caps.

Gather it up like amber from a fossil. Extract the wings and skeletons and see who stood in the hot sun before their last long train ride.

Sometimes

Sometimes when you speak I can't comprehend
what you're saying. The words are lost in the noise,
the hum of yesterday's laughter and the emanations
that clang and clatter.

You could be asking me if the roads are icy or telling
me that Phoebe ate my lottery ticket. All could be
drowned out because an aroma makes noise.
I could hear the beef stew.

Sometimes when I speak I can't comprehend
what I'm saying. I spew some gibberish because
you're wearing flip-flops and your feet are still of
interest to me.

You could be wearing chain mail and I could still find
something of interest, your answer to why the squirrels
must be fed, your voice pleading, "oh please, oh please
scratch my back."

Sometimes the white noise from the Brookstone box
is the distant rumble of the IRT express as we huddle
in the bowels under Lexington. You breathe softly
while I sip the Bali Hai.

You might tell me it's time to move along, to find
some new underground hideaway. Then I wake to the
morning sun and the bouquet of violins playing in
the folds you left behind.

The First and Last

The first time you saw your father fall it was funny.
He fell off a horse at his brother's farm.

The last time you saw him fall it was a tragedy.
He didn't know he was going to fall,

like not knowing if the ice is slippery or if there
are six or seven steps to the basement.

The first time he was a cartoon character
and the last time he was much too proud.

Sometimes fathers are forsaken and sometimes
lovers live in abandoned schoolyards.

They both appear near the bedside at dawn,
fragile and faint with just a hint of understanding.

The first time you saw your mother cry she was
watching Gary Cooper.

The last time you saw her cry she was throwing
dirt on your father's coffin.

She knew she was going to cry, like knowing the
Syncopated Clock of The Early Show.

The first time she was a soap opera character
and the last time she was a tragedy.

Sometimes mothers are forsaken and sometimes
lovers live in your imagination.

They both appear at bedtime, punching the time
clock for the endless midnight shift.

