

Caregiving

It's tough to quit a job,
Though there is no pay,
The hours are always,
And the rewards are bitterness anger and blame.
When your partner is sick
And the illness is mental,
Guilt is forever,
And divorce is never final.

Too late

1. Bondage

Your death will come too late for me
To forgive myself for not having killed you.
Your shadow passed over me when I was born,
Blocking the unnatural glare of the birthing room sun,
Staring past me with a mother's loveless eyes.
Now that shadow begins to pass away.

My father has lived ninety-six years,
Been married sixty-five years
Been frightened of you for sixty.
Now, post stroke, you rage, aphasically
They hold you,
In four point restraint.
Finally we are all safe.

2. Grief

You were upset the first time I was drunk
You were upset the last time I was happy.
Now I am drunk every night.
A long time ago,
A woman loved me.
She waited,
Under a railroad trestle,
With the keys to my future,
Offering to take me away.
I never came.

There never was a woman waiting.
I lost the keys on my own, carelessly,

Not knowing that all the doors were locked.

3. Love

If I had killed you inside me,
Where judges and prosecutors never tamper,
I might be free.
But there you lurk,
Unexorcised.

My father will grieve your death,
I will share his grief,
Not for you,
But for the dream of you,
The single moment of eternity my father can never forget,
When he brought you flowers
On a rainy night,
And you met him,
Under that same imaginary railroad trestle,
Where women always wait, so patiently,
Through that ground rattling rumble,
Maybe in love,
To steal a soul with a kiss.

Destination wedding

Solitude

Is more than the word on the page

In the mind's eye. White whirlwinds

Surround me,

Bringing desolation and bearing you away.

You are his this week,

Though you say you are mine,

(Though of course you are no one's)

Though you said you loved me,

Before you left,

As you offered me a red kalanchoe,

For Valentine's,

Uncomfortably jammed into a heart-shaped pot.

It's a difficult holiday,

For you,

Married, separated, in love.

Family weddings,
Are for couples with promises,
Not lovers and their desires.
I am banished.
My imagination, greedy for pain,
Watches you a thousand miles away.

The wedding is on the beach,
The sun is warm,
Soft sand caresses your feet.
Words come too easily for the young couple,
Seagulls laugh as vows are spoken.
When music plays,
Black skimmers dance in a line
Dipping their beaks to taste the ocean.

I dove in full salty deep,
Came up with nothing,
But this watching,
From this barren apartment,
Your other life.
I paid in pain in full,

And regret, this week,
Offering bargain love, selling it bargain price.

Where are you tonight?

Comfortable.

Playing man and wife, again.

Same hotel, same room, for certain

Same bed perhaps.

Thrift matters.

Two toothbrushes

One shampoo.

The casual intimacies

Of life of years of together

May matter more, finally,

Trudging on,

Than the moments of passion,

Fresh forgotten, that we shared.

Those succumb easily to sun, wine

And the welcome of old friends.

When the sun set

And a toast was raised,

Did you kiss?

I am grateful for the kalanchoe.

It needs love and care.

I water it, thinking that,

At that moment, in that hotel,

He might be watching you, drowsily,

As you brush your hair until it shines.

The Dark Room

The moon sheds pale light on night truth.

Hesitantly, you show me, in my mind,

What you always knew but hadn't remembered.

The dark room,

Toyless crib,

Walls painted white,

Yellowing blinds always drawn.

She hoped you would die.

You show me **you**,

Still, now, silently crying.

She,
Who painted the room white,
Has moved on to bingos and church choirs.
She has forgiven herself, graciously.
She was young.
It's your fault, really,
For remembering,
It's your fault for crying,
As it was your fault then.

You weren't supposed to survive but you did,
You weren't supposed to remember but you do,
You weren't supposed to open the shades
You weren't supposed to tell anyone
I'm not supposed to love you but - I do.

I am not that good at gifts
Cards, jewelry, rings,
Bad poems that slither away
Never saying what I mean,
Caresses that, if I'm honest,

Are for me more than for you.

You have given me the truest gift,

You have opened the blinds,

You have shown me the room.

Hungry Love

Excitedly she unwraps the sticky silk.

“A fly, how thoughtful.”

With jaws that open sideways

She crushes exoskeleton,

Greedily sucking the still throbbing life juice.

Her tiny betrothed, the bearer of the wedding gift,

Frantically thrusts.

Now is not the time to pause,

Self-indulgently, between strokes,

Or gently caress that beautiful blue black cephalothorax.

He must love just as she must eat

Now, forever or never.

And timing is, as always, everything.

She discards the fly carcass.

She notices him.

The hot light of desire passes over 10,000 eyes.

Suddenly, gracefully,

She turns to find him,

With a hungry love.