

### ***Toronto***

It's a day for the beach or a trip to the museum downtown  
To study the new collections and pretend we're more foreign than  
We are, because that's what you do when you're in another country,  
You go to museums. Yet here I am on the patio of my apartment  
Because my throat is in a coma and I have a show at six, and I want to  
Be able to project. Audiences like actors who project.  
We make them feel safe and welcome  
In the dark strangeness of a lonely theater.

It's nice outside and there are three children playing tag  
On the baseball diamond.  
They beckon me to join in but I can't because I'm sick  
And I don't quite trust them yet. They understand, I think,  
And go and find their refuge in the shade where I won't be  
A distraction anymore.

I know it's time to go inside now to dress and clean myself  
And remember what I look like. But I see a plane above the children,  
Underneath the clouds, flying slowly and not far from the ground.  
I want to warn them because I don't know where their parents are  
And I feel responsible because they're children and I then wonder if  
They have parents at all or if they ran away or if I'm to take them in  
And look after them forever.

They don't seem to mind, though, and that is reassuring and devastating,  
Like watching a dog pant calmly in the heat.  
I guess it's normal for planes to fly like this, as they  
Drive through the traffic of the sky, patiently searching for a spot to  
Land, and now I selfishly hope it lands on the baseball diamond  
Because that would be a sight to see and I could tell my parents  
About it and maybe they'd be proud of me.

The plane accelerates on. I can tell that it's nervous and it knows  
I've been watching. The children find their mother and are now  
Walking to the CN tower, up in the sky, where they can see the planes  
More intimately, and they invite me to come with them but I decline  
Because it costs fifty dollars to get to the top and my vanity would  
Get the best of me if I were 553 miles above the earth.  
They wave in disappointment and I wave back.

As they slowly stamp around my building,  
I determine that I could give them one last goodbye from my front  
Porch, and thank them for saving me from anxiety.  
But I remember the sign on the railing that says “no smoking”  
And I threw away my apple in the bushes yesterday, and I worry that is  
A worse crime than lighting a sad cigarette in the night.

And I want to sing a little now because I’m happy, and that is a word  
That means different things to everyone  
But not everyone can have a patio like me.

***The psychology of relationships abhors a vacuum***

Casualness, though, does have it’s limits.

As I sit here with your dying father  
I am reminded that he refused to cut his grass in summertimes  
So that it could grow tall for us.  
We would run through your yard, like primates in the jungle  
Losing ourselves in heat  
Nowhere to go  
Nothing to keep.

At night we’d hide above the ground,  
Beneath the dark,

Where we saw astronauts dancing around up there,

Or their reflections at the very least,

And the stars, all of them belonging to the ages.  
Stars so bright and lonely,  
Stars that cut into the natural order of things.  
We’d talk of our nowheres to go,  
Our nothings to keep

For what else did we have but words?

We’d grow so tired  
But were too afraid to leave.  
If we got up, someone was sure to take our place.

Yet there and then the struggle had been born,

I think,

Because we knew we'd not share nights like these forever  
And if forever wasn't such a long time,  
Maybe we could try to pick it back up again  
Like bike riding or curling up our tongues,  
If not for being casual all these years.

With variety and concentration and tension  
We could celebrate the tall glass of water that is America  
And discuss our unity of approach while cannons roar in the distance  
And colored lights make drunk the dusty night.

But what of that? Let's talk no more of that.

We heard those fireworks last night,  
Your father and I,  
Though they were a day ahead of schedule.  
He sat up from his chair with great strength,  
Like Jupiter with a shock of white hair.

He ventured out of his den of iniquity  
And towards the polished window by the door.  
Hands in his pockets, obviously in some pain,  
He said "I'll never make the mistake of being old again."

He's still so strong, you know.  
Even his hair has muscles.

### ***By the Lake***

The absence of grey in the sky makes  
Young men and women celebrate  
Outdoors, with a beer from a can and a  
Board game or some memories.  
The evening comes at just the right hour,  
When we are anticipating dancing and kissing.

You kissed me in the bathroom last night  
As I was looking for the hand soap.  
Your lips and mine had met before

But it was nice to reacquaint myself  
With warmth and confidence.

You held my hand also  
But I had forgotten all about that  
Until I awoke too early with a fever  
And no one there to touch me in the morning.

### ***Fiction***

November came.  
Like a tree in the Garden of Eden,  
Tough as rawhide,  
Gentle as my mother.

And I saw a bluebird,  
Red as blood

Circle through the trees,  
Challenging the multitudes below  
To make believe.

It flew past the sun,  
Which seemed to last forever,  
Into night  
As I walked down 14th street,  
Looking for a knife  
With a silencer on it.

And I saw a cardinal,  
Blue as the sky

And I wondered how I became so confused.

### ***Lost***

Goodbye for now.

Engage with me in time and place,  
Remote and isolated.  
There I'll bring you a loaf of bread from  
The bakery back home. I'll tie a ribbon  
Around it's heart and conceal it

In the finest tissue paper I can find.  
I'll place it in a duffle bag and hand it  
To you on your porch. Don't offer me  
Some wine, I'm trying not to drink in the  
Afternoons anymore. Just tell me that  
I'm looking better these days, even if I'm not.  
Chide me if my speech  
Stumbles into something stupid.  
Don't let me talk too much.  
I can listen and accept things that  
Now seem deserted and fossilized.

I can change, my mother tells me.  
You tell me too.  
You may not possess the softness of  
My mother's voice or the tired eye-roll  
Of my dear sisters, a trite ancestral trait,  
Yet you take care of me,  
With your voice, and with your eyes.  
With other things I can't describe.  
They are not formed inside my head.  
They're shipwrecked off the coast, near  
The islands of hope and understanding,  
Two places I have yet to travel to alone.  
I'll reach them soon enough,  
But by then it may be night time and I  
Will have to venture to the bad part of  
Chicago, where you can't spy other  
Universes from the rooftops in the sky.

Let's take a trip there one day, to that  
Green and anxious universe beyond  
The fog. I'll buy the tickets,  
You the sunscreen, and we'll see if  
There is wind and spiders  
And requited love.  
We won't stay long, I promise.  
And when we return, and I forget my  
Coat, you'll bid farewell.

I won't know what to say.  
There's no good word for it in English.

I'm lost.

"Je suis perdu."

French?

They say "Au Revoir."

I'll see you again.