

## Nikki's Park City

on TV she saw soldiers carting trucks full of groceries  
and weapons tremendous creaking impending dust  
she imagined her house on fire trying to get rid of  
her housemate who took crotch shots on her kids' cell phone  
living in the high desert woods her construction worker boyfriend  
at home in New York offered her a world ripped open and honest  
between us all just barely dinner time

a torment of listening and questions into that a torrent of frosty  
light she tells us *I don't wish anymore I let kids' fish die*  
in the bowl their orange scales  
like furry sweaters  
we rock bumpy upon the road cold air breathing  
and far away over the ocean in the hot land of soldiers  
and gunflare and explosion  
sharks cluster around coral flowers  
we're looking deeply into falling snow

*words in air*

the games of a teacher her demanding sagging scores  
by now beyond joining surrounded by juggling  
boxes of tax receipts balanced remarks on the page  
planning lessons and endless students' seats filling up

the filing end run of chronology trilogy what if it's all arbitrary  
letters and documents of the deceased  
koi swimming streamers of algae floating mud museum  
mint plants volunteer lemon rind soaked in oil

always threat of financial pressure who gives up gives in or won't  
at this point the space the alphabets the beach glass  
the rim of fog lifting a movie script in production  
as one person walks solitary not speaking the others so animated

last trips in between absolute covering a career trajectory  
practice isn't clear some occult cognitive college bureaucratic scrapes with  
nothing special any laboratory manner and received a neutral review  
with revelation at some stage leaders filtered response of silence

could it be performance of dance of the alphabets photographs  
no way to know perhaps a joke an apparatus of the particular  
trekking so necessary to make this connection a chance at anything  
a shot of wistfulness missing some key ingredient

not knowing where to begin so never beginning or picking up  
in the middle an active point of prizes and publications  
skills and interpersonal typed notes delight interest and conversation  
everything about schools and children and predictions and whatever names

## **BOOKBEAT in Fairfax, CA.**

I wonder about the people who have stopped here in hopes of stumbling across  
some understanding to change their lives...the world a -glitter of coolness  
as we are trapped in music before Christmas  
Chris Izaak soft crooning steel guitar hillbilly twang  
December rain that gray all day like the British Isles

Are they looking for books or craving the chatter of others?  
swapping stories in this little leftover Hippie town  
where the young girl making coffee  
and an older bearded guy talk about the same woman they know  
she has cancer she is very sick  
and they all will pitch in to help her husband...

Recently Judith took her own life and I haven't reached out to her husband Ray  
while I said hello last week in another bookstore  
as he was wandering the stacks thumbing pages of philosophy  
crime novels and poetry I imagine he is overwhelmed with grief  
all the people she knew and all the questions  
we have about why she was trapped  
and why the people and books and artwork she loved that couldn't console her  
why she shot herself the day after Thanksgiving in her garden  
that she had given great attention to cultivating  
children and a richness for compassion and ideas  
and knowing that the Buddhists say your death will change nothing

she asked to speak maybe she didn't speak  
she wanted to read maybe scream  
but she wrote:

*water suspended in sun  
a cobweb of grey light  
spreads over green dampness....  
run alway with the silence....  
memory and hope fuse....  
a world that gives pleasure to others*

A man with toddler twin boys and girl a bit older  
tells her Daddy she wants to read  
that's what you do in a bookstore  
read and touch the pages look at the world and words

a sad-looking woman in dirty worn wet clothes browses  
through some bestsellers and while no one pays attention  
she inserts some neatly wrapped candles into her pocket

I need a dictionary and an atlas  
to understand words and the shapes of land

and how we speak forgiveness

### **Nina's Story at Feather River**

after he saw that strange light  
he told them in the hospital  
his car flipped off the road  
and he got out he dragged himself up the ravine  
his insides bleeding  
and he hitched a ride to the emergency room  
to try for life

you tell me this while we're not really safe anymore  
by these cliffs and rivers,  
how we know when it's okay to reveal how good it is to have friends,  
how you loved to travel with him,  
and although now you have someone else  
when had you never thought you would meet another  
and in the shimmer of summer by this ravine of light  
miles from our homes I wonder how it is to survive  
the disaster of death's heartbreak  
and how you needed to travel alone, for a while returned to a tropical place  
you had visited together, then managed to shift back into the States...

they say there is meaning for us in everything,  
and I wonder what I've done to deserve knowing all this,  
while you were telling me about losing the love of your life  
I was holding a smooth stick, shaped like a dragon or a snake  
shaped by whatever made the courage to go on

a crow yells from the rooftop flapping strong stretch of wings  
we should look at our three dogs in the yard  
as orange light bounces off an airplane and sunset clouds  
the dripping water through rocks and bamboo chimes hanging from trees  
the dogs sleep the move around and restlessly as the hummingbird hovers  
over planets the slope of wings and July wind drifts  
nothing exactly what we would like but what of it?  
there's nothing to tell: the airplane surges west  
the crow flying away at dusk

someday all of it leaves  
tulips and sunflowers  
a large dinner fish  
that plate of tangerines and creamy Italian cookies  
photos of turquoise umbrellas  
farmers churning curds of cheese  
a wall of brick and ivy  
the sweat of people some earthy and sweet some awfully stinky  
like mildew and mold  
humanity swearing  
blindness the wearing  
weathering that funny way we age  
so full of mystery waiting for the guests and trees  
full of warbling afternoon birds  
so all of it ends  
we never know what will happen next  
laundry and paying the bills for certain  
all of our worries  
all gone