

Fireman

*- for engine company 280 and ladder company 132,
all the firemen who sacrificed their lives on 9/11/2001*

**I wonder what it would be like
to be a fireman
the good guy
saving people from burning buildings
or collapsing towers of smoke
running head on into the unknown
knowing only
there is a life to be saved**

**I wonder what it would be like
to sacrifice your life without hesitation or question
even as you saw it was hopeless
you had to try
the clear red incandescence of courage
the brotherhood of rescue**

**for that's what makes us human
to respond without hesitation or forethought
to the call of those who need us
to be like the firemen who died
saving our lives at the WTC:
beyond that wall of fire
I see your spirits moving
your fire gear and helmets
under the souls who rose
as you watch over us.**

Jamal/ Ordinary People

**"... i pass away from my ego self, i disappear from the world in the presence of intimacy"
- Sidi**

**early am on the #2 train to Brooklyn
a couple sitting across from me
his arms loosely around her shoulder
his long fingers draped gracefully, grazing the side of her face
they are sharing her ipod headphones
she, a plain faced street urchin
he, levis and glasses
she asks him 'Do you like Jupiter Rock?'"
looks at me as she vibes with him
she says to him, "sing for me"
i look down
look up again
she is stroking his hand with her cheek
like a colt who begs for an apple
with his long slender fingers
he could play
fluid, wise chords on a guitar
she stokes the side of his palm
with her cheek
turns her face and kisses it
secure
protected
confident**

**this is where God's light is
this is where love's warmth is
plain
unadorned
naked**

**why pick the roses
that wither and fade?
you have love in your arms.**

Velocity

**if I was there
present with the bullets
ricocheting in star bursts
I would not be writing this
I would be dead
because I am a teacher
because faster than
the sound of bullets
could travel
I would have got those 20 children out of there
I would have flung my body over them
I would have been shot
even if that meant
they would breath a few seconds longer
our lives go by in a flash
take these moments
we have
and live**

Under the Lilacs

Spring, Brooklyn Botanical Gardens

I.

Nectar

**see
the butterfly
by my shoulder
she flies, alights and drinks
deeply,
briefly
from the lilacs,
from each tiny flower
and flies
can we be
like that?
touching life deeply
with passion
desire
drink to the
bottom
the sweetest of the sweet ambrosia
without the attachment
of our
earthbound feet**

VI.

Immensity

**I am aware
of low
rumbling insects
in the lilac bush:
bumblebees
honey bees
droning
pollinating mantras
butterflies
red and yellow
monarch and
swallowtail
other unknown creatures with wings
fly dizzily past me,
speeding on their own crazy, confident routes**

The insects weave life
together
dancing its pattern
on an invisible loom
they are a tiny
multitude
the bees
that toil to pollinate the earth
their intricate
mating dance
with blossoms and petals
pistons, stamens and
finding the way in
giving and receiving
patient and gathering
the worker ants
humble
and dedicated
the drones in desperate chivalry
fly for their queen
displaying
elegant gleaming wings
and slender abdomens

The bees find their way home
Laden
with golden baskets
the paths to their children
looping thru
sunlight
to put sweet food in their mouths

III.
Pagan

If this is it:
lying in tall bending grass
soaring with the blue sky
breathing the
silent, giddy
ecstasy of the forest
of every living, growing
thing
leaping in my chest

the light of heaven halos the trees
those
green saints,
hoary ancient elders
goddesses
bestowing a benediction of
peace
if this is it
then I am one.

**IV.
God**

A butterfly
suspended
stillness
on a tiny white lilac bloom
brown wings fan open
white bars,
round orange markings
God's staring, painted face
the primal mask
the
throbbing mystery
its wings fan slowly
tiny breathing feathers
the delicate antenna quivering
shining like a deva's wands
or xylophone
sticks
black tongue curled
God revealed like a demure bride
drawing you
into this elixir
this minute, living jewel
the endless present kingdom.

V.

Rabbit in the Roses

A rabbit is hidden in
the roses
chased there by 7, then 10 happy kids
A rabbit like my

mother
whose childhood name was "Hase: hare
shy and secretive Scorpio
child
her winter spirit melting in the passionate grass
the roses already
planting their thorns,
a long, tender, defensive labor
The rabbit has
alert, gentle eyes
she is still, patient, and nervous
For a long time we
look at each other
frankly, unabashed
She is my lost gentleness,
my
ability to stay
yellow petals drifting around her
she forages in the
soil

My Taurus father loved yellow roses
and small songbirds
He
would sing to them
as he sprinkled seed on the kitchen window ledge,
they
would alight to be fed
He sang 'Summertime..and the living is easy..' in a
deep, rumbling voice
as he pruned the hydrangeas
behind the
house
tended their pale green and pink blush
full of bumble bees

He
dug huge glacial stones from our new garden beds
with a crowbar,
blew up
woodchuck holes with M80's
he loved yellow roses,
left their secret in my
middle name

"Rose"

the hidden bud of my unborn heart
his hidden
tenderness protected by
his sorrow,
his first wife's face
he sculpted
in a plaque
"we will meet in eternity"
He mourned his life
sculpted his
defeated face
into the granite of his anger
He was the best hugger, his
heart pressed against yours
He was the worst hitter, silenced my voice by the
threat of his hand

I am my father
a yellow rose
softening to a
velvet white
arrayed in radiance and scent
I have returned to my
voice

I am my mother
a messenger
of my lost loving
of my lost
gentleness
my lost white petals
a shy sacred girl
who used to run and
hide when visitors came
peeking at the strangers from behind the porch
and
my long hair
hiding in the woods, in her secret garden
I am now coming to
life

My father was a photographer,
took a picture of my
mother

lying in the wild violet irises
her honey hair and rosy frostbitten
cheeks
lying fragile, bright and broken
their Sunday morning arguments in
the kitchen
my father shouting about the flowers
she cut from our ample
gardens
his hand raised as she cowered
protecting the bouquet she brought
each week
to the church
their bedroom below mine
squeaky
bed springs

A week before he died, my father saw me for the first
time
reached out his hand
said my name with longing
I took care of my
mother
now her grandchildren love her
The guard has found me
with my
guitar, writing
under the lilac bush

VI.

Music

-For Brent

I am free
now
radiant Sagittarian girl
with gentle hands
demure green
eyes
washed with ocean,
and a lightening smile

Now I know why people
play guitar outside
under the trees

My chords drift people to the
bench
smiling and relaxing
I smile at the Latino woman and her
family
“just learning” I say “poquito”
I strum a chord
she laughs,
the baby shakes her rattle
the father hands out stuffed pita sandwiches
I strum a chord
one with the meditation of the trees
and this sweet human
music