

*April*

There's something about this flower  
Photo shoot  
It's the only one there is. The world could end  
tomorrow  
Emphasized by a broken line. Can't trust anyway  
a decent kind touch  
of something outside of one's self.

The pang, the punctum, and the pain  
I told you I didn't need to document  
every single one.  
Every pain, every turn of my head  
toward an eclipse. A slice of ginger  
burning up in front of the sun.

I can name any feeling  
any single one  
to this pang, this petal  
and this bud growing just to burst.  
I don't need to seek her out  
because she finds me in her brightest flesh,  
translucent, vapid, and shameful.

Forget it forget it all  
I remember backward and forward.  
When I think of the future  
I think in the same detail as I remember the past  
maybe more.  
I see limp yellow flowers at the altar  
Stems stretched with tough skin  
grew too fast.  
Buds of no particular shape  
nothing memorable.  
Branches with no form  
not all together and not individually.  
Ready for a whacking.  
The blade that cuts them  
making a mockery  
of my beautiful, wild,  
and so terribly commonplace love.

*Bloody*

Secret messages  
meet on your deathbed  
from a far away land.  
Hello and a smile  
the same tempo as the shadows  
fallen trees cast into the desert light.

Then, I hear your voice  
translated with the help of a woman's.  
Her voice, a little painful,  
falls against the cold wall of winter.  
The one I spent with you.  
Each word is a mistake  
falling, sliding, slipping  
away from you.

*The ground*

When I imagine walking,  
there is no ground.  
It's not until I turn my back  
toward the locked door  
and buckle my knees down seven steps  
when I remember the ground.

The relentless ground. The awesome ground  
that will bow my leg under my next step  
if I dare to drift among the branches overhead.  
Then, I cannot forget the ground.  
All other concerns dissolve  
into the corners of my lashes,  
but the ground continues.  
Now, I can hardly imagine  
my feet in my socks  
and my socks in my shoes.

The first block is always dedicated to the ground.  
The second block always remains unconvinced,  
rambling on and on of the misfortunate ground.  
The third block is tired  
and when it knocks into the next straight line,  
I hesitate.  
Sometimes I stop completely,  
take anything from my pocket, examine it,  
then I continue,  
returning it to my pocket as I walk.

*The hallway*

This is the hallway I lay in as a child  
My bony, fevering body held  
between the dirt-dust of yesterday  
and today's snow-ice,  
melting into droplets that take an eternity  
just to be noticed.

My skin sighs a hot breath  
on the towels my mother lays  
over my arms and legs and neck.  
My bones never feel their cool.

I cannot remember the nausea of my youth.  
The crunch of regurgitated toast  
or the rust around toilet hinges.  
I cannot remember the visitors  
beneath my soaked sheets.

Not their names nor their faces  
nor what they've said.

But, I will not forget the hallway.  
The gray path down the center  
fades toward the walls into beige,  
then quickly back to almost black,  
where the dust waits.

The light from the kitchen is always  
the same shade whether day or night  
A once gold line somehow keeps  
the living room carpet from being torn up,  
but that is all.

Before me, is the silhouette of my mother  
on her knees, sometimes sitting, always barefoot,  
always with her hair in a single, weak clip.  
Her hands,  
working hard to bring down my temperature,  
start at my head and pull the fever toward my feet.

She doesn't leave me there,  
alone in the hallway,  
very often or for very long.

And now, when my skin finally feels like ice,  
she lifts me back onto the gray couch.

I pull the shawl over my face and stare  
through a thousand fuzzy eyes at a dimly lit room.  
At moments, my mind, sleepily climbs  
through the knotted, itchy yarn  
into language it will never understand.

Then, in a last-minute realization,  
I awake,  
peel the shawl away from my sticky hair  
and see the already set sun  
and smell a pot of boiling water.

*Wise*

Mrs. Dingy was my favorite teacher.  
She understood: the wisest of us rise  
but we all fall, so fall gracefully.

I remember her face,  
a bobbing egg in a nest of gray curls.  
When the principal spread his wings  
and flew away, she cracked.

It could have been a room of twelve  
or an auditorium of hundreds,  
but it was not the same.  
It was not the undulating triangles of laughter  
beneath the flag,  
singing, crying, and not knowing why.

We knew why. She knew why  
I didn't make a sound. I could disappear  
and she would pretend not to mind.  
But when I reappeared,  
she replied with sternness,  
which was the only sternness  
that has ever felt like love.