

## ***Connections***

### **The Family Field**

Grandpa's voice has faded into the memories of other people's stories,  
And when we water the family field every year we think of him,  
And try to get the seed to grow like it did when he grew it,  
But it doesn't –  
And maybe never will again.

But we go out to the field again and again and toss the seed and till the soil,  
Because that's what was done before we were born,  
And we think that it will be what is done after we die,  
But we don't know –  
And we don't even wonder.

The sky is dark with the dust that blows across it like dirty snow,  
The children wear masks and goggles and lean forward when they walk,  
And the adults are covered with scars that make it hard for them to move,  
But they struggle through –  
And walk the field again and again.

Grandma's voice is telling us that it is okay to move on but we don't hear it,  
And we still cannot figure out how to get the land to grow again,  
And the children are taught how to grow the seed as if the seed will grow,  
But it doesn't –  
And maybe never will again.

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### **The Depths**

I stood upon the rocky shore,  
At the edge of the lake once more,  
And staring into this blackened sea,  
I saw all the worst parts of me.

Black and oily, this undulation,  
Haunting me since my creation,  
And I whispered to my friend,  
“Let’s go in and back again.”

Finally, in we swam,  
Him by me, hand in hand.  
He looked at me from far away,  
“Let’s go back,” I heard him say.

Letting go, I swam alone,  
Into my darkness, my unknown,  
Staring back, upon the shore,  
My friend screamed, “Go no more!”

Suddenly, I drank the depths,  
With nothing else, released regrets.

## Connections

### Conversations with Alice

*Mommy*, she says to me, her dark hair in her eyes,  
Yes, *my love*, I say, brushing the hair away  
*Mommy, what if you die?* Her eyes welling with tears.  
*Mi amor*, I whisper, and crouch down in front of her, holding her shoulders.

*I'm not going to die*, running my hand through her hair,  
Tears run down her face, *But, but, Betty said that you're gonna die.*  
*Baby girl*. I stop talking. I hug her instead.  
*Why would you listen to Betty?*

She's breathing heavy into my shoulder, her tears wet on my face.  
*Mrs. Palumbo, she, she, she. She said everyone dies.*  
I pull her back away and look at her. I think. *They do*. Simple.  
*No*, she croaks and I hug her once more.

*Everyone dies*. Simple again. *But*. I get her eyes in mine. Green and wet.  
*But*, I say, *I'm not going anywhere. Not now and not for a long time.*  
*Really?* She asks me. Hopeful.  
*Really. I'll be here with you as long as I can.*

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*Why?*  
We are at a park, a woman in torn clothes is pushing a shopping cart filled with plastic bottles.  
*Well*, I say, *you can turn in the bottles for change.*  
*Yeah? How much?*  
*Just a nickel a bottle.*  
*That's not a lot.*  
*No, it's not. But it can add up.*  
*I'd have to pee a lot.*

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Her hair is tied in pigtails and they fly past her as she swings.  
*Mommy, I wanna fly*, she tells me as I push her.  
*Baby, I'm pushing you as far as I can.*  
*No, Mommy, I wanna fly.* Her dark hair trails behind her as I push her away.  
*You can't fly.*  
*But I wanna try.* I push her again.  
*I wanna go over the top.* The last part fades away as I watch the red bows in her hair.

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*Mommy, what's your favorite food?*  
I smile. *That*, I say with emphasis, *is a tough question. Do you have a favorite food?*  
*I asked you first, Mommy.*  
*You did.*  
We are eating ice cream. She has strawberry with chocolate syrup. Mine is cinnamon.

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*Well, I don't know. I like a lot of different things.*

She makes her angry face. Her mouth is dripping chocolate.

*You have to pick one.*

I'm laughing at her and she's getting more upset. *Mommy*, her voice strains.

*Okay.* Still laughing. *Let me see.* *Well, I think my absolute favorite is Papa's chicken parmigiana.*

Her eyes are wide. *Me too, Mommy.* She hugs me, squishing her face into my arm.

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### **Playing Make Believe**

You say you want to play make believe,  
And I guess I want to play too.  
So, there are many things we have to do.  
We have to move in together,  
And make believe that one became two.  
Then we'll make a house for us,  
Put some plants in the window sill,  
You'll hang a painting on the living room wall,  
And we'll laugh because there's only one room.

I get anxious at night when you're sleeping next to me,  
Your breath comes steady in and out against my chest,  
But, I hold my breath, worried I'll wake you with my worry.  
Because I agreed to play this game with you  
And I'm convinced I want to see it through.  
But now I don't think I'm the one convinced anymore,  
And the one convinced is you.

The clock on the wall ticks too loud. I tell you every day,  
So take the battery out, you respond.  
But then the clock is just art made of hands,  
A bizzarro Venus de Milo that tells time twice each day.

How do we live in ethereal time governed by ephemeral constraints?  
How do we fight?  
The lessons learned are nothing more than lazy conceits.  
I grab your hand when we're walking because you tell me to,  
And in spite of the spite I feel for you telling me to do it -  
I like it.

When we play this game of make believe we both must agree,  
That at some point not that far away this game will have to end,  
And we will walk away from each other,  
Remove the painting and the clock/art.  
We'll allegorize the empty space in the room with the emptiness inside of us,  
Except we won't actually feel it, because it is just a different game,  
The game of being apart.