

## Moments

Habakuk asks God:

*Why do you make me look at injustice?*

and God tells him about Babylonians.

I am meant to make a connection.

See, I pick up

a penny on the street.

Made it in Denver, 1989; one year after my birth although

I come from a flat place.

No snow-capped ridges

or deep green valleys

cradled by grey skies;

Level fields roll out

across the earth until

a line of trees divides them.

When I was seven

my teacher had us dye white carnations.

We lowered their stems into water

tainted with cheap food coloring,

purple and pink and teal.

She said--*watch the veins,*

*they will turn first;*

*then the edges of each petal.*

*See what*

*you changed--*

*flowers return the things we put in.*

Kristen gave me a rock, once,

worn smooth by years of passing water.

*This is from the Pacific Ocean,*

*since I know you've never been.*

She was trying to say:

*I have coated my toes in water you have never seen.*

But I have been to other coasts: familiar ones

my father's father studied

when he was trying to understand

the underside of the world;

if sediment patterns could tell us

how the earth spins,

if whales really

knew how to speak.

Kristen said,

*isn't it something, to hold something*

*that used to be so much bigger?*

*Isn't the world so strange?*

(It's all just rock

underneath.)

If I was a woman who knew more about truth

I would take a knife,

slit the sky,

select a cloud for questioning.

My proper quest for knowledge.

(My father's father would be proud.)

But the blade would have to be sharp,

and mine is dull from peeling apples.

I litter the ground with their skin,

smooth, red and yellow.

If you want to be a scholar,

pick up your clipboard and write this down--

use your blue pen so you will remember.

You may understand this

when I give it to you:

before that, the knowledge is mine.

To the spider that fell on my head while I was in the shower

I did not know you  
had a purpose  
until I had already  
flung you against the wall,

watched you slide down the slick tiles,  
watched you  
struggle, try to climb up wet porcelain,  
then give up,  
die in the water by the drain.

Before the water could sweep you away,  
I collected your body,  
laid you in a tissue.  
I dried my hair  
and took a moment  
to study you.

Slick brown legs, black abdomen.  
Cupboard spider. *Steatoda grossa*. Dark  
comb-footed spider.  
Architect, the guidebook said.  
Your webs are simple:  
long, straight lines, stretched.  
Pale, sticky, strong.

Hunter, the guidebook said,  
of flies, gnats, centipedes,  
other spiders.  
*Not harmful to humans.*

So, if I had let you live,  
would you have been my ally?  
Would you have stalked through my house,

trapped other predators in your web?  
Maybe together we could have been sure  
we were the only living things inside.

But you were dead.  
I took your body to the bathroom,  
gave you back to the water for burial.  
Your body spun; you disappeared.

Today on My Drive to Work I Thought:  
(for Katie)

if I could unfold this morning like an old note,  
all creased blue lines and soft white paper  
covered in thin  
graphite words,  
saved and slipped  
into the fold of my wallet,  
I would give it to you.

You could sit with me in a yellow room,  
and we would eat  
crumbling pumpkin muffins and blueberries.  
Our feet would slide across old linoleum.

You could sit in my car,  
drink coffee with too much cream,  
listen to the man with the deep voice  
sing:  
The floors are falling out.

(We would know what he meant was  
sometimes, things are not  
what I expected them to be.)

A cloud would cover the sun  
and for a moment  
the world would be dim:

your hair, dark on your shoulder,  
the road charcoal, pressed out in front of us,  
smudging the grass in a smooth line.

But we would know:  
clouds are just water, suspended

until they dissolve.

## Entropy

I will do my best  
to plant these trees in perfect rows,  
sort my clothes into drawers by color:  
black on the left, blue on the right.

I will line up the books by author and size,  
give us something to guide our mornings.

I will ignore what the physicist says about entropy--  
that you and I will never be able to stop this  
slow decay;  
that the universe will spin around us,  
stars inching toward explosions. Today

I will wish I could say  
I am not a part of their demise.  
I will say, let's be  
quiet, today,  
not produce any more carbon  
that just leads to things getting hot.

The physicist will say it doesn't matter,  
that every moment  
we're alive we're spinning  
closer to chaos,  
that, breathing, we unravel the world.

She will say, *confusion*

*is the normal state of things.*

*(Everything you do makes it worse.)*

I press my hands against yours,  
line up our thumbs, let the edges of my fingernails touch yours.

I will say,  
grab hold of the world,  
pull the pieces together.  
You take the oceans, I'll take the sky.  
I'll organize the cloud by type, then size;  
you put the waves in a line.  
We will keep it all steady.  
(Do not let your hands shake.)

The Pilgrim Nuclear Power Plant Might Shut Down

When we're in Falmouth,  
we hear it on the news:  
the water in the bay is too warm.

Nature got ahead of us.

The newscaster looks right at the camera  
like somebody told her  
*blue eyes make people calm.*  
She doesn't smile--she says,  
*Engineers are making decisions.*  
She nods.

She says *reactor*  
and *fission*  
(or fusion? I never remembered  
to learn about power)

and *vents. Alternative cooling methods.*  
Not *meltdown*  
or *evacuation*  
or *climate change*

but in the ice cream shop,  
everyone's making plans,

so

we start making plans:

follow the signs marked "Evacuation Route"  
and drive right past the plant,  
or head for the port,  
take a ferry to one of the islands?

(I wish for more roads,  
pressed out across the sand like dark panes of glass.)

I vote for the ferry:  
the water makes me think  
*maybe the radiation will recognize*  
*this is a thing you have to pay to cross.*  
We wait for the news to break.