

WAITING FOR: THE RESULTS

the Doc to call, the stroke to strike
the cancer to flower and bloom, the heart
to burst its cage, flicker and go out.
For tomorrow's Lotto you might yet hit.

For some son-of-a-bitch you may even know
to start pawing around your second wife.
For the perfect bourbon, one last day to go
fishing or at least put up the storm doors .

For all the children to finally fly home,
for friends to remember you well,
for your shoes to forget your feet,
for the insurance to pay off somebody.

"Hello, you've won a tropical vacation!"
"Hello, remember your appointment
at the dentist at 2 PM on Tuesday!"
"Hello," but it's only your mother, dead
these many years. "See, "she says. "See?"

SEE?

When she asked me, "Am I Going to die?"
I believed then only what the doctors told me,
"yes," I said," because boys aren't supposed to
lie to their mother. A month later, she asked
again and I was ashamed I didn't want her to.

I was staying in my sister's house for as long
as it took, which was my father's parents' house
where he lived after the divorce, one day at a time,
in the back bedroom with his tropical fish and his
deliriums in the corners. "See," he said, "See?"

The last time my mother asked if she was
going to die and I told her yes, again, yes
the late sun dipped below the blue hills
as she whispered so low I had to lean close
to hear her," Why should I believe you?"

ALWAYS EXPECT A TRAIN

says the new sign at the tracks near my house
I've crossed three or four times a day for years
on my way to wherever to get whatever
I need or want or think I have to have

but I've never seen one coming or going
nor even, as I've imagined, been stuck there
watching car after car rumble by full of whatever
going wherever or rumbling empty back.

I've not even seen a speck of one at a distance,
future engine speeding my way or red caboose
at last trailing away, vanishing into the past.
But some nights when the stutter in my heart

wakes me before dawn, or one of my old regrets
sits on the edge of the bed smoking and sighs,
the moan of a not so distant whistle haunts me
and rumbles in the dark I always am expecting.

TRACKING IN SNOW

Most mornings we know
the tracks outside our door,
bunny and Bambi, Rocky
the raccoon we recognize
even without his mask.

Sometimes we can't and don't.
Something feline the books say
though we've never seen a cat.
Something canine but dogs don't
run loose this time of year.

Once from our shore somebody
stepped off, walked straight
across the frozen lake
alone, in the dark, in the cold,
at least as far as we can see.

Fresh snow covers everything,
scratch of squirrel or crow,
even our own familiar trails
which took us somewhere and
brought us, this time, back.

LEARN ICE FISHING AT HOME

lately I've been trying since
it goes on right outside my window
sometimes so close to our bedroom

the sound of the auger wakes us,
you can tell how deep the ice is
by how long they have to drill.

They set their tip-ups and sit
on buckets and smoke and stare
down into the unseeable dark.

Nothing left to do now but wait.
I breakfast in my sunny kitchen,
the coffee bold, the toast golden.

There are many lessons to be learned.
So far I haven't learned them all.
I know why they sit mostly alone but

where in the ice to drill the hole,
how deep into the dark you have to go,
how long is how long it is to wait?

