
The language of the farm

I farm for the language of it, the soil between
the words & the dirty conjugations, the morning
syntax of pistil & stamen.

Under the pole barn tin roof in a leaking March rain just
cold enough to be cold & I've left

myself still tucked under the covers with another
me outside, not quite dawn, seeking
chicken eggs in the brambles & watering the new sprouts.

Now with sickle on the table & tools sharpened in the shop
forgotten, I wake up in the fields again.

Monday's to do list

Find what fits naturally.
Let life fall where it

does, piling up like topsoil,
soaking in like rain. Compost,

ferment, break down, trellis up,
grow again. Carry away harvest and

glean alike with the same
heart, beyond elation & above regret.

Lean prose & tender living, simplicity & grace.

Leaving the farm

Lucky enough to have been able to say what I wanted to say
& when all those adopted voices (even my own) have at last settled
Into the reluctant root-bound quiet of spring back on the farm,
Clear sighted enough to know when to stop:

A high sustained note in the still uncluttered March air &
Now come inside to the cold hearth tinted in the glint of wet kindling
Hard archaic words pulled away to reveal vigorous growth naked underneath,
Oral poetry out amongst the early rye, chickweed and henbit

Write northern words worn into the floor boards & watch the snow
Blow roof high, bored already with anything I could have imagined;
Let everything here fade back to simple soil, crusty loam, and hogweed
& on some nights share ensnared memories of soybeans and stink bugs.

Five years' worth of words written in dirty beds & no-till rows, yet
Nothing here to read anymore, no invitation to beauty, no stray chthonic text
Just faded script moving comfortably from the depths back into the shallows
In the shape of something that should have been more complete.

Lighthouse

A glimpse of sunset behind Kumiko,
still planting edamame in the new turned mulch:
hayfork in hand, there was no me before I knew her.

A moment of tenderness exchanged in passing
between the hoop-house & the seeding room on
an ordinary afternoon is enough to sustain

the disruptive luxury of farming together,
husband & wife.

Years before in Niigata, we walked out to
a lighthouse at the end of a long pier:
a two hour journey through the coastal night
lit only by a few boats fishing for squid.

We sat under that solitary beam & ate pickled plum
onigiri, aware of a steady hum inside & black
waves lapping underneath.

Note to Leah

You stepped out one cold December
evening in your pretty dress
to vanish,

& not only you but nothing
ever really completely came
back after that:

just one day somehow tied to another.

All these years past &
still not even one step closer to
understanding
what gone forever means.