

Title: Surviving Loss

A Soft Breeze

My wounds scabbed over long ago
my wounds have yet to heal.

What does healing feel like?
look like? Maybe a lightening
a soft breeze that brushes
across my face and arms.

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A Sense of Strangeness

descends upon me
as I enter our house
the place we lived
for twenty-four years.
Emptying it now to sell-
bit by bit, room by room.

I don't belong here anymore
when did I start to "un-belong"
in this place, our home for so long?
When did estrangement set in?
Isn't that feeling of home
supposed to remain in my bones?

As I carry bags of trash to the curb,
I lose pieces of myself
first my right arm, then the left
head and torso next, legs last-
until I've disappeared on our front walk.

When I go back inside, ghostly,
I rummage, I sort.
I find books and clothes.
Ones in good condition I place
in boxes and bags to donate.
I think of someone reading
Toni Morrison's "Beloved"
another wearing your pink sweatshirt.

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Fragility

A baby bird in
my backyard grass,
hurt, too young to fly,
abandoned by her mom.
I can't save her.

A kitten adopted from
the animal shelter-
dead a week later,
sicker than we'd been told.
I can't save him.

My beloved, decades-long
pain pulling on her heart,
fragility she adeptly masked.
Why couldn't I save her?

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Shadows on the Sun

At your favorite ocean beach,
you lay motionless on your stomach
soaking up the sun you loved. I took
a walk, skipping flat stones on the water.

Thirty minutes later,
I found you asleep and,
calling your name several times,
failed to rouse you. I'd never
seen you like that.

Trying to bury worry, I shouted,
"Are you alright?!"
"Yeah, I'm ok, just a bit tired."
You sat up on your elbows as if
to prove your good health.
That was the first time
I failed to see
shadows across the sun.

The doctors ruled out
Lyme disease, anemia,
chronic fatigue syndrome,
but couldn't pinpoint the problem.
Your bouts of fatigue sporadic,
I didn't see the shadows.

When the oncologist gave us
your diagnosis of Multiple Myeloma,
we worked hard suppressing our dread,
went about our daily tasks.
We did not know what lay in store.
Now I saw the shadows become storm clouds.

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Lunchtime Vacation

I lay out the ingredients on the kitchen counter;
store-bought tuna sprinkled with celery,
two slices of seeded rye bread,
mayonnaise and two cherry tomatoes.

I spread a generous portion of tuna
onto the bottom slice of bread,
cut the cherry tomatoes in half,
placing each one on a corner
of the sandwich bottom.

Next a layer of mayo smeared
over the tuna, the second piece of
bread on top, my fingers splayed
on either side of the sandwich middle
like they do at the corner deli before
I slice the sandwich into even halves.

With a teaspoon of instant coffee,
one sugar-free packet and cold water,
I make iced coffee, stirring before
adding three ice cubes.
I carry sandwich and coffee
sit down at the kitchen seat
where I always sat when
there were four of us,
now just me and the cat.

At last, I open the book I'm reading-
literature, history, science, or poetry.
With a pleasure deliberate and intangible,
I start to devour the words on the page
as I munch on my tuna sandwich,
relishing each moment
of my lunchtime vacation.

