

LEFT WITH WINTER

In the sleepy time
The stumbling middle of the night
When the starlight and streetlight mix up here in the hill country
Gathering together and reflecting off snow covering
Their harvest scattered up thru this window in a softened shaft of light
That bends and falls out across the bed
Showing me only the flattened sheet
Telling me only
You're not here

You came into town like a snowstorm
And while others ran and hid seeking shelter
I rushed out the door to you to embrace you
Finding comfort in your winds and your wildness
The constant fall and the flow of flakes that swirled in the air as I danced
Madly spinning in circles, my tongue laid out for me to taste you
As we played alone in our worships and adorations

For days and days we kept each other company
Alone
While others only watched from windows
With opinion and pronouncement on you or me
Or watched that aching corner inside them
The recognition of their own missing dream
That lives outside buried beneath the snow

But wind and weather move on
The silence now leaves either the empty or the echo of you
I stare at the miracle left behind
Seeing colors and shapes not there before nor will they be again
Now mine for having danced them into creation with you
But the crunch is cold under foot
The sound rushes out from underneath each solitary step of mine
And into the air
Rushing to follow you
I hear it and feel the air nip at me as I stand and watch
Parts of me try to follow you
But I know that I am alone
And now I am left with winter

HOME

She is giving up
The house
She grew up in
Now, as a single seventy year old
She will leave on her own
The highest house on Wakefield's fair mount
The slender, spiraling red Victorian
The top of whose three stories
Allowed us to dream among the sparkling stars
And where we first felt the softly falling flakes of snow
While the rest of the little town waited by the lake below
For their first taste on tongues of winter's delight

This, the house that her mother and father bought
To raise their three
And then Mary, the youngest, taking over
Right where mother Libby left off
To raise, with husband Ed, another three
Whose adult lives did not circle back
To climb that winding slippery-slick driveway
Ever steepening from lake to street to hill to her home
Meant for smaller cars in a more modest time
When children shoveled while they played
Daring to go out and break
The quiet of winter's white
Entering into the surrounding silence
As if running into church

The home where blueberries ruled
And apples filled the court
Where pies were brought to the table
Each held as precious as a crown
To coronate family gatherings
Like grandmother and grand mothers before them
The dining room surrounded by sideboards and glass china cabinets
Soldiers-at-arms marshaled around the long dining room table
While all of us sitting and served like knights and royalty
Our right of noble Irish working class birth
Anointed again and again by love and food
While stories, conversations and laughter filled the air
The surrounding smoke and warmth from the hearth of family's fire

But Mary is going
And though the house remains
Still spiraling to the stars
Her home, Libby's home, our home
Will disappear
Drifting slowly away in our memories like steam from her warm food
Wafting away in our hearts and in our noses
Those smells and flavors of heaven in the oven
Leaving nothing inside us but gratitude
And outside the quiet of winter's white
The surrounding silence

SQUARE

In the square, empty spaces
I must now learn to call home
I tell myself things
To fill them

When the dawn comes
I get up and go
To other empty places
Without you
Where I find easy distraction
In other faces, voices, movements

Until I return in the evening
Between the late afternoon that flows away
Like gray rainwater rushing for the storm sewer
And the night that comes up to me quickly
Like a strange dog
Seeking me and smelling me
Knowing I am weak and fearful

The night knows
I have no other place
To call home
Far from home
But these corners or those small places
In the center or at the side
Hard surfaces with eyes
Eyes that are staring at me
Daring me
To spend time alone
Without you

So I tell myself
"You Don't Miss Me"
And I feel the strange comfort
Of this chair that those words become
I feel myself settling in
Moving around in the You and the Don't and the Miss
And the Me believes all of it

And I tell myself
"It's Over Now"
And the words feel so firm and strong
Suddenly sprouting sturdy legs
Becoming a hard surface... furniture of my own
A table I can sit at and put things on
So everything isn't always falling and crashing
Now the cup is steady as I place it down
Suddenly seeing the It's and Over and Now
As clear and dangerous as a cracked glass placed in my trembling hand
When I lift it up
Shaking and drinking in deeply the dark liquid phrase

And I tell myself
"You Don't Love Me"
And I want to lie down and cry
So I make those words my bed
And I go to sleep with them every night
Sleeping with them all night long
Holding not you
But the pillow of You
Under the cover of Don't
On this strange mattress of Love Me
Anymore

I don't dare to dream
Some other dream
Where I hear you tell me
Differently
For fear of what the morning will bring
Another empty dawn
No you
No words of love for me
No bird singing
Its hopeful, optimistic notes
Calling to me
Calling to me to come home to you

YVETTE

Soft as sunrise seen over languid surf
She comes into your life
You were waiting and watching
Weren't you
In anticipation of a new beginning
Hopeful of a fresh start
At least better weather

She curls around you like a wave
Lapping at your shores
Wiping clean the marks and footprints
Left behind by others
That walked over you
Washing up gifts as precious as
The art of driftwood
The mystery of fishes

She is as gritty as sand
And will stick between your toes
Chafing you
Rubbing you the wrong way
Think of her as a different form of sea side glass
When you lay yourself down
Surrender to her warmth
Or endure the wind swept sting in your eyes
As you leave her beach

I IMAGINE YOU AS JASMINE

Will sleep come
When all I can do is think of you
Sharing the same night air
Stirred by global currents
The smell of you carried
Not hundreds
But thousands of miles to me

I imagine you as jasmine
Though not yet knowing the scent
You will give off when near me
Now attentive as an animal in the night
Nostrils flare
Seeking something beyond those flowers
That will give away where you are
Breathing in thru my mouth
Hoping the moistness will add just enough
To add direction

You are a flight of hours
A voyage of weeks
Which I would make
If you curled your index finger
But for now I feel you here
In my chest
Under my skin
Twisting
Turning
Like I could burst
And release you
To be here with me