

## The Woods at Night

Dear child,  
Night always follows Day  
Try to time your travels  
So that darkness drops  
Over you on  
balmy beaches  
Rolling hills  
Gentle prairies  
Even so, occasionally  
you will find yourself  
In the woods at Night  
You must  
Beware the wiles of  
Dusk and Twilight,  
Beware the barbarity of  
Mid and Nameless Night  
When loosed among  
Black trees

Dusk will descend first  
Regal, then reckless  
Between bony branches  
Sweeping warmth from skies  
Apparent poignancy  
May make you linger  
Searching for substance  
In his passing  
From afar he will  
Carelessly tug color  
Below the horizon with him  
Leaving you alone

Among shifting shadows  
Twilight's rustling robes will  
drift down  
Her luminous skin  
Studded with stars  
And you will not  
Heed the loons  
Wailing warning  
From glassy lakes  
Her cool melancholy will

Seem a respite  
But Twilight always leads to darker lairs  
She will sink into the western sky  
The shifting shadows  
You disregarded will  
Cluster and solidify

Midnight's celestial ink will spill  
Over the land  
Sucking at your heels  
Now you will  
stumble and thrash  
Now you will  
fumble, frantic

With the worst yet to come  
Midnight will seep out of the sky  
And a part of you will  
Drain away with him, will  
Leave a hollow husk  
Shivering in the dead leaves

Waning resistance will  
Be all you have  
His successor, Nameless, will  
Pack your rib cage  
With ebony and onyx  
Breathe and it will  
cut  
Surrender and you will  
suffocate  
So you will  
breathe and bleed  
Under the implacable  
Gurgle and heave  
Until anything  
Seems preferable

But

Nameless is the brittle elder  
Slivers of silver will  
Limn the eastern sky  
His crumbling obsidian  
Grip will

waver  
Sparks of hope will  
Gutter  
in your tattered lungs

Dawn will emerge  
Sedate in her ascent  
You will still  
Stumble in her chilly mists  
You will still  
Doubt the coming sun  
For Dawn is  
Enlightened, not tender  
But my child,  
Eventually you will  
Find yourself  
Drinking draughts of morning  
And struggle into the promise  
Of a new day

## You and I

We flow together  
Our current inexorable  
Over rocks and rapids  
Smooth surface shining  
Although that does not mean  
We never slow or  
Whirl into each other  
For of course we do  
But you and I  
Have eyes filled  
With the same horizons  
You and I  
Grew strong on  
The same spring thaws  
And this helps us  
Sweep past the bogs  
Work through the rapids  
As we have done  
As we will do  
With luck,  
You and I  
Will have a course  
Long and winding  
You and I  
Will push on  
Each for the other  
Until  
You and I  
Are given back to the sea  
Until  
We are You and I no more

## Magpie

The Magpie showered you  
With storms of love  
Fields of flattery  
Billowing in  
Summer-scented breezes  
On his breath

Enchanted, you were  
Distracted  
From the first gift  
He begged:  
A wingfeather  
Iridescent, practical, beautiful  
He begged it  
and  
He hoarded it away

But his wanting only grew  
He begged  
The gleam of your eye  
The strength of your grip  
And they entered his collection  
Bright things  
He brooded over  
In a glittering nest

Then, he no longer begged  
Simply plucked  
Away at your  
Strength  
And cleverness  
And beauty

When he had stripped  
Your most valuable parts  
He found you  
were worth less  
Than the sum of his hoard

Shame flooded his gaze  
Now his breath

Was all bitter cold  
Icy whispers of your shortcomings  
And for a while  
You shivered and cringed  
Before him  
Clinging to wisps of  
Summer and storms  
And fields long dead

Until your neck ached  
From groveling  
And you could bow no more  
Wisdom bloomed  
At long last:  
Acquisition, not love  
Drove the Magpie

Possessing your pieces  
Did not give him your gifts  
The things he took  
Would grow again  
Wise, now  
You put your face  
To eastern skies  
And hurled yourself  
Up and away