

Sky

We were always looking up
in spring; those months so
hot and cold anything could happen;
funnels dropped, vanished,

vacuumed up between the clouds.
The Midwest sky turned
jaundiced and still.

Oklahoma knew it was coming:
the cliché of the freight train,
the stillness,
the mass of moving earth.

This time, the myth would shred
the houses to toothpicks
scatter photographs
and houses like paper shells.

In Kansas, tornado
drills were routine;
I thought we would outlive
whatever hit us; our heads
down, legs cramped, breath
hot above our folded laps.

Carrying my blanket
down under the stairs, my
father's shortwave crackling
weather reports,

I knew I would not survive
when the tornado hit
our house. Living would be

too difficult, as the living always is.

Her Letter to Kurt Vonnegut, 1982

There's a place in Kansas City
called Montana Wildhack's;
I thought we might meet for a drink
and talk about *Cat's Cradle* or
Slaughterhouse Five. It would be
nice, nice, very nice.

*My sister knows the place.
It isn't a gay bar, really, but
she might have kept that secret
(she is so used to keeping that
secret); she just likes the name,
I think, and said she'd take me
there, if you agree.*

I think you write like you know
all too well how humans behave--
the writing is spiritual,
tough, real. (Too much?)

*My sister hasn't read a word
of it, and probably won't; it's
not her thing. She leaves reading
to me except for Anais Nin
or the author of 91/2 Weeks;
The books were in her room
and she was out.*

Earthly conversation
would suffice, not be
the end of the world,
frosty and nuclear--
so it goes.

*She told me she was in love
with a woman one night
in an old pickup we hotwired.
At her friend's house with a pool
late at night, we drank beer
and swam above the Playboy
logo, down and back and down.*

I am sure this type of thing
has happened, more or less; this

may be one of the good times we
concentrate on, ignoring
awful ones. I hope you will
consider meeting me

the next time you're in Kansas City.

Cycles

Spring hot, yet
it feels like fall--
through weak bones
through clotted skin
thickened and congealed--

jaundiced spring and wild
ochre seep through
flaming bramble; bruised
plum of laden hyacinth,
the cadaver of a grey mouse,
the pinched ruby of a tree

growing, leaning toward pale
summer petals of a shrub flowering
in bells that hang low, look
as if they might reach

for furry mustard & black
pepper with wings--
translucent and spinning--

winter insinuates its approach .