

Autumn

A New England Fall calls
for descent of airy sunset clouds
in muffled, balloon-like bounces
to glowing trees.

Clearly blood was splattered overnight
from death fights high in the sky
these maples bear the brunt.
Blood soaked leaves scatter the path,
rain glistened, like discarded
ruby kisses.

Fallen oak leaves strewn
the multitudes of brown leathery hides.
Were they trying to flee?
To the safety of sumac, lit like Tiffany lampshades,
in a dim and gloomy corner.
With their last capillary throb,
did they try to scabble away
even knowing they were dead?
Perfectly flattened limbs, toes
splayed, heads forward, stem tails,
miniature trophy hunting rugs.
Black trunks grieve and
bare branches stab
angrily upwards.

If I pay attention to fallen leaves,
when I tell you "I'm Sorry",
will it be enough?

Have You Been Looking For Me?

I am breathing the breath that follows yours
tucked between your warm sheets
with burning fingers
my tingling lips.

Have you been looking for me?
I thought I heard you take my name
thrown in glitter
up in the air
to fall in female sighs.

Are you looking for me?
I live in traces
as a ghost's unfinished business
might tether her still.
A pulsatile energy unexpectedly
severed mid arc.
Imagine that as a vast silence.

If you have been looking for me
I am found
I am found
lingering in a rocking chair on a summer porch before dinner
smiling under red geranium hanging baskets
in our entwined imprint seared
upon a flat midnight rock at lake's edge.

In quietness you will recognize
I cram into cracks
tangled in your once wrap-around gossamer threads
now sticky like leftover crème brulee.
I cry
gently under your skin
I fly
on owl wings whispering,
throwing you ropes.

If you are looking for me,
here is a map.

Old Beauty

Sitting in oversized chairs, wrinkled skin thin
bony skulls with wispy hairs like baby birds
sockets for eyes, the past for sight
claws for hands, veins over bones.
Unmoving, leaking out feces and urine
Accepting, resigned, expressionless
teeth loosely in
or out and lip-less.
Neither here nor there.
Lines and rows of wrinkles
deep grooves like a comb
Skin tissue folds upon thin folds
sagging eyelids, tightly strung purses for lips.

Pay attention, notice
as you reach out
how the hand grips you tight
so much strength,
see wrinkles move and flow
like water rippling,
the stone face blossoming
with life, with laughter.
Observe the shining eyes that meet yours,
stay awhile,
visit the sheer expanse of their lives.

Comfort Care

Alone tonight except for hourly turns,
change pads of drool and feces
every orifice slowly leaks
except for the eyes,
repeat the same CD.
Stopped sipping broth from an offered spoon yesterday,
would not reply to you,
could not look to the window,
nor beyond the bed.
Turned around already,
begun the journey back.
Have you noticed
how the dying don't cry?

Natural death is 4am,
give or take an hour.
Nightshift nurses pore over
forms and papers.
Removing soiled linen, the IV, the foley.
Tugging off the wedding ring,
turning over they jump and giggle
as the body vacantly, loudly exhales.
Fill holes with cotton wool, bathe, push
in dentures, comb hair into generic pillow style.
Tied tag to toe, prop jaw closed
before rigor mortis sets the
mouth into an open sag,
as though halted mid sentence.
Ceaselessly they chatted about tomorrow's party, not
going to get their break tonight,
covered the mirror, leaving
a low light, cracked a window for the soul to go.
Placing a flower, signifying
their work completed, both
practically and humanly.
Death is a lot of work.
Now she is ready. Acceptable.
The ringless hands left on top the clean smooth sheet for goodbyes.
Proven by vacancy,
death left no trace
except for that which is now missing.
You walk to your car parked, somewhere,
with a clear plastic hospital bag of things
She didn't mind, she didn't cry, just seemed tired, even of you,

you were probably the last thing on her mind.

Willow

Grasses crowd together safety in numbers
Pine needles fall to a cushion
Feathers layer perfectly with the same aim
No arguments about the river's direction
not even from the beaver
Surfaces are agreed about where to stop
Sunshine will find a way
Stars always
Wet rain and cold snow will fall
downwards generally speaking.
Unlike the oak
a willow tree bends in case it falls
shies easily tossing token twigs.
My choices made no difference in the end
this explains some things
Seems it would be easier to be
a willow tree.