

Sometimes a Flock of Birds

for Gwendolyn 3/11/14

I don't believe in God
because if he exists,
he's an asshole
for giving me cancer
among other things.
But I love you more
than one animal should
be able to love another.

Sometimes a cloud passes
revealing the mountains
minted in new snow,
and the sun shines down
on us for the first time
lighting your sleeping face.
Sometimes a flock of birds
breaks from the treetops
and flies pellmell into
the blue distance.

My arms are indelibly marked
with your weight,
your shape.
Whatever is in me,
whatever I am at root,
whatever I hope
might one day be revealed;
You are.

Assisted Living

I don't want this to be too sentimental,
so fuck you, Grandma.

I've been thinking about the dead,
those near to death like to a lover.

I am walking the wood paneled halls
of your small and immaculately kept home.

I am rearranging the furniture.
I am unstraightening pictures.

Especially the one of you on your wedding day,
The one where you look so beautiful,

The windblown curls of yellow hair,
Your bright blue eyes,

a smile like abandon,
Like luck.

I know you've moved to a center,
somewhere they can take care of you.

I know the walls must be bare, the cupboards empty,
the beds in storage.

Tell me, what have the days been like?
Do they let you wake early to walk the beach?

Does the pale blue light that tips in
through the bedroom window remind you of me?

Do they let you sleep
with the window propped?

Does the coolness of the morning air almost
stop your heart?

In my mind, I take down your picture, press fingers
sticky with Jiff to the glass over your lips.

I hold it against me,
hold onto you.

You'll have to wipe the smudges from the glass over the photograph.
You'll have to rehang it on this imaginary wall.

Once you were a tern or a loon,
Perhaps a frigate bird.
Something that returns to the water.

I rode on your back, all motion and wind,
and the sea was in us.
Salt water was in our veins.

You are not coming back
to tell me
we are kindred.

I've seen the gray mist of your eyes,
the curve of your body, like bent feathers,
like a drowned gull washed up on the beach.

This is why I never come.
I can't bear to watch
the stillness overtake you.

Fox holes

Are there no atheists in fox holes? Perhaps you don't get into a fox hole unless you have something to believe in, but in my experience, most of the people in fox holes are in the process of giving up their gods.

The world will continue without me, will continue to turn without us, my love, though the thought makes me feel a little sick to my stomach.

I would like to believe that only you and I exist. I have believed such a thing. I believe both at once... in the world, and also in nothing beyond what I can taste.

I am the juice that runs down your fingers, I am the sweat that pours from you, the extravagant feeling of fingers parting your hair, an extra set of hands to let the world slide through.

Let us rejoice in each other, let us give thanks. Let us suffer in each other. Let us be tortured and meaningless and pass out of the world having mattered to no one, having no immortality beyond our mingled dirt.