

## "Perception"

A whisper is only slightly louder than a thought,  
as a shout is only slightly softer than a scream.  
A word is only as good as the one who produces it,  
as love is only as strong as the one who seduces it.  
If nothing is nothing  
And everything is everything,  
Then they are both the same,  
and all we need to remember  
are the syllables of our names,  
assigned to refractions of light that  
bounce right off our brains,  
and swim to thick pink tongues where  
speech falls down like rain,  
but the meaning never stays the same,  
yes, it waxes and it wanes,  
just a verbal imitation of the confusion in our brains,  
a reflection of the Soul's attempt  
to earnestly maintain  
the differences between thoughts and whispers,  
shouts and screams,  
real life and real dreams,  
and always, always asking  
"Hey, what does this all mean?"

“Harold and Maude”

When I was thirteen,

You told me I should go and rent a movie on VHS,

Harold and Maude.

You said I was Harold incarnate.

You asked me almost everyday

If I had seen it yet.

I went to the Internet,

And read the synopsis. I thought it was a dirty movie.

The kind my conservative, Republican mother probably wouldn't rent

For me.

So, I lied to you.

And you asked me questions,

Made jokes I pretended to understand,

I laughed and shook my head and blushed.

I watched it two weeks ago and loved it.

And now that you're dead

I wonder...

Were you Maude?

“Man in a cabin”

There is a man in a cabin.

He is alone.

He's rolling a beefsteak tomato across the marble countertops of his kitchen cupboards.

The tomato makes a dull,

"tha-whomp, tha-whomp" as he rolls it away and then back toward himself.

He's not looking at what he's doing.

He's staring out into the early afternoon sunlight which streams into the kitchen, all shades of gold.

But he's not seeing it.

He's watching himself say goodbye to his wife and children for the last time.

He's seeing her get into their car, his hand is on the side of the front door. He wants to move forward, to stop her. But it's just a memory.

He's standing in a cabin.

Rolling a beefsteak tomato across the counter.

Tha-whomp.

Tha-whomp.

"74"

love of mine,

you've grown taller  
than the boy you were,  
your hair is different  
and your speech is slurred.

your name is changed,  
the syllables all barks  
of differently dressed animals  
all cawing in the dark.

and O, I remember when  
you kissed me in my bed  
and whispered little demons  
to dance inside my head.

I have run so very far  
and for such a long, long time  
I never thought I'd see you here,  
strangest love of mine.

we should soon depart, my dear  
from beneath each other's stare  
the night is cold, we are too old  
to find love happens here.

“you showed me”

I was eleven, the first time I saw you.

I thought you were sweaty, and that your hair was too long.

I had just skipped two straight months of school,  
they had told you about me and I hated that.

I was twelve, the first time I met you.

I remember my classmates were uninspired  
and equally uninspiring.

I wrote things for you, I wanted you to know that  
I wasn't like them.

I not only thought things through, I couldn't stop.

I wrote to keep from going crazy.

You showed me your plays,

your poetry,

your short stories.

You showed me college English textbooks

full of various prose,

each one flavored slightly differently.

You showed me *The Giver*,

and *Dead Poet's Society*.

I wondered if you really fancied yourself

the captain,

leading your charges into vast fields of knowledge,

and what's more,

appreciation for that knowledge.

You were the teacher that made kids  
want to teach.

You looked after me.

Made sure I was fed.

Signed me up for extra credit,  
even when I said no.

You showed me what it was like  
to have someone's support.

You showed me love.

When I went to high school  
we stopped talking,  
except for the occasional email.

But I had a boyfriend

And I smoked pot

And I didn't want  
to let you down.

When I graduated, I sent you an email.

Explained everything.

I begged to see you,  
to talk about all that happened.

You never replied.

You died the week before I received my diploma.

Since then,

I've been going off of soundbite bits of advice  
you once gave me,

trying always to remind myself that I can do this,

because

you showed me.