

Over Stayed

Sometimes, in the morning,
you can see the moon,
pale, sickly, as though it drank
too much mist the night before,
fell asleep and didn't wake in time
to freshen up and leave before first light,
as it knows it should.

It looks embarrassed, sheepish.
It knows it shouldn't be here.
It would glance, side to side
in search of an exit if it could.
Leave in a dramatic flash,
as it has seen lightning and more
than a few stars do.
But it can't.
It is only the moon.
A thing in the world.
It fades slowly.

Injustice

In Georgia, a seventeen year old boy, a robber,
shot a thirteen month old baby boy between the eyes
because his mother had no money.
Needless to say, this is intolerable.
Something must be done to prevent a recurrence.
There was undue haste here
and a reckless violation of procedure.
There should have been warning shots.
Two in the air and a crisply shouted Halt!
Then, if he didn't, one in the calf or knee,
preferably the knee.
And only then, if the baby still
wouldn't get out of the stroller,
the one that brought him down.
There are rules,
rules of engagement.
And something must be done
about a mother who has no money.

Adams All The Way Down

A man I knew had a dog named Boy.
Everyone called, Here Boy, here Boy, he told me,
so his name is Boy.
That's how it is with words and facts.
Pull up a chair, someone offered long ago,
so it's a chair.
Look at the moon, he told her,
his arm around her in the car,
and from that warm night to this, it's moon.
Oh my God! she said,
when she felt his hand—which, by the way,
is from that time hand—
and so we have a deity. God is.

First the spoken word, then the name,
the ding an sich, the fact.
When you said, Leave, I didn't want to,
but I knew I had no choice. I left,
though left came later, another story.
It was in the present then. I felt it.
When they said my father,
slouched in the shredded, worn-
to-his-body's-shape blue chair, was dead,
I looked. I felt his pulse. He was.

Living with Wind

Wind blows one way.
Leaves, accustomed, street wise, flutter,
go the way of wind and back, resistant.
As though the wind, like light,
the old clock's second hand,
moves in the minutest packets of direction,
wrapped separately in stillness.

We are too domestic,
too tucked away, indoor, to feel them.
But it is in these intervals,
the respites crowded in its cry,
the long held note,
that leaves and grasses,
gull feathers and the matted hairs
of alley cats and bears
steal the fitful rests they need
to live with wind.

Drinking the Sea
(a lullabye for Etai)

When he couldn't sleep
I'd press his tiny body to my chest,
set his teacup chin in my shoulder's rest
that I might be his violin,
and sing him up and down the corridor
between his bedroom and our own.
Rockabye Baby a hundred
dying toward a whisper times until he slept.

I was forty four, my spine a twisted
olive branch that proposed no peace.
And within minutes, where the bough
for the thirty-seventh time gives way,
I'd feel my own. Feel it curtsy, bow,
swing its vertebrae like a white plumed hat
and step aside for anguish, wide as any pavement,
striding through.

No shifting of his six apples and a grapefruit weight,
no Tarot, leaf, or palm-read realignment
with the moons of Saturn, piety or stars
would detain it with a friendly conversation,
block its way.
Only the glassy smoothness of his skin
the world these foundling months lends out,
lays at our doorstep, sparkling
its flat sandpaper smile when we take it in.
This and the swooning scent of newness I sucked in,
deep as the Chinese brother in the tale
who could drink in a single draught the sea.

He calls sometimes, from another continent
for help with something costly, broken
or in his love life not quite right.
It isn't easy. He's a little heavier now, my size,
but though he wears a three-months beard
and sweats a little on the treadmill
or weeding with his woman in their yard,
I lift him still, set his satin smooth sweet chin
where throat and shoulder meet to let him in
and drink the sea to reach him.