

Un-Chosen

Like limbs of a tree the versions of me
Fork in all directions
Infinite
Each branch a tiny moment
A choice
Decided in a decimal point of
Life

One is on a swing
On a wraparound porch Down South
Pouring sweet tea for my friends
Making sweet melodies
A child on my hip and one in the den
The old floorboards of the canary yellow house
Creak as I creep through to
Put a blanket on my sleeping son
I whisper “Daddy will be home soon”
As I write a love note to leave with the piece of
Pineapple upside-down cake
Waiting in the fridge
After his gig playing guitar at Charlie’s Bar
Sweet jasmine wafts through the window
The breeze lifts the lace curtains
The jangle of a collar
The clicking of toes against the tile
And soft fur snuggled in the spot behind my knees

One is alone but hardly lonely
In an old house on the eastern shore
The weathered green shutters like sleepy eyes
The fog a blanket to
Tuck me in on chilly spring nights
The whiskey swirls around the rocks
And my head spins with thoughts of
The unwritten third line
In my fourth book
The only time I regret saying goodbye
Is when I see couples on the beach

Ice cream dripping down
A waffle shell an a child's hand
Laughing smiling families remind me of
The one I'll never have
The nursery turned into a library
The moment I moved in
The den a dungeon
For boxes of bestsellers signed
And memories of him sneak in
When I hold a pillow
Instead of a warm body at night
But the silence and the space
The freedom without
Ties
To an un-chosen place
Are worth it
Most days

One of me has
Given up
Gray before my time
And days sliding by with nothing on my mind but
Constant questions
Of what might have been
What should have been mine
A million trips my heart has taken in a single year
Down memory lane
Remembering when things were
Bright and hopeful
Better days
When I was strong enough
To resist what was
Comfortable
A kiss hello and a kiss goodbye
And in-between
The droning of the television
The ironing of a shirt for the
Hundredth time
A glass of wine and a bottle of pills
A solitary life

His presence looming large and silent
In the other room
Secrets held like
Anvils
Around my heart

One of me is merely a
Memory
Because I
Chose the only choice
That
Can't
Be
Changed

One is wrapped
In a blanket of words
A pen in hand
A mug of hot tea
And a warm goodbye
From the man who loves
Like the sea
Deep and unending
Despite my
Staying up all night
Writing poetry
Lines with near rhymes
Hell bent to bend just right
Wondering
Which one of me
Is the most content

The answer needs no words
For the culmination
Of all the un-chosen choices
Brought me to
This place
Now
Breathe in
Breathe out

All the other versions
Poorly executed paths not taken
I rest my eyes with
A sly smile
Knowing this moment
Knowing this me
Knowing I'm exactly
Where I've always been
Meant to be

The Other Shoe

When everything is beautiful
And nothing hurts
That's when I want to hide
For the fall will hit that much harder
With my heart so far up
Tumbling down from unspeakable heights
Balancing like a leaf on the tip of a cloud
And so I spend time that I should be
Singing with bliss in this sweet situation
Celebrating the ease with which
I've achieved this dream
And then the next
Waiting
For bad news
Bad luck
Late night phone calls
Sirens and
Dramatic endings
Rejections and
Depression
I buckle down
Build a wall
Try not to smile too wide
Prepare for the best way to lose my mind
When the inevitable happens
A dark gray woolen blanket
Musty with hesitation
Cloaking whatever
Joy
I have left

Safe Harbor

I am the sea in a thunderstorm
Churning with the energy of a
Thousand volts
Bolts ripping through the sky
You are the lighthouse
Strong and steady
Standing calm as the wind
Whips around your weathered
Wooden panels
And waves wash over your windows
Flinging rocks and foam
Yet your bright beacon of light
Never wavers

I am a small boat
Alone and
Lost in the depths of a
Dark expanse of sky
Creaky boards
Tossed about like a child's toy
And you are the stars that
Align to
Make a map and
Guide me home

I am the swimmer
Lungs burning
Churning froth and salt
Sipping air and
Losing hope to
Reach the other side of the beach
In time
Heart racing

Mind on a loop
Calculating all the little things
That could go wrong
And you are the island
Where I rest
When I have struggled far too long
Gentle grasses and
Trees blowing in the breeze holding me
Like a lullaby

I am the seagull
And you are my stern
I am the seal
And you are my soft sand
I am the wayward soul
And you
You are my safe harbor

Drowning

Some of us are drowning
And some of us are waving on the shore in wide-brimmed hats
Bright-eyed with smiles as big as our egos
Watching the waves with wonder
As they come crashing over our heads.
And somewhere a child is pulled under
His scream during the struggle failing to compete with the fly
Buzzing around the wine in the woman's glass
Today her own boy is down at the buffet sampling chocolate cakes
While others are being swept away
But it's OK
Because others aren't the same
Are they?

Some of us are drowning
And some of us are laughing as the shore tickles our toes
Noses plumb from too much sun and foreheads wrinkled from disdain
Straining to hear each other's joyous refrain of self-congratulation
Never counting on the sounds of drowning
To be such a disruption
Hoping for something a bit more abrupt
So we can return with our lack of concern and our sunburns
To our regularly scheduled lives
Only better this time
Because some of us are drowning

Some of us are drowning
But in this deep sea of awareness
We build rafts and learn to surf
And the waves will do their worst
But joined hearts and clenched fists
And spirits strong enough to resist the frigid churn
We ride the tide to shore
And those sunning on the sand
Who merely pointed at the men and women fighting for safety
Distracted by the lies of all they don't understand

Will one day come to know
The power of the undertow
When their very own are blown away by life's great hand

For when some of us are drowning
The whole ship takes on water
And rips apart
Plunging down
The sound of seven billion broken hearts
When walls and fences
Fail to sever the connection of our collective
Breaths

And history will write and repeat and forget
The gravity of events
The words a day's lesson and a blip in time of regret
A page and a half for the future to highlight
And a caption below a photo of a carving on a rock
Let it be known
Some of us were drowning
And the rest just let us go