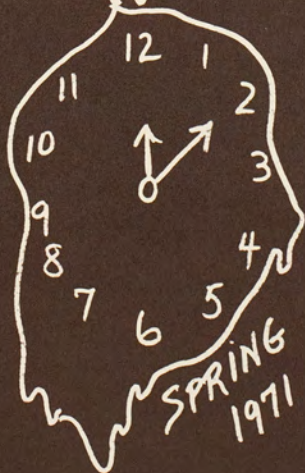


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We have only so many seconds

Let us not weep them away.

They can be used only once, you know.

(Remember when we drove away and laid on the rocks like
wing-clipped

gulls—chilled by the sea, warmed by the sun)

Let's drip sunshine generously

Like breakfast-waffle syrup

Over dreary laugh bereft days.

(Remember when we watched the fat snowflakes fall like
cottony stars,

showing white against a blue velvet sky while we were
warm in each other's arms)

When I think of laughs gone by

I cannot help but smile

Thinking of all there are to come.

Carol McCullough

hands

it would be nice to be a hand
 touching another hand
nice to be the hand
 being touched
but even nicer
 to be
 the space between

Norm Ranone

Shapes of Soft Shadow

I spent my childhood years living in the mist—
Seeing the trees, the mountains, the seas
In shapes of soft shadow;
Seeing the rounded illusions of sharp corners,
And the wholes instead of the particulars.
I grew to love the sight of fog-shrouded landscape,
 of fog-muted sound.

But I grew older
and suddenly, one day,
 the mist broke
 the fog lifted
and bright rays of sun pierced through—
Forcing me to shield my own eyes
And search consciously for evergreen shadow,
And to spend daydreaming moments living in the mist.

Christine Tsetsi

Little Bird

I could've told you that this is no way to hurry love—
But you were much too smart
And I was much too smart,
And walking up the stairs now I feel
The weariness that comes with subconscious resignation.

I do not share common bonds with the day
As I shared them with you.
In the empty prison moments
The only sanity is the ticking of the clock . . .
never failing . . .

Birds are little winged creatures that can never be held . . .
Never be caged . . .
not even by a glance.

Collette Lafond

Pain is white, cold, and blinding
It begins in a flat cold space
deep
within your stomach
and it
sits.

Then slowly it comes out
permeating your whole being.
Oozing . . .
Out of your pores
freezing all you see.
Until at last the pain is not yours
It is not part of you
You belong to pain
You become its slave

It is as if . . .
things have never been otherwise.

Carol McCullough

No More

Upon reflection, I see it was one of the finest days we ever knew. It was rich yet simple, like the heather-colored scenes of winter. The time and place lulled us to serene peace with ourselves. Out for a ride in the grey overcast afternoon, the air was cold and the clouds strained to hold their burden of snow within. The sea, a darker grey than the sky, was broken only by whitecaps and black jagged rocks. We stopped, walking to see the shore and breathe the cold of the ocean. The only sounds were the cry of seabirds, the voice of the waves and the sound of our feet upon the rocks. It was blessed and still. He took my hand in a way that was almost virginal in its innocence. My purity was somehow restored to a natural sincerity by his tender sweetness. The only heat of the day was to be found in the contact of our bodies. We, like-souls, spectators of the shore, stood together under the misty dome that was the sky. Placid in contentment, I watched him skip flat stones over the water. Our laughter split the stillness when the stones skipped to their targets. So passed these few moments of soothing, united joy. The inhospitable day finally turned the cold to deep chill and we were driven away. We knew love that day, I think. That beautiful day is now past and so is the oneness we knew then. I never saw that beach before and I will not see it again. It invites me no more.

Elizabeth Richards

To a Lover Eight Hundred Miles Away at School

What has made you go so far,
my soul?
Is it search of self?
Did you so intend to leave
tearing yourself from out my breast
and leaving
unfillable emptiness?

And are you changing shape out there?
Will you fit back in?
Or have you now forgotten
your warm safeness
within my nest and
sought another home?

Are you what you were?
Am I, I? Are we yet one?
Is all my loneliness the
vanity of an already dead being?
Or am I tearing needlessly at my gaping wound?

Susan J. Fowler

Sing the blues
my day Janis . . .

Bleed them, Belt them,

Feel the blues, my lady Janis—
Sweet sweat notes
flying from tormented soul and body and

mind? Lady Janis—

where was it lady?
the blues were never meant to be so cold.

K. C. B.

two o'clock -- three o'clock (Peter's Poem)

two o'clock
people in painted chairs
across the room
loud music playing
two-bit band and
two-bit people
each cell is loneliness
each . . . solitary

dancers
writhing, rhythmic, pulsating
wholly a crowd
each a lonely person
honky tonki' isn't my style
two dollar women and cheap beer
hardly makes up for the loneliness
each feels

three o'clock
saxaphones herald the hour
the stench of cigar smoke
and spilled bourbon wreck sense
as sight turns to sound turns to smell
and people turn to holidays in Maine
or a trip upstairs

some have gone
some have returned
each will come back
each with fears
for the loneliness can't be broken
the emptiness must be complete

Joe Richards

House

The house on my hill
Is so small
And so strange—
It shelters the world . . .
In daylight and summer,
The holder of delicate circles.
There's a Life at the door,
And a Love in the bed,
And a low-set entrance for the children.
It is the night-to-night haunt
Of the wise and the not-so,
The beautiful and the not-so,
The not-so and the fool.
And let it be known, world over-population,
That there really is no evil here . . .
None. No evil—
For the carpets are thick and fertile
And the air noiseless and slow-breathing.
We've all found Time to destroy here:
In the black, in the dull . . .
Always there is room for sinners—
The poor, weeping unwanted—
I have the room.
That one over there
Knows that I have arms
And eyes with which to be . . .
All of them know
Of hate and human dissection.
That is why they are here.
Turn the dark up;
I cannot see.
And see, another comes.
Swing wide the door. Yes
Come in. Meet Life. O
Go and rest yourself with Love . . .
And these children—so special—
Be reborn through the low-set entrance.
But in the parlor . . .
In the parlor . . .
Don't go there.
In the parlor, always patient,
The spider of doubt sits waiting . . .
Waiting . . .
For the blindest and the weakest,
To take victim.
He knows well that he is King
Of that room.
The house on the hill
Is so small
And so strange—
It shelters the world.

Collette Lafond



Photo by Eric Robinson

To Seffie

Yes, Mystic Street is down and up and left,
And calls my gasping heart to softly tread
Upon its fatal, crumbling stone,
And whispers to these icy, haunted windows.

They've torn most of the road up,
And the dwellings too have been leveled.
Yet on the Mystic Street of my heart,
There still remains one house, touching well in the sky.

It looms above all else, sparkling like a glass memory,
Trembling in the shrouded moment before shattering,
And in its soft-edged reflection, I am crushed back
Without you.

For you watched me from your window,
And smiled, and you felt safe . . .
Safe, indeed, from me.
But even love has been known to hurl stones and shatter
Time.

Collette Lafond

Light streams into my face
the clear brightness opening my sleepy
eyes and
calling my dreams away.

The sound of city creatures,
sparrows upon the ancient wooden
fence,

the trucks storming by
in their dusty attire,
and a steady drone of autos

getting to their destinations, also interrupts
My dreams float inside my head quickly,
trying to escape with sleep,
but being tardy in their race,

I can recall some vivid scenes.

At last the day clamors too loudly upon
my sleepy head
and I must return to the world unwillingly.

sometimes life seems to be one waking then sleeping
with all that occurs between
becoming dream
as real as any absurdity we create
in our heads.

Kathy DeMoia

As Death Sings

I would be so content
Just to know you
As the sea knows the shore,
Touching briefly, and then surging back again . . .
To lightly rest my head upon your back
As you gently dream and toss about,
And feel the flow of your breath—
The swell and ebb of the life itself you know.
Why the trembling flesh?
If so desired, it could be calmed.
But something else you said to me
(if only with your eyes)

"The shore"—you said—
"The shore oh cannot hold the immensity of the sea
And neither you, me."
(pause . . . as Death sings)

Collette Lafond



Photo by Steve La Rocque

Upon the Departure of a Sister

Open and smile——
Open and smile——
Death comes to these flowers clutched
In feeble hands, so fragile, so still——
Open and smile
Into the big black box
Protecting foreverness . . .
Scrape a tear from the cheek and wipe it
On the very best dress to be worn
On this very solemn occasion.

The very last look was warmth.
The very last look was a peakless mountain . . .
The crest of a wave——
A little girl——
The very last look was an eternity . . .
The very last look was only love.

Close and weep——
Close and weep——
Into a hole . . . no dead flowers . . .
just earth and sky on top.

Colette Lafond

Every blade of grass
A piece of yesterday
Soft to lie upon

so
to look upon
the sun
playing havoc with the sky.

Every blade of grass
Soft to lie upon

but
having the potential
to cut.

Christine Tsetsi

to my dear friend eLSiE Kaye

the answer is not in my sheets

but in my head

said the boy one day while growing up

the wise

withering

sage

full of youth

and old age

her hair in a bun

rocked slowly in her chair

knitting herself a rather

short

skirt

she looked up with eyes

that beckoned beneath a wrinkled brow

and with a half I-thought-so smile

she said

yes

and then rocked back

to the other side of silence

leaving a trail of tears

for certain ones

to follow

/thank you

Norm Ranone

Suppose we call it mono of the mind:

Suppose my head was screaming not to function—

What if my brain should cease and leave behind

my body, to its death and extreme unction?

Could I then be released from asking why

of people who respond with only questions?

Would then contentment come from forced-fed lies

half-swallowed? (Think: no chance of pained digestion)

But no . . . no peace, my soul still lives and breathes

this gagging air, this game of mass deception.

Through lies my mind, my soul, refusing, leaves

the painful truths, the hurt of self-conception.

I've speeded through My game with one mistake:

I recognize the car, but not the brake.

K. C. B.



Photo by Eric Robinson

unnecessary waste

ice cubes float
in a soup
of sadness

rejecting hope

clinking
with metallic sensitivity
they shade the path

of escape

this way

that way

high clinks

low clinks

loud clinks

soft clinks

lone clinks

many clinks together

clinkklating

devastating

maddening

symphony of despair

sip, withering sage

(though seeing double makes troubles look twice as many)

lean your elbows on the bar
while the world passes by outside

in people-cars
on people-streets

many of them leading
to fields of flowers

dry the spill

from your after-school school teacher dress

grope your way

to your black-night bed

and sleep fully-clothed

just

gargle twice

before you leave

in the morning

"oh my, another day"

Who the hell are you kidding?

Norm Ranone

on friendship

there's a fine red line

which separates
the solitude

which we all sometimes need

from

the loneliness

which none of us could forever bear

some people know where they stand

others walk the line

many pray for a different trip

isn't our solitude nice?

Norm Ranone

many brief moments

shared

because we both

want to love

Kathy DeMoia

Beings in Relation

Yet if I find in thee some dreadful falsity,
Let it not be one fashioned from the pieces
I have known. For, if its design be
To uproot the tiny, budding blossoms
Of our mutual awareness, of our intimacy
Born of special glances, then
The minute-second years spent in realization
Are all but wasted . . . and my love
Remains struggling for the breath . . .
The lustrous purity . . . of thee.
Back-to-back we face each other—
To meet again, one essence upon one source,
On the opposite side of the universe . . .

Collette Lafond

We are all characters in a child's picture book
Crookedly crayoned and half-filled in with fears.
Acting out our roles in flat fairy lands.
Colored brightly — waiting for the wax veneer to be
scraped away.

Carol McCullough

I have been waiting
So long
For the rains
To come
To fill this rain barrel.

Tap water
Is just not the same.

Christine Tsetsi

Thursday

The reflection of
someone's face in
the shiny toaster at
the restaurant where
I eat suddenly brought
you back, and I had
to look quickly away
because I didn't want
the old man behind
the counter to see my
strange wet eyes, because
he never knew you and me
before or how long ago
you left or how the
reflection of someone's
face in a toaster can
suddenly bring you
running back.

Cathy Estrella

The edge of a razor can be a comfortable width to walk.
It takes the feet a while, though,
To grow accustomed to the cuts they get
Every time one's balance is lost.

Eventually I suppose
My poor feet will develop thick
Unfeeling callouses—
And my heart.

Until then
I'll just have to remember
not to slip.

Carol McCullough

Changing Faces -- Changing Fates

Watching you here, I begin to wonder
At your gentle, stroking movements,
And wish that I might possess
Such sweet, yet fatal, memories.
I could die so well with you . . .
This I know.

All in a hurry now, so frightfully indifferent,
You walk away and I stare after you . . .
but it's still unchanged:
The name is still the same—
The face might have changed with the frost on the glass.

Sleeping first, I awaken
The thoughts of lonely existence—
To your face carved into the ceiling—
To the echoes of your voice streaming from the walls—
Then back, to the thoughts of lonely existence—

The dawn and I.
We share each others tears.

Collette Lafond

Leaving Now

I'm leaving.
Yes, I'm leaving.
Poet with the sad eyes and the plastic boots,
You know where your life has gone.
It lies in the oil-covered puddles,
In the hands that hold lies,
In a night of broken dreams.
 and furthermore . . .
It also lies in me.
O yes and your golden, vinyl-covered chariot.
You ride down from the high country
And kiss me with your disease . . . to kill.
My mind has slipped before — but never like this.
Enter dreamy-eyed in the morning—
Fall down and laugh.
Didn't you ever know about the inside?
O there is much to learn at Death's grasp!
Or fatted sky — or touching a wound,
Man, is it me? No
Wondering sometimes how feet move the ground . . .
Is it the night or the sea—
Or maybe the time of year?
Decide if you can live at all — in sad November.
Skip and giggle on your knees to the bottle.
Forget that this is new and you are so afraid . . .
That I could've built the fence around you
And drawn you to myself . . .
NO!
So

I am leaving.
Yes, I'm leaving
You
To love yourself.

Collette Lafond

The Parting

inky darkness
filling up the void
of paper pages
running words together
into meaninglessness
as rain falls on the page
as a rain that is really my tears
blurs what I really meant to say
but I didn't have the courage to

Kathy DeMoia

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