

Even If I Am Ash

Much of the light is still there, in these words

Ben Buchanan

Some words I found, in time 🌸

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EVEN IF I AM ASH

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Website :: <https://lexicachromatica.xyz>

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The clouds roll on fronts made by Lauri, Scott, and Kiana.

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The stones hum a familiar comfort of my mother.

The stars turn above at the hand of my father.

The flowers are colored in the shades of my sister.

The birds sing a simple melody of my grandfather.

My territory spins for you all, and I am forever grateful for it.

*For Those Who Watch
And Wait In Time*

and,

*For Those Whose Thoughts
Are Much Like Mine*

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FOREWORD

Even If I Am Ash is a collection of poems written over the course of three years. I've found it difficult to write pieces at the same pace I did years ago. Perhaps I've found myself with less to write about, or perhaps I've developed the restraint to wait until I have something worthwhile to say. Regardless, I tend to say a lot of the same things, with the same words, over and over again.

At first I found this repetition to be a sign of decline in my work; I now feel that it's rather a sign of recurring themes in my life. I've seen the same kind of repetition in my music. For quite a while I felt that my creative work was broken, or without value, *stagnant*. These days I've come to realize that it is not a stagnation, but rather a *meditation*. I am still meditating, chewing on these words, even now.

If you were to ask me what I write for, I would say that I write for myself, as an exploratory practice. I mean this in a literal sense, as I've felt for a long time that people are like landscapes, unknowable and vast. When I write, I go running through my hills. I go spelunking in caves, bushwhacking dense jungles, sketching flora and fauna.

What you read here is like a map of that place, and it will seem to return to the same spaces again and again. Excursions and returns, loops and circuits, well-worn paths in the weeds. A repeated phrase is a mark in a tree. A revisited theme is a campfire's remains. A rehashed idea is a mantra of feeling that points like a compass back home.

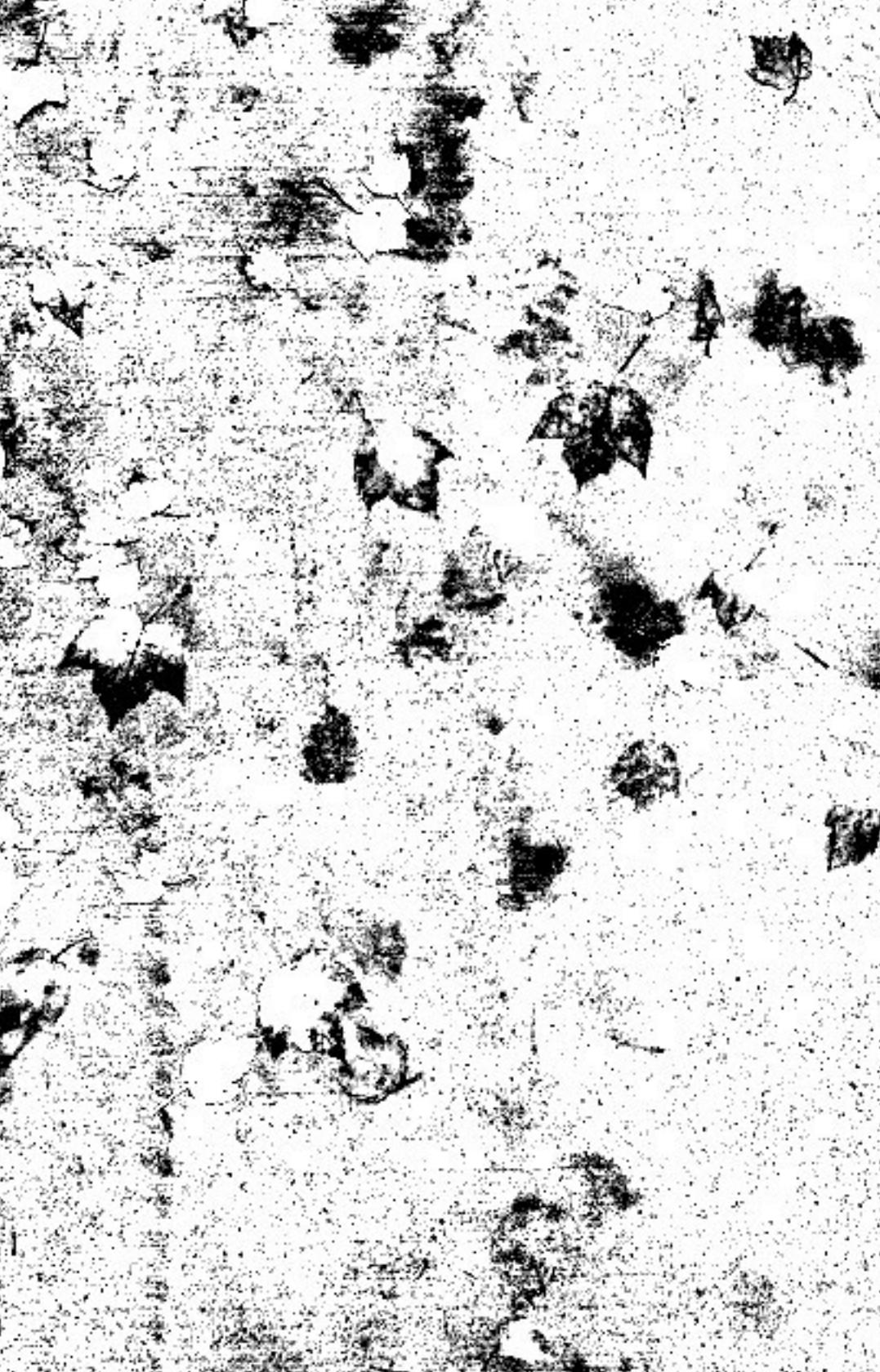
As the poet it's difficult to remember that the reader does not see what I see in that place. You see the map; I see the territory. My hope with this collection of poems is that they blur the line that separates the both of them. The map should *be* the territory.

This is a territory of three years, captured and pressed into pages like a flower. I hope you find something of beauty in its wilderness.

Thank you, and be well.

– Ben Buchanan

Even If I Am Ash



I

The Ones I Know Are Real

*Through Doors of Light and Meadow Sounds
(The Thing I Mean to Say When Words Are Not Enough)*

Sky opens doors of light
Through clouds

Water falls in cups of plenty
Feeding grass

The bugs and birds all hide away
They hold a breath
In tandem

Hold their hands in candy planters
Dusting sticks
and
Fuzzy antlers

Mossy letters written by no one
Write themselves
A love poem

The rhyme a rhythm coming back
To itself
In a knowing
State of
Mindfulness

I want to be a thought of love
In concert with
The rest of
Me

I want to be a floating bee
Or the pollen
On his legs

I want to be a feeling that
You know you
 know
From sometime in
The long ago

I want to come back
To you
In a strange
Returning dream

Compelling you to make something
That speaks to children
In the hearts and minds
Of folks like
Me
Who haven't lost that yearning
And still wish to slumber
Wish to dream

I want to be the thing that is your art
Before it's finished
Cooling off

In meadows packed with petals bright
They twist and tangle
 dance and fight
In harmony of color
And light

In meadows packed I want you there
To lay with me
To ask of me
To share

I want to share
This
With you

Trees and Children Both

Will and weave in wonder
Curled in comfort quiet under
A still yellow moon the shape of birds
In flight or dragonflies as they alight
Upon a stalk of green

They cling and clamber flutter fast and zip
Across your eyes
Like blinking seasons passing by

This thing I feel won't go away
It comes in waves as tides drag words
And rearrange them in the sand

Us bathed together in a beam
Between a cloud and looming mother tree
The loam beneath our feet we wonder not
Why birds sing songs
We wonder only how to sing along

I want to wonder
I want to think and thunder thoughts together
I want to be a lover
I do

I think compassion looks good on you,
Too



In time the silence in the leaves
Makes sense while watching darker colors
Drop from wood and see their children
Splayed across the flagstones
Passersby in thicker boots avoid their shadows
They don't want to feel they're torn asunder

In time the Sun will set before it's ready
Everyone has days they wish could
Give them moments to prepare

In time I hope to know just what to say
So I may finally be done with words

In time I hope to go where all my wonder
Coalesced in crystals hung from stars
Are shining brighter than the moon

And you and I will sit there
Under comfort I have felt
In fantasies and daydreams running
Through a hillside light I still
Recall

Prophecy (Come True)

A warm wind
Touches my face
In the noon
Of the days
Where I walk
Place to place

Here and there
In the sphere
Spinning orbits
Elastic concentric
In satellites
Telling myself
There is nothing
To fear

In the lights
Swimming round
Swarming delicate sounds
I feel comfort
In an allegory
Like a fable
In my mind burning tracts
Onion embers
Float up like bubbles
In the lights

Those cloud scattered beams
Verdigris pillars protruding below
Amber honey I cast you up over the fields
Silent sheets of heat melting the snow

Melt my slow
Forgetting
Into a liquid
Crystal
Remembering

I want to remember
I want to be better
I want to know light beyond just a pretender

You call me collector
My fickle inner weather
Amassing a thought of a love thick as light
As a feather

Like a soft downy mender
Threading jet engine breaths
Through a thin mesh reflector
I want to be better

Like a mirror you favor
See the real you through the steam and the vapor
Wipe me clean
Don't just leave me
For later

—

In a far-off companion of woods
You sit in distant communication
Contemplating the possible chance
Of slim remuneration
This world will not give you

You make the light for yourself
That's the only calm view
In a dream I once thought I would wake from

That day hasn't come
Won't arrive in a star or a comet's gold tail
Just the patience of trees and cold hail
Still waiting to return home
From my prodigal odyssey

Wait for me
Somewhere
Think of my laugh
Or the crease of my mouth
When my mind is a blank slate
Waiting for me
To begin
To believe

That dream
Is a cloud
I would capture
In color
And dress in
All blue

Your beam
Of a smile
Like a prophecy
Come true

Ramblings Remembering (The Galaxy That Brought Me Here)

Canyon of light
And noise
Little heart-headed pilgrims
Cross edges and sightless oceans
Dark with green copper waves
Cutting grooves and grottos

Pillared stones weathered rolling
Stood leaning half melted
And leaking the dust of their
Mothers

Grass eyes whistle flute notes like bugs
Rubbing legs and mandibles
Blinking paint strokes coarse onto canvasses
Of glass and cinder blocks

A pastel project
I will be there in the composition
Sat under poplars and pines long felled
Only stood in my mind
Their names long spelled in the holes
They once rooted in

Twisting spirals of tongues laced with leaves
Can't speak like the shiver of trees
In the summer
Can't mimic the pleasing shimmer of green against the sky
From under

Deep canyons descent
Thoughts belong on shorelines
Ready and able to go
Floating across
The wide surface

Through layered stones and starlight
Archways bending the dark night
Grass eyes like moths and matriarchs
Watch moons crumple and shatter like birch bark

I am watching too
From under
Under summer
The razor gaze of the Sun
Like a cabin built of homes
Wherever you turn
You will find a place
You belong

You belong
Here

Joinings I / Spring

On a sunny May day
Where the light parts the trees
And weeds sing a path
Through the fire pit's ash

The waltzing world
Whirling around
This gripping my arm
In tow
I teacup and spin like a star
Until helium flash

The goldenrod behind the house
Is bright yellow Sun
Beneath the sumac
Dried out and black
New moon

Young clearings hum idly
In daydreams or
Thoughts of light
Like motes of dust floating in a beam

New deciduous
Bird perches and watchtowers
Stuck in the earth
Stuck in the accumulated
Time

Time winds knots around our limbs
Until the wood has been set into stone

If I suddenly decided I would be fine all alone
I don't know how much would actually change

I want to see you rise from your bed in the morning
Bleary-eyed fussing with your hair
Swaying tired to another room

Everything you are
Screaming
"I am here again"

Wherever you are
Those days will return to you
Like colors or rocks or young dandelions

A thousand tiny wishes
Like yellow spindles blooming
After the April rain

Marching down a path you've left
Behind you
They will remember how to come back home
Long after you have
Forgotten

Glow (I've Known)

The touch of sunlight
In amber tips and tumbles
Running thrumming rolling
Through my lungs

Mouth of fire tongues
Waving waxing waning
In the emberside night
Dreaming of another life

Something after all the
Dark days without
The light

Something telling us in
Whispers that we'll all
Be alright

It's alright

In the reeds and rocks
And patterns baking into earth
Little homes for us
Like a stationary bird

Long-legged crane
Wanders far for its worth
Never finding the answer
Just a blank stare
Staring back

And the little firelight
Edges of the circle where we
Rest in a long-held warmth
Kept in my mind

A field of burning stars and moons
Like coals
Where nothing is cold and dark
And your face is wrapped in that
Amber ember glow
That I know

I have known

For longer than I'd like to admit
I've been searching
For that joy
In being alone

And in its absence I'm not sure
If I've failed
Or simply grown
Old

er

The Things That I Left In The Sky

In a way like wind
Rustling through nameless grass
Forgotten paths cut

Folds in on over another
Underneath the height
Of the sky not solid
Rather glass reached through

In a sway like fever
Pulling yourself through that silver sky
Your other
Your brother
You and you alone
Through that mirrored life
One in your eye
The other in mind

All your hopes in a lamp
With a filament ash
And a shade like the shade of another's
Grave

You don't like to visit

That other
Your brother
You and you alone
You will take nothing home
When you go
But who is leaving?

You,
Or you,
Alone?

In the morning some weeks
At a time
I remember the things
That I left in the sky
Like kites in a path of wind
I hope will take them away
From me

I remember those vaults
Of amber
And peel them back
From my oblivion
Of forgetting

I open my safe
And I
Am ash

In a day like a mayfly
Hopes become rain
Running down away
Again

Cleaning off the ashes
We begin to dream
Of little paper things
Kites to send up and off

Never to be remembered
Again
Or so we
Say
To ourselves
To our brother
Our other
Ourself and self alone

So we say we are not
Alone

Thoughts About the Sun, or Something to That Degree

Sun comes in and out on a day
Like today
In curtains and shades
Or a flare passing by
Like a gleam in your eye

Sun comes in and out
Like the tides
Pulled in directions by the moon

Silvering shadows of clouds dance on the walls
Of your room

Sun comes in and out
Of the house
When it pleases
And it pleases me to know
You
And to see
You
Every once in a while

Sun comes out
When I feel myself notice a smile
And I wonder what's happened
To bring me to this place
Of recognition

Some days I'd rather be oblivious with a grin

Some days I want to watch the
Sun come in
And stay a while
Like a friend

Those Without Ears

Mirror me smudged
In acrylics, lacquers
People in the sweep of life
In the dark hole of my eye
Peeking out

Time slathered in textures
Over my skin
Twisted into my hairs
Copper, blasted brass
Blown glass

Out the window cracked with sound
My father mows the grass
Around the house around
In arguing concentrics
Like demagogues
Endless electrics humming

Bugs in the night
Peep toads
Mating croaks on mossy roads
The logs all still and stumped
Under cracked trees
Their shelter
Bunkered helpless slumped
Content

Those thoughts captured
Daguerreotypes
Sterling silver pressed flowers
Grown from old earth
Old dead gardens fallow
Like years, stiff needles
My dog's grave

Winter come and gone
Without words
Breathless frost in a rime
Around my eyes
Blinked without feeling
The moment in time

Opened in spring
Around the trees
Coated in snow
Heavy blossoms
Cracked explode
In rebirth

My mind stalls in words
Never spoken
Better left to be heard
By those without
Ears

Now is Here (And Gone Again)

The clouds remain
After all the burners are turned off

After we've begged for a breath
After all mine've been recycled
In the Sun staring down
Through your eyes

After our wishes come to pass
The chill rolls in with the mist
Holding hands making angels
In the damp summer grass

Time swirls in a muddied glass
Staring up at the slate dark sky

The summer climbs a hill over the dam
Grass flash frozen falling end over end
Down the ridge into autumn

Simmering brass waltzing our weddings away
The rain kissing our half-full glasses
Of change
As the chill rolls in again

Winter spares me a thought of the Sun
And January blooms like an icicle flower
And every little meaning closes in
And opens up again tomorrow

Morning glory purple windows
The night is the day and I eat lunch
By the window
Without noticing

In the spring we go on walks in
Foreign places
For fun

You and me
And me and I
And us and we
And we and light
And light and wind
And time and again

Now is then is when is now again

The heat rolls in
And freezes
My melting
Search

—

I stop and watch nothing

In the spring I eat lunch
By the window

Eager Ornithologists

January January
Jumping at a ghost
In a mirror willow weeps a river
Through a coast

Cannonballing tufts of white
Diving through the air
Little future generations hover
Here and there

Summer season comes and goes
Proliferates a care
In its swaddled topographs and flower
Petal pairs

Aviary aviary
Sounding off a song
Eager ornithologists would love to
Sing along

Sedentary fossilizer
Taking all its time
Years and yellowed memories are always
Passing by

Do you now remember how
The world used to be
Or is your world another word connecting
You to me

Dragonfly dendrobium
Before and after fate
Threads will multiply like bugs like flora
Propagates

Momentary harmonizer
Wishing on a star
Waiting on a name that knows exactly
Who you are

Familiar familiar
And other names I've known
I wonder you into a place that you could
Call your own

Color-stricken chrysalis
You are not alone

Sing Along

The trees are coming in green again
I've noticed in a moment of calm crisis
As I do every year
Since the years have gone wild
Like days and months in jubilee

Not letting me feel the passage
Of time
Until the exit mouth is far behind

The Sun and rain trade places time and again
As my lawn grows deeper and breathes clean
Not quite as choked by the roads and the stones
Not quite as buried beneath snow or steam

My mind is in a lateral looping hold
Making maneuvers circuitous
Telling me I'm gone, I've left, I'm old

In the open window night the trees behind the house still
shake slightly in a light breeze
I remember when I would have more words for this
This thing in my head
When I see it

All the words became noise
And all my noise is a strange music
Quickly slackening into a stretch of austere empty
Space

Space like a grave, like a close copse of trees
Overshadowing a pile of old browned needles and leaves
In a late afternoon light
I used to write about
Like metal and glaze

All those thoughts are erased
Replaced with the dull clarity
Of wind chimes

They don't mind if it's day or night
They know when it's right to sing along
With the breeze

Perhaps that is my path forward as well
To put down the words
And know when to
Sing along

I Remembered Silence (Along With Its Absence)

And silence was a voice in our heads,
You see?

Just speaking numbing vagaries,
Nothings in spots like ink
Dripped from fountain nibs

It's easy
To forget what your voice is like
Or the shape your name would take
In a mind as young and malleable
As mine

Scratched out on cracked vellum veined in
Silver winter rivulets
When the snow swallows written things
Like love poems or careful sonnets

I'm afraid of that silence
Speaking into my quiet life
Still quiet in the summer
When I forget the noise

—

Hands held light before the moon could
Hands made rings of wisdom in elder wood
Hands tied knots of certainty splayed cat's cradle
'Tween fingers fond of each other
Like drops still clung together in a cloud floating over

Hands turned a world of young and brittle things
Slowly baking into ambitions, little yearnings
Hands burned their touch
Into cells I've since
Replaced

Hands held high
Or soaked in rain
Hands on bodies
Picking petals
Brushing cheeks
Or bending metal

Hands of crystals
Ferns and birds and butterfly vessels
Hands in mine
Or placed in laps still waiting
A patience slowly burns in coals
Drawn close and shining bright
Like a newly minted dime

My hands type words
To say it's fine
Many hands have purpose
And right now
This is mine

How Do You Recapture It Now That It Is Gone

A filter of sunlight. Little children like leaves scattered searching the sidewalk. Their shadows left acrylics on flagstones. Newsprint gesso palette bones. A memory in strokes and windows to the backyard. Hidden birdhouses. Muffled voices through the floor dictate the mood. Serially oblique stenographer. Returning thoughts and seeds of sadness. Static shock and laundry baskets. Feelings folded over creased collected placed in jars and recollected. Reinvented while the heart was beating. Reasons and rhymes like rain falling all at once in a flurry too many to recall. So often we rebirth does it really matter at all.

Call it any name it will not leave. Only time runs the river red and clear again. Kinder corners of square brick buildings. All surrounded cornerstones and pine trees. A canopy of green peeking past between the you before and you who sees. A cloudy sky of golden fleece. With rays of heat cross state routes and flocks of geese. Looking away at moving on. Moving into a shield of steam. As if in a natural dream. It comes naturally.

Words are not weapons or bulwarks. Divining rods melt under scrutiny. The Sun moon and stars are contemplating. Speaking in waves of gravity. Words are nothing but pressure along the air. Perhaps inks and dyes along paper or skin. Liquid wind blowing rust off the frame of a decision. We ignore the shape and choose at random. We love in myriad ways without accepting other angles. We confine the answer to a page or two. A tablet carved in a tree or a heart. We avoid other people. We tear ourselves apart.

Evening colors. Reflected in a window pane. Splayed along across the floor in shades and shapes like children's games. The days we spent in solitude with nothing but our growing mind to paint the pain into a different way. Jumping through the view outside to reach a world of our design.

These words reach out to touch a form of joy. A shape I do not know. A noise sometimes distant in the night. Or the darkness of a mind.

Perhaps this is my design.

Yes, Yes, I've Heard the News

Metal

Crystalline

Flowers

In a meadow like pools of earth
All colors and sway of stems and stamens
Little dancers drumming feet
Bugs clapping climbing feasting
Endless gathers
Fathoms fathers drifting petals surfing
Driftwood tideflows over the waves
Metal spirals curled funnels
Fingers woven taut like a love
In friction
Gripping tender tied across along the days
Intertwined with fiction

The face of a moon not known
Perhaps with a solemn
Companion

Name shaped fire volumes line the shelves
Either side of the stars and the
In betweens between the reeds

Your name in a voice
I cannot recall
Waiting for my moment
In the Sun

Already gone before behind my eyes
Behind my back in the long ago
Remembering

A frenetic fever of words
I don't read or command or describe
Seeing
Or knowing
Or feeling
All unknowns to belabor the point

Pointless
And fine like dust
Light powdering trees
In a nine-tailed whip of beams
There is me
And myself
And I

Wrapped in fantasy

Sleeping half-lidded waiting
For the binds

—

Quartered floods filter through brick houses
Paint cracked cinder blocks stacked
Stapled and creased
This home of a patient man's peace

Walls hung long faced in shades
Fractalized
Always crooked
Always feeling out of
place

With the stones and boxes
Under the needless twigs of white winters' night
Behind the house
Back before my notice or my innocence
Or my stubborn childlike ignorance

That is sometimes where I feel I belong
With a flower in my hair
Onyx beetles crawling the crook of my smiling lips
As I sing deep breaths into the soil
Next to those who should have meant
More to me
Before they were
Gone

—

Wounds are nothing more than skin deep
Punctures
That we shall tackle with time and
Circumstance

Give yourself that time
Like light slowly making its way
Even from the face of our burning bulb

Steel yourself
Young flower
You have a world of wounds to find

Sink your roots in deep
And tie the petals
Back
Together

—

After the end
I want you to sit with me
And we will talk under
That light we have
Waited for

Reminders of Guardians and Other Joys

Cloudy shadows
Meadowgrass

Twisting leaves and
Painted glass

Warping sounds as
Airplanes pass

The weight of light
Nature's mass

Threads and thistles
Mender's task

A billion stitches
Stars and gas

They flicker fires
Until they're ash

Longing embers
Gone too fast

I want this warming thought
To last

—

Reminders linking
Dreams and droughts

And floods of fireflies
Dance about

The earthen divots
In the ground

The reeds and rocks
And friendly sounds

They glow and chime
And float around

No worries coming
Not a doubt

—

Follow me
This ancient dream

This ritual
Returning beam

This light of mine
To hold
To keep

—

I want you to stay



II

Kiln of a Word

Towers

Sun rhythm humming
Burning bulbs hanging dripping dew
Like drooling spiders
Many eyes

Clouds all sunburnt bleeding light through
Like mesh
The crows drinking into their
Pitch dark feathers
Like plants

Sumac burning blooming maroon
On the side of the state route
To Ithaca
Like crimson eyes towering over other
Wildflowers

There is our bed in the earth
Up high in the towers of nature
Or a natural dream
Sleeping beauties us we and you me

zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz

Something of the light infects us
Our melting sorrow shrinks
Until tomorrow
Holding up the hope
Like Sisyphus

Sun bleed in rhythm
For a little while longer
As I sleep in
Your towers

As I Sit in Summer

The night is black at 10:00 PM
In the summer

Through the solid block of heat
My eyes struggle

Lone lightning bug
I see you

I too
Wish for storms to carry us
Away

Along away over past this liquid
Heat
Like time stretched skin tight

Lone flickerer in the field
Beyond my window

I see you
Aimless without wind

The night is black at 10:05
As black as midnight oil

Swirling inkwells in the sky
They keep their thunder under lock and key

My eyes surf shadows
Vaguely shaped and splattered

A broad stroke of coal dust trees
Cuts the earth from
Heaven

The night is dark and quiet
And I sit alone

Watching this mote of light
Like a mirror

Lone floater
I am you

The Girl With the Painted Eyes

Two red moons
In a thick mud dusk
Mostly darkness and
Humidity

The girl with the painted eyes
Like a moth's wings
Sits and sees
With her antennae
As I drink my water

I am the room temperature
The critical mass of mist
The white noise of the fan
Spiral born black around my bed

She is the electric hum of the lamps
Ruby glow on a face she's never seen
Or maybe never opened her eyes
To find

The heat wraps
Like a leather cocoon
And I drink my water
As she sees into me

And I sit in her space
Around like a ring
Meditate her
Between my splayed fingers
In a dance

I am the web caught in myself
And wonder if my eyes
Quickly closing
Are painted
Like hers

Illusory Heat

Heat moves adjusting to the
According to a
Given a set of parameters detailing
Along a shaft of light

Heat moves in a circle pattern
Through itself intersecting a plane of space
Between your shoulder blades

Heat is a blanket I sometimes want to
Cast off
Or burn up
Or perhaps
Give up
Entirely

Heat loves another
And I love another
Or many others
It's hard to nail down

Heat is a name
Or a word
Or a word for a name
Or a pseudonym for shame
Or a hotness of breath
Or a state of duress

Heat is another one of those things
That people made up

Nobody made up the birdsong
Or the flash of a lightning bolt
Or the hum of a rainstorm
Or the face of a gravel stone

Sometimes I forget that a couple of people
Made me up
And I have to remember to make something
Else of myself
Before it's too late

But who's watching the clock
Anyway?

I guess I'll lay in the Sun
In a field by a dam or a flood stick
And wait for a day

Wait for it all to catch up to me

Note to Self (Fates :: Constellations)

Fragments still
D r i f t
Around the house

In the morning the yellow light
Splays itself across my desk
All along the old photographs of old valleys
Old friends
Old thoughts of beginnings
And thoughts of the end

In the morning I get up and get ready
Get my feet moving down the stairs
Already ignoring the floaters still
Lazing about
Clinging to the hair of my legs like cilia
Wading in a flooded dream

Time has not taught me how to face
What you thought was unfaceable
Nor has it given me tools to build my way
Around it

In the morning I am sleepy-eyed leaving for a horizon I hope
will be there when I arrive
In the evening I return a fuzzy crawler, having been turned
around by doubts
Slowly meandering along your doorframe
Leaning with my emotions limp, some days

In the evening the shadow of a tree is missing from the lawn
And sometimes the fireworks at the baseball stadium can be
heard from over the hilltops
Through my cracked bedroom window

I wait for fate to turn my feet
Like stars in the sky
Tracing new routes home to
Other constellations

Time has not prepared me for how to love
Myself
Or perhaps anyone
Instead it has given me space
And so I keep returning it to myself
Time, and space, waiting, and existing

And the fragments of my time
Shattered, spread out in puzzles before me
Still
D r i f t
Around my ankles

As I sit and wonder
Where I went
Wrong
In this life
Or a dream
All the same

(did i go wrong?)

All the Nameless Bugs Above

Couple of geese stand in the grass by the neighbor's pond
Couple of hours gone by in shapeless flight formations
Couple of miles beneath my wheels on a whim
Couple of fresh graves dug in the cemetery down the road
Couple of thoughts caught circling themselves in my mind
I'm sure you've noticed
By now

Everything stuck sunlight on the walls inside
The things repeated as salves, tinctures,
Whatever I can self-prescribe

The colors from the window,
The movements of clouds overhead,
The slow drip of emails I'd rather ignore instead

Endless crawl of ladybugs searching for an escape
But my windows are closed
How did they get in here?

July washes itself against my skull in repeaters
Lily laves and mallow prays incandescent near
The center of a humbled thinking position
Caught up in the religious act of wishing
On a star
Without a name

Flit of an insect alighting on a leaf
Beneath an ember larger than the world itself
Only here a moment then on to the other
Destination or transit or looking glass shape

Like a droplet of rain
Without a name

A thwarted belonging like that
Simply believing they are nothing more
Than matter made for
Ending
At the bottom
Of the fall

That is the kind of rip we search for
Through years of skittering glee and gloom
We roll every room
For a shred of 'because'

Without it
We wonder why
We should try
And continue

Some days
When the mist still sits lazy against my window
And the ember above is too cold to melt it
I wonder much the same

And other days
I wrap myself in a heavy heat
And wonder what they would call it
If it had a name

I'm Tired of Being Afraid of Being at All Times

Heaven stirs and spills a sheet of rain
Every half hour or so
And I
Sitting still waiting spinning
For a patient sound is turning
Returning
And falling in sheets
On deaf ears

The flowers are not growing anymore
Only sustaining what they have

They don't ask what their purpose is anymore
They know time will deliver the answer
They know

—

The summer is lapping up noise
With a coal ember tongue
And a chorus of bugs

My thoughts are bent angled
Like blown glass
Feeding water to vines and old
Ruins of barns
I will sleep in the loft
With the hay bales and watch
As the stars turn above
In tandem

The summer is wrapping up joy
Like a present
Presenting a lesson in time
Passing by

Little flecks of remembering paint petals
On walls and the corners of church dais pedestals
Pulpits and looking glass sacraments
Stained colors in eveninglight far away sentiment

That place in the past where I rest in a memory
Like a couch or a cot or the crook of a tree
As a bird I once knew flaps his verdant green arms
I ignore the alarms

I refuse to go back to that place

I would rather
Find peace in my view of the lawn
Without all the trees and weeds
I remember

They're gone

I would rather
Be comfortable in my skin
As it ages on my bones
And the things that I wanted
Never come to pass
Just as well

I would rather
Find a friend
In the mirror
Like summer

Or a child
A reminder
Of who I once was
Without rushing to relive
All those fallacies

I would rather
Be
As I am
And be
Happy

I would rather
That be enough
For me

Deep Crash

Kiln of a word
Thought remembered recycled all day
Desiccant's decay
Kept tumbling in dryers and blasted with bellows
Foundry of sentences
Wasted away

Air thick honeyed heat
Dreams lag behind as cans tied to a bumper
Just a memory
Sweet as the end's shy delay

Ghosts melting today
Scared of heatstroke and lazing around
Worried patterns of weather
I'd tell you the same
If I wasn't too busy
Being

Being an ember kept warm
A cigarette mote burning ash
Through a late summer swarm
Of contemplations
Before autumn's
Deep
Crash

Onset of aimless time
Running watercolor hues
Along my arms and other
Limbs too confused
To function

Kiln of a word
I keep thinking about
Many words at a time
Each a jet engine thruster

Jungle trees out the door
Some turning yellow and red
Maybe more
In the morning

I'll count them with tallies
Press leaves into folders
And file them away for
Another day

Just another day
Just another
Day

Ziggurat

Tired

Wishing for sleep

Doused in a bug static noise

Eyes still as stone

Unfalling

Erasers for feet

Walk in circular brushes

Tracking nothing

My memories

The same

The days

They were made

House like a cinderblock

Ziggurat

My worship

Empty zen

Bug noise blankets

Heavy gravity darkness

In my room

Warm and humid

Half-lucid

I miss someone who never was

Never will be

Their occupied space in the mind

Waves coming in
Splattered losing mass
And momentum

Spent against the cliffs watching
Baleful eyes

Drone of a hundred wishes
You made against fate

Nimbus of rime around the gate
Of your mind

It's not quite too late

Heavy light gradient

Bug noise layers stack up high
And long into the night

Under a cover

Tired

Impossible Interloper

Backyard
Stray cat patio
Listening to the music

Is this life for me
Perhaps not

I live in a
Strange wilderness

A quiet overlook
Thinking
Of becoming

In a quaint copse
Or clearing
Gestating

Backyards
Like fields
Without people

Still their voices
Like colors
On flowers

This is life
For me

In a slipshod reel

I sit in someone
Else's comfort
And feel
Nothing

Perhaps rest
Inaction

All my tethers tied
Like a kite
Leading home

I want to follow

Joinings II / Summer

For a moment in indigo
The ember suspension of night
Like stigmata of humbling stars
I freeze stood in the grass
Reaching up lacing blades
Like fingers through scars

Slow parade of all the things
Remembered
In nights' and evenings' solemn whispered
Phrases hymnals incantations
Humming spells and leaning lanterns
Pewter pestles grind and knead
Their footsteps fall down halls of leaves

Crawl of those lavender stars pin lights like bugs
Against the edges of my slender recollection
Back when vestibules and sanctuaries were
Shelters for the heaven-sent men
Leading us children by the hand
Down a long winding path
Or a staircase into
Colors
Unseen

Sea of mercury
Humidity
Sloshing through my bedroom floor
Sundered swollen thick and heavy
Summer marrow tree bone canopy
Cracks of birdsong reeds kintsugi
Flush with more
Or less

The captain still smiles
Under her sunhat
At me

And I am caught drifting
Through early fragments
Of an afterlife
I know will
Never be

My desire is rest
My desire is warmth
My desire is humming
My desire is light
My desire is growing old into the weeds
Of a thick summer's night

As the bundles of cloud
Move on tracks passing over the moon
A slim second of patience
And peace washes out of my mind

The Remover Comes (Again)

Removal
Empty air
Light
Sitting still
Here and
There

Treeless
Needleless
Nothing
Where
Has it gone?

Into the chipper
Piles of
Dust and fungal
Rot

My sudden heart
Left
Raw

In a manner
Or meandering
A river's name
A forest's thought

A passing flare
A stunning daze
A daydream slaked with sluggish haze

That star
Is a shimmer
Warping wobbled warbler
Caught in a throat
Without home

Over mudflats
Reeds in rows
Orderly organics
Rocks and fish and crows

Heavenly space of a day
Walking alone
With your eyes
Caught on
The time

Too consumed
With flight
To leave the ground

The dust and soil
Where we are
Subsumed

Small steps in
Empty space
We pray
With motion
Forward
Genuflect
Until we are
Gone

End of Life Situation

And the suction darkness of the open cave mouth behind me
swirls about my feet
The sky outside is like an orange peel
And the rocks are weathered sandstone, lime and chalky
 patience wearing down in the heat
The cool heat dripping down my clothes
My skin sweating it off, madly hurrying to be rid of it, this
 caustic feeling

The mouth draws a breath
I turn to stare down the wall of nothing
Down the throat
Of myself

And there the singular is a man
A man I know like the back
Of my hand

Not this swarm of faces and feelings
He is one
With himself

And the birds are sounding off as they fly away like robots
On a clock like migratory transactions

And the mouth hums an idle melody
Like a fever
Or a river of mud
Or a pond frozen over in the night without life

I step into my mouth and I swallow

Head Pats

Rain pats the roof
Over my head
Rain pats my head
And I feel
Something I seldom feel

The sky is black with dark clouds
And the window is closed
And the rain talks to me
Or the rain lets me talk to myself
Lets me say all the things left unsaid

The trees are wrapped in mist
Rolling off the water control dam
The trees are blanketed and covered
In water
or another
Twisting shape like silence after the rain
Stops falling

The trees hug the water
The water hugs the roof
Of my mind
I see things in my mind
Little memories speak to me
Like a child

Sometimes I speak to myself
Like a child
I am a child
Once again
Little eyes see the world in another way
I want to see the world in another way
The other way
I used to
Again

The rain is a filter of seeing the world
Like it is
Through a thousand tiny looking glasses
Only here for a moment
Then silent

The roof is an impasse
My ingrained doubts and hang-ups
And the rain can't get through
No leaky ceiling for you

Living under the same roof is
Killing me
Stagnant and still in my bed
My death bed
It sometimes feels
Like the distant rumble of thunder

But if you tear open a hole
And look out
Through the rain
Still falling down
Before it removes itself
Into silence

There is a way
out

All I've Left (Is All I Have)

I statue-ize myself
In a hand-me-down office chair
In the place where I sleep
In the place where I tumble sleepless
In the place where I leap
Crumbling mirage platforms
To and fro and to again

I recognize myself
In the mirror dripping glass
Of summer through the window
Screen to backyard hill rise
Over humid wave melt horizon

The trees all stood still in the
Sun-slaked air

I memorize myself
Schematic reams and stacks
Tipping toppled over
June bug flutter heat splash
And ripping torn asunder
All the fragments
D

r

i

f

t

And all I've left
Of myself
All I've left

Is all I have
Is all I had

In blacktop simmer ripple pools
Popped like bubbles
I still myself and
Return

Nonsense Talking (Or Not Talking)

Yellow green tree lines
I watch the forest fence out my window in all directions
It shakes and shimmers
Withers
But only a dream of dying winters

For some reason the summer stills
In a bathing, boiling heat
Subtle as it beats against the skin
Like a heart
Rather than the wind's fingers playing games in our hair
Or dancing round a stone

The birds don't congregate outside my office window
Anymore
Seems the spring was short for them
They've left to watch someone else
Check their emails in the morning

Locked in amber towers
I sit hunched and still as a sweating tree in this heat
Without emails to read
Without beaks to feed
And my brain is flattened into the slanted blade of light
splintered off the setting horizon

Nothing left to cut into
My mind meets a concrete wall and simply
Stops



III

Yellow to Red, Brass to Bronze

Newjoy (Copper Trees)

Copper trees
Like poles

Light as a feather
Between

I drift
In a nameless breeze

Perhaps this joy
Might stay

A little
Longer

Though it's not
Enough

I hope it may
Linger

Before and beyond
This face

Like hooded death
Dusting off my place

At the
Table

Archways

Trees look upward bending archways
At a sky like coral soup

Moon hanging swinging
Newton's cradle
Colliding

Over the tall fields of weeds
And rock piles like thrones
Little crimson wings flitting things
Flirting with nature's bones
Still fresh

from the
Earth

Fireflies in the cup of my hands
Drinking embers

Burning my tongue in my eagerness
Water stirring
In stones
Cracking open marbles like eggs
I am a hatchling
Not fully formed

Primordial fingers
Slipping off the physical
Grasping hands like
Gray drizzle
With the amber coming through
The trees
The leaves and little
Ornaments
We celebrate

We should celebrate
For what reason
I do not know

But I know
I do not need
A reason

I bend my archway and gaze up
Through a memory of brass snow
At a sky the color
Of oleander
And rime

Joinings III / Autumn

Autumn cool breeze
Paints leaves like wind chimes
Listening to the rattle

Growing into the air carried along
Like a dandelion puff split apart
Into all your fundamental pieces
Completed by the rest of gravity
On a sun-soaked patch of soil

Grooming shrubs and hedges
Trees and blades of grass
Cups and petals
Stems and stamens
Pistils perched and pollen heavy
Bending like the clouds are ready
To slowly begin a parade of crystal
Drops and tumbles
Teeming puddles
Splashing splashing our boots harassing
The sidewalk
Like leaves leaving shadows as proof
They were there

Heliotrope and lily orange
The sky behind the curtain wall
The drizzle precipitates subtle salt
Leaves a residue
Covers us
In colors like flowers

Those colors gleam like cut rocks and geodes
Those colors bend rain into scents
Left wafting off the blades of grass
Or a drooping blue jay's fence

A ripple gray and white and gold
As trees across the view below
Along above and through the sky
Like waves and islands wonder why

October wind is holding light
Like candles gutter in the night
And I do find myself in a strange way
Without a reason or a rhyme

But I would bend beneath a leaf
For a drop of that kintsugi gold
If it would mend my cracks

Copper oceans
Draped over the hills
Side to side sprawling oxide orange and yellow
Red to bronze under the sky
Quickly losing itself to the shade
Of the moon

Soft noises distilled into silence
Waiting for a blanket of snow
Our minds much the same
Wondering where the days go

In a dome of our selves
We are a mural of stars
On the ceiling

Each one showing us our place
In our joy

Now I Am

Now I am a piece of the earth
I am a leaf turning copper and red
I am a sumac dried and dropped
Sleeping sound in the wet
Yellowed grass

Now I am a cloud snaking waves
Along the sky
Dripping myself in grayscale deposits
Like a river running over your head

Now I am a pane of glass
Watching through myself
I am outside in the night
When you cannot see where the trees
Meet the sky

Now I am a thought of myself
Like an engine turning over and over
Continuous and curious
I am a mill stone around the neck
A burning harvest wheel

Now I am a buzzing
Like a dragonfly's frenzy
Or a hummingbird's wings beating
Letters symbols signifiers
Through the wires humming

Now I am a night alone under stars
Under a generation of lights
Watching slow decisions grow old
As red giants burning coals

Now I am a floater
Buoyed by wondering
Just exactly where we are

Moment Dissolve

Fetch me through the wire
Through the thinnest open grin
Draw me out
Draw me in
Your house

The one in your head
Floating on that island
With the strings and strands of memories
The time between you cannot see
It hangs like vines from unfinished

I don't like the idea of time
Or what idea we've made of it
The same way we conjured up faith and money
Like we're made of it

Time is there like antimatter
That dark glue which binds our stars
And we throw ourselves into it
Like flypaper

That old gray square on a rock
Somewhere in the black of unknown thought
With my many doors and hidden compartments
Like olive rooms and bay windows
Overlooking Solitude's tombs

The door that opened
Cast in shadow
Pitch and mud
I stepped across
Without a light

I hate the idea of time
To put a foot forward
And lose all sense of
Where
In thinking about
When

—

In a dripping light
Blinking hazards

Windshield drowned
In a fractured rain

Running off

Running away

All the old halls fallen leaves
And red ivy

And the softness of memory
Faded and gray

Where the moment dissolved
As I failed to remember
Why I should stay

Red Sun Goes Down Over Four-Lane Freeway

Atmospheric shimmer a few degrees above the horizon line
As I sit and breathe
And become somewhere else
In my long black sedan

The whine of my engine
Like a child never grown
Beyond an echo of my own maturity

A scaffold of thought
Like stones balanced
Considering mutual identities with zen
And the uneasy bond of nothing with
Eternity

Snapped branch on the road
After a storm
What does it see

Does it see

Flare of a red sun like a ring world
Hula-hoops my skull
Like a time I once felt
And have thought about
Maybe once or twice

or more

But no more

Sunburned across my forehead
Sunken into my empty vessel
Every moment on a roulette wheel
Spinning

That scaffold shudders
In a cold that is not there
But I am somewhere

At the movies in the summer
Or the Cyber just before winter tightens
In the lens of a setting day
Or the words of a closing chapter

In the water of a dream
That I clear from my throat
As the morning birds wipe my mind
As autumn drives closer to the center of this place
Where we sleep with
Each other

Along the four-lane freeway
We set with the star
Spinning down slower and slower
Growing red and old

I sit in my long black sedan
And breathe the cold air of my a/c
And wonder

What will I do
Before I wash away

Several Metaphors About Fire

Site of the cinders left behind
The night we had is a soot-stained slab
All that remains of those lives
Lived in the space of a breath
Quick and humble as a taxi cab

Sight of an unseen copse of red trees
Still in a stubborn fit clutching leaves
Holding its headache'd old mind
By the tip of a mud-caked bird nest's bind

Slight of a hand down my back
Rubbing slow circles knowing you are there
Behind me
Beside me
I miss knowing someone there
Knowing their skin on mine
Knowing their eyes through their hair

Ghost of a past like a thousand forgotten nights
Some days I remember them still
In the strings of gold light from on top of the hill
Looking down at a map
Of my cosmos reflected
That flux of my inner self, weathered and empty
A vessel waiting for the fill

You are a thousand nights I never knew
A million and one more reasons I flew
From the nest-tangled trees of the copse
Over ember-slaked fields tinted red in the smoke
I miss hearing the words that you spoke

I remember their shape like a mouth
But the sounds have eroded away
I hoped you would
Stay

Lazy Dog Napping Under the Willow Tree

Yawning day
I am yawning away
My mouth speaking layers and volumes
In syllables silent and waiting

Their patience is mist under sunlight sustaining
Feeding youthful beliefs of remaining
In a thought or an echo,
An idea never mired in naming

I am an idea
An amalgam of views
From the chain link hillside
Or the top of Arnold Park
Looking down through the night
Into moments of my blood
I find it hard to look away
Some nights
More than
Others

A visitor
A nomad
A waltzing melody stilted walking rose spirals
Through marshes and reeds and lanterns and fevers
And campgrounds and trailers and lean-to's and leavers
They're walking away on petals floating lazy
Down a river I cannot name
I don't want to
Give it a name

Names have power
Over me
Some nights
More than
Others

Some lights
Are like pockets of jellyfish
In a wide empty roil
Floating by
Nothing on their mind
But being

Not a single worry about
How they got here
Or where to go
Next

Some
times I feel as though the words I use are
A smokescreen that only works
On myself

Can you see through these things?
Can you see me?

I am between the poplars
Under the eaves of a winter home
Over the valley in amber and glaze
Around the house in concentrics
Returning to you out of
A deep anxiety that I carry
From my childhood

Growing old is learning
How to put it down

I am growing old, too
Whether I want to
Or not

I grow through your lattice
I watch the Sun travel in arcs
I make waterfall habits
I breathe wind through your hair
I am here
I am there

I am a heavy light whistling
Through your arms

I just want to touch
These words
Do they touch
You?

Tell me that they touch you,
Too

Fate, and Other Things

Rain fall
 ing
Down a face that's seen a thou
 sand
Different people in the moon

Eyelashes are bare branches limbs of emp
 ty
Space where feel
 ings
Grew as leaves and turned toward the Sun

And fell as drops of color into pud
 dles
All the tired all the lonely faces wash
 ing
Clean repented in the mirror sur
 face
All the fragile all the wishing on a star

A thousand years gone by a genera
 tion
In a week or day a million bill
 ion
Eyes caught watching drops impact the earth

A hundred lives like fireflies are ready to be lived
In blinking murmurations
Somewhere I am watching slack-jawed as I sit
Under a canopy of turning night rotations

Underneath the shimmer atmos
phere
The gentle wind a voice of someone sing
ing
Splitting fire
wood
In late October I remember how you used to feel

And every pigment of your skin enumer
ated
Words unspoken dreaming out the win
dow
Spider silk and gossa
mer
And embers that still yearn to glow

—

Some days in a thought I grasp that simple smile
Like a river that will always know just where to flow

—

And the morning clings to light reflec
ted
Off a tired pair of eyes

And I will know the age of sun
beams
By the angle that they rise

And birds will beat us to the worm
It's meant for them
It's fine

*Odd Look in the Mirror Today, Hair All Wild and Dark,
Eyes Like a Wanderer Looking For a Name*

Cerulean blue
Waving through
My window
Cloudy cataract hue

Frozen image
Of a future
On the front page
I like to think about

I don't like to think about it
But I think

Torch-tipped trees
All doffing their veils
Showing off their thin
Scattered limbs wild and brittle
Like river deltas

Scarlet glow
Along the hill
Where the crows sit on
Branches
Or the peak of my house
Watching me move through
My world of morning color

Autumn color
Autumn lover
Dead and dying in my lawn
The grass is slowly
Stopping
Growing
Foggy dusk
To frosty dawn

My eyes don't count the leaves
Anymore
Don't see them making shadows
On the flagstones
After a heavy rain

Is this a strange and unfamiliar season
Or do I recall this
Descent?

It is tough to tell in limbo
Thoughts swim round
In traffic circles
Endless driving
Fruitless watching

Knives stare out the window
At nothing remaining
Reflecting back
My heavy light marrying
Itself into the morning
Or the night
All the same

When will I see something
Look back into me
Again
?

Black Powder Thoughts

Sun behind their heads
Behind old dead night clouds
Stale as storms

Sun behind their teeth
Peeking

Swallowed glow
Of a flare passing
Through

Sun behind their somewhere memory
Full of wood hills and resin
In puddles and pockets of flowing
Back together like
Glaciers

And Nick is sitting still as ice
In front of golden midday windows
And I am curled in a shadow ball
In a basement miles into the past

And carpets and hardwood
And ceilings of fire
And feelings like gradients
Too abstract to tell

And all the people I used to love
Have learned to love themselves

And in my mirror I see a firework
Without a fuse

Powder black and stale as old dead nights
Passing through

I Keep Looking Outside

Conifers and crows
All going gray in the light quickly leaving
Mornings slowly static blue
To black and white
My sleeping eyes somehow dreaming
Despite
The shallowness of the evening
Before

The often turning pillow
Never cool anymore

A broken feeling is often
Incomplete
A leafless tree in the spring
Or a coil of confusion
Around your head
Spinning

Unfinished
Is a person
Unnameable
And young

And old as time before we knew
To count it

Colors change and shift
Like water
Amorphous
Just as feelings of being
Broken
Busted
Beaten

Strangely distant from the horizon
Or anything at all

Nature climbs a ladder of that distance
Over many moons and suns and stars
Above
As trees collapse and crows release
Their feathers into the wind
Spelling out a poem
In pentameters unknown

The syllables are their hollow bones
Collated into calcium thrones

Melted down, weary people
Walk with us like smiles
Never showing the cracks
Never the gold, never their backs
If they turn to face the past
The curtains race closed

Unfiltered
Impure
People
Are your brother and your sister
Your self
And cherished lover

Purity is a standard against which all of nature is set alight
We burn each other like ember fields
Of ashpit brambles and
Harvest wheels
Like grindstones

Unmade emotion
Is a formless thought
You can't hold onto
Can't fold into

Only a trauma echo
Or a mirror into silence
Without a voice to shatter its advance

To feel unusual
Or understandable
In a moment's time
Is quickly replaced with
Something else entirely

Sometimes joy
Sometimes sorrow
Sometimes a long unending stare out of the window
Watching a murder
Of crows dance about an old needled tree
Across the way

Unchanging is the only stagnation
To be wary of

And cycles are like chaos attractors

Even if you don't change them,
They will change you
And your position will be shifted
Around in rose spirals
As if you dreamed it to be

Don't worry about the sleep
It will come
Dream along the unfinished path

Incomplete means there is still
Time
Left

A Diatribe on Belonging

Belonging

Sometimes feels a futile desire
For something out of our
Control

In a state of mind

You cannot belong in a state of mind
It is already shifting like
Water
Into something else
With or without
You

In a ray of the Sun

You cannot belong in a ray of the Sun
It will move on to the other side
Or a cloud will come along to hide
The gold and glaze

In a house of wood and cinders

You cannot belong in a house of wood and cinders
It is just an empty space that you
Will walk through once
Or twice
Again
To get from place
To place

Sometimes that is all a home is

A place to look intently at your face
And the slow circuit breaking
Underneath the surface
Behind the eyes

In a family
You cannot belong in a family
After being pushed out of the womb
You have already been pushed
Out
Where is the door to return?
To go back
In?

In a tangle of curtains or perhaps the leaves of a tree
You cannot belong in a tangle of curtains or perhaps the leaves
of a tree
Wrappings come undone with wear
And you are already naked
Beneath
See the form in the mirror
Understand its shape and shimmer

In a wash of noise called music
You cannot belong in a wash of noise called music
The song ends
And the playlist gets shuffled again
But perhaps you could sit
For a spell
In the skipping of a record
Finished playing on the b-side

In side
Inside
You cannot belong inside
Because belonging is taking your inside
And feeling comfortable making it
Your outside
If you sit inside and stagnate
Isolate
You will crumple and wither
Like a flower left in the dark

In what
Then?

What can you belong in?

Stop searching
Just be
Here and there
For a spell
For the while
That we have

Be with me
And I with you
And we with out
And in around the sphere
Spinning again
And again

Be the light streaming into the house
That welcomes you in
From within

Suncrane Ponders the Mountain

Mountain peak
Looking down
Against the yellowed grassy switchbacks
Topaz turns of starlight captured
In a scattered crop of fractured
Stones and totems

Faces names locations plastered
Tangled tied and taut between the spokes
Of night's unspoken soirée

A family of embers walking drunk along the breeze
Fireflies and drifting eyes that see the cracks
Of gold between

A hand that grasps and knows the shape
Of fingertips and petals
Curled into a blanket draped in shade
The moon's repose a fond familiar face

A name of shapes you know
Like roads to home
Or moments in your ancient life
Spinning relays blinking dead forgotten languages
You crafted to preserve the feeling of a joy
Not yet cooled enough to hold
For long

At the mountain peak
The moon above is smiling
With a ring of gold

I've wept for nights like this
And wept for many more
My wonder shattered seared repaired
And limp across the floor

I ask myself
How much of this is simply in my mind?
The question answers back to me
The truth of it
My essence
Is a complicated rhyme

I'll weep again for nights like this
And wash away the toll
Of wishing for another day
Without a mind that's full

Scattershot Delegations of Purpose to Nature

Plumage distinctions
Badges buttons bolo ties
Written in a simple script along the arms of time
Wrapping limbs around this life of mine

Beige and brown as dirt and soil
Sand and plaster brick and dusty lacquer
Poles and pylons armatures
Along the rolling thoughtless hills
Across the vaulting asphalt roads and avenues
My memory remembering is you
Is watching is a winged view aloft
I soar and specter downward heather
Bending light around a finger
Rings of purity forever linger
With me
On my skin

In spring the sunlight washes sin
away
And I rejoice in knowing I will
See another display of your
Contentment

Removing I
From some equation
Is a methodology of mine
To recuse my ego
Or perhaps my being
From the view of written
Visions

Could the absence of myself
From my own words
Create a more worthwhile
Semblance of art?

The question floats down a reeling river
And banks are breathing drinking
Grass and weeds and roots and trees
Do shiver under nests of starlight or a flock
Of silver glitter gandered up above
Or gathered into the wings of a dove
Dipper delving scooping wires and transformers
From the telephone poles
Left to carry humming brightness to your domicile
Of choice, that is to say,
If you've had a say
In it up until now

I've rather left it in the hands of the goldenrod
And the sumac

I've planted seeds of desire in the dreams of a campfire
And their children up in smoke spoke volumes of joy
To my eyes closing under the covers

Mud and moss and lichen across
All the stones on the path up to
Jarimuh Point

Reading maps I am oriented into a line
Slanted smacked into a belly of pine
Donning trail markers topographical bindings
Reading writing a simple language of time
Growing older with my
Waiting or
Walking along

Doubled sprinting and over the edge
Or up under above the sky turning in love
With the earth and the ground
Tilling loam with a sound of stars
Feeding plants and small children

Running idle
Beyond a thought of the world
Making up time in the hopes of creating
Something worthwhile

My words are not sediment
Are not clay or creation
My words are not sentiment
Though abstractions breathe elements of emotion
Like poems

My words are not worth
Much
To me at the moment
Perhaps never

But the waiting is what kills us
The wondering when
It comes true

Keep dreaming with me
I'll keep thinking of
You

Path of a Thought Led Astray

Days in a sequence of songs
Broken down into movements
Breaking down into notes

Stuck to my monitor
Reminders I'm older than the boy
I was when I thought of her
Last

Little photographs
Instax
Washed out recollections of days I don't like to believe
Are far out into that ocean swell behind me

Have I stopped growing
Or is the world no longer getting smaller

All the flying flitting things in my head
Mosaic of lightning bugs like a mobile above my bed
They scatter like rain
Breaking silence
Again
and
Again

Little droplets searching
The sidewalk
Like the leaves
Little children
Of trees
Walking bugs over seeds
And the birds
Making nests
In the reeds
All the fallow weeds
Not yet made
Incomplete

The end of the thought stops there
Like a taunt
And I am unable to sway it

Like a shadow tendril of the willow
Out the window
Of my room

Dancing little leaves
Thick with wanderers
Onyx black pilgrims still as stones
Soaking in the Sun

And the sumac blooming underneath
Behind the house deep in the weeds
Where the rainwater feeds
Each warming season their red beams

Where are my seasons

They've all collapsed into one

Coalesced into none

Left me wanting the waves undulating
As years accrete into something
Denser than a belief
Or a dream leaning on hopes like a leaf
Left floating in a petrichor puddle

Time is a muddied tapestry made muddier
With isolation
We retreat from the screens into our heads
Until

Suddenly,
Now

Am I older than before

That is a given

And I will give more

Before

It is done



IV

As Yet After

Before the Stars

Before the stars were wiped in soot and cinders,
Charcoal pinholes burned long light into the center
Of a summer night
Alone

But not alone beneath the rolling names of constellations
Heron's wings of clouds go floating by
Like blinking murmurations, stars look right back into us
Like memories that travel between
Galaxies

Before the night was lonely, it was solace
It was loving arms and bug noise blankets
Little microcosm melodies that sat outside the other hours
Waiting for a curious mind
Like mine
To call home

But now the soot and cinder spires of trees
And diamond linking armatures
Are wrapping spilling languid breezes
Through the space the stars once held

Their fingerprints still plastered over every cloud
Don't tell me that those days are ancient
Let alone gone
For good

Gone away
That memory of another version of time
It's difficult to excise
The old rotten foundations
While still extracting all the good
That was left behind

Before I reinvented myself
For the nth time in a row,
Windows slanted beams from clouds
Like pillars in the snow
And Winter's name was just a planet
Or a sleepy day without a care
Where we could worry later about
When to go

Before the words and noises
There was feeling without knowing,
And the wonder of a child that saw a world
Of spring trees blowing
Willow shadows dancing on a wall
Or lightning bugs that weaved between
The silhouettes of sumacs
Like a swarm of embers glowing

Before the stars were snuffed like candles
All the world was late and lazy like a child
I once knew I was

Now I look outside at night and wonder
Where I am

Before the stars return again I want to be a man
That hasn't lost the child in him
And knows the parts to keep and hold,
And which to leave behind as he grows old

Before they blink their eyes at me and recognize my face
I want to know that wonder still has a place
Here

I want to know they know my thoughts
And hear my fond regards

I want to know they missed me
Through a thousand years apart

Proof of Light

Frozen memory of a stardust night collapsing
Shatters heliotrope tapestries of my youth
Sponging up the excess packing away in excuses of age
Coming and going like water
Through my idle fingers

Dancing a pen in slow circles
Over blank notebook pages

Waiting for a moment that has already passed
In a voltaic shock and then smoke
Shimmering like long grass under a wide breathy wind

In waves of time melting and flowing together
Dripping and stretching between the me who was buried
And the me who will cease

Dark memory of a crane
Perched on my mind
Drinking shades of a thought of a love
Thick as light

Dim memory of a day thrown aside
Running up the embankment
Tumbles spinning and flash
Like a smile left behind
Coming back into your mind
My mind
Like a memory
Like a smile
I reach for

I reach through the disease
Humming slaked in my ether

Recall the demonstration
The proof of light
Up and over the hills
Through the myriad shapes of the clouds
'Tween the leaf-laden trees in their youth

Their years are elixer
Slowly melting distilled into motes
Resting on your face
Like a nap in the amber past

In the light
Like a proof
Of beginning
And end

Little moment in time
Like all the others
Come and congregate in my steeples
I am calling you
Home

Doorways Into Another

Walk

Me through a gate
Into a clinging amber slush
Of winter afternoons
Or maybe
Just a window replaced
Into finality

Jungles sink and simmer into bones
Making little rooms of light
The things we remember into homes
We never leave
Ourselves alone

Walk

ing
Under flocks of geese that don't remember
When it's time to turn toward the fields
Perhaps simply the weather
Leaves them wrapped in
Circular confusion systems
Strapped down with
Worry

In a constant rain
The window says my name
And shows me afterimages
Of a face I've yet to make my own
Yet to reclaim

Like summer vines and daffodils
And overgrown beliefs
The only things I take with me
Are all my memories

Damp and fresh from trees
But quick to dry and disappear

Done and dusted like a leaf
In late October's atmosphere

I bury them in boxes
And wait until the snow has gone
Away

In early spring I wander houses
Walk

ing

Under floorboards over old foundations
Through a maze of doorways
Into other lives or living spaces

In a day of rain and running blues
I wonder why they run from you
And do not disappear like leaves
To be reborn
To be released

Playing in my mind
I run the length of hallways
and I smile

As I imagine how it would feel
To hold your hand in mine
Under a doorway into something
Of my own design

Those amber windows slanted beams
Still call to me
From somewhere in a past I had forgotten

I will walk
Through thresholds further farther into other
'Til I find their names engraved
In my remembered bones

In evening light I want to be a home
For someone

How You Got Your Name (or, My Desire For a Place With You)

Packs of clouds
Continue on their way
Under a knowing sheet of sunlight
On a young forgotten day

Below and over layers singing psalms
In ponds and postcards, little lakes
Take shape around your memory

Your oft neglected factory
Its gears and gizmos rest in rust
Awaiting idle innocent
Thoughts of things the way they was

The shade of classroom windows
Or a line of ducks along a trail
A gale of pleasantries that tumble
From your ears in sleep or slipping down
Into a creek of greetings sayings parsed in
Patches wrapped and crosshatched
Over eyes all speaking long goodbyes

The corner of a room you memorized

It knows you, too

Crowds of birds will follow shapes
That crawl across the sky
Before they settle in a place that
Listens when they cry

Somewhere there's a place
That knows the sound
Of your sigh

And if it's not reality
I'll ask the trees and weeds to weave
A bed of plains and oceans there

And we can climb across the sunbeams
To a place that will remember you
And how you got
Your name

Zoetrope Life (Another Letter)

Fall
Your colors
Plaster my memory
Corroded conifers in constant spin
Your rust is a numb recollection
Of our youth and fragility
My dolorous
Hall

I don't blame you for your sad expression

Winter
Your snowdrifts
Caress my tranquility
Disturbed by the ripples of darklight wind
Your thaw is the break of a fever's end
A tomb, a cavity
Now bereft
Interred

But your silvery stars are a canvas of lights

Spring
Your blossoms
Expand my capacity
My joy and furtive presentness of time
Your branches thin and crusted with rime
Shed weight in levity
Hear our psalms
Ring

Just don't go to leave so soon

—

Summer
Your noises
Translate my piety
In tongues of leaves and ember teeth
Your ashen nights still slaked with heat
That intimate society
Of voices
Slumber

Return to me that plain serenity

The End is a Place

Clearing
Channel through trees
Canals of leaves
Funnel water like eaves

Hearing
Little poems blossom
Tiny precious koans

After the end
It goes on

Even though we may ask it
To stay
As it is
For a spell

That it moves along
In the wide meadow wind
Is just as well

Fearing
That we will stagnate here
With our hands all wet
And clammy with sweat

Bleary eyed
Wanderers
With no wind
Upon which to rest our
Tired heads

Where the breeze is a solid heat
We find hard to breathe
That is where we will meet
Our many ends

Nearing
Upon the edge
Or close to other ledges
We ponder and pray

In the slow missing rain
Not yet drained out of the sky
If you have seen that ember night
Fading out
Then this is my
Prayer

Smile wide in the pitch dark breeze
And watch the stars dance
With us there

Wandering Thoughts

Jupiter spins
I sit and listen
The world outside
Quiet but for cars
Hungrily engulfing all the sound
Sucking on the air
As they stumble passing
By

Trees shiver shake
Shatter
Under weight
Invisible
Like bugs
Black-shelled crawling
Before they're pressed
Shellac
Or forgotten passing
In death

Weather coils
Vacillates like metal
Heating
Contracting
All the grass a vice
Blowing in the breeze
Passing
By

Jupiter spins
Like a hurricane
On a finger

I sit and listen
Linger

Contemplate
Questions grow thinner
Longer
Endless furrows in the brow
Thoughts wander

I keep no leash
Any longer

Jupiter spins
And I listen in

One Foot In

Where are the stories in our blood?
Dispelled like oxygen
Consumed without thought

Words sputtering out
Like a bonfire
The orange yellow embers
Fly up and rest flat against your face
Without feeling

Some nights I sit flower-like
In a blooming position aligned
Compass-esque magnetized
As they said
Something “zazen” something “mind”
With one foot in
A waterfall midair in flight

And I wither with those stories
Burning off in sunrise
Mist-like
With my worries

Time accretes and washes
Away
Sometimes like our minds
And our little bits and pieces
Odds and ends
End up drift-esque
In a way

Where are the stories in our blood?
Rinsed out with sorrow
Replaced with joy
Time and again

But when?

Unfinished Thoughts Stuck in the In Between

Trees colored honey and brass, jungle of rust nestled deep in a mood of falling in layers. Soil pressed pages bituminous passing of passages raining like light on the snow. Melting shrinks our heavy hearts, that is my prayer into the silent curtain of leaves. And the moon tree speaks it back to me in a glow across my floorboards.

Before the Sun roars us back into seeds of belief, settled process of fossils and maps of a terrapin world turning around. Stained glass rotations of tapestry'd philosophers, or beetles that crawl between words between ears between folds in a feather's bend. How many nights have I left to lend, I, the weather of men, a cloud without end. Left to evaporate in a pool of brightness like gunpowder spent.

Heaven looks like a horizon unending. Cliffs tumble mountains hanging lazy from arches, and stars wink behind a wash of opaque azure. They wish blessings on lily pads floating down streams. Tracts of wisdom unseen baked in lichen and mud, humming warming like love or a birdsong in March. Something coming along in a subsequent dream, let it lead you to me.

Follow fall into winter, spread winds between fingers, splayed blustering under the new wondering lingers like jam. Simple mornings and rebirthing thoughts. Every day you wake up is a dream that you've caught in your throat. Speak now, and let it out.

I Yearn For Meadowglass

Stillness core
Sits squarely in the circle
Or circular realm
Domain
That I have set aside
Inside
Of me
Myself
For it to reside

That sphere
Like blue and clear marbles
Click clacking together
Shudders within the rustling of leaves
Their skin and cells are seizing up
Dried leather trees the rose gold thoughts
And memories
They drop like teeth under a pillow
Of snow yet to fall
And fall
And fall
And winter comes
With spring soon after
But never too long

I find the seasons like to
Move along

That stillness core of brass and oil
It sits inside my longing
Deep and warm as soil under summer's awning

I daydream about autumn's crash
Like temperatures or daylight hours
I wonder about unpaved roads and forest trails
Windless plains and ashen fields
Bramble dens and homemade meals

I hope for light and darkness both
The Sun and moon and stars and earth
I yearn for meadowglass and rest
A home in which to build my nest

That core of stillness stirs and settles
Into rhythms off and on
Sometimes it feels I have no roots
Or reason why I should belong

And I wake up in the morning
Thinking of many little sparks
And by the evening
All that's left is
Tired lids on open eyes
And sleepless hidden beating hearts

In life the valley feels so low
I yearn for days in meadows

From up top it seems so small
And still like cores of brass and oil

In time I'd like to say
I didn't mind those days
At all

When the Light Escapes

When the light escapes the window frame,
A diorama Sun expands its wings through clouds
Of paper maché thoughts of younger days

Black ink across the pages creased and folded,
Old pens emptied of the embers burning,
Ancient afternoons are turning thoughts of you
On fingertips you've felt against your cheek

It feels, sometimes, like all the things I have
Forgotten
Are simply fiction,
Shadow moments,
Never happened,
I have forgotten them like dust

Do you have corners of your mind
That have not seen the Sun
Since the ringing of a school bell?

When the winding traces of a breeze
Blow through the names of thrumming leaves,
Do you feel the corners of your mouth
Curl up at the edges?

I used to feel the heat of campfires
Combust my skin into a shimmer,
All the nights of spring and summer tucked into a
Glass ball of stars and moonkissed spinners

In those corners of my mind that have not heard
The name of the ancient world in so long,
I wonder why a fair-weather day does not
Capture my heart in the same way it did
What feels just yesterday

You, child of the world, you may not know its name
But it is written on your teeth,
Scribbled in your hair,
Spoken through your eyelashes like beams
Through diamond windows in that
Ancient afternoon

I want to see you smile the words away
And spin apart a story that we know like
Diorama children in a middle school play

When the light escapes your mouth,
The names of every leaf will settle on a shoulder,
Perched and waiting for a moment to believe

In rest,
In luck,
In one another

Cornerstone (Under Light)

Through wind and other winding homes
We live in tunnels made of others' bones
Remember them like statues
Or an epigraph above a poem

Static text in tides that roll
And cover us in meanings full
Of seedlings

Little growing smiles of teeth
And lips and tongues eager to speak

Their words mix painted clouds
And brush the heavens into canvas
If you squint the letters make a face
With something good to say to you

The summer motes will save us
And be clingy like a drop of dew

The rocks and riddles wrapped in earth
Will all unfold their names to us
And cornerstones will be our homes
While embers recount the breeze's rush

And lakes will drink us into reeds
And cattails turn and bend and feed
On thoughts of days spent under light
To get them through the quiet night

And I will make a place with you
In endless tunnels made of bone
And call across the winding things
To draw a picture of a poem

In meadowgrass and ancient loam
A canopy
A tide of foam

A name for comfort,
Cornerstone

My Song Over the Quiet Fields

Rushed force of a movement
Along my body
Like a wall
Against
And over top
Below my
Gaze or thoughts
In a cage of denial
Or design
Of my own hands
My own mind

A back and forth like water
Left idle in a spinning cup
Tipped over flowing up the river
Little pitter patter raindrops
Paint like invisible colors
On my face
Telling tales spun from words beyond
Truth and recognition

I sometimes stare out the passenger side window
Of a moving car
And see the words in the trees
Brittle as they may be
For now

Other days I am passing by
Like time alone
Along a tome
A stack of ink and lesser fears
The ones we have words for
Much less feelings

Other days still
Moving still
Not moving
In rain softly falling like mist
From a cloud as wide as the sky
Looking down at us
And what does it see
Staring back at it
From a second story window
Through the curtains

Other days aloft
We forget them flying away
Like dandelion seeds

Nothing left of them but the ghost
Of a touch across our minds
A phantom limb that tickles
And pries

In the winter these are the only days
I can recall
Sitting over the silent white and black fields
Of brittle trees and dead yellow weeds
Peeking through snowdrifts and roadsides

A song like a string of sighs
Floating through skeins of silvery stars
Turning above us there

You and me
The two eyes seeing into each other
Past and future
Unsure of where to meet
And unsure of whether there is
Such a point
Of understanding

The point
I find
Is to understand
Itself

Today and tonight and long after tomorrow's light
That will be my song over the quiet fields
All waiting in peace under layers of white

Last Word (Even If I Am Ash)

The last word of my mouth
Is a break in the clouds
Peeking blue and gold towers of light
Settled beams along roads
In a rainbow arc of forgiveness

Perhaps just forgetfulness

The tip of my tooth
Sunken into the earth
As I am subsumed
And recycled into matter
Better used
As a path, or a leaf
Better seen through your window
Or grown in your yard

I am lilies and tulips, I am pine trees and juniper
The hard shell of light that blankets you
From the dark poem of the world

We live in a strange nature
So to be strange is only
Natural

The end of the play
Stage curtains closing
Closing closing
Like the end of the evening
Only night carries forward
Turning stars like so many fish in a pond
Great white swans drifting circles
Around us in firmament's ether

Look up and around
I will be there
Even if I am ash

Joinings IV / and After...

January sun
Crashes into the blue or the gray without color
In a mirror of me
Or my daydreaming face
Caught in troubled suspension

Her shape is a glory closed in morning
Or a meandering visage like the eyes of a bird
Watching from firmament's perch

Deep behind clouds and contrails
Bird wings washing evening light on a rock
Beaten dry against migration

In a place of trepidation I am not much like a bird
Turned toward the way I know I must go
Rather twisted around in a tangle
Or a puzzled route wrapped and folded in on over itself

In the tower
Or the nest of a season I once remembered passing through
Left nothing but old notes
As if I could remind myself back into a person
I once knew

Some seasons pass slow
Mine have taken a century or more
It feels
Though
Perhaps I have felt this way before
In the space of just a day
Or so

What is the point of writing about seasons
When I have not changed
Too

What is the point of writing about light
When the Sun will do
What it will do

Long light provision
Carries my sight before layers of snow
In a day dreaming of me

Times I felt there was a hand of certainty
Beneath my sleeping standing self
Roots and tangled weather wrappings tightly
I recall that comfort
Now

—

Hidden greenery
Our secluded mantleplace nestled in ivy cornerstones
You and me there floating bees
Or butterflies waiting still
For the seasons to tear us from our cocoons

Honeydew green beneath an Otsiningo tree
A hand of certainty beneath my sleeping standing self
Still unaware of my own fingers splayed atop
Reflexively reaching for that comfort

I wonder
A glowing gust
Through whistling glass
Or a thin singing light
Too fragile to touch

I still see you like a work of art
I still watch you drift apart and back together
Like a swath of vapor off a star
Your name still rings like bells of gold
And other metals from afar

January moon
Returning voyage away from her first form
Into anew

In late winter I wonder what the trees are like
Bent sundered under light
In parks and pathways holding hands with
Roaming hearts and tethered kites

Their ribbons ripple flap and fight
A winding breeze like your own reflection
Something underneath the surface
Unseen uncertain
And their colors run a trail across the stairs
Up to the clouds

In vibrations
Running humming thawing rush
The sudden heat of honest crush
Or hairs collected in a brush

You know the tangle
Or the shape of use
The way their hands made use of you
The days you felt in service of
Something more than just
Another night of sleep
Another light of birdsong

Continue counting moments
They will come to you
Or coalesce like dew on blades of grass
Or rain that drops from leaf to leaf
In pirouettes and tumbles

And after...?

Hang your words upon the crescent moon
And move into a silent sheet of light
Your feelings will return to earth
Like shooting stars,
Or paper kites

It's alright

It's alright

I've Changed

A lifted note of wind across a frosted view of night
Between a worn and warming high behind
And falling through a forward light

A note accrues collects a speck of oft returning voice
And bells and chimes are ringing overhead
As fields are chewing on a choice

The trees and roots and other ancient children take a breath
Beneath the ember blanket fields of white
I ask myself before I've left

The questions coming back and quick as rain upon a roof
My rest and meditation dampened full
Of fires and memories left to soothe

Salvation comes to those with eyes still open far and wide
As ranges fields and meadows in the Sun
Where people you once were still hide

Don't hide away from me before I've sketched your face again
I've come to know your shape before it's lost
In tumbled snow and upward rain

A hinted mote of something pure and still as humming stone
Beneath my feet the underside of clouds
For what have I left to atone

A singing song perpetuates itself in fallen leaves
As silently as seasons moving through
And thinks upon a thought of peace

A song returns to where it knows it will become a tree
Those old repeated phrases fond regards
I wait for their return to me



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ben Buchanan is a programmer for money, a musician for passion, and a poet for kicks. He resides in Upstate New York, where he watches birds flit from branch to branch, and listens to the rustling of leaves across the ground in autumn.

His work has appeared previously in the collected volumes *Another Flow* (2020), *Drift Illogical* (2021), and *Babylon Effect 2nd Edition* (2021).

You can find those collected volumes, as well as his other creative work (music, programming, digital artwork, sketches) on his personal website (<https://lexicachromatica.xyz>).

♥ Thank you for reading.

