

CONTENTS

Back to the Ordinary

-
- Back to the Ordinary / 15
- A Room Full of Light / 16
- Hawthorn / 17
- Talisman for Summer / 19
- The Perfect Hotel / 20
- Sestina for Pousada Infante, Sagres / 22
- Ghost / 24
- Sestina to Landfall / 25
- Small Hotels / 27
- Shutting Down / 28
- Things / 31
- All You Need / 32
- Dirge / 33
- The Divorce Papers Finally Come Through / 34
- The Angel of Backyards / 35
- Gauze / 36
- Room at the Table / 37
- The Mars Hotel: 1950 / 38
- Chagall's Red Tree / 40
- Icarus' Sister / 41
- Mother and Daughter to Thailand / 43
- Bodies / 45
- From This Distance / 47

Between Affection and Flight

Winter Sketches / 51

Grounded and Pensive / 53

Considering Falling in Love after Sixty / 54

Argument / 55

Crazy Jane Resolves the Argument / 58

Heron, Daffodil / 59

Crone / 60

Seeking Baba Yaga / 61

Still a Valley / 63

Boarded Up / 64

Brief Kiss / 65

In the Bird Sanctuary / 66

A Very Tiny Movement in Some Direction / 67

Rehearsal / 68

As If / 69

Desire / 70

Nothing between Us / 71

Not This Time / 72

Exit Scenarios / 73

Chagall's Lovers / 75

The Master's Response / 76

Icarus Diving / 77

What to Bring / 78

Could / 79

Online Dating / 80

Lollop / 81

If You Kissed Me / 82

Adam's Dilemma / 83

In Everything That Sings

Breath / 89

Well, Hello / 90

Everything That Sings / 91

Still We Know / 92

What is Mortal / 94

All I Can Think About / 97

His Voice / 99

My Mother Gives Away My Father's Clothes / 100

Rainbow Skirt / 101

Conjuring My Grandmother / 102

Instructions for Dreaming / 104

Directions of the Heart

Taking Apart a Solid Sense of Self / 109

Four Directions of the Heart / 110

Six Months / 112

Walk On / 113

Magnolia / 114

Mothers, Daughters / 115

On the Doorstep / 116

Classroom / 117

What Does She Want from Us? / 119

High School Subtext / 120
Retirement / 122
School's Out / 124
Almost There / 126
Undoing / 127
Nothing to be Owned / 129
Counterpoint and Pause / 131
Simka / 133

About the Author / 135

Back to the Ordinary

That in between time
when your clothes still smell of the beach
you walked along that morning, but the stone
in your pocket has faded from its bright
pinks and purples; on your hands
is a faint whiff of seaweed, and there is sand
between your toes, the trace of surf
still sounding in your ears. The ordinary world
has not yet clutched you, your books seem
unfamiliar, something someone else
might have chosen; the couch holds the ghost
of someone you might have known. Perhaps this
is just another hotel room, another place to set
a hat or a suitcase; nothing really yours, not
the trees in the yard or the dahlias
you planted in the garden; not the photos
on the fridge or the paintings on the wall;
no more than the long sand
where you shivered at its watery edges,
the sea anemones drying between the rocks.

A Room Full of Light

after Yeats' "Lake Isle of Innisfree"

I will burn these papers, and head to a quiet shore
where I will rent a villa, fill a room full of light,
shells on the window sill; outside, feathers of tamarisk,
and I will be alone, and like it.

Nothing entangled, the threads of thought long and shining
so quiet I can hear the yellow warbler weave twigs for a nest
in the morning's shimmer, and later, noon's hot halo
and evening full of wings and wind.

I could catch a plane, quickly, while the restless heart is bold,
while I can still hear the warbler, the sound of leaves
in the breeze. But I am at my desk, the rustle is only of paper
that freezes the deep heart, seizes the mind's core.

Hawthorn

*Hawthorn after rain:
wind and wet and white, blossoms
again into green*

Hawthorn in the back garden:
a nest for sparrows,
made of berry and blossom.

After the winter storms, one
flicker hunts insects
at the edge of the patio.

Rain on a Sunday morning:
I watch the clouds across the water
gather, glower, and drop —

wind follows. *Watch for wind*
he always said: a change in weather —
perhaps a change in me.

And more to come, these oasis days —
not the Garden, but not desert either.
The rain falls,

wet and song-filled,
the sparrow's cadenza
descants above the traffic,

and the crows bully the juncos.
This summer I'll build
a Zen garden,

white with silence, on the patio,
one yellow rose bush
in the centre —

blossoms in the mind, a hint
of fragrance,
wind from new directions

again, sails tight,
the boat angled and racing,
feet bare, pay out the lines

into taut measures, wind against flashing water,
turn
and turn again —

green hills in the distance, gulls calling
a lost name: and the rose bush
among white stones.

Note on the form:

“Hawthorn” is an extended haiku. Each word from the original haiku begins a stanza. Each stanza is in itself a haiku, containing approximately seventeen syllables. The form was suggested in conversation with David Kaetz, a musician.

Talisman for Summer

in the style of a terza rima

Toes curled at the edge of the deck,
warm planks of fir and maple, the sun
above the mast, sails full — I check

the lines, coil them in neat spirals, each one
in its separate place, as I've been taught.

First mate's duty is never done

he reminds me, and I keep the sails taut,
the tiller straight. The wind is strong,
the ship leans into the water, light caught

in the shimmer of hull and wave, a long
line of summer: bare legs and arms,
happy rags of shirt and shorts, the song

of quiet evenings — the winter storm
of stress and deadline gone, forgotten
for a little while, a little moment worn

like a talisman: white sails in a blue breeze.

The Perfect Hotel

It must have a bathtub,
with faucets in the middle, so lovers
can lie back, toes touching, bubbles
from a small bottle scenting the heat.
Like the room above Friday Harbour,
overlooking sloops and schooners,
the morning ferry from Anacortes.

It must have room service,
a red rose in a glass vase, pewter
tea pot, basket of croissants
and the morning paper: the *Times*.
Good coffee in crisp white mugs. A window
overlooking the Thames, lighting
the bed with neon and shadow.

It must have the sound of morning:
a robin pecking the grass, fox sparrow
in the cedar, rocks tumbling in the creek
at the edge of the garden. A high bed
overlooking the willows and aspens,
the greens and grays of early spring
in the Kootenay Valley.

It must have the sound of the sea:
waves against rock, the rhythm of tide,
arbutus branches bent to the shape of wind
and the stutter of shoreline. A path
winding down to water, tidal pools
pocked with rain, the small inhabitants
busy in their drowned city.

It must have a fireplace, with wood
ready, and paper, and kindling, and good air.
Smell of cedar in the grate, sound of yellow
fingers snapping. The slow glimmer of embers,
red against the blackened logs.

It must have books, no TV or radio, a view
to elsewhere. Time is a distant thing
that others wear on their wrist, and is measured
by the light in the morning, the darkening sky.

It is the space between the waves, the sudden
flight of an eagle across the window. It is the slow
unfolding of bud, the rain shining the bones
of trees on the beach, it is the sea
drifting into sky, a no point in the centre
where you know you have been and are no longer.