

CONTENTS

– I –

Gentle Reader / 3

Any Morning / 4

Raspberries, Regret / 5

Gifts / 6

Leaving / 7

Piano Lesson / 8

Blue Moon / 10

The Basket / 11

Loosely Held / 12

Something That Arrives After / 13

The Angel of Silence / 14

Thisness / 15

Bowl of Light / 16

Stagnant Hour / 17

The Well / 18

Between Your Heartbeats / 19

Salt / 21

Autumn Equinox / 23

Elegy / 24

Even Now / 25

Bridges / 26

– II –

Why She Went to Italy / 29

The Painting / 31

Postcard from Ischia / 32

All of It Overflowing / 33

Impression, Sunrise / 34

This Not That / 35

The Better Story / 36

Cornwall / 37

Café / 38

Suitcase in the Closet / 40

Red Shoes / 42

First Lesson / 43

Learning Silence / 44

Almond / 45

Marcello's Feet / 46

Firenze / 47

Dinner / 48

Go / 49

Caravan / 50

Psalm / 51

The Evening Phone Call / 52

Aubade at Amalfi / 53

Öresund / 55

– III –

Walking the Dog / 59

My Father's Feet / 60

My Mother's Wedding / 61

Scripture / 62

Shalom / 63

As If We Invented Love / 65

Boketto / 66

Vilna / 67

Seventh Decade / 68

Tashlik / 70

Aubade to Father / 72

Walking the Seawall / 73

Be Ready for the Third Day / 74

Berlin / 76

Still Life with Small Boy / 77

Saturday in Trastevere / 78

Happiness / 79

Isaac / 80

Four a.m. / 81

Wabi-Sabi / 82

Take Care of Your Mother / 83

Balance / 85

Known and Strange Things / 86

You Could / 88

About the Author / 91

Gentle Reader

based on the painting by Karen Hollingsworth

There is a breeze off the sea, you can tell from the curtains,
though the colours tell you that too. If you were sitting
in the white wicker chair, your hair would move a little,
you would brush away a strand, settle deeper
into the pillows. A rhythm of waves
at the shoreline, the steady beat
entering the room. A chair, some books,
a window.

What is outside this room?
Nothing beyond the words on the page,
the water's percussion, an echo of the concerto
you listened to this morning.

Look again.

How long can you live here,
before longing enters — that hillside in Sicily,
those buildings in Riga —
where can you be that fills you up again and again?

If only you believed this were enough —
this pillow behind your back, this book,
the sea beyond you. The wind.

Any Morning

Waking up, those moments when the day
or the month or the year is lost
in the threads of a dream — an attic room,
an old lover, a red truck.

And the day opens slowly, unfolds its hours
without lists of things you need to do —
no papers in neat piles to mark, no clothes
to wash other than your own.

It could be Monday, it could be winter,
it doesn't matter. The sun is somewhere
you can find, the sea is waiting,
even the rain, something skin can love.

The one who judges you still sleeps. The mother
you have eaten has lost her voice. It's dark
inside you, and quiet. Nothing is being said
you need deny.

Raspberries, Regret

starting with a line from Gwendolyn MacEwen

And think of nothing else but raspberries
cold with rain, magnolia full of stars,
hummingbird returning to the branches —
think of nothing else, clear the clotted mind
and name each moment that flickers on the nerve:
this is merely regret, this
is murderous rage, this is confusion.
Name it and let it go, a feather's touch
against your skin, nothing there to hurt you.
Think of willows bending to the river,
the river running between green banks,
think of raspberries in a yellow bowl,
nothing else but raspberries, heavy with cream.

Gifts

*We study how to deserve
what has already been given us.*
— William Stafford, “Love in the Country”

The sky is brilliant today,
the trees blaze their dead leaves
in gold and crimson, an ecstasy
of mourning. How is it that death
is so beautiful? The skeletons
of trees on the seashore, the small jewels
of insects caught in the spiderweb, the wing
of a robin, perfectly spread on the pavement.
The grey days will come, but for now
we study how to deserve

all this light. It's not that we've been good —
sheltered the homeless, fed
the hungry, laid down our weapons
or cleaned our watersheds. It's not
that we trained our children well or forgave
our parents — we still treasure
the recipe for rage we sometimes offered
our husbands. And yet
this amazing day, our cherished hearts —
what has already been given us.

Leaving

a cento

The melon scent of you
lingers in the corridor, in the linen.

There is no other way for us.

Were you to go
I'd sleep in every elsewhere,
would pack a bag
and book passage with the ferryman,
his bag of coins, his indifference.

Doors open outward,
coffins close.

Maybe I'll care tomorrow.
There is a happy stranger somewhere inside me.