

Questions, Answers and Lies

We Keep the Cottage

I never mind the long drive north

every year on autopilot.

Left hand between my blue jeaned thighs.

Right hand on the wheel.

I contemplate the sameness.

Passing the same grey boulder by the same broken window house
still haunted for sure.

Rolling past (swear to goddess) the same dead deer
by the fallen tree dressed in moss and yellow mold.

The same as those years when we lived together.

Finally,

topping the hill

stopping for the panorama.

It never fails to impress the eye

heavy loaves of pale grey clouds

rolling in a Prussian blue sky

light breeze moving pines and maples

Soon,

a sensual pull of cresting water

urges me to coast down the dirt drive.

Noting her car is already here,

I sigh and take the plunge.

First, unload, make coffee, and begin to clean.

Clearly, she has not done a damn thing.

Then,

she brings in beach grass step-by-step
she rolls her one-piece down
onto my previously swept floor
leaving it a lump in the kitchen doorway.
Sand drops grain-by-grain
from her tight damp nipples
from her light tan, lightly dimpled ass.

“Water’s cold,” she says.

“Do I smell coffee?”

A long grey braid swings
wet and heavy between her shoulders.
Her ink dark eyes do that thing,
that sideways flash.

I am moved to join her in front of the pot.

“Let me get that,” I say.

Now,

I have a mug in my right hand.
Reaching around,
I have a cup of breast in my left
my old soft flannel on her cold soft flesh.
She smells of lake, sun, and woman.
She adds too much half-and-half.
We pass the hot mug until it’s empty.
Staring out the window quietly, heads together.

Familiar pose, familiar view.
“Time to clean up,” she says
with a little laugh.
She pulls me through the doorway
by my shirttail.
I’m not resisting.

The outdoor shower I built last year stands open.
Swept and ready
A freshly unwrapped bar of Castile Soap is waiting
towels hang on the wooden door.
She stands open.
Wet and ready.
My clothes fall to the warm slate floor.

Cascading water turns us sudsy, shiny, and sleek.
Lips tasting everywhere
Hands touching everywhere
Slippery sliding in and out
We sway with the bright breeze
The phrase ‘unbridled passion’ passes by
my unwritable delight
Pulsing and calling
Falling into each other
Rocking in sunlight

Never fails to impress
same as every year.
We keep the cottage.

Progression In Three Parts

Part 1.

I remember when having a penny was a gift of anticipation.
clutched in a small sticky hand.

I remember the way to a neighborhood store
over hot summer pavement and weeds
to feed that dull copper into a glass globe on a heavy stand.

Turn the wheel once.

Turn it twice.

Sure to get a treat, but wait there's more.

Twist to take the risk.

To compete with luck or fate
for a small speckled ball
a chance for more change, more sweets,
to feel more special, a momentary small-time winner.

I remember.

Part 2.

In this place of at last feeling the ideal pillow under my head
Neck supported, cool on my cheek
Spine aligned with all the past lives and present boredoms
I must question if it has been, or is yet to be,
Enough?

When I know the bed itself
actually is myself and so far perhaps
Insufficient?

They would say, "She never seems to work up to her potential."

How would they know? How do I? Do I care?

Part 3.

Passing each day as an unrelenting

Space and Time

of more and less substance

I hear the constant bell

in some distant reality.

I shift my essence toward the next

and the next, and the next in my time and rhyme.

Looking down and in

I see I am a pudding stone.

and my life is mostly good,

so far.

Something About Water

It isn't just that water is life. I know in my animist self that water itself is alive. Of course, the term animist is probably not quite right. Water is one of the most animated things we know, micro and macro. What I know, in my animist soul, is that water knows me, relates to me, communicates with me—in an inhuman way, like when we converse with dolphins. We are connected as family. Our DNA is so many parts water and not so many parts sand.

My body yearns to be on the shore. Growing up and older encircled by the very Great Lakes and over 62,000 smaller inland lakes is immersion. Going north to Beaver Island is more going home than on vacation.

Great Lake

She lies against the shore, curls unfurling in luminous streams.

Dark sky ceiling watches her in dreams tossing rolling side to side,
her stretches reaching point to point filled with sighs, her body lithe and sliding
breasts along the supple spine of stones and sand,

moonlit fingers pressed into her rippled eddies as she arches
cresting, riding her own ride

into murmurs, into first light.

Satiated and glittering with pride,

She lies gently lapping and brightly laughing.

Her wide arms embrace the living.

She loves.

The Cliff Fell Away

To roiling seascapes and tossing weeds.

No other way down.

“The fall alone could kill ya,” she said.

Probably, I thought.

If not, there will be a whole lot of swimming.

Am I strong enough for the swim?

Strong enough to take the leap?

No guarantees here.

I looked at her.

No guarantees we will jump together either.

Your Door

I tiptoe to your door and stop to think

about the way to knock.

Two knuckle taps, just loud enough.

No sound within, no click of lock.

But at the floor, the line of light blocked twice.

Left to right,

light dark, light dark, light.

Signals for me in my night.

I hold my breath.

You know I know you are there.

Unmoving, moved or unmoved by what is between us.

Or, what has come between us.

The risk is clear.

You know I'm here and I may go.

May never know unless one of us will try once more.

I breathe again.

I knock again,

softly on your door.

She Comes In

She comes in to wake me
purposely walking hard on the hardwood floor,
bumping into the door and rustling some paper
near my pillow-propped head.
I play dead asleep to keep her
going through all the funny moves and playacting.
She could have said something.
She could have touched me or kissed my cheek.
But no.
I slit my eyes open to watch her,
amused.
She checks the clock and shrugs,
slinking out the door.
I get up,
tippy-toe to the hall to watch her hair
disappearing down the stair.
I shout, "Hey, where are you going?"
We laugh.

Some Questions Keep Spinning Trying To Be A Poem Maybe

How little were you when you first heard a lie?

Recognized it was a lie?

Was it just another new thing

or did it startle you?

When did you hear a lie about you?

Did you learn a new concept—betrayal?

Did you count them on tiny hands until you ran out of fingers?

Did you point those fingers at the lies,

scratch at the betrayals?

Did you learn to be still about lies from family or friends

because some illusions you could not afford to lose?

When did you learn to lie to family or friends

to keep some illusion,

better than nothing?

These are some questions.

The answers may be lies.

So Many Questions

She said, "Sometimes I have to scrape away a layer to see the painting underneath."

She showed me what she meant.

A painting of a quiet girl

with a ball of fire

just below the surface.

One painting acrylic, the other oil.

Not well blended but easy to peel.

What I didn't understand was on the left side of the canvas

I could see she was already painting another scene

over them both with a palette knife.

A chunky dark sky filled with lightning and sailing ships.

I have so many questions.

Standing At The Edge

Standing at the edge you challenge me

Want us to jump together

into the surging stream

into seemingly surging rocks

far, far below.

Yes, I remember the movie.

Mist is rising.

I say I have a fear of heights.

I may not swim that well.

You tell me we might fly, or die trying.

You reach for my hand.

My words echo back off sheer rock walls.

They rebound off your blindered ears.

Your words insist I be

what you call brave.

A question rises.

I am a mostly questioning sort.

Withdrawing my hand, I send a message

beyond your ears, soul to soul.

“How do you name us we, without me?”

I survive.

Trying To See

Trying to see you is painful

Trying to see you is to see beauty

mixed up in suffering

recognizing I can never see all of you

even chipping at the shell of my oddly sheltered upbringing

peering out of spoon-fed illusions of my own origins

I cannot see all of you

Even though you share shattered, deconstructed bits of self

mosaics of reconstructed, reclaimed pieces of worth

of strength building stronger and bolder

pieces fit and held together by truth and love

I cannot see all of you

Trying to see you means looking from angles

created in shadows,

the way we chase an eclipse of blinding sun.

Trying to see you is painful but

filled with hope.

Seeing how you fill

eyes that closely share your rising

burning orbit is witness to creation and art.

So I try to see you as I can.

To turn away is more than blinding.

To turn away would extinguish what I see in my heart.

Prayer Of Praise

As a tiny child they taught me

Every prayer must begin with praise to a capital G God.

Every prayer must end in praise of a capital G God.

Sometimes in the middle of prayer

I was allowed to plead for my soul to be saved.

I could give thanks for the opportunity.

It was fine to be generous about asking for others

to be so blessed.

Despite many lessons, I did not have that faith.

I escaped the required guilt and hell as well.

Rather I honor myself,

acknowledge my acquired ability

to depend upon myself to bless me and others,

to do right for right's sake,

to praise capital M Me

for saving and cherishing my soul.

From Your Window

You stand in your window wondering at the force of wind that lets me fall and rise before your eyes. I am alive, soft and pink, sinking apart from mother tree in the course of my flight and demise along with other free flying mosaic bits, leaving starts of fruit to sit on boughs bending in the reality of wind you cannot feel, yet.

Your Poems

A book of your poems is next to my favorite chair.

I pick a random page and like a shot of high octane liquor

I taste your voice, a resinous note in my throat.

A flash flood fills my mind and belly,

sweeping away cars

drowning places I have lived for so many years

dredging up debris from muddy layers,

inconsequential junk.

My head falls back into the cushion from the G force speed of your

Observations, contemplations, and accusations.

Big And Little Things

Cold floors at dawn

Speed of a walking duck

Smell of a warm toddler with arms around your neck

Breakfast rolls that depend on the pastry more than sugar

Your child's voice getting deeper

Taste of a lie

Sound of a lie

Staying silent

Speaking out

Places where they know your name

Places you can stay anonymous

Sounds of silence in a loud forest

Power of moving water

Smile through a mask

Leaving late

Returning early

Sound of a slap

Trying a new drink

Knowing the wines you like

Knowing all the words

Changing the words

Being included

Welcoming others

Feeling betrayed

Letting go of hurtful things

Filling an empty space

Sharp cheese

Extra sharp cheese

Please

Thank you

Motion of a boat on waves

Flying into a another country

Waking in the darkest dark

Buying local

Breaking the sugar on Crème Brule

A broken bone, rubbing

A broken heart, rubbing

Wave from a stranger

Waving back

Sound of waves at night

Water moving all night

Death Waits

Death waits patiently.

Death has always been good at waiting patiently

Death waits by the fire cooking a marshmallow on a stick
while we watch.

Embers fly skyward in flocks.

Waves move along in time with our hearts.

How many heartbeats until the marshmallow burns?

It is a challenge to guess—

like the number of licks to the center of a tootsie pop.

Death tells a campfire story.

We dig our feet into sand and listen.

Then we begin to share stories of our lives.

Someone suggests this is a night for last poems.

I want to read aloud.

One Last Letter

Dear One,

Before we both fade away to dust

I must write to say these things and trust

you will one day find them,

Although our love was not meant to be,

it was for me the brightest blaze burning

silently under the seal of "It never, ever happened."

Whether reborn from past lives (in which I do believe)

or from the passions of present circumstance,

I see it as meant to be, but briefly—

especially on the night we spoke with only

touch, taste, and wordless murmurs.

This letter will not be sent

except as one heart reaches out to another.

Perhaps we are both searching in those future lives

for the right time to try again.

Know that every time I returned to that place

I returned to the memory of your face and wordless

emotions like endless rolling oceans

or ceaseless singing winds.

Love to you, Dear One, Forevermore

An Empath

An empath approaches a work of art
and channels the artist's soul.

An empath creates a work of art
and channels themselves without interruption.

Sacred Grove

Patterns on a blanket of sky

they rise

creating themselves

over and over.

They reach and drop a scatter

of needles and leaves,

of nuts and cones.

of primal energy.

Earth receives each piece to nurture

in fragrant decay

of passing time and passing fruits.

Roots push down and shoots cry

Upward in celebration,

timeless pattern

timeless elation.

Holy union of the Grove.

Grilled Cheese

People have asked, "How do you make such great grilled cheese sandwiches?"

Perfectly browned evenly on both sides. Cheese sharp and soft. Just stringy enough.

The answer usually gets a laugh.

Aside from good ingredients, the answer is that I

pay attention the whole time.

Control the heat

Adjust as needed.

Check before turning over.

Do not multitask.

Phone down.

Focus.

This is also my approach to giving love and other appropriate gifts.

Yes, go back and read about the sandwich above.

Earth Promises

Run through my grass.

Sift through my grains of sand for treasure.

Dig holes to plant your food again and again.

Swim against my tide and ride back from the horizon.

But, pierce me deeply to touch my core,

to shatter my shields,

and my heart will burn you,

will return you

to irredeemable matter.

Reading About The Maya

Reading about the Maya today.

Legends, myths, symbols.

The power of words.

Be careful what you speak.

The number three,

number of women,

multiplier of power.

Three times offered

Three times denied.

Be careful what you say, you sacrifice—

like blood, your oath, your truth.

Reading about the Maya today.

What three words of power should pass my lips

like blood from a bitten tongue?

Black Lives Matter

All Welcome Here

Save Our Planet

Wear The Mask

Vote In November

Make It So

Prayer To Mayan Goddess Ixchel

Thank you, Ixchel, for the food in my bowl and for the bowl itself that gleams in the light of my smokeless torch. Thank you for this clean shelter with clear water running along many passages, into many rooms.

Thank you for filling the brave hearts of those who even now are running along the old paths to lead the intruders away.

Thank you for showing us the greedy hearts of those who do not see the gift of your light, who do not see the beauty of things created in your honor, who do not see the beauty of our children. Silver and gold lights the cold eyes of those who seek only what they see as power and wealth. They would kill us as nothing and kill each other almost as easily. The sickness of their spirits is greater than the sickness they bring to poison our healthy bodies.

Thank you, Ixchel, for my family and long life. May my service continue as a joy to you.

Moon Mother, as you weave your tapestry, wrap us in your blessing. Ixchel, when you make the last spin of the long count, bring us out and into a clean, clear cycle once again.

This we pray.

Nobody There

With nobody there:

Day starts too early

Not enough happens

Night closes out nothing.

With nobody there:

Getting dressed adds some routine.

Walking is an event, but stepping out is irrelevant.

With nobody there:

Showers are long and hot

No one worries about utility bills

No one opens the door

Lets out the steam

Hot water dreaming turns into poems I remember to write down, not just going down the drain.

With nobody there:

I sit early in my bed reading books, untouched by loving hands, stroking my mind, reading the lives of others.

With nobody there:

I separate the days with simple things, marking today with laundry, tomorrow a takeaway meal.

I strive to feel part of a whole.

I plan for normal.

Pay the utility bills.

Fill my mind with the next house project.

With nobody there, with no one to care, I carry on.

Dancing Alone

I have often danced alone.

Dancing alone often causes others to dance

alongside or boldly in front of me

until we are dancing together.

In pandemic days, I have often danced alone

taking all the space

to take my groove from room to room.

I find a place inside of me

alone but dancing.

Devil

I freely admit I am the devil.

Okay, maybe not The Devil.

But, certainly a devil.

I am the still small voice you hear saying,

“Yes, buy the shoes. You deserve the shoes. It doesn’t matter you have other shoes. These are special.

They are an upgrade to the collection and you can donate a pair that doesn’t fit so well anymore.”

But wait, there’s more!

I can justify other things, not just shoes.

There are real reasons why you want what you want, who you want.

What you need is encouragement.

What you need is validation.

What you want has value and weight in your decisions.

This is where I come in.

I step up, your empathetic friend filled with understanding.

Brushing away the guilt-mongering of other voices trying to load your psyche with shoulds and should nots.

So, yes! Eat the good thing. Be a bit excessive.

Love the woman who may be a risk because living comes with risks; and oh my god she makes you laugh. She makes you feel.

And, definitely buy the shoes. More shoes make for more choices in a too-short life.

I am a low-level devil but I am here for you.

Glad to contribute.

In Motion

Forward is the direction.

Moving may be the destination.

Who cares about grammar?

Except for contractions, they're important.

Power Of Wings

She refused to hear the child
crying in the grocery cart.
On some level I was appalled.
On another glad
she didn't smack the kid as I have seen before.
They left the store, child still sobbing--
a different sound in the open air.
Me and my cart followed into the clear day.
Gulls circled overhead, sometimes landing,
snatching a bit of squandered trash.
The wings were powerful and efficient.
I took a chance to stop by the truck.
Speaking to the mother first,
"Your child is very beautiful," I said.
She stopped in surprise to look at her.
Then, smiled and patted down her hair.
The little one was startled.
She paused to stare at her mother and me.
I pointed to the carnival of wings overhead,
asking, "Did you see the pretty birds?"
She looked up, snot on her upper lip, and clapped.
Mom looked too
and I could see the resemblance.

Please

A silver tray forms in my mind.

I seize the metaphor to hold it in my hand.

Manifest a small envelope in the cold center
instead of my business card.

It is an envelope stolen from a remembered church pew,
meant to solicit a sacred donation
to fix some broken roof,
to feed some poor children,
to furnish a nursery where babies are tended during the service.

I share my need with you from my inner pulpit.

Are you listening?

Are you sleeping?

Are you pretending to follow along while reading

Song of Solomon? (I know it's good, right?)

My hand touches yours as you take hold

to slip something in as an offering.

When the tray returns our hands touch again.

For a moment longer this time we are connected.

Our eyes meet.

Please.