

Because I Can't Forget How It Was

Mornings I rush to the window,
and I don't know if I want to keep it coming
or stop it—I'm speaking of light,
how it begins, breaks the blue wash

we call dawning. But this is not only about light

I try to catch or hold. It's more about failing,
never finding what I've rushed to see.
It's about not even knowing everything washes
white in the end, leaves only blue shadows.

How It Begins

Winter is endless when you're in it, long cold stays,
blue snow stretches every direction.

You head out for groceries in a thick coat,
and find the store is not there.

You spend the night making hot tea you never drink.
Carelessness got you here; you didn't prepare.

You've forgotten, in spite of everything,
you were too caught up in living.

It happened slowly like a marriage unwinding comfortably,
staying inside, turning on fires with a remote.

Try as you might you can't get back that last summer,
nothing can change the Arctic water

that separates you like an animal on an ice floe.

Now the long nights grow longer. You like them for their sleep,

the dreams with slippery hands, one with a man who tossed
a little girl repeatedly into the air,

caught her before that last time when he missed.

The Pulse

Someday one of us will look back
to this, the rain outside the glass,

the two of us under the covers.
One will look back to warm arms, kisses,

but will not get the moment back,
not the way it is now.

It will be like this morning's dream,
close in my mind, but gone. Someday,

after death has come singing between us,
one of us will try to recapture

the smells we know now. One will remember
the rain, how it came before we heard it

and we awoke knowing only its sound
on the pane, listened closely

as a bride in her chamber for her husband.
One of us, eyes closed, will try hard

to see the other, to remember arms,
legs enmeshed, our breaths together,

hearts beating three, four, five, six,
and the two of us, like rain on the glass,

falling deeper into the singing.

Red Pedal Pushers

If you'd not cruised in with the confidence
of one who knew the rules,
red Chevy Bel Air, top down,
that summer I was sixteen
desperate to make something happen.
If you'd not stopped near the dam
and dared me to cross like a high wire walker.

If my friend and I hadn't been walking
in Woodland Park that Sunday afternoon,
had you not stopped to talk.
If I'd not smiled the way I smiled
when I didn't know what to say,
my thighs ripe in pedal pushers,
gray string tied at the knee.

Had the water inside me not begun
its flow that day, ending the next summer
in a rush I couldn't stop—
water spilling over the rocks
that dammed it, a river flowing to another.
In the dapple of light and shade
it was easy to blur choices, let them pass.

A Simple Dance

Because someone doused
the lights

and you kissed me
that night

at the Saturday dance,
your smile

like neon lighting
the dance floor,

your body
a glove, me the hand,

as we moved
to the dance, the dance

so slow, so easy,
because

I had only to count,
one two three,

and let the dance take me
a direction

I hadn't planned,
never bothering

to learn the steps,
because

I knew only
to dance.