

## **To Speak of Grief**

We wear our finest tongues to speak of grief.

each garment in its perfect place, tucked and ironed.  
we unslump the black mourning suit we keep set aside from our  
summer clothes, not wanting the anguish embedded in the thread  
to spread its contagion  
onto yellow dresses made for joy.

I wonder,

do the gods prefer us proper and neat, must we shove  
our wail and howl into the backs of kitchen drawers, quiet  
and nothinged like bits of string and a few loose nails? is our sadness  
best held like the moon, farflung  
and docile, a cold grey glow hung out of reach. or

Can we scream,

can we become the tide and all its heave, can we groan and  
weep like the wreck in its last grasp for sail and oar, can we  
yell out as we drown, can we sing the hymn of the damned, all growl  
and sob, all shatter and no glue, can we break-  
shouldn't we break- before we heal?

The morning sun

is the ruin of us. we've made coffee for two, but one cup stays in the cabinet.  
we forget to eat- what a waste to a dirty pan, to fry a single egg.  
the phone rings, someone wants to know how we are- we are  
fine. we are getting through. we have  
dry cleaning to pick up, a clean sink to wash.

Because we are the living

we do the work that remains. we clamber to be alright. and sometimes  
we are. when the hawthornes tremble in the breeze, when the rain  
stops suddenly and the neighbor's dog shakes its wet ears free  
of drizzle, its mouth wide open, pure grinning

just with the magic of it all, we are

Ok. We've always known

this is fleeting. we know the body is quicksilver,  
ephemera, our breath a splintering fleck of stardust waiting  
to reappear in constellation, birth to death a celestial navigation from  
zenith to ground- what is below reckoned only  
by what is above.

We accept death

as the last privilege of the living. nothing has ever been so certain.  
but the how and the when of it, the rude revelation of chance and  
circumstance: this is the terrain of the mystic. to know a thing is coming  
but to live as if it never will, to love anyway  
because short time is still

Time. With you.

with you gone, i am only instinct and salt. the bedsheets call your name  
and sleep is an old friend who has forgotten where i live. i write you letters,  
every detail i can remember, preserving the best and the worst of it,  
the way your hand bent around mine,  
how you tended the garden when i'd given up.

Maybe the gods

love our mess. birth is an ugly business, and there's nothing lovelier  
than that. infant's crawl to mother's breast, a furious breath and a big yelp  
as the body discovers what it is to be alive, how to pass from  
secluded, oceanic repose  
into gravity and air and light.

And so it is with you, and with me.

an intrinsic surrender to this passage made by all animate things. from one side  
of the ocean to the other, from nothingness to somethingness and back and  
back again. the flow so constant it ceases to be separate from itself.  
the beginning becomes the end, the end becomes the middle

and the empty cup in the cabinet is just a new memory

That hasn't been remembered yet.

before we counted in hours and minutes, the theory of time was  
only measurable in the daylight. the rhythm of harvest and cull,  
the cornsilk announcing the readiness of the corn, the soil  
without frost welcoming the seed.  
nothing final. just the cycle recurring:

Plant, grow, bloom, reap, repeat.

but before we were here to do any of this living or dying, the continents collided  
and once immoveable mountains folded like note paper. the weight turned to pressure,  
immense and unimaginable, and what was underneath crystallized into granite.  
our great great grandfathers wrested this granite  
from the ground, cut away the soil and the moss and raised

What was buried into the light of day.

so like the ancient ones, who bent to garland the graves of their fallen kin  
with antlers, pollen, a scrap of flower, or a heap of stones, my Love,  
we built a monument for you. we chose the oldest pieces of earth we could find,  
remnants of the planet's first chaos, boulders that remember  
the beginning which was just the end of something else.

And we made sure it was too heavy to carry alone.

we had to create this together, as a family bound by loss, our mess of sweat and salt  
clambering for perfect arrangement, every piece in its place,  
tucked and pressed just so. something to hold on to when the water gets deep,  
something to clutch and lean on, a tower of memory  
undisguised, too strong and too salient

To ever disappear.