

## Secondhand

This telling of the tale is secondhand and thick  
I quarrel with myself to believe.

There is little time, and I hand myself  
seconds of happy recordings.

Who loves the way I dream myself into spirit,  
the way I second-guess,

the way I defend all my glories?  
I know this is nothing but secondhand

nonsense. In this land of mistake,  
my heart becomes an offering of second-helpings.

I don't remember falling second to myself,  
neglecting the long table of my heart.

How did I do this to myself?  
I have become secondary.

## This is an Older Goal

All of my life, I've wanted to look back on my life. All of my life I've wanted the already-made-adventure. All of my life, I've wanted to be the thankful woman, the sharp woman, the loved woman, the loving woman, the accomplished woman, the beautiful woman, the well-read woman, the traveled woman, the aged woman, the respected woman, and the cultured woman. All my life, I've wanted the focus of a hawk, to look back on a life of worth that accompanied heartbreak, and know the strikes and the spares, to know the flight and arrow of my life, to know the ditches in the terrain, and the curve of time.

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all of my life starts today

the girl I once was

the woman I wanted to be

these arriving shes

their teetering hearts

the molt of their lusts

I want to tell them,

there will be time for gingering

to procure and to harvest

back::back::back

sketching of winds

peppering of days

jailing of whens

all the pastured dreams

*rustling*

all the populated nothings

*doubting*

all the ebbed yearnings

*saturating*

those rubied fragments

a-wreck and watching

their eyes are sky-cast, sun-clipped and cold

## Poem in Which I Address Myself

**Y**ou aren't being robbed of time,  
you're just trying to get out of your landmarks.  
You're being robbed of the present by thinking of the future,  
You know that, Leah. Let me lead you behind the curtain.  
Here, are the levers, the smoke-screen, the horns.  
Here, are the buttons, the knobs and the toggles.  
Read this: PREHISTORY. Forget about what will come.  
(How can I make more sense?) Let's turn to something new:  
nonsense. Everyone has their offences, Leah, yours, well,  
I laugh to think of what yours are, but it is probably  
the heart you wear on your sleeve and your need for love.  
We are an empire that hasn't fallen. We are an empire  
that hasn't fallen yet, but all good things must end,  
mustn't they? I know what you'll say, *they don't have to*,  
and you're right. Let's ride that wave. Every story you've  
ever read is a golden treat. I will tell you a new one, now.  
We are an endless line that will ultimately break  
or never break, or break several times before  
re-generating like a starfish. Ahh, that beauty.  
Think of the organisms. One small step for mankind;  
one small sludge up shore. The braid of such sea-songs.  
There is a *why* to these things. There is such a thing  
as a "good fail," and *you* know better than most.  
Determining what your *sometimes* is, is always the hardest part.  
Let's see where the kick is, here. Writing is creating.  
This poem is a creation. Is it monumental? (no)  
Will it change the world? (unlikely)  
Can it be a backdrop for a natural process where the world  
keeps gurgling; keeps destroying and rebuilding,  
burning and cooling? (yes). All things yearn, Leah.  
Desire is natural. Keep the story alive.  
All tales hinge from another tale.  
Yours starts with words.  
We all send messages.  
All you have to do is look.

## Sometimes the Angels are Devils

Sometimes the angels are devils and we are all in a gyre  
but of course, there are alternate ways at looking. The falconer  
is just a man, and *boy, are men shutting themselves off*. They can't hold  
on to interests, or feelings. Boredom is a new four-letter word;  
so is pride. *All men must die*, is a mock battle-cry, but there are fires everywhere.  
Mine are real. They are not self-made, but man-made. They will not be drowned.  
I am the subject of my own life; a friend, an enemy at times, but my worst  
face is softer than most. These are troubling times with such hallowed intensity  
and spiked-musting.

There are daily messengers at hand,  
they open my heart; they feed from my hand  
and sometimes, the imagination shuts, whispering *outoutout*  
but let's get back to the minute particulars of life and spirit.  
I will lift away the despair with the flick of the hand and I will desert  
the false hopes, those torn pages, and the wolfed-heart I've manned  
with a force so bright, truth looks away. Moons, stars, suns  
look away. You see, there are a hand of stories inside us. They, we, it  
knows what our sacrifice means. They live in our boxing of life, as a bird  
in her nest. You need this to align, and I want something untypical; I know  
something that doesn't want to lay alone; stir alone, sleep  
alone; something that isn't afraid of a tender-failure, or a cradled-mystery.  
Last night, I was a star. I was in orbit and the whirl of night was glorious. Last  
night, I picked up my own force, like I tried to keep the good going; and the sad,  
pushed off, into the past, and back-borne.

## Wrung

It is not the heart twisting and turning. It is not the talking back of the heart, for the heart knows how to whittle experience, how to feel something akin to a spine. Yes, it is about becoming. *Wrung*. It is not a spiky thing and it has no tentacles, though it is feeling. That mechanism of defense, can bring about glory, can bring about the moment where a girl becomes. *Wrung*. Sticking words together, the heart beats sound and in that sound is snot, blood, and tears. There is much more here, that is animal, not human, not star-light, not sea-rasp. *Wrung, wrung wrung* again. This is not a platonic love story between two lovers, but a love story between the heart and the self. *Wrung*. I will throb you. I will shelter and shatter you. We can swing this. We can take this. We can gut it and line it. Red is a color of blood and the color of birth and the color of faith. *Wrung*. Let's take the writer out of the experience. All these words are nested in heart. *I am your only love*, it says. *I am your only life*, it says. *I am your only only*. Love me.

## Force

1.

At night, the stones are heavy in my hand.

At night, the stones are heavy in my mind.

At night, the stones are heavy in my heart.

I want to be someone. I want to be someone. I want to be more than someone.

I want to have something to show for this life.

I want to push my way up.

I want to force my way to greatness.

In this dark spackle of night, I know there is kindness.

2.

At the gym, the other day, an elderly woman asked me for help. She was at the top of the stairs coming down, and I was walking up, sweaty, exhausted, purpled. She asked, "Will you do me a favor?" I said, "sure," She said, "Will you carry this bag down to the bottom of the stairs for me?" I said, "yes."

I think about the things we do for one another and the things we don't do, the things we will continue to do despite uneasiness, despite fear, despite cruelty, and change. I shudder at what might rise to my lips, about what mountains might separate us from one another, and about what mountains might separate us from ourselves.

There must be kindness despite the possible end of the world.

3.

The dead wooden stars of my tongue

The dead wooden rolling sound of thunder

Will nothing come to bless what has a chance to spring?

Will nothing stand for what once was ruined?

love to slaughter it all

love to bring it all down                      bloodied

## Khaleesi Says (reprise)

after Game of Thrones

*I will fight injustice with justice, she says.*  
and, *I bring you a choice.*  
But what if she said, *you will obey me?*

That pride is a pit  
and Khaleesi is no peach.  
Brute. Burden Beast  
She is Bullied, Brazen and Bare.

She has scabbled with man, horse and spirit.

What is fire-born can be fire-ridden,  
for, one hand has five fingers  
One digit could lead the others astray

This hand is reaching up  
as she is of the air.

She says, *I will see each of their faces*  
When she says *each*, she means *all*.  
What if, in the moment that she leans in close  
to the lens, there is a smear of sap  
What then of womanhood?

A mother of dragons  
is still a mother.

Her stare is blue:  
a fire, not catching.  
a stunted sun  
a contorted kiss  
a vein left turned

this hand gives allegiance  
and this hand, the heart.  
and this heart beats

with the roar of a wingspan  
so big it could cover us all  
in darkness.



