

learn to lose

learn to lose because those not versed in this science sit down at the table of life
as a butterfly alights on a child's hand – trustingly, not knowing that it, too –
this contraption of weightlessness and awe — can suddenly fail

those who are not versed in this science live like waves on the shore
playfully running hither and thither, thinking
that they are free at any moment to run out of the sea and rush up the overgrown steps
from the beach to the trolley-bus stop on bunin street to the edge of the earth
to those other waves – the strangers beyond the edge
and the sea will allow it the sea will let them go

learn to lose – first of all yourself – learn to see yourself off
on yesterday's long road past the garages
having nothing to say only in despair
holding a damp hand with a damp hand holding
in your mouth a slippery hot heart that beats so loudly
that your temples are left throbbing and after
who can recall where you said goodbye, where you let go

learn to lose learn to be a bare tree without leaves
learn to be a chair missing one leg
a smiling snub-nosed face in a photograph no longer known to anyone, even mother
learn to be a worn-out coat discarded for a new one
a book about pioneers in the village library
a favourite toy bunny missing a paw left on the rubbish heap

learn to be a thief who steals herself from herself
a sleepwalking thief who robs from his own drawers and chests,
stuffing them instead
with moonlight rotting leaves birds' feathers

go to the station and learn to see the trains off without departing
fall in love forever with the dark-haired guy sitting opposite you on the metro
with his birdlike gestures and slightly crooked slightly sad lips
don't say anything let him get off after four stops

practise losing as one practises archery concentrating in silence
as a novice tattooist studiously inks with an indifferent needle
his left hand, then years later inks everything over in black

ink it black
you boy you girl

you boygirl
you womanbird
you grassstone
you starsea
you stopcomma