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## Sweet red sounds

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**sweet red sounds**

by

**Julia Jane Sweet**

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS**

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Program of Study Committee:  
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Graduate College  
Iowa State University

This is to certify that the master's thesis of

Julia Jane Sweet

has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

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Signatures have been redacted for privacy

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**I. Salt**

## Evening

Daylight has settled like dust  
on the windowsill  
when you sit beside me on  
the bed.

Tonight the moonlight is  
slurring with orange  
as it glistens against the  
glass panes.

In our hands we find ourselves,  
skin, sweat, and the roughness  
of your cheeks.

When I close my eyes,  
I see your face

Pale, cold,  
behind my lips.

Arts

We make something beautiful  
our own,  
teeth scraping skin like  
carpenter's files.

But in dreaming, I am cold  
behind weeping walls  
and I wake to find myself  
too warm beside you

These dreams leave me  
breathless  
craving the separation.

If you knew what I did  
while you slept  
you would not smile  
at me the way you do  
through the steam of your  
coffee and

the mornings you spend  
making love to  
empty space.



Charlie

Your voice is strange.  
The world beyond God  
Blooms with compassion  
When you speak,  
Choking whispers  
Taste genuine like  
Anger and death  
Catching on your teeth.

I lie too often,  
Alone and to you.  
Rain and taxes  
Cover the desk  
Where I once waited naked.

## Testing Monogamy

Trembling on my lips  
like so many bitten tongues  
more words draw the color  
into my cheeks.

After waiting for so long

You are what you wish  
for me for you to be.  
What I never wanted to become.

Coming home at noon to empty beds,  
scraps of letters I never finished  
and couldn't send.

The hopes that we have become  
Do not become us.

afterthoughts

the stars gaze down  
on the sea of darkness  
on your mouth opening  
and closing on  
my eyes that know  
listening  
is speaking is to stop

but knowing how  
I love the way the words  
float from your lips  
like foam on this ocean

the words that say less  
than your eyes  
when they do not meet mine  
when they do  
you do not do what you

your eyes that try to see me  
the way I see you  
and the future that  
the stars await

all the words prematurely  
spoken with hands  
that never grasp  
the moment that was perfect

except for me

Buddha Means Enlightened One

The color of my eyes  
is the blue of dawn  
that silences the mourning doves  
falling to night

Your voice is the sound  
of the birds that I can only hear  
when I breathe in

The smell of my hands  
is the quiet admission  
of guilt that innocence carries  
in its mouth

All the people that I never  
wanted to become  
fade to mirages  
on the interstate

You turn to face  
the last of the leather-faced  
cowboys

And draw

## Garden

When I have chipped my paint away like dust,  
You'll see where all my skin has gone to hide.  
My hands and mouth just sleep and creak with rust  
Since life has passed the skies where stars once sighed.  
The gate has grown too large, I need her here  
To see what gardens hide within her hands  
While I surround my flowers, deep and near;  
Like gardens I once loved to fill with sand.  
My eyes are chalk and you the sun that falls  
To wash my fence away and take my hope  
To not be one that is to stand in walls  
That fall away in wood, discarded rope  
And clay. I'm not a garden, nothing here.  
I am the wood which blisters opal tears.

I Am Always Forgetting You

I christened my boats with water  
so I could drink to you again.

Another toast, another toast,  
to forgetting you again and again.

This is how it came to this,  
all my anger like a whisper.

This is how the world is seen by ghosts.  
I am still forgetting you.

**Blink**

The light surrounding you,  
glossed with pain and old demands.

Your throat, still rough where  
your tongue cut deep.

In the light, the green truth  
Glints in burnished gold.

Your dangerous eyes,  
bitter almonds, apple seeds.

Angry wounds that could open  
again like yawns.

My eyes that can turn  
water into winter.

The tears and scratches  
I left on your memory.



## Snow

When you left, the world ceased to sing.  
Though the icicles melted into slush,  
The winter did not give way to spring.

I watched birds shake frost off their wings  
In the sunset's earliest blush.  
When you left, the world ceased to sing.

I sometimes wonder what we were doing  
When we lay together, faces all flushed.  
The winter did not give way to spring.

I came home that day, somehow knowing  
You'd be gone; the garden was hushed.  
When you left, the world ceased to sing.

I read it all and still can't help but asking  
Why I allowed it, taking my trust.  
When you left, the world ceased to sing  
The winter did not give way to spring.

## Regret

It smelled like mango chutney the night my father died.  
I remember you smiling at me in the light from the  
refrigerator as you pulled from the door a bottle of  
orange juice. My mother used to tell me that she and  
my father used to dance late at night, me, the infant,  
pressed between their chests.

Tell me how to make your eyes wide and round. Let me write  
our children, line by line, make them with the faces I've seen.  
Their hands and footsteps already count my heartbeats as they run  
down the hallway, like the *I love you's* that I've wanted back  
since they've left my lips.

**II. Wine**

## Graceland

jars of silence  
gather dust and nails  
on their shelves  
behind the dirt and jam  
pickles and plums

we you me  
musty walls  
preserve our worlds  
as we alone collide  
discovering again how  
bodies smell and  
the taste of sweat  
mingling with lips

you led me here  
our backs to the sun  
following your heart

forgetting to remember  
that shadows sometimes  
give bad advice

## Cherry Branches

The things we do behind the mask  
Of drunkenness  
The silence lost in words  
And the words that thrive in silence  
Are a mouthful of petals  
The laughter still spreading across my tongue  
Like chains of madness  
In my nervous mouth

Like the serial lovers  
and compulsive desire  
That were my orbit for so long  
The crumpled slices of pearl  
Smother me passively

The best of times are stolen  
while I sleep  
Wants wasted in dreaming  
the wind in branches  
that touches me where I sit

as the blossoms  
Touch my eyes  
Like sand on the wind

Pomegranates Stained My Lips (and I Wished for You)

I remember where we were when  
I knew I'd let you slip away.  
Dust flooded the air behind the car, twisting away  
like sheets.

I was watching the birds sing  
when you walked by,  
angry as ever, full of sad things.  
You never told me what they were.

When everything catches the light,  
the air goes dark, like birds blotting out the sun.  
We were so bright,  
I lost sight of everything.

Shirts and flags hang in my closet,  
my carpet hangs beneath my shoes.  
They are empty ears, tongues  
yawning for the pleasure of it.

Like smoke stained the wall after the fire,  
I wanted us to burn.

## Quinine

You wake in a forest of legs  
And broken books,  
Sitting among the damned,  
Singing through the summer of the dead.

Dark falls and the sounds around you  
Are getting more and more  
Desperate.

Voices twist and stretch,  
Writhing in the medicinal fog  
That winds through heavy limbs  
And drifting leaves.

Fruit from the lime trees rots  
Beneath their backs  
As they lay fading  
In the rattling drunkenness  
Of drifting away.

## Your Sickness

Until you can call it beautiful,  
you let it fester.

The fermentation of love—  
you reek of its decay.

Love is the Poet's disease.  
I can smell it digesting you.

You vomit your love across the tabletop,  
Smearing it onto sheets of paper,

So you can show me, tell me  
How sick you've become of me.



## Spaghetti

It must have been something I ate.

*You.*

You and your superlative spaghetti,  
Basilled to perfection,  
The tomato still firm, scarcely warmed  
Through...

Through, we were through until you  
Invited me to talk things over  
What went wrong,  
Not how to make things right.

Not to not make it through  
Our first serving.

Not to be back on that couch  
Kissing that same kiss,  
Caressing the same corners...

*Damn* you and your superlative  
Spaghetti

Your Italian aphrodisiacs  
Love without the wine.

## Threadbare

Films chirp like lantern light  
Flash clips of blue pornography  
On the peeling walls of this hotel  
Smiles betraying intentions

We break the seal on cheap vodka  
And wait for judgement to dissolve  
Before we can remember where  
We are

The bed creaks under your back  
The floor moans when I  
Lean against the wall.

I study you, lying there, while  
All along your body, I can see  
The hairs standing up, one by the one.

You only watch the ceiling,  
Afraid that I would see  
Your face on me. Ice cracks in  
My hand as frozen cells give  
Way.

We are the cells that  
Hold on, refusing to let go of what  
We know is right.

Falling Too Soon

Drinking the red wind  
That winds through your fingers  
The footprints written in smoke  
The drops of dusk  
Rising into night  
Scarcely aware

Of the stars that reflect the ocean  
That reflects the stars that reflect  
Themselves

I descend

## The Yellows of Spring

I smell you dying when the rhododendrons bloom.  
They bring night wandering to me, purple swallowing  
the last of sunset. Far away, hollow hills clink like tin  
cups full of coins and amber in my hand. Cold things  
touch my mouth and wind themselves like rings around  
my cheeks. My lovers are wrapped in string and paper,  
locked in drawers in my room. Wind traces my mouth,  
twisting my hair into sheets of rain. I sink in memories,  
drown in their oil and handfuls of salt, forget the wheat  
that blew through last year, the thunder keeping time.

### For That Still Morning

Like snow on the ocean, all my love. Wasted.  
I've braided myself into the coils of a clock,  
where I click softly like water dripping.  
I will burn in your hands while shadows swirl  
around your body, silver smoke and wine.

There are butterflies on the ocean,  
swarming over the waves,  
smothering the water,  
a garden's carpet of petals.  
You never see the way your eyes  
turn gray when they turn to mine.

The sea froze thinly with frost  
for half a day, yellow with a soft  
sheen of sunlight  
and I touched you with my fingertip.

### **III. Blood**

## White Scythe Smile

Her name her name her name  
and yours  
Sugar and death dance in  
my mouth  
On my tongue  
Ticking ticking ticking

I have watched you  
For so long  
I have forgotten the color  
My tangle of hair has become

My ribs gnarl around my chest  
Around the little  
Wet  
Sacks  
That keep me alive  
With their  
Ticking ticking ticking

In your arms the blood runs  
Like a train  
Her name her name her name  
Your teeth snap  
When you speak,  
Always her name

My mind my mind my mind

Is whet

Like pretty blue

Eyes

And clicks and ticks

Like stones

I smile at her my

White scythe smile

Until the ticking ticking ticking

Stops.



Portraits

You think I am water  
Fluid flaws and bone.

I am nothing more than  
What my memory will bring

To the face of someone  
I never saw watching me.

You are the silk that writes songs  
On silk and laughter.

You make the walls bleed  
Like papercuts.

## Your Daughter

Whenever I hear your name, I feel like I'm dying.  
I am. My blood goes heavier and bluer with every step.  
A glass slips through my fingers and shatters,  
The light is cracked like eggshells and neon.  
Crimson stars appear on my fingertips  
Then drip onto the linoleum with a hushed raining sound.  
I rest my palm in the shards.  
The drips fall before my eyes. They are like our child,  
Wiped away before you ever could know she was there.

## The Cement Garden

the towers  
rise, oaks in the sea of  
heads that bow

the stricken angels  
writhe away from god  
to the corners of the canvas

to the reality of paint on museum walls  
fingerprints scrawled between  
monet and van gogh

on the world's pointillism  
the chain-link fences us in

in the black fog of metropolitan  
coaches  
the yin and the yang of tomorrow's  
friends

razors and needles that give  
the comfort of pain  
that the drugs rub away

like blood confused  
for graffiti  
cloaking the caves

beneath the towers  
where a million amoebas  
live, die, fornicate,  
beneath invisible thumbs  
and absentminded eyes

never bother to see  
the unhappy demons  
try to escape

dig tunnels that will  
collapse into graves  
like legacies ending before lives

trees falling into silence  
in the breathless  
noosed men worship  
the towers

never seeing  
the bones that made  
their temples

Villanelle- Et ça c'est pourquoi

Je t'aimerai au bout de ma vie  
Je te dis, sans peur, dans mes rêves  
Soyons ensemble au bout d'aujourd'hui

Il me faut toi, les nuits longues, je crie  
Et je vole chaque moment, comme ils sont breves  
Parce que je t'aimerai au bout de ma vie

Mes yeux te regarde, je pense c'est comme si  
Ca me fera du mal à les enleve-  
-R pour même qu'un instant d'aujourd'hui

Je suis tout honnête, voilà ce que je dis  
Sinon, tu sais que tu m'achève  
Il faut que je t'aime au bout de ta vie.

Tu devrais voir notre chimie  
Sinon mon coeur sera hêve  
S'il te plait, restes avec moi aujourd'hui.

Et ça c'est pourquoi je fait des chichis  
Et pourquoi je me sense comme ma peau s'enleve  
Je t'aimerai au bout de ma vie  
Parce que chaque jour je dis, "Je t'aime aujourd'hui."

Villanelle- And that is why

I will love you until the end of my life  
I tell you, without fear, in my dreams,  
“Let us be together all of today.”

“I need you”, long nights, I scream  
And I steal each moment, how they are short  
Because I will love you until the end of my life

My eyes watch you, I think it is like  
It will hurt me to take them off of you  
For even a second of today.

I am completely honest, here is what I say  
If not, you know that you finish me off  
I must love you until the end of your life

You must see our chemistry  
If no, my heart will be gaunt  
Please, stay with me today

And that is why I'm making a fuss  
And why I feel like my skin is removing itself  
I will love you until the end of my life  
Because each day I say, “I love you today.”

## Villanelle- Le coeur qui pousse

L'amour est une angoisse profondément dans mon coeur.

Quand je te vois, je vois un homme ardent

J'aime comment je me sens, mais j'ai peur.

Quand je suis avec toi, nous sommes le bonheur

Je t'adore et nos jours ensemble passent heureusement

L'amour est la douleur qui est dans mon coeur.

Je te veux tenir jusqu'à que je meurs

Je t'aime plus que l'or et l'argent

J'aime le sentiment, au même temps, j'ai peur.

Ma vie, elle ouverte comme une belle fleur

Du petit bourgeon du quand j'étais seulement.

L'amour, il habite profondément dans mon coeur.

Je me sens si bonne, les nuits sont le bonheur

Sous les étoiles qui danse comme l'eau d'argent,

Je me sens comme une reine, mais mon Dieu, j'ai peur

Tu deviens mon homme-consolateur

Et je deviens une fille qui aime joyeusement

L'amour est une chose, je t'ens dans mon coeur

Quand tu me t'ens, je ne peut pas avoir peur.

## Villanelle- The heart that blooms

Love is an agony, deep in my heart.  
When I see you, I see a fiery man.  
I love how I feel, but I am afraid.

When I am with you, we are happiness.  
I adore you and our days together pass happily.  
Love is the pain that is in my heart.

I want to hold you until I die  
I love you more than gold and silver  
I love the feeling, at the same time, I am afraid.

My life opens like a beautiful flower  
From the tiny bud from when I was alone.  
Love lives deep in my heart.

I feel so good, the nights are happiness  
Beneath the stars that dance like silver water  
I feel like a queen, but my God, I'm afraid.

You become my consoling man  
I become a girl that loves happily  
Love is something I hold in my heart  
When you hold me, I can't be afraid.



## Eating Baby

### Wife finds

her in the freezer like any other bird. It is not until she is home that she realizes this tiny thing is a baby. It is curled into itself like an embryo, elbows tight against its body, legs, tucked against one another.

### She watches

Baby thaw, slowly unfurling, limbs drooping away from body. She reaches into its chest, Removes tiny organs, lines them up on the countertop to count. Stomach, liver, lungs.

### She rubs

Baby's body with oil, rubs salt, pepper, and rosemary into its flesh and places it on in the roasting pan with onions, potatoes, Carrots, half a glass of white wine.

### She washes

the dishes, sets the table, lights the candles, puts on gold earrings. She makes a salad of endives and apples and puts on more dark lipstick in the dim hallway.

### Husband comes

home, takes off his coat and shoes and kisses her, wants dinner. At the table, Wife watches Husband cut Baby from the bones, chew, swallow, take a sip of wine. He talks about weather, traffic, the price of oil.

## Humors

Dissolving on your tongue, my words drip down  
Beneath your chin, like herbal tea that spills  
Over your trembling lips that softly frown.  
And I am quick to take and eat what chills  
Your mind and thickens blood-- that beats-- to stone.  
Because I said a name you think I lied.  
I'll swear again until I'm sure it's known  
I only said the name to live and thrive.  
I'd never do a thing to ruin you,  
Now look into my eyes and say you think  
I was untrue, and tell me what you knew  
That made you leave the promise wrote in ink  
A mem'ry far behind. The words you said  
Into my ear seem drowning in my head.

## The Five Principles of Wrath

The misunderstanding.

The fear (our only

Natural predator).

The anger and isolation.

The humanity.

You shouted so loudly

When you threw the

Glass against the wall

I could almost imagine that

I didn't hear it shatter

You threw it so hard I almost

Didn't move away.

The shards are still

Embedded

In the sky

You think that if

You didn't love me

Didn't know me,

Things would be better.

I wonder

Would you still

Have thrown

The glass.

Bitter

You left me

But I am still with you

If but a shadow down the hall—

Or closer—

A feather in your pillow.

Be careful what you taste,

For my kiss is still there

And soon, you will taste me

(Like Wednesday last November).

But instead of drifting away

On your breath,

I will creep down

Your throat

Down your spine

The itch that you can't scratch

And she will never taste the same.

## **IV. Honey**

## In the City

Morning birds who love evening birds  
Nest only with the night.  
I didn't wake you when I left.  
You told me you could not sleep unless  
I was beside you.  
I know you meant until.

Copper pots wait to be scoured in the sink,  
Sacred as our wedding vows.  
In the alley, frogs sing beneath city-stained clouds,  
Air sweet with the death-smells of fall—  
The smoke that hangs at the edge of every day,  
The mustiness of another year gone stale.

I kept your letters in a drawer.  
They smell softly of sugar and lavender,  
Remind me I have been loved.  
I carry them with me tonight.  
I peel them and pull them into strips.  
On the first gust of frosty air, I let them drift away.  
Walking home, I hear the scratching of paper.  
I turn, looking for your words to be crawling after me.  
It is a crumpled grocery bag.

How sweet,

    how sweet,

        how sweet.

I laugh so hard I weep.

## Icarus Desire

My lovers tied in golden rope and shame,  
Like broken birds that try to fly, have failed  
To know what bones I dried in winds that wailed  
Beneath my eaves. The thoughts you sent to frame  
My face, like tendrils sweet of hair, did not  
Surround my past, as you, I think, had hoped.  
Instead, like rain, they left me cold and soaked.  
As sure as bones have cracked, my smile you sought  
In vain. My lips will part for only one  
To whom I owe a kiss. That he may find  
Me here one day, I'll know only with time.  
Perhaps he'll bring me flowers with the sun,  
Or it may be that he shall never come  
To wake the sleeping lust that left me numb.

## Honey's Life

Remember it as sweet, when night was fresh;  
The salt of skin in water's heavy warmth,  
The oiled edge of steel embracing flesh.  
You bled like seaweed into water's arms.  
How would you look, but after drops and buds,  
Were I who morning brought to find you here?  
I'd see your whitened flesh in watered blood,  
A tub of violet brown carnation clouds.  
But bleeding fences into water's hair,  
You found that you forgot to rise above  
And cherish, relish what you want to tear  
So you could swallow what it is you loved.  
A life is pain and pleasure wrapped in skin,  
The movement, bodies, people we live in.



## Crayons

Who knows why  
The rows of sharp, smooth  
Color  
Are so inviting?  
Row by row  
In an order  
That will be abandoned for  
A heap on the floor  
The crayons that drew out  
So many houses  
So many mothers and  
Fathers.

Angry wrappers tear  
In the sharpener  
Cerulean and meadow  
Snap

Flesh is scratched waxy  
On teeth  
Between lips that tremble.

**Daisies**

Like freckles of laughter, they dot the grass.  
Madeline has been picking them all day.  
She makes chains for us. One for me,  
One for you. Me. You. Me. You.  
They hang around our ears like fog,  
Asking "why?" I can scarcely bear to look  
At you looking at me. You look so tired.  
Tired of the grass. Tired of daisies. Tired of us.  
We are strawberry patches full of birds  
And empty of fruit; the sweetness  
Peck, peck, pecked away.

## Losing You

We counted days like  
The quarters we save  
For the milk man, left  
In the tin box  
On the porch  
Where we drank  
Lemonade and cicada  
Songs when it was  
Too hot to read.

Now you are silk and  
Infirmities.  
I watch you fade  
Like summer.  
Sugar and death,  
The grasses shake.

## Pantoum

I want to breathe the air from your lungs.  
Please, spend your life with me,  
Counting out our days like buttons  
And seeking out things to see.

Please, spend your life with me,  
I want to spend my days touching time  
And seeking out things to see.  
Will you come with me, as mine?

I want to spend my days touching time,  
Not biding it, not waiting to be found.  
Will you come with me, as mine?  
Our love will be ribbons of sound .

Not biding it, not waiting to be found,  
We'll speak by tasting tongues;  
Our love will be ribbons of sound.  
We can climb heaven's thousand rungs

We'll speak by tasting tongues,  
Guide with words what you cannot see,  
We can climb heaven's thousand rungs,  
Then heaven's fire we will be.

Guide with words what you cannot see,  
Tell me how to make your eyes shine  
Then heaven's fire we will be,

I'll write our children, line by line.

Tell me how to make your eyes shine,  
To open them wide and round,  
I'll write our children, line by line,  
Build them with the faces I've found.

To open them wide and round,  
I want to breathe the air from your lungs  
Build them with the faces I've found,  
Counting our days out like buttons.

Honeymoon

I slip between the sheets  
wearing nothing  
but your name

## Between

You tell me to sit on the edge of your bed.  
You tell me to sit on the edge of your bed.  
You tell me to say nothing, to do nothing.  
Tell me to say nothing, to do nothing.  
Do tell me to edge to your bed, to sit.  
You tell me of nothing, you say the nothing on.

Yes, put your tongue between my teeth  
Yes, put your tongue between my teeth  
Run your mouth down my spine  
Run your mouth down my spine  
Yes, run between my mouth, your teeth.  
Put your tongue down my spine.

Twist my skin in your hand like hair  
Twist my skin in your hand like hair  
Press of your palm against my calf, yes.  
Press of your palm against my calf, yes.  
Palm in my hair, of your hand, like my calf  
Twist press against yes your skin

Sit between my calf, your bed,  
Put the edge of your teeth to my skin,  
Your hand your tongue run down on in to my nothing,  
You do like your nothing.  
Hand against palm, hair in mouth, twist of my spine, press.  
Tell me yes, you say. Tell me yes.

The Color of a Lover

Sweet cigar perfume  
drips like pearls from my mouth.

Perhaps I could tell you  
why the sun turns red at the horizon

I could paint the ocean  
though it always moves like a smile

If I was anyone else,  
anything else.

I came from the teeth of a peach, grazing  
the grass where it lay to soften to nothing.

I am the color of a lover, crushed  
between the pages of a book, set away.



## **V. Ethers**

## Cigarettes

Smoke curls to the ceiling  
as ash drops to the table.  
Your hands, holding mine,  
do not brush it away.  
We are as oil and water.  
The air is damp with summer  
and we moisten it further  
with our whispers.  
Your sweat, lover's icing,  
beads on your back.  
The smoke curls from  
your mouth.  
Do not brush it away.

## God is Sleeping

Everything is smaller than it was  
Ten years ago,  
Though the world has expanded.  
Rainbows still bend as easily  
As steel in the strong man's teeth.  
But there is a sky.

God is sleeping.  
When he snores, the wind blows.  
Buddhism is an umbrella.  
The collapsible 8 fold path,  
no match for fire and brimstone.

I am a child again, foolishly  
Afraid of nightmares  
That I haven't had,  
afraid of horses  
And two-wheeled bicycles.

Float

Falling like whistles and leaves in the wind  
We try to reach the sky as it swirls downward  
Into the ocean's rocking.

Our fingers brush the light  
Like lips and eyelids between whispers  
In the dark.

We can slip away into cold silence  
Like birds leaving the eaves a winter morning  
And seeds sleeping in the dirt

But we unfurl our hands upward  
As though we could perhaps catch a feather  
And float away.

Dust

While you sit there, watching us  
from so far away, I am not  
thinking of you. I am hiding  
in the dirt.

The dead around tell me  
how brave I am  
and you ask if I am well.

They speak like you  
hear- nothing of this  
nor that, nor themselves.

Stories came to conclusion in  
sweet red sounds  
today.

I did not know them.

Lucid

Tomorrow hangs from a sky thick with clouds.

His white feet dip into the waves,  
making the water lap at our island.

The sunset rolls across the water  
as grasses sway like sand in the wind.

The last bits of light sting my eyes  
and I blink into dusk.

I step across the sand and onto the sagging porch,  
catching my toe on a loose nail.

I do not bleed.

My feet warm the floor- briefly, like pats of butter-  
as I walk through the kitchen. The sun is still leaving its long gash  
across the sky when I run my fingers over the wall,  
tainting it with the near-imperceptible stains of the day.

My fish stares at out me from her globe  
and I think I see her wink. It isn't the first time.

Half the world dreams in their beds,  
but I have not slept since March.  
Another red X on the calendar,  
another day ends without having started,  
another night begins  
and tomorrow, I will again walk without waking.

### The Jeweled Grotto

Rorschach's spots laugh at me and say,  
"Hello! We are cats! Can't you see? Cats!"  
Ink gleams like diamonds and hisses like saints.  
The jeweled grotto melts in the sun.

You've drowned. Jars of water fall from the sky.  
I'm still not afraid of the ocean. South of blue  
Jersey, silver quicksand sinks the sky, burying  
Girls and marigolds. My steps fall angular  
And smeared like watercolor in the sand.

You speak with a hand as heavy as wooden pearls  
And the wings on birds. Our quiet conversations  
Hang in the room like photographs on fishhooks.

How did we ever get to this place? Twelve monks  
And all their grace; chanting, chanting past the sea  
Their droning sounds crawl back to me.

When God Swallowed Greece, I Lost My Taste For Sleep

She came to me through frowning reedsongs, drowsy and moist, the  
embers in my fire. I wiped sand and pearls from my eyes as I rose  
from the carpet. the trees bent over me, teetering on collapse,  
like the seven days of creation. There are other things we know

without asking, but I will find them all the same,  
a hundred jesters, hanging on the wall.

People for a king fall through the clouds,  
waiting for evening to bleach the west gold.

The violets laugh and laugh, blue in the garden,  
laughing from their yellow throats.



The Snow of 1912 Nearly Drowned Marlboro, Vermont

Though the sun now stings my eyes, the well is not dry.  
But your kiss gathers lint in my pocket, folded in addresses and wrappers.

You waved at me until I was gone. When I close my eyes, I still see  
your face. You closed your at my reflection that smiled like wet  
diamonds, blooming like water and light.

Ten angels sit on my fingertips, Columbia's rivers ebbing away from  
the seams of my palm that run like fences across my hands.

It is rawness and law that make water and ice lighter than air,  
rawness and law that made me eat my jealousy, build a Rome  
of gold to get lost in when you were gone.

I breathed ice into the air so I could watch the birds shake it  
from their wings as I shook powder on my breasts before sunrise.

Outside, the wind was perfect;  
perfect in the trees.