

A black plastic swing seat hangs from a metal chain, suspended in a field of tall, green grass. The background is a soft-focus landscape with trees under a clear blue sky. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Hello Goodbye

a poetry collection
by
Margot Loren

DUNWALL PUBLISHING

San Francisco, CA USA

Copyright © 2018 Margot Loren

Cover photo by Aaron Burden

Layout and design by Margot Loren

dunwallpublishing.com

Hello Goodbye

Margot Loren

Table of Contents

With A Sharp Machete	1
We Needed To Fall Apart	2
Coming Back	3
The Farm	4
Grand Canyon	7
My Funeral	8
In From The Cold	10
Folklore	12
My Luggage	13
We Are Grieving	14
This Love	17
Real Love	18
Fuck Love	19
Unfinished Love	20
Hello Goodbye	21
You Are All Around Me	23
When I Listen	24

With A Sharp Machete

sometimes the only way to get to you
is with a sharp machete
and fierce determination
to make it through the brush

though my hands will get sore and
the overgrown weeds will slice my wrists
leaving exposed wounds
vulnerable to infection

the jungle is a dangerous place
if you let it scare you

sometimes the only way to find you
is to lay down the machete
and crawl up a tree
to listen

even if it takes days
I will wait for you
feeding off the fruits
hanging within reach

or I could carve my way into a clearing
where the lion brings its slain
and surrender myself
to be consumed

because it's the anticipation of the pain
that hurts me the most
all the rest
is freedom

We Needed To Fall Apart

we needed to fall apart
to break
open to something
more real

like a good fight
that airs out
those buried doubts
there needed to be this

stripping down
to the ugly naked
where words get harsh
and hearts beat loud

now that I hate you
I can see why I loved you
and all the cracks in
my heart you fell through

if I didn't scream it at you
I may not have heard
what I really wanted
to say:

this was never a story
about me and you
and I can see now
how irrelevant you really are

Coming Back

coming back into your
soul song flow
feels like
waking up hungry fresh
and the city sound
tick tock
seems more unbearably loud
than ever before

and you have to
have to
clean your
house body mind
eat some grass
dirt
ripe green
apples

because the colors are too gray
and the noise is overwhelming
and you've always known you're sensitive
but now you actually like it

because you never really could be
in sync with that concrete tide
so why not just flow down
a river of waking dreams

in this moment
the apple I am eating
seems infinite like
breath death light
and I hope I can sustain
that knowledge
a little longer this
time

The Farm

I.

I ran away from the farm
when my heart was pumping
youth
erratic
and thick.

I tore around
unrooted and unfed
by the nurturing fruits
of the orchard
back home.

I sucked the life
from apples too ripe
stolen from liquor store shelves
far removed from the Mother tree
pumping blood rich and rhythmic.

II.

I could have mattered
I could have thrived
but I wandered aimlessly
too afraid to face

the rows of crops
structured and fixed

the overworked land
demanding and needy

the seeds
buried by my father's
calloused hands
sprouting slow

slow slower
than the beat
of a dying heart
it seemed.

III.

I almost forgot
how I used to bury
my own bare feet
in the soil
like an eager sapling
pushing my toes deep
towards something ancient
and eternal
and fertile.

IV.

Father gave me a farm
and laid out my future
so I could more than survive
so I could belong

But waiting for things to grow
felt like torture
and the labor of keeping life alive
felt like prison

So I fantasized about freedom
defined by the opposite
of every gift that was placed
in my ungrateful hands.

V.

I turned my back on my prologue
and borrowed someone else's plot
plowing my way through life
as if there were no vines
that intertwined each choice

with each consequence
like veins protruding
from a clenched fist
in the story of myself
that could cut to my ending
or back to the beginning.

VI.

Now I feel the need
to come back home
just as every living thing
yearns to grow

But since I've been gone
I can finally see
father got the words right
but the message wrong

I must inherit his farm
and work the land
but I think I shall grow persimmons
instead of apples

and I will make pies
with the fruits I've sown
to feed the runaways
and remind them of home.

Grand Canyon

I thought we loved
because destiny manifested

but I found the Grand Canyon in my chest
because I chose to.

You do not belong to me
and I will never understand

why you lick your lips
before you kiss me

or keep your hand on my hip
when we sleep.

I don't need you to swim naked with me
in that muddy river

though you can choose to as well.

I can't hold my breath underwater that long yet
but I'm trying

because the silence
when I'm submerged in it

is the only heaven I know.

My Funeral

You arranged my funeral
two days after the crash
not too soon
not too late
but more soon.

You thought it would be nice
if it was small and quiet
and people did not show
too much
emotion.

You wore that same black dress
for my sister
but this time
no golden cross
around your neck.

You did not invite my friends
being artists
you were afraid
they would not wear
the appropriate black.

Father would have
cried
but he knew
it would embarrass
and annoy you.

Two days after the funeral
you made my bedroom
into a study
filled with books
that would never be read.

When you were throwing out
my sketchbook
you remembered
when I was young
I used to draw only horses.

You cried
silent but hard.

In From The Cold

When I hover over
you in '63
me like infinity
spying on you
in that clandestine
smoke shrouded
room you seem

a reticent man
quietly pensive
in that grey pinstripe suit
cigarette in one hand
scotch in the other
handsomely brooding
like a man who knows

too much.
For a moment
your eyes seem to soften
as if you considered your beautiful wife
and child back home
but that could have just been
my imagination

or the lighting
or the scotch.

Perhaps you are too sensitive
to be so informed
in a war behind closed doors
with no end in sight.

Perhaps you are too broken
to stay silent
in a cement room
with no access to light.

Perhaps you are too human
not to shiver at the memory
of the men you have tortured
and the friends
who have died
for some greater good.

I watch you with pity
and infatuation
knowing I would fall for those icy blue eyes
the way my mother must have
justifying with the same denial
the cool distance and selfish reservation
with which you rationed out

your love and time.
You seem vulnerable somehow
secretly hoping to be extricated
from that dark cloud
of lonely lies.
If I had been your wife
knowing you as a child

perhaps I could have let you
in from the cold,

but knowing you
as I do now

I know my love
would never be enough.

Folklore

I could be

two steps ahead
if I took matters
into my own hands

and stopped swaying
to those old melodies
stuck in my head
and stifled in my throat

beneath those clutching hands
though I am alone now
with only my own
angry fists.

Most men can't help
but poke their fingers
into the warm sap
oozing from the grooves

in my bark armor
shielding the engraved archives
of sad circle songs
born from my roots

feeding from soil
still haunted
by those bedtime lullabies
though I'm dancing with you now

my cold hands
clutching yours.

My Luggage

I go with the hard cases—
the expensive designer ones
like my LUV
(what I like to call my Louis Vuitton).

It's actually pretty messed up on the inside
but it gets the message across.
I feel safer putting locks on my baggage
and I always use the same two codes—

one is my mother's birthday
one is my father's birthday.

Once I forgot to use my locks
and this guy ripped open my trunk
and stole my lingerie
and my camera

that still had nude photos of me on it
that an ex took when I wasn't looking.
I was going to delete them
but I was starting to like them.

He also broke my oldest possession
a small porcelain figurine
my parents gave me
when I was a kid

of a bear in a tutu.
It's ugly as hell really,
but I take it with me everywhere.
He left it out

didn't even bother to take it—
guess he thought it was ugly too.

We Are Grieving

We are grieving separately in adjoining rooms.

I am avoiding the bed because
the sheets smell as if someone died in them and
no one bothered
to wash them with bleach.

I am nauseous from the smell and
the knot in my stomach that seems to be
storing all the ugly names she has called me
since I can remember.

There is a morbid thought
that I keep trying to beat
out of my head but
it refuses to die.

It is the image of someone stabbing my eye with something sharp.

When I let it in, I can see
her holding a pair of tweezers.
She is trying to pin me down
so she can dissect my eye with her tweezers.

When I surrender to it,
I realize she is trying to pull out
my insight
from my pupil.

She is doing this to help me
so I can forget about this room,
and the smelly sheets,
and the pain in my stomach,

and the loud silence
rejecting me
from the other side of
the wall.

My vision blurs as I drift off in a tunnel of light.

But death demands attention
and an overwhelming sense of
panic is pulling me back.
If I stay with it,

I may forget how to breathe.
If I knock on her wall,
she will pretend everything's fine and
then I will not want to breathe.

In some families it is safer to be alone.

I try to forget
she is my mother.
I imagine she is a child
who has been neglected.

In breath- she is just a child.
Out breath- it is not her fault.
In breath- I am my own child.
Out breath- I am my own mother.

Somehow it is soothing to visualize
her mother's empty body.
When I saw it in person, it became clear to me
we are not our bodies

and breathing was a short-lived task.

When she was still halfway in it,
I tried to soothe her
humming her favorite melodies
over the sound of her loudly

forgetting how to breathe.

We took shifts with her.
Near the end,
when I was alone with her
I whispered quietly in her ear:

It's ok to go now.
I am here
holding your hand.
You will not be alone, I promise.

She left her body in the few minutes
between my departure
and my mother's arrival
when she was finally alone.

I think she was trying to help.

This Love

may or may not be
a manifestation of some
convoluted karmic history

may or may not be
a perpetual
neuro-glitch

may or may not be
residual attachments
from former lives

when our love thrived
or died
unresolved

this may be bigger than us
or this may be
a microscopic brain synapse

releasing dopamine
like a bad cocaine habit
but messier

this may be a curse
this may be a cruel joke
or this may be

the whole Goddamned point

Real Love

I choose to soften
to feel your lips
on the curve of my neck
every so often

though now I am alone in bed
curled up and warm
on the left side by the door
reading a book instead.

You accept me whole
when you can
being a man
not like the Mother.

Sometimes I realize her
like my love for you
though I shift and slide
in her muddy wet hands.

I hope to receive you
with white flagged courage
in ecstatic glimpses
of the eternal truth:

I have what I lack
present in each moment
like the safety of your thick hands
on the small of my back.

Fuck Love

last night
that orgasm you gave
released a tremor of
not love
fuck love

hate
throbbing beneath my breast
excitement
constricting my breath
like his hands used to sometimes.

those hard memories
punish me still
though I've spent years
thrusting myself
into numbing ecstasy.

your hands are gentle
but each orgasm you give
threatens the careful
neat
detachment I have arranged.

I have been penetrated
too deep
I fear I will drown
in my wet
and eager tears.

Unfinished Love

A house of dead people
maintained in a state
of suspended existence
attached
to the unfinished love
of alive people.

They do not know they are dead
the permeable light bodies
detained in ignorance
trapped
under the roof illusion
as the living cling.

If I could walk with you
to the other side of death
I would cling too.

Hello Goodbye

hello. remember when we
broke into that colonial building
and sang on the rooftop
until dawn? I feel like
breaking something—
a dish or my fist
through a wall
but I can't because
I'm glued to the bed.
I don't remember when
I first met you
but that's not as important as
everyone thinks it is.
you loved me and i loved you
but you loved me more
and I feel guilty about that.
hello. your funeral was the worst. grown men
were crying and several people agreed
they expected you would suddenly
jump up from your coffin
with your goofy smile and say
“just kidding!”
young people dying is unnatural.
your parents are now dead inside.
hello. we loved to sing and write songs together—
always together singing and laughing
and confessing—
I don't know how we had time
for school!
hello. I fell asleep crying
then dreamt of you
and woke up crying
and I don't feel like eating anything
ever again.
it's funny how memory works.

I don't remember getting my diploma or
how I got that scar on my wrist, but I remember
the exact look on your face when I said
I already had a prom date.
in my memory there are no gaps of us,
although we both know that isn't true.
everything i thought was true is
suspended in my mind
in a state of uncertainty
and I still can't process
the meaning of all this and the visual of your
lifeless body that looked like you
but was not really you. this is a memory
I wish I could forget.
spiritual people are always saying
be present, but presently,
I'm lying here in bed like
a corpse and my body feels
way too alive with the feeling of death.
my body has been doing things
I have no control over like
not crying at your funeral
and then crying in the grocery store
and having the urge to laugh
when I got the news
but I suppressed that one, thank god.
hello. is it possible to die from a broken heart?
would that be so bad?
I'm going to play our song on repeat
and see what happens. goodbye.

You Are All Around Me

You are all around me
in a song
we both liked
your name
being called to a child
the smell of your shampoo.

You stay with me
revived in each memory
that fills my heart
warm
then sad
then borderline bitter.

The image of you and me
plays over and over in my mind
glossier each time
as if by imagining it
I can undo all our mistakes
and blame it on fate.

You are everywhere
like grass, sunshine,
lovers
usually unnoticed
until the story ends
and that's all you can see.

One day I will forget to notice
all those things
that remind me of you
and I will walk around
and finally see things
as they are.

When I Listen

When I listen to the music
beyond the notes I am playing
I realize there is nothing
but the vibration of its perfect sound
intertwining with the only part of me
that matters when time disappears.

It is the sense that
there is something to be said
that would name me
once and for all
but words
would only bury it.

This is my song
unmodulated
by who I loved
what I did
and where I think
I want to go.

Without desire
I am alone with my song
and continue to breathe
only for the vital, unselfish,
inherent need
to sing.