

*My Window Seat  
for Arlena Twigg  
and other poems*

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*For my parents*

*I have lived at some cost to others,  
and others have lived at some cost to me.*

—Ingeborg Bachmann, *Die Zikaden*

# PART ONE

## PLASTIC ARMY MEN IN SNOW

They patrol *in country*, posed  
In the snow killing ground ankle-deep  
Like wedding cake brides and grooms  
Married inside a ring of icing roses,  
A picket line crossing a picnic tableland,  
Where their general left them for hot chocolate.  
They are good men who melt  
Like crayons when they die,  
Whose grim, green faces  
Watch the backyard no-man's-land  
Through sun, which scores furrows for dragon's teeth  
As it falls between the tabletop's planks.  
They are good men even when they know  
Their hands are tied molded to gunstocks,  
That they wear leg irons and roach motel boots  
With feet planted in their bean slice of homeland,  
That their enemy is near  
Wearing my own small balled-up fist  
Like a glove, setting them up  
For a drumhead art and friendly fire.

## HYMETTUS

There is a reason my grandmother's remembered  
with honey spoons  
Wherever I order the toast.  
She bottled her own ketchup in washed beer bottles,  
She kept bees, she comes between my lost-for-words,  
Where the dead show themselves,  
Putting down her smoke pot  
That burned ripped potato sacks.  
A chain mail of golden workers blankets her arm,  
The broad brim and veil of her beekeeper's hat  
Is a visor against all blows. On the porch  
My grandfather shrinks to her as she waves to him  
from the orchard  
That terrible arm by which he slept,  
His sex curling at the thought,  
Into this shape of the stung field mouse  
From which I dangled to the earth.

*—after Laura Rachel Reidel*

## SURF CITY

Sometimes we leave our column of salt air,  
The murder of gulls crying overhead, and come close  
to being family when asked  
To take strangers' pictures.  
We almost always agree to this charity.  
We're unfixed by love's pushpins, the crumbs of its  
old corkboard,  
We never have to be born or marry into in their picture.  
We're like this Samaritan with someone else's camera,  
With this comfort of a second set of prints,  
Beach sand today instead of a bedside manner on the  
Jericho road.  
We can say it's no problem, meaning it this time  
Even as this pause in our day slows us we fall out  
of a line  
That feeds our footprints to the surf  
So as to get everyone in.

## NEBRASKA, OCTOBER

Across the two-lane highway into Beatrice,  
Beetles split the toenail red of their backs and fly,

Disturbed by the harvester  
That spins its blades into a cloud of dirt and chaff.

There must be a name for them here.

I feel the chill of the evening,  
Of having guessed.

They fall on the terrace outside the motel room.  
A blood grain sprinkles against the thick, fixed pane  
behind me.

They cling to the glass and join the flies  
That enter through the door left open to give us space.

What a foolish place to need space,

Leaning on the rail,  
Rubbing my hands together above the cars below

Where the cold sunset has still not left their paint.  
Voices from inside make plans to leave.

I must stay one more day  
As if not convinced I'm alone.



## THE SNOW ANGEL

I made his wings and the gown  
That would bell around those bare feet  
That walk across snow like coals.  
I wore myself almost to the grass  
Until the cold seeped through my snowsuit  
Dorsal-ventral—cold as one of them  
Falling through the clouds  
Enjoying that peace of your tinsel  
Tearing away, torn out at the root.

I would be my invisible companion.

I would watch the sky far too long  
Without getting up,  
Without turning to see  
This thing like my own shadow,  
The chicken-wing beats,  
The empty snowcap  
For the shining headful of praise.

## CALLUS LIGHT

It is seen through a lens the yellow of raw amber,  
Inside which is trapped the milk of cataracts

—and by going no further  
Than the stairwell in the early evening,

When sun comes through the blinds  
At the turn

Like the red hand of the Mayan clock,

When I sit on the third step  
—put there for man

That he should never wear his shoes in bed—

Crossing each leg, removing each clog  
As though I hold a mold carved from wood.

There is more of the callus light,  
Which you only see otherwise

Sinking in beeswax ahead of the flame.

## BLOWCARDS

Even the most beautiful child is an hourglass of its  
stool,  
A water clock of piss and pores.

All ask, “Have you seen me?”

It tears you up to think that—you’re no bastard,  
You are one of their companions on the river of life,

The kind who *have* the children,

Who make a family unto themselves—  
Even with them, the ones without age progression  
to their pictures,

These last-seen-with men and women falling from the  
junk mail.

It’s like we’re not really looking for them,  
Not keeping an eye out.

I tear the one I got because I will never have the  
full deck  
And what happened to my baseball cards.

The clothespins,  
The Jew’s harp of the spokes bit them off.