

Barbara Hughes

## Crumbled

I am returning to the place that memory goes  
each version of myself collapses  
I know I've lost, but what

I can remake my face, rehearse  
my history, calling it whatever I want

a new version of me  
remembers another version

evening retreats  
into moon and light  
does not yet hurt

I swallow the pill, bubbling down my throat  
singing me to sleep  
deep in the blue cream of oblivion

in my chemical sleep  
I am an ordinary me  
unfree from my history

## Willow Run

her mighty limbs filled with promise as fine as sandy silt,  
& they grew so wild they swallowed God

if I don't ask the silence grows  
shadows under her winter long sleeves, most of them innocent  
& when I lift my own there, they bloom

do they call the life they wish they had back?  
weightless by now soon you will understand  
& still they disappear

Or are they at peace in this space, a threshold  
an arch of entering and leaving where everything is endless  
& hung on the rays of distance

branches dying arms waving farewell,  
putting breath back where it was  
to know what to fear, so we fear everything  
& more

so much like my rage

*Acres of Disillusions*

on the corner of Sunview Drive the snow turned pink  
remember the grass,  
with the ladybugs edging the blades?

both of us in a ruined house  
shaken loose by echoes  
chasing sentences to their ends,  
crushing words

I am the owner of unremembered moments

everything I experienced popped out of my head.  
that melody grinding away at my bones  
here in my playhouse dreaming of rosy painted toes

I ask the ghosts questions I don't want answers to  
things they already know,  
that being alone is always being lonely

under the shooting stars and moon fronds  
enclosing me in: I dream of the gun I can't stop firing  
dreams and desires hurt the most

## **Melancholic Mood**

You see the clouds floating past and in the blue days of your childhood. You watch the rain soaking your house in ruins. You could never free yourself of those shadows growing there. You try to remember him as something more than an empty echo because the desire to forgive is as thin as smoke. You saw your father leave to attend AA meetings and drown in the booze. You watched him as he drank his sorrow down like an exquisite liqueur each night. You exhausted your energy, pretending he was sober. You prayed that addiction wouldn't smell the undeniable prey in his blood. Your eyes became fixated on the emptiness of those demons that dream. You stand in your childhood house years later in a room where memory cleans up after imagination ends. You think the scars have blurred, and miracles still linger in every corner, but the bits of hope here live in the dull yellow glow of the lamp. The darkness seeps in from outside, seeping through the cracks in the floor, swallowing you up and kisses you with thirst. You spend years riding along roads gazing out windows and looking for yourself, so much of which you could not see. Sometimes you think the past is all there is. Your future remains an abstraction, even though you know what will happen, like death, mostly death, always that universal destination. The solitude expands your sense of time. There is no wrong way to mourn.

## Night Nymph

This is a reminder that I dreamed of you way back  
in my sleepless rivers you  
were fresh and luminous always moving  
in prayer against my skin

I learned of hunger and absence of pain that  
winter breathing snow under written whispers  
I still see you in my window theatre  
like sharp diamonds of light in the dark mirror

Your warm flesh is visceral, cradled in my young hands  
the touch, scent, & your voice make me weep  
behind haziness of a broken hourglass  
I am one breath from your embrace

Time chases me as you soar into another sky  
I let you expose me to the stars,  
now I ache to bathe with the moon

the night will answer itself singing  
what is wished for or might never be

With breathless lips, I reach as deep as I can into your blissful ooze  
feeding on your memory that invades, seeps & spreads  
ripping into me

so, I can dream of dreams again.

## **I am Her**

I must take more than one deep breath against  
the aloneness that demands my reflection  
only there

her madness inhabits my dreams

creeping softly amongst the enemy's silence  
dreaming of revenge on trembling  
prey——fate

standing in the shadows sharing sorrow with  
the animal I named silence  
she will drown you  
in her tears

beaten under depths  
rest staggering stones and  
tree shadows shortened  
more sunrise than reality

soon the moon will steal you away  
the sky shows us every single  
wound in the vacant spaces of the night

pulling time from  
the sun's golden threads  
inside my mind's velvet folds

earth rotates slower with half dreams  
she asks the night:  
*Why are you so dark?*

night answered:  
*so the stars reach you  
for another light*