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Some Undisclosed Secret

We made lemonade that day you learned the
news, squeezed them in the press owned by your
grandmother and which I didn't then know
I would inherit from you by the
time the year had ended, along with the
rugs and silver serving set no one
uses these days, if they ever did, just
something to repeatedly polish,
now with its patina black. You added
sugar to the pitcher and other
ingredients I always try to
recall. Nutmeg? Zest? Some undisclosed
secret I can never remember.

When I See Geese

When I see geese, I think of you and the
confluence of these rivers with more ghosts
than living, where a battleground's buried
in permanent flood by the dam which makes
navigation for the transport of our
raw materials as possible now
as when the Army Corps of Engineers
took charge of welfare for the waterway
through tireless dredging in what is now a
trench lined by concrete. We're better off with
out floods which cleanse by taking from us all
that doesn't matter and leaving behind
only what we should want. We're protected
by slabs that don't grow moss, hard to realize
a barge is the drone of the river, has
no engine, dumb in the sun, needing
to be pushed or else will snag and catch.

Must Try to Understand

Of course *trying* is everything,
 gets you a boost with some, while in other
 situations, you've grown stale, which becomes
 still trying. *Never giving up* is another way to
look at it unless you want to define "it,"
 and then the whole premise unravels,
 for again there's always that soul who should
 let go, but never does, every Sunday, Monday,
Tuesday, you name the month—pick your
 favorite, the one with the anniversary
 dates, the ones you're always surprised
 to forget. So you understand, walk the
razor like a snail or some child's
 finger that has just slid open on the
 defacto knife without knowing what it was,
 or someone, some lone, some you, born unique
in the midst of too much originality, who has
 lived among many with a singular soul seeking great
 community—because that's how life is, that's how we
 live and die, by taking care of one another, better
not to be too firm in your definitions
 unless the words count, best to be clear about
 what you do not know and must try to understand.

And Gently Reminds Us

*I used to rush from bed, she says, even
on the cold days.* She likes to sleep on the
porch as soon into the season as she
can to listen to the peepers and the
returning warbler's song, hawks circling,
shrieking out to one another above
a community of sixteen thousand
souls hugging the banks of two rivers and
clinging to hills of clay left behind when
melting glaciers washed away all the top
soil, exposed cliffs that seep between rains so
foundations have slipped over the ages,
no supporting bedrock beneath them, gone
places marked just by daffodils in spring.
*Now I have to think about how I am
going to move my body before I
attempt,* she sighs. Sitting beside her, we
don't recognize her swelling stomach, for
the roundness has nothing to do with a
baby, instead is the result of her
belly's inability to drain. Soon
she will be unable to walk, won't need
our help because when her kidneys fail, the
loss will make her sleep, but right now she can
still laugh, life irrepressible between
injections, moments of lovely awake
while she advises, cajoles, and gently
reminds us she cannot live forever.

Frost Bitten Fingers Starting to Burn

Imagine thinking you're done, believing
you're still hunkered on that rock beside the stream
fifty years ago, wailing your head off, lost
in woods, the sky already dark, ground become
a frosted bog after the day's melt, seven
men and their flashlights tracing your footsteps which
earlier had navigated the mounds of
frozen skunk cabbage as if they were stepping
stones, too young for speech later in someone's warm
room to say you'd been left alone: mother gone
but for whispers, a secret inside you not
to learn, frost-bitten fingers starting to burn.