

The Reading Dress

[sitting, reading text transcribed on dress]

Genesis

some traveled a thousand miles on foot
through flood, fire, and frost
trusting doubt
their questions rewarded
something rare for religion
I attempted to trace their steps
but was eager and overwrought
robe pulled tight, blinking hard
still wild, senseless thoughts
no pattern to the mind
like lost keys in a dark alley
obsessing over tomorrow's to do
come, there's more light here
plainness, desire is suffering
stop expecting the kinds of things usually expected
they're decoys
disgorging stuff
pretending to attract a change of heart
eventually, sitting completely still
keeping it with me day and night
unhooked from my condition
getting really close to the cells of my foot
seeing between atoms
like god
uttering a word to create the world

Mindshift

undo everything
nothing holy!
who are you?
I do not know
I don't know, I don't know
I met him, but didn't meet him
delightful insubstantiality
everything comes from nothing
emptiness
true or untrue
seeking inward freedom
managing my mind
kindness

no merit
never taken away or lost
everyone thinks they want happiness
they might not
there's beauty in life's misery
mistakes lead through doors

Midstride

motionless and full of a life
a silence in which worlds revolve
outside the circle
things are dark and unknown
doubt is a form of spaciousness
a loud sound
something precious damaged
I stop myself from mending it
leaving space where something solid should stand
slowly, learning to embrace the dark
there are people in place
making decisions about
who gets saved
and who gets to drown
people say:
I can't believe this happened
yet everything about our culture
says this will happen
in a world where the strongest country
is run by a pack of rats
we must seek happiness inside disaster
and find peace inside war

A Condolence Call

the world stands still
the mind starts spinning
a heavy chest falls
keeping silent
may not mean
nothing is being acknowledged
though externally nothing changed
looking past white-capped mountains
searching for sacred bones
we are all already at rest
marking time
I whisper to the earth every sorrow and shame
strike the coffin with my hand

refusing to say alive or dead

The Red Thread

it's common to feel lonely
to think of yourself
as something isolated
and small
in the vastness of things
a friend is home territory
a living diary
for sharing and storing
the feelings of the day
rare friendships change your understanding
of who you are
they help you recognize
human achievements are rarely solitary
even when they seem to be
so, without premeditation
connect
to be of use in this world
allow others to act on you
refuse to be unchanged
it takes courage to find out
what and who you really want in this life
an adventure that has something dark
and unconscious about it
desire, friendship, and death
are all intimately entwined

Count the Stars in the Sky

the vestibules of the mundane:
airport lounges
waiting in line
waiting on someone else
to do something
there's nothing wrong
with these passages
you move through them
to get to other times
arriving in California
being granted a visa
waiting for that special someone
to fall in love with you
life is made up of
mostly ordinary circumstances

if you awaken in the morning
an evening death is fine

Out of Nowhere

time organizes itself
usually people work hard
to make things happen
yet it might be
that things happen by themselves
if children have natural clarity
then we might too
let's forget our carefully assembled fictions
of who we are
out of nowhere
the mind comes forth

What is This?

there are certain coercive attitudes
weddings are happy
funerals sad
what if things don't have to be
anything other than what they are?
I know my story comes with conflicts
beliefs have consequences
building their own fictional world
what if I could see things
without wanting them to be different?
appreciating the scars
looking forward to seeing
my own pore-oozing face
the sun stands still
and I'm no longer
armored against unpleasant events

The Tree in the Garden

broken leg on an elaborate chair
broomstick bound for stabilization
still shaky
splinters sticking out
I prefer it that way
the woman who raised me
a great teacher
her stories, words working after The End
she left so much with me
no usual inheritance

no armchairs or tiles tied to land
there's something strange about meeting ancestors
vial of ancient life
reaching down across years and night
but what I remember?
grandma locked in her bedroom
salted beer in grandpa's fat fist
mom and dad attending to the yard
and the tree and I?
we're acts of the universe's wild imagination

The Consummation

reach in the dark
for what you need
all through the body
are hands and eyes
throw everything overboard
beneath understanding and consciousness
at the bottom of the bottom
love is left
the workings of the universe go on constantly
snow melts, bark peels from trees
large lumps of asteroids sail by
like hands finding hands

[stands, removes dress, hangs it, and leaves]