

Thorn

The Thorn in my side is particularly sharp today
It pricks and twists and goads and grieves
my body and my heart
It carves into my mind
and cannot be excised

Oh, that I were a mollusk!
A strange thing to wish, I know,
but then I could blunt the sharpness of my Thorn
with coats of nacre
and make something beautiful out of the pain

I am not a mollusk (alas),
but I have words for nacre
and I will layer them
and layer them
and layer them
until I make something beautiful
until I reflect the One who took
my crown of thorns
to give me a crown of glory.

Valley of Dry Bones

In this valley of dry bones I lie
Losing faith in the living
Losing faith like decomposition
One small decay at a time.
Deconstructing each breath
from skin
from sinew

from substance
until nothing is left
but a heap of bones,
broken and weary.

Did You really say...?

Are You still just if...?

Why would You...?

My trust is a hollow, desiccated thing.

Speak, Lord,
and tell these bones to live again!
Restore to me the breath of life
Strengthen the shriveled sinews of my trust
Remind me that Your body was broken
to make mine whole again.

O, For a Muse of Fire

A bipolar hypomanic episode is a visitation by a Muse of Fire, bearing a glass of artistic ambrosia—the sweet, intoxicating nectar of inspiration. It’s a perfect storm of brain chemistry and a creative soul: a tornado that uproots all the other structures in my life and flings them to the far corners of my mind—heedless of the consequences—to enlarge the footprint of an already-generous artistic allotment. When the Muse visits, I *need* to create. *Need*, like an itch, an urge, an impulse—a gravitational pull to a blank page. It’s glorious and satisfying while it lasts, but the crashes are all too painful. In those moments, the

mercurial Muse departs as swiftly as she came, and the fire is doused in a wave of despair. I become Icarus, wax wings melted by fire, plunging headlong into the wine-dark sea. I become Sisyphus, and my life is my stone. I become Hamlet, taking up arms against a sea of troubles. But I do not oppose them to *end* them; rather, I oppose them because I know that the war is already won. Each morning, I pick up my sword and my shield to face my lifelong foe: a dragon with three heads whose names are Euphoria, Dysphoria, and Despair. I have scorch marks and battle scars by each day's end, but scars belong to those who *survive*. I fight—moment by moment—for I choose to trust in the God who calls me by name, who gave Himself for my ransom, who says the Waters will not overwhelm me nor the Fires consume me, for even the wind and the waves obey Him.