

12 Poems from the Four Sections of
Songs for All Souls

I: All Souls Letter

1 Anniversary
—for W.S. Merwin—

If every year we pass the day
on which the fire of our bodies
will stop burning but spirit

will flame into another level,
& the silence of our griefs
& our joys will gather into

this higher burning, we must
prepare each day of every year
to become our new flame

so that those we leave
behind will hear our silence
and tune their ears to our

frequencies & see with
the help of the light we are
their world with new eyes.

All That's Quiet

My friend is gone
who gave me light.

I look into the night
for anything bright

yearning to find
letters that form

to make lines in a song
someone will sing.

That song will name
what he was & did

& tell the story
of the love he left

for those who listen
to all that's quiet.

II: Morning Meditations

Morning Devotions

My mother is picking tomatoes
in the warm morning sun

wearing a blue apron,
her kitchen uniform.

One tomato in her palm
is the blessing she gives.

Behind her, in memory,
her mother & grandmother.

They all genuflect cupping
a round red chalice in hand.

Downtown

Wherever we go,
the green life
comes along.

Brought lilies from
that island word:
they, too, revived.

When irises open,
we come every morning
to worship in silence.

German sage drinks
up rain water at the base
of the downspout.

Beside electric box:
pink & white petals
of flowering almond

from the garden of
my great-grandparents
in the hill country.

III: The Smallest Sprout

O religious wars
in which we give
ourselves license
and a blessing
to murder one another!

Smallest Sprout

The smallest sprout
is the biggest miracle.

Spirit Song

Prayer comes
from the eye
that beholds,
the voice
that would sing,
the spirit
that can no longer
rest in silence.

IV. After Waking in the Dark

Woods Song

When I was a boy
I was happiest
in the woods

where I watched
light filter down
through the trees

& heard the songs
of birds & insects
in just the right pitch.

I know then
I would never find
a better way to pray

than to receive
this contribution
of sight & song.

Direct

I am lucidity
gliding toward you,
refusing to hide

in the fake
complexity
of academia.

I come at you
with all I am, trans-
parent as sunlight.

Short Shadows

I stood often

In the shadows
of a short father
& uncles

but knew even
then that the length
of a man's shadow
was no measure

of his will,
his spirit,
or the depth
of his love.

They Always Knew

Always behind the men
who spoke the word
were the women who
quietly made the house

& kept the family
together & knew
what to do when
a child came sobbing

& what to say
when the world went
wrong & how
to hug when no

doctor could be
found or the priest
had no time to
give his blessing.