

# Light Pages



## Squash

With surprise I recognize  
summer squash is in the bag  
which hits the table, that distinctive sound  
no more describable than the subtle taste  
of elegance lightly cooked, lightly spiced.

*Attasquash*, crookneck, *Cucurbita pepo* –  
dismissive and ridiculous names  
for this pretty vegetable,  
delicate, ephemeral in young perfection.

Fresh from the sunny garden  
singing hot nasturtium colors,  
shimmering butterflies,  
I sense an aura,  
clear yellow radiance,  
abundance on the silver fork.

Are we so beguiled by sugar  
that we laud the strawberry and peach,  
ignoring this unassertive squash?  
Ask the overlooked among us.



### Dowsing

These two bare twigs, formerly bayberry, too scant to be driftwood but nicely branched and silvered, they fit the hand so well I carry them full circuit around the island with no vain intention of taking either home with me, but I like the feeling of winnowing the sea breeze, of holding hands with the sky, of sensing how a lobster feels waving its claws in communication with Neptune and the sea.



Photo by Ann Flewelling

Flowers for the Tea,  
*chabana*

Tie my poem to  
the blossom branch  
with deft knots of  
freedom and formality

silence to sound  
vase to flower  
page to ink

I sing the breathing words  
of heaven, earth, and man  
in bud and bloom  
and fallen petal.



### Billy Collins on Vacation in Maine

I am standing on the deck overlooking the shore  
in bare feet with a cup of steaming tea, opera on the radio,  
watching seagulls and a lone man in a plastic kayak

which barely zigzags as he chants to seals while  
the first clouds climb the rigging above the bay.

A white lobster boat draws unhurried circles  
and the drone is carried by the gulls  
to wedge between the bars of Verdi's quartet.

I study last night's wine glass on the railing  
lit by a ray of sun which goes on to  
gather blueberries and ferns and a small sparrow.

Cats watching through the window wear calico shadows  
borrowed from the birches like the green  
fleece pulled on over my nightgown,

which I pull closer to my shoulders  
feeling what it's like to be Billy Collins in Maine.



## Mackerel

Out of mind's vast  
blue deep they come,  
racing into coves  
flashes of silver bearing  
black-barred stanzas,  
writing ripples.

You don't call mackerel.  
You know the tide  
and go out in your boat  
or onto the pier  
and you wait,  
knowing that unless  
a line or net is in the water  
no one ever catches  
the meaning  
or the music.



Photo by Ann Flewelling

## Fall Tweed

Ridiculously humble name  
for the gallant  
little spindle  
of a bird, brown creeper  
fluttering down with the  
rain-driven leaves

to begin again  
its persistent ascent  
of the threadbare birch  
weaving life, the only  
anti-entropic force  
in the wintry universe.



### Spring Geese

Half a hundred geese  
winging north across the bay:  
you've left some fecund, flowered place,  
passed over warm and moistly green  
full-petalled lands,

arrowing your fine dark lines  
across the lonely blue  
of open water, open sky,  
the brown and grey and tan  
of our just-melting world  
to press on to your polar claim.

My heart cries Wait,  
oh wait for me. I'm coming too.  
Although you leave me spring,  
you leave me.  
How I envy you  
talking to each other  
every wing beat of the way.



## Spring Color

All the past weeks  
the hills have glowed  
with clear yellow greens,  
new buds and new leaves,  
and rosy breath of inexperience  
blushing a spring world.

Unable to cope with all that  
particular shade of blood red  
alongside this hope green,  
our human eye or brain  
perceives these frequencies  
vibrating in cosmic contest  
one against the other.

From our small perspective  
we humans have difficulty  
distinguishing beginnings from ends,  
so the trees in their quiet wisdom  
show us how the world buds  
and grows and crisps and flutters on  
again and time again.



## Junco Zen

A hundred tiny birds come  
linking whispered calls  
low through the dripping spruce.

Like smoke they flow  
up across the granite boulder face  
pausing only briefly  
over the glow of moss

Ink-grey Juncos migrating  
white tail feathers flashing  
brief signals of intent.



First Osprey, April 16

*Pandion haliaetus carolinensis*

Osprey, who dares  
plunder the eagle and wins  
we pause every time to watch  
your casual crook-winged beat up the sky  
mackerel gleaming in the talons of  
your nonchalance.  
As my son once explained to me  
you have to be born to be cool.

There was nothing casual about  
the line gale that yesterday screamed through here  
shaking our bridge, plucking it like a lyre  
licking hungry at the causeway  
battering houses cowering with  
waves of such awe that fishing boats stayed on their moorings, every one.  
Not just their women, but sea-crusted men  
spent the hours stealing glances over their shoulder.  
We crept to our beds, shut windows to keep the deluge out  
slept fitfully, wholly unable to block the ocean's roar  
the answering grinding moan of beach rocks in the dark.

Born cloudy, cool of its own sort  
breezy morning finds us, all over the island  
busying ourselves packing lunches  
doing up breakfast dishes, gossiping over power outages  
pausing to survey the gear going with us.  
I imagine I hear ospreys  
calling to each other  
that unmistakable piercing whistle  
I want so fiercely that I step outside  
where they are circling overhead  
calling, soaring  
in signature  
arrival.



### Drab, You Say?

Gray skies, chill air,  
goldenrods blown  
to tufts of tan,  
over all a lace of sound:  
goldfinches and geese,  
chips and clicks and calls.  
flocks of tiny birds  
in touch with one another,  
moving just below  
the understated aster fizzle

a force of sparrows,  
warblers with  
eye rings, wing bars, and without,  
the faint suggestion of green flash,  
tan hinting copper,  
gold to tarnished silver,  
ripe, elegant,  
here.



### Blackberries, Late Summer

I go to pick blackberries  
in the arcing glow of goldenrod.  
Taller than I disheveled asters  
star pale and wild above,  
crickets fiddling away in the  
hot sunshine of short grass.

White Admiral, surprisingly  
assertive for a butterfly  
dares me to come closer  
flaps velvet black wings  
as if it might alight  
on my outstretched arms.

How rich the wine my tongue  
kisses from the ripe fruit,  
how fierce dry saber canes  
snake-strike thorns marking  
me again with the sweet pain  
of every love I've ever known.