

*Inconsiderate  
Madness*

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For Dean

*Oh! let your pity and favour... save her life. Let not your love and wonted compassion be conquered by her inconsiderate madness... Oh! let Mercy's wings soar over Justice's balance, and then whilst I live, I shall exalt your goodness; but otherways, 'twill be a languishing sorrow — yea, so great, that I should gladly suffer the blow at once, much rather. I shall forbear to trouble you with words, neither am I in a capacity to expatiate myself at present. I only say this, yourselves have been, and are, or may be, husbands to wives; so am I, yea, to one most dearly beloved. Oh! do not deprive me of her, but I pray give her me once again.*

*William Dyer to Governor Endicott*

## New World

Fog swallows the ocean, the sky, everything  
but sound. Waves thunder.  
Nearby, oak, maple, fir, pine, juniper.  
One great horned owl.

Seagulls. Sandpipers. Plovers. Salt froth.  
Fog swallows the waves, the shore,  
everything but sound. Nearby,  
birch, fir, pine, wild rhododendrons  
brilliant as rubies.

It begins again every year,  
the loneliness.  
I have readied my garden and wait for seed.  
How quickly cultivation  
is conquered. Parasites. Degradation.  
Sky of no color.  
Does nothing happen as often as something happens?

Hibiscus, anemone, larkspur,  
rhubarb, martyr, yarrow, angelhair,  
archangel.

The membrane holds.  
She chooses not to be born.  
Motherwort. Blue cohosh. Fennel.  
Uterus. Pain. Water. Blood. Fear.

Seed finding a home.  
Limbs. Lungs. Liver. There will be promises and lies.  
There will be some darkness. And dreams.

The dying completes itself.  
The landscape goes dull. There will be days  
the color of boredom. There will be days the color  
of flame. No one knows what is coming.  
Will we go soft as overripe apples?

Will we sink inward? The sky rearranges itself.  
Grackles converge.  
Dead pine needles absorb secrets.

I lie down in the shadow of death.  
I do not find him ugly.

## **Advice to Mary Dyer from an Old Woman**

Mary Dyer, listen to me. There is evil in the wind.  
I hear it circle. I hear it flap its great black wings  
as if the devil himself will beat his way indoors.  
We knew no cure, Mary, your unborn baby dead inside,  
unable to get herself born.  
Poor misshapen thing, never meant to live.  
We buried her out back, beside the birch.  
If they come searching here, say you do not know.  
They will look for devil's signs.  
They will see what they have come to see.  
Guard yourself, Mistress,  
from men who come to do God's will.

## He Had Claws, a Tail, a Forked Tongue

They saw him everywhere.  
Where they did not see him,  
they saw clear signs.  
He rained down snow in summer.  
He made the earth to quake.  
Everywhere they went, he followed.  
He took the shapes of neighbors.  
He stole children.  
He led maidens into the fields.  
They signed their names in his book,  
danced naked, bore his children.  
He had many wives.  
He wept for those he lost.



## The Poet Anne Bradstreet's Winter

My eyes go past the naked branches,  
past all distraction,  
and I let the lone black bird  
fly out of the frame.  
It is not empty, that sky.  
It holds whiteness like prophecy,  
waiting to do what it will do.  
Stretched across winter,  
that sky is cold and silent as fear.  
It tells me nothing I do not know.  
Still, I watch as if watching  
is a way of knowing,  
as if nothing is inscrutable.

## John Cotton's Departure

It was never easy  
deciphering the Word,  
waves roiling as he crossed,  
his wife delivering *Seaborn*,  
first son, name a beacon—  
like *Mercy, Increase, Faith,*  
or *Prudence*. Anne and Mary  
looked to him for grace  
on a barren shore, blood  
upon their skirts. He urged  
secret burial, helped dig  
the grave, hid God's malice  
in the wormy earth, assumed  
his robes again, cast midwife  
Anne into the dark.  
Then he went on preaching  
the malevolence of Satan  
and his kind.

## **Forsaken**

I would give my life to love a God  
who consumes me utterly,  
inflaming my tongue, my breasts, my loins.  
Ablaze in the wilderness,  
I would exalt Him,  
give my body to His ravishing,  
be sweetest milk on his parched lips.

He does not answer. I cannot find Him  
anywhere. Anywhere. He will not be found out.