A CROCUS IN THE SNOW (To Say Goodbye)

It is morning, and Daddy's bed is empty, the child I once was, cries knowing it cannot wake him.
Daddy will sleep now - no more endless nights of reaching out to grasp a hand no longer there.

I see Daddy kneeling and lifting his eyes to the sky, given this day bright with butterflies and a crocus in the snow.

Entering death-sleep a smile touches his lips and I know he is holding me on his lap again, in the old rocker; and so, I let him go - and a part of me, too...

his last breath, my lullabye. I lift my eyes to the sky, feeling him holding me this last time, to say goodbye.

-Judith Lundin
July 13, 1985
Plantation heat wave
prostrate in the cotton field:
dead pregnant slave

plantation heat wave
beaten in the cotton field:
dead pregnant slave

during the death watch
in a corner of the room:
a spider spinning

Mountain delivery
at the bottom of the slope:
arthritic mailman

emptying the house,
sticking cut of the trash can:
his bowling trophies

during the death watch,
in the shadow of the clock:
a spider spinning

Desert New Year:
adding another rattle:
old sloughing the snake skin

March wind to market
stopping on the parking lot
starts a shopping cart
marooned couple's
car wheels spinning in mud:
moon in a puddle

my mirrored mother
with more than tears in her eyes:
the map of the war

Farmhouse ruins
an old boot in the cellar hole
filling up with snow
during the death watch,
in the shadow of the clock:
crawling cockroach

my palsied mother
with more than tears in her eyes:
the terror of war

Desert New Year:
adding another rattle:

my mirrored mother
with more than tears in her eyes:
the terror of war

Desert New Year:
adding another rattle
to the diamondback
NO MATTER WHERE, OR WHY, OR WHEN

When all my paths seem to have come to an end
I pretend you have made a circle with your arms
wherein I am to go...
both of us knowing what the other was thinking
and feeling. Sometimes just remembering
that you are another human being is enough
to keep me from being afraid,
to give me a sense of great belonging and
of being loved;
In your arms the trembling leaves.

No matter where or why or when,
there are partings...
each separating, a fragile thing,
with silence holding off the moment
as long as possible -
it's ashes and its beauty
creating a touchstone,
a star that never made it to the sky.
Only the shine of it

so more precious stones can be gathered.

-Judith Lundin Lowe
sept. 5-7, '86
on the crumpled sheet,
the shadow of the crucifix
creeps into the crypt
don the crucifix
receiving the flag:
mother and father grieving
in the August heat.
cemetery heat:
Marine sergeant uncovers
my brother's coffin
the Pentagon flag:
Marine sergeant uncovers
my brother's coffin
the shadow of the widow
on the broken pavement
in front of the empty church:
carpenter ants
sold at the auction,
separated from mother;
bitter cola
an autumn morning
the shadow of the widow
follows the coffin
the shadow of the antelope
slips down the slope
creeping sunlight:
the shadow of the antelope
slips down the steep slope
cougar on the crag:
the shadow of the antelope
slips down the slope
the caribou cow
looking back at her crippled calf:
the wolverine claims
Viet Nam monument
shadowing the crippled vet:
the Pentagon flag:
cardboard president
at the cave entrance,
in mother grizzly's shadow:
a winterkilled elk
on the headland beach
reaching the dead sandpiper:
the spreading red tide
in the shadow of the cross
the far train trestle,
and condominium beyond
shadow the old pond
And You Believed In Me

I believed in Him and you believed in me,
coming into my silence
where I felt secure,
your soft voice helping me to understand
my tear-stained childhood holding me captive
in subtle patterns...

You had time for me, my stranger-friend,
embracing me without ever touching me,
changing me with insight gained
and prayer,
our time together a treasured time
to be hidden away and re-lived again.

I believed in Him and you believed in me,
watching me struggle,
then rest in His perfect love;
that from tears would come pearls,
little bursts of joy
and the laughter I never knew...

Before the summer would pass,
part of me a butterfly
on untried wings
loosening its earthly hold,
freeing itself to peace,
that I would not cry anymore.

-Judith Lundin
June 26 & 27, 1985
over flat tombstones
in the city cemetery:
the lawn mower's roar

between wooden posts,
lifting in the Halloween wind:
ghosts on the clothesline

over flat tombstones
nestled in the dewy grass:
the lawn mower's roar

trapped in the phone booth
the empty phone booth
a trapped sparrow

over flat tombstones

New Year's reunion:
replacing faded faces
with baby pictures

gracing bare branches
replacing cherry blossoms:
the face of the moon

another autumn
on the bottom of the pond:
years of beer bottles

his pulse stopped
on my fallen father's wrist:
my dead brother's watch

at the Monument,
sharing hair-raising stories:
Viet Nam nightmares

silence surrounding
the town radio tower:
sunflower field

over the flat

over flat tombstones
grooming the graves of the war dead:
the lawn mower's roar

over flat tombstones
grooming the graves of the war dead:
power mower's roar

plantation heat wave

where the bighorn sheep
has summered in the valley:
hoofprints in the sand

plantation heat wave
forgotten in the cotton field:
death pregnant slave
THE GRAY SILK HOURS
(of psychotherapy)

In the hours between us
the moments are like the years I wish I had known you...
my childhood, roused and troubling, and
what Time had kept secret and buried;

As I give you all that is left of me
you let my spirit rest.
Sometimes we laugh and
I feel like a child on a merry-go-round
grasping brass rings, one after the other,
your arms of childhood stretched out, too!

In the gray silk hours, the warm grains of sand
celebrate Survival each time I come to you,
and Quiet spreads from edge to edge
of me
of the room
of you

and I feel safe inside.
I know you would not give me pain,
for you have loved me back to life...
I feel the love of a father in your embrace,
creating heart-shaped memories to sustain me
with the strength I have been missing.

I know you would not give me pain,
but I know a cross is being hewn
to hold me when the gray silk hours end.
Surrender me gently, please.

-Judith Lundin
writ. 9/4-5/85
emptv arena

fingered in the bloodied sand;
the sign of the cross

Christmas soup kitchen
replacing the dead wine;
a new face in line

stuffed in the poor box,
wrapping a wad of peaces:
the signed confession

from downwind

closing in on the grizzly:
wild huckleberries

circling the old pond,
centering the autumn moon:
the midnight jogger

September cicada
in the dead silver maple:
esting squirrels

on a rose petal
fallen on the small coffin:
a firefly settles

after the funeral,
on the mausoleum roof:
est-building pigeons

the deserted beach

fifteen summers since
the town barber's funeral:
my last cigarette

Thanksgiving turkey
replacing the candidate's face:

billboard Santa Claus

my palsied mother
fallen on the kitchen floor;
the news of the war

boulevard billboard
replacing the candidate's face:

Thanksgiving turkey

In the empty crypt,

creeping on the crumpled sheet:
crucifix shadow

the heat and thunder--

at the bottom of the bay:

beat of the drumfish

from the sewage pipe
into the scum-covered pond:
school of condums

gathering walnuts
in the old Quaker graveyard:
crippled squirrel
We're As Close As We Can Be
(to Hal)

My eyes draw you in the night
and I run to you, a quiet shaping of expectations!
As an angel's embrace, your strength calms me,
coming into being and warm to my touch.
Your words are like bits of colored light
wherein I like to dance until I'm sleepy;
As long as I live, you will live in me,
maintaining my sense of reality
which keeps threatening to fade out.

You always draw me near just in time,
your voice softer, and your words simpler...
until the language is mine;
You get down beside me with a curiosity and a distance,
but your smile is all that I see.
You get sleepy, too, but there is no falling asleep -
your eyes closing for only a moment.
You find the part of me that's in fetal position,
and something about you assumes full responsibility.

You ask for my tears that haven't yet fallen free,
that I would have a separating once more...
for to feel pain is to release pain.
To be set free to begin another journey.
I ask you if I can go home.
A child not a child,
you cradle me softly in your arms...
and let me see you cry
for me

Wanting me to come into being and be warm to your touch.
We're as close as we can be.

-Judith Lundin
2/4-5/86
New Year's morning tour
throwing another penny
on Ben Franklin's Tomb

where Burma Shave signs
lined the highway through the pines:
signs of spring haiku

winter depression:
assorted Wall Street skyscrapers
winter depression:
score of Wall Street skyscrapers
cornets the morning sun

warm before the thaw:
storing cakes of lake ice and straw
in the storm cellar

the evening star—
the far radio tower—
the first firefly

now the campfire dies:
the old storyteller speaks
to sleepy eyes

on the brothel wall,
crawling on the crucifix:
cockroach

through the midnight snow
reflecting the far lantern:
path to the outhouse

through the midnight snow
reflecting the lantern light:
path to the outhouse

the Mexican birth:
a peco facing the sun
pacing the parched earth

the town mockingbird
clowning on the clock tower
cuckcoos the noon hour

on the winding sheet,
the shadow of the crucifix
creeps into the crypt

on the crumpled sheet,
the shadow of the crucifix
creeps into the crypt

one by one leaving
the park bench to the pigeons
in the evening sun
fragments

sometimes leaving is a feeling,
sometimes a reality,
like tears... tears
for as long as we were together
and for the time we'll never have again

it hurt more to hate
than to trust and love -
feeling very close, very warm...
small victories for me,
but victories! and mine!

in caring for me and
the hours of my life
i felt Hope trying to survive
while i exchanged trust for confidentiality
and confidentiality for trust

in love you accepted my boundaries -
the words and no-words i used
to protect myself
from first and last embraces,
and the hugs that would come in between

as often as i closed up, you opened me
and found a needy child waiting
to be loved and understood, to be freed -
to be held by you if only for a moment,
if only just once...

if only just once the hurting would stop...
it did tonight...

-Judith Lundin
( July 29, '85; -10:30pm)
monastery pond
mirroring the autumn moon:
the moon on the hill
silhouetting three crosses
the moon on the hill
silhouetting the crucifix
creeps into the crypt

the moon of autumn
emptying the
the full autumn moon
emptying the Zen temple
honking of wild geese
the autumn moonrise
emptying the Zen temple:
honking of wild geese
on the scarecrow's arm
a mourning dove perches
a mourning dove perches above
the abandoned farm

In the empty crypt,
creeping on the winding sheet,
the shadow of the crucifix

In the empty crypt,
creeping on the winding sheet:
the shadow of the crucifix

In the empty crypt,
creeping on the winding sheet:
the crucifix shadow

in the shade of the linden:
the toy soldier's grave
Being discovered
the baby rabbit trembles;
And then, no more.

—Judith Lundin Lowe
9/1/86
fallen from the rose,
it glows on the small coffin:
crawling firefly
on a rose petal
fallen on the small coffin:
a firefly settles
on the water jar
smearing his daughter's fingerprints:
dusty calloused hand
barbed wire surrounding
the town radio tower:
sunflower silence
erasing the smile
on the tenement child's face:
spring tonic
waiting hand in hand
on the steps for great grandson:
the grammar school bell
under the covers
in the television bedroom:
soap opera lovers

Long Island graveyard:
British soldiers are building
a hearth of tombstones
the bellbucket tolls--
cut of the mist cone the gulls
and the missing ship
left cut of the will,
feuding over the farmland:
flies on the dunghill
the Mexican birth
facing the blazing sun:
pacing the parched earth
the Viking graveyard,
now only the tourists come
for rock souvenirs
alone on the beach:
the shadow of the shipwreck sun-
reaches bleached bones
under covers
pinned to the Virgin
lifting in the summer wind:
twenty dollar bill
IN THE LIGHT YOUR CANDLE GIVES
(to Hal)

I've loved you and I've hated you
for knowing more about me than I did,
always staying poised, and
keeping a "professional" distance from me.

I never knew your strength until
I found His love for me in your voice
as you read your much-used Bible to me,
dissolving what would hold me far out of reach.

I love to be near you,
the differences within us creating no barriers,
only bittersweet memories of my struggle to grow,
to have summer days and freedom from yesterday.

Sometimes I feel like a butterfly caught -
   now here now there now?
too tired to remember where I was going...
   wings heavy with falling rain

Drained of all struggle now,
I reach for your hand once more
in the light your candle gives,
and promise no more escapes from your flame.

-Judith Lundin
oct. 23 & 24, 1985
the fireflies rise
in the fields of Viet Nam:
little brother dies

the tattered
the tattered flag waves:
a gold dragonfly patrols
the old soldier's grave

my palsied mother
fallen on the kitchen floor;
the news of the war
gracing the billboard,
replacing the candidate's face:
Thanksgiving turkey

from the fallen rose
at the bottom of the grave
crawling firefly

turning from the grave,
facing the hot morning sun:
my palsied mother

the fall migration:
teaching grandfather the falcons
from the red-tail hawks

sunken submarine
at the bottom of the bay:
beat of the drumfish
sharing the coffin,
in her satin wedding gown:
baby in her arms

billboard Santa Claus
replacing Thanksgiving turkey:
the candidate's face

head on the carriage,
sports
halfway through the column
the dead reporter
THE LIMIT OF MIRACLES
(to my twin sister, Debbi)

Our parting -
there was no talking about it...
It was to be, and we knew.

I loved you before
and during
and after
and you knew.

We grew closer and closer until
we grew each other.

The shape of our shadow changed
all too soon
and I felt a warmth leave our body
until only a place just your shape remained.

I was stillborn.

Our parting had begun
before birth, when you would turn
your small pink face towards mine
for a wet kiss...

we understood each other's simple needs.
And yet... and yet.

I know that only in my sleep
can we have each other again.

-Judith Lundin
9/23-24/'85
Memorial Day:
walking my palsied mother
  to the monument

turning from the grave
leading mother to the car:
  the hot morning sun

turning from the grave,
holding my palsied mother:
  the hot morning sun

flag-covered coffin
on my brother's face and hands:
  the Viet Nam sun

his copper-tanned face and hands:
  the Viet Nam sun

the moonlit veranda:
  a chandelier of icicles
  rhymes the glass chimes

my dead brother's face
and hands copper-colored tan:
  the Viet Nam sun

copper colored tan
on my brother's face and hands:
  the Viet Nam sun

copper-colored tan
on my dead brother's face
  and hands copper-colored tan:
  the Viet Nam sun

the distant church bell,
an air raid siren beyond:
cicada song

summer burial,
cut of my dead brother's cross:
copper wedding bands
In the empty square,
squatting on the frozen snow:
stone Buddha
In the bronze coffin
In the bronze coffin,
copper-tanned face and hands
In the bronze coffin,
my brother's copper-tanned face and hands:
the Viet Nam sun

In the bronze coffin,
removing the shroud:
mother and father alone
step out of the crowd
I LOVE YOU WITH A TEDDY BEAR LOVE

I love you with a teddy bear love
upon a silent stage;
   velvet wings fluttering
      in perfect moves,
   to rest lightly
      at the crossing where our spirits could meet
and merge together for strength
   the way letters make words.

I imagine you with your arms outstretched
to gather me in and cradle me softly,
as if to protect
   all that I understand of life right now.
What shall I color
   in quiet sleep
as I curl up in you
   so soft and warm,
your heartbeat in my ear.
I see you cup one of your hands
when I seem near,
as if awaiting me
to rest lightly
   upon your open palm...
then settle in to let you study me
   over and over again.

I love you with a teddy bear love
upon a silent stage...
   everything carefully in place
      as we keep close the best we can -
as if there weren't already enough in this world
we can not touch, or know, or change.

-Judith Lundin
11/4-5/85
tossing out the moon
with the baby's bath water

a black negligee

slipping to the bedroom floor:
the knock at the back door

during the death watch
with each gasp of mother's breath:
flickering candle

first day of Advent
holding up candles in church:
expectant mothers

leaving the old church,

I wander through the pine woods
following the wind

Marine sergeant uncovers
my brother's coffin

shadowing the flag,

Marine sergeant uncovers
my brother's coffin

folding the flag,
the Marine sergeant uncovers
my brother's coffin

folding another flag,
Marine sergeant uncovers
my brother's coffin
PREPARATIONS
(to Hal)

The hours etch your face
as if with permanent ink phrased on paper.
You know the time for our parting
will come, and I know, too...
in my place
will be another tear-stained face.

Nothing can be hidden from your eyes
as I watch you watching me
hesitate at the edge of reality,
wanting in and wanting out
at the same time,
my hands reaching up to grasp His.

Life tenderly embraces me
in the shadow of morning,
the shadow of your smile
drawing me near again and again,
helping me release all things
too tightly held; With sorrowful joy

I feel you giving me wing,
having changed parts of me forever
as if with the touch of His hand;
I know I must be strong and say goodbye,
to hear you say "Well done,"
for in releasing me

you will release yourself as well.

-Judith Lundin
10/26-27/85
garage by the grove:
cicadas are tuning up
mechanic's morning

the first day of spring:
a red-winged blackbird alights
on the beaver lodge

the Communion bread
softened in sacramental wine:
the Mass for seniors
full of windfalls,
bellowing at the yellow moon:
the bull on the hill
blessing the ashes
in the church's hibachi:
burning last year's palm

ivy-covered church:
cheeping sparrows in the steeple
spell the broken bell

atop the town church,
at the foot of the gold cross:
mockingbird perch

walt whitman bridge
in the mist, a broken pigeon
lying on a ledge
among rows and rows
of crosses on frozen snow:
old moss and young grass

old moss and young grass
gracing soldiers' graves gracing
old moss and young grass

the cold musty smell
through the empty cathedral:
the funeral bell
empty and adrift--
at the bottom of the bay:

beat of the drumfish
the fall migration
of falcons and hawks, grandson

pulsing hands touching
a lock of her baby's hair: