

Two Few

for Susan

1. (Finding You)

When I write these poems
I remember how I love you,
though they seldom talk of love
or the things we share.
But when I write them I
remember the things too easy
to forget and how you hold them
and how loving you was like
coming awake into myself
after those years of wandering away—
of half believing the things you are
and we sometimes become.

2. (Surgery)

All afternoon I ride the elevator up and down
hoping you still sleep and knowing that this
is what I dreaded—not the risk but the certainty
of pain and the nothing I can do to change it.

After the gray, cold hours of the operating room
when you finally wake, it is as if the conscious
mind floats below sleep speaking to itself,
amazed and sad, as you say simply “I hurt.”

How can I help but think of the ways I’ve failed you,
and though I’d rather anything than see this,
I look again and say as best I can the yes
I will always say to you.

3. (Early Spring)

All day, the wind—from the west this time
and dry through the early leaves and still stiff branches.

From the window I watch the gusts of green and dust
rise and settle across the brown grass.

Even at the start of these few weeks I would rather
you were here, and the children—rather the ordinary
surface of the day as we each go about the things
we do—even as I watch from the window

and find this momentary distance not empty
but full of these last years and the forgetting
that is not forgetting, as now the life
together becomes the living.