

# 10 poems

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the unwritten poem

my poor idiot child  
limps through the house  
in lost reverie  
tries to reach a fancy toy  
on the highest shelf  
but staggers  
in precarious balance  
desists  
yawns in desperate boredom  
yet stirs  
and cannot rest  
inarticulate  
babbles her own name, calls a friend  
the words refuse to jell  
and hover fluid, intangible  
nebulous faded balloons  
above her head

march 1980

self-portrait

water-gazer, ocean-watcher  
not daring the plunge  
the knowledge by destruction  
in the mysterious white vortex  
of the maelstrom

frustrated kamikaze  
avoiding the fatal chasm  
the cosmic revelation of truth  
by fire

phoenix imperfect  
live cinder among ashes  
consumed in partial agony  
of unfulfilled desire  
without the purifying flame  
of absolute death

April 1980

christmas

We talk of jobs, parties, and cars  
the world freezes around us

old stories

half-remembered fables  
of former loves

masquerade our own  
chilling the words  
that would make us warm

you wink  
I smile  
between drinks and cigarettes  
we play our parts

being friends  
becomes a memorized ritual  
a frozen gesture  
tinsel snowflakes  
on a paper tree

december 1980

red wine

your anger runs down the wall  
in absolute silence  
red rivers  
rivulets  
a network of pain  
uncomprehended  
the puzzle  
spread out before your childish eyes  
questioning, daring  
the anguish  
broken  
but sharper still  
and multiplied

I stare in wonder  
pretending to understand  
but the wall is a mirror  
and what I see  
is still your anger  
that in amazement  
looks  
at me

december 1980

do it carefully  
when you choose  
the fiction to feed you life

— Susan North

I need a new fiction  
a new story line  
leading into light  
open fields, wild flowers

I need a new path  
toward streets crowded with faces  
smiles, tender gestures  
toward the ocean  
gently drawing sweet motions  
against the sky

Someone,  
write me a story  
I can no longer dream  
I've rewritten the same plot  
a hundred times  
I know the crisis by heart  
the resolution comes uninvited  
and settles so comfortably  
I even forget  
to hurt

december 1980



motherhood as survival

men don't like thin women  
I heard when I was ten

at twenty my friends advised me  
that girls who swear and talk too much too loud  
become at best  
one of the guys

at thirty I was ready for life  
a plump and quiet wife  
mother of two  
men had stopped being friends  
they were husbands bosses strangers  
husbands of friends  
bosses of friends  
strangers

when my daughter turned ten  
beautifully ten  
lively  
sensitive  
intelligent  
talkative

thin

I suddenly was afraid  
that someone might tell her  
that men don't like thin women  
and girls who swear and talk too much too loud  
become at best  
one of the guys  
GODDAMMIT, FUCK OFF! I cried out in fear  
and as I yelled and screamed and swore and talked and talked  
and talked some more  
I swore myself  
into my self  
again

April 1981



we used to fear

we used to fear  
our future as strangers  
that passing each other in the street  
eyes darting quickly  
beyond the aged surface  
to see if the heart would still pound  
in a special way

in a special way  
my friend  
you've made it easy for me

not having to search beyond the aging  
I see you clearly

in the eyes of children  
the smiles of friends  
the body of a lover  
that for a moment  
makes me feel young again

I see you clearly  
when I read Drummond  
listen to the blues  
or walk in the rain

in a special way  
my friend  
you've made it difficult for me

again and again I cry  
the futility of living

still

in a special way

as if addicted  
to those tears we cried together  
knowing our doubts  
fearing our future  
as strangers

April 1981

## Property Settlement

We've shared mechanics and lawyers  
an office, books, poems  
some love and  
many fears

Will we be able to share  
the distance  
and make it less?  
How will the absence be settled —  
will I keep the memories,  
you the loss?  
Who shall have that trust  
it took so long to build?

I — spoiled child — would like it all  
but what I want the most

right now

is to

remember

that evening you surprised me  
with a kiss  
and brought me back

to my senses

the moments we spent together  
learning each other  
the time I spent alone  
learning to let go

I want to remember the sound of your laughter  
I want to remember the clicking of our glasses together

Yes, I'll take all the movables —  
those sentimental, unnecessary objects  
I've kept as souvenirs

I'll leave you the house  
that solid, well-built house  
our friendship  
When I return — for a visit —  
I'll travel light

May 1981

to mother

raised in the stillness of the silent season  
too late/too soon  
for growth  
your voice was stifled  
by the rigid walls of custom  
your madness

that divine spark of anger  
echoed back as insult  
self-pity  
pain

had there been air  
in currents, movement  
to carry the strong voice beyond the walls  
had there been earth  
to feed the growing seed of discontent

your words, mother  
would soon have bloomed  
the tears you shed  
would not have flowed  
and dried  
in vain  
would have been rain well needed  
fertilizing the soil  
that we now plough

May 1981