

A WALK NEAR RECHARGE LAKE AND TWO TRUE STORIES

1

I'm here in sandals to part the grass
with my toes, prairie grass
long enough to harbor quiet stories not easy
to find these days. Loud stories demand boots:
laying ties, felling timber
but the wind is very still today.
I must remove barriers
become attentive to subtlety:
 the water hardly ripples
 but does
 toward no outlet
 I can see
 somehow sloughing the sky
 into troughs
 gathering bright shavings polishing
 the heavy slate bellies of clouds.
 Nameless birds call
 from their ground nests.

This is the grace I've come to find
the patience that outlives tall
cottonwoods.
It starts from the dirt
and moves out
a quiet, slow dance
I join with my bare toes I'm that
trusting.

2

I have this one story
I keep trying to tell but I
always fail.

I'm three or four and have crawled
under the porch of one of the old
buildings at the college
where my father teaches.

I watch people through the wooden slats

walk past
sometimes turning to tramp over the boards above my
head.

I'm the troll under the bridge
silent, naked
waiting to pop out into the deadly light
and accost the laughing travelers
Who's that tramping over my bridge?

I slip off my clothes
in the smell of dead birds
and earthworms
in a hidden freedom
a secret power these people know
nothing about.
*It's not over on the other side
where the clover seems thicker;
it's here, under the bridge in my
castle of dirt where*
I relieve myself, finding an old notebook page to
wipe with.

Later, hand encased in my
father's, I see the place
glow behind the slats as we walk past
on the sidewalk.

The smell is still in my nose here, on
this paper.

3
I have one more story.

I'm fourteen
on a church trip at night.

On the bus, in my sleep
my left hand drops
into the deeper darkness of the aisle
my fingers brush something: a shoulder.

I'm suddenly awake with the choice before me;
I leave the hand there
bouncing, brushing softly with the sway of the
highway.

Time is lost in darkness

in the warmth of touching
in the warmth of my
imagining, the offer I'm making that might
be taken as no offer only sound sleep.

The blackness blossoms red as a hand brushes
mine and our fingers touch.
Light shoots through my arm there where I hold that soft
warm torch below my body.

Later, the hand moves mine down
past a V-neck I can only imagine
and places it like an offering
on the soft mound of skin above her heart
her nipple between my
fingers.

I ride the bus like that all night
instinctive as a baby
my eyes wide, taking in the blackness holding life
in my hand.