

Spring Cleaning

Straightened the books
Dreams pushed aside again
No-one to discipline me;
I discipline myself

Inner child disciplined all day
Lonely, but the voices have disappeared

Lonely night I prefer to lonely day
Broken heart I prefer to broken mind

She is so far away in a dream,
and so close in a photograph

I find records of my winter delusions
on scraps of paper, in corners

Burn

Her eyes meet mine in the kitchen
Her suicide plan didn't go through again

Her smile warming the room and the food
Her hand covered in ink spider webs
she drew in Emergency

She is scared here too
She doesn't know anyone
and she can't eat anything
with charcoal left in her stomach —
if I lit her on fire
she would burn all night

Butts and Coffee

One dusty downtown
summer afternoon
you came running over
with your smile longing for teeth

We were careful not to trip
on potato chip bags rolling down the streets
walking to my bachelor suite for coffee

You sat in my reading chair,
began rolling tobacco
from your pocket collection of cigarette butts
while I made a fresh pot of coffee

You censured my music, ignored the books
Spoke with the pride of acid trips
and your own room at the Salvation Army

It seemed to bother you that I was also deemed schizo-
phrenic

I walked you back halfway to the Salvation Army
Crossing Victoria Park you gave me some older cousin
advice:
killing people is wrong

Cleaning Crew

we leave our boots on
and we can't sit down
because of the possibility
of syringes

I prefer to clean the bathroom,
though I can never understand
all the trinkets —
a forest of elves
migrating

the woman who complains
about everything
is pushed
to complete
her tasks

there is never enough
all-purpose spray,
almost an empty bottle —
it is clear they are saving
cents

the man who is always home
tells me he is the rooster
because he has all the chicks ...

I don't like moving his false teeth
and his toilet never works

After work
I walk home alone
on faded crosswalks

Neighbourhood Cleanup

We poke through
the streets

A man heading
out to his car
points
at garbage
on his lawn

“You missed
a spot,”
he snarls

My bag collapses
My face melts

Endless sunshine
Endless garbage

the guts of the hovel
carried out in cardboard boxes
myself included ...
still the dreams
of ancient plumbing

you pulled over
your car
in the valley
and read Shakespeare
to cows

your last phone
call
from a cabin up north:
“I’m in the depths
of depravity”

valley summer —
shale breaks
in our hands

my Dad took me on hikes
up the valley ...
at the top
we found shelter
behind stones

icy sidewalk ...
a grey line of pigeons
above the underpass

a man
falling
out of his winter jacket
with cheap cotton stuffing
enters the overheated bus