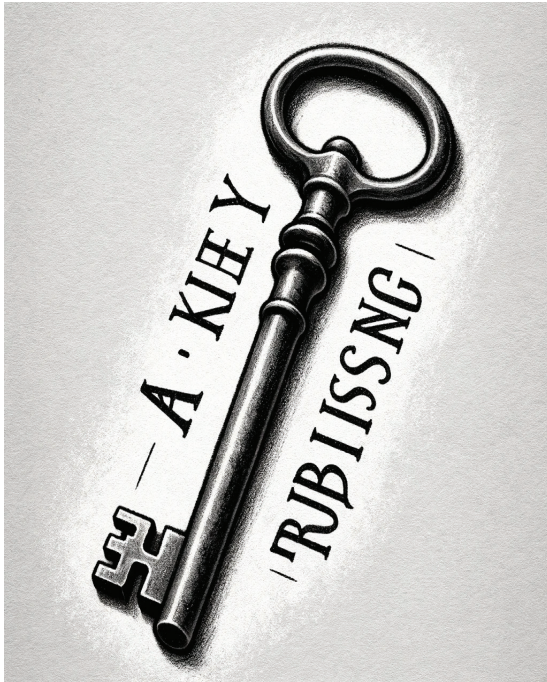


THE SEASONS FROM PERRY CITY ROAD

A JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF,
RENEWAL, AND THE HEALING
POWER OF POETRY: SELECTED POEMS
2012-2017

Lex E Santí, LCSW, MFA



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A Key Therapy Publications

For Shona and Gordie
you are my loves (the Shantis)
I dedicate all of this to you.

And for all my friends and family
who helped get me here, thank you.

THE SEASONS FROM PERRY CITY ROAD
BY LEX E SANTI, LCSW, MFA

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Lex E Santi

'THE SEASONS FROM PERRY CITY'
a postlude (2023)

After the MFA
And then the MSW
After your open email.
The summer of
Seperation.
I found myself in the seasons of Perry City.
In a rocking chair wailing
Like a babe
But a full adult- not to diss babies
Unable to go into the purple room
That should have been Lyra's.

Broken moments while the clunk of the black walnuts
Slammed down on the metal roof
Like gunshots waiting for me
To be next.
That first winter, I learned to build fires
Walking alone in the woods
Pago by my side
The spring emerged, the long thaw
Shoveling out into
The summer of love
Our Lake Crew emerging.

All these poems showed up. Knocked on the door.
Underlined copies of Hafiz
Enough herb to hold me over till spring
The length of rope tied to the shore
cut
As I let myself swim in the lake
Post on the 'gram
And write poetry again in the margins.
It's not all bad.

You learn to love again
But you have to be broken first.

'WHAT IS FROZEN IN TIME'

I'm okay with this.
The way things are now.
It doesn't bother me in the slightest:
That we're not celebrating our daughter's second year of life.
And you're not getting ready to put plants into the dirt.

The hose is not leaking.
You didn't forget to close it off in the basement.
That's tricky. I know.
But your things are not in the house.
Or rather the boxes that turned into bowls are back into boxes.

You and I never mourned our daughter's death
8 weeks of IVF or not.
Nor our own freed hearts
That broke open in the dead of central new york winter

Only the cracked corn stalks encased in ice along the straight
Lines of where the plow had broken the earth remain
Your Subaru so warm, while we tried to process, our hopes and
dreams, dead inside..
We sat in silence looking out
At what was the end, before it was said.

II

I hold poses for hours. Breathing deeply. I stay still often now.
And over that summer that's what I learned. Scared to go
anyplace.
Too fast. I watched you move someplace else. To in North
Carolina.
Then to Florida
to visit your mom when she decided she needed to post about it
on Facebook.
Everywhere you went. Criss-crossing the land.
Picturing you confused.
Unsure of yourself or my own intents.

Was it that bad, to get a job?
To want a future with a house?
Remember when you said, "What's the point of all this?"
And from the heart, I didn't know what else to say but,
"Life. That's what we're doing."
Love.
Work.
Making dreams come true."

It wasn't though, what you could handle.
So you packed up the Subaru again, 4 months after the fact. To
pick herbs in the Blue Ridge.
And some sort of Communist
wannabee somebody was down a couple of hours away
waiting for you to pick up the phone, when enough lavender
had been picked
and you told me later you invited him
into the yurt and that was that. I was no saint. A yoga retreat
fling, did me in. I confess(ed): not my finest moment. Maybe
this all was a bit much. At that time though
staring out at the Sonora desert and wondering
fuck I wish we could go back
frozen in time while we were in your car
looking out at the field and say
I'm sorry it has to be this way.

'THE LIFE LEFT'

You wake.
Dreaming of taxes.
Labor.
Unfettered markets.
Performance reviews and
all those other
nightmares.
Thank god, for walks with the dog,
great friends and hearty chili.
Beyoncé.
I'd like 10 more minutes
but there's things to lift.
Things to do now.
Plus, dreams like that, who needs them?

'HEARTBREAK'

You are quiet at times.
Wandering through your days.
Wondering where the end point is.
Hafiz said not loving is a letting go.
Letting go is sometimes
The only way to love.

'WINTER ENDING'

We won't turn and scorn
The first person who says
"It was a mild winter," after all
We deserve a break.

Now and then I dream of you
And the seasons we didn't make
Together we were something, no?
Like all lovers we got our time

And ours was a good run.

These days, any time after January 26,
Which is supposed to always be
The coldest of the year

I think of spring winds coming
Flowers will bud, it won't be hard to
Face cold mornings. Fleece slippers
Will be lost in the back of the closet.

We'll run around again and find the lake
Put finger tips to laps of water; the wake
Left over from a memory beyond. There
Is a touch of winter in all good things.

Scarfs, mittens. Those knee high socks
Walking around without boots--
The solace of watching this fade, slowly
Away. Before I forget, just know

I loved with what I had, as only I could.
In a world of cheap deals--and empty
Campaign promises--I like to hope
That means something.

'THE LAST NIGHT'

We spent in the same bed—did you know
That you were leaving
We had already decided. Some time away would work

But you still hadn't decided. When.
You woke up and went to the shower. I was already dressed. I
looked at your phone.
Facebook messages to him.

Wanting to let him know—just how important he was to you.
And when you came out of the shower.
And came into the bedroom

I pounced. There was nothing left in me.
You'd already quit counseling. Said you didn't want another go at
a child.
You'd take the towel off and were putting lotion on your body.
Taught.

Your belly now flatter. Your breasts light. Your hair fine and
getting longer.
Laying next to you, was all I wanted for so many days of my
life. How did we get here. Before I screamed I remember
knowing, knowing it in my heart.

The life we had was going to end. I heard it in songs late at
night while I was working on the novel. The one about Cuba.
Do you remember? Reading the pages and deciding that you
couldn't be all about me anymore. It would have been

Easier to let go of you the night before. You could have said,
--I lost it with you. I just did.
-I could have said, I'm done too.
--I don't think we have the magic any more.
-You don't want the same sort of sex that I do.
Or

-I'm going to start wearing more plaid.
--Something is too hurt inside of both of us

Together the words would have been understood.
It could have ended before. Not with me screaming and
leaving. Not tearing out of the driveway, like I'd done when I
was 16.

Down that fucked up driveway onto
Route 79, oncoming traffic honking their horn.

Off to work I went. Off to work I went.
Relieved to be done.
Relieved to be done
Working on us.

'EARLY SPRING'

I can't help but exclaim
When it's in the 50's. And I've stopped by the Piggery
For a dry rubbed rosemary pork chop
and a few sweet potatoes at Greenstar
that the sun exclaims loudly
that Pago and I can spend more than 15 minutes in the hammock
and I remember
that spring could feel like
a pelting of sleet in the morning
followed by 3 straight hours of sun. I'm calling for the early
Spring: rosebuds and blossoms and the whole nine.
I couldn't be bothered by anything when I sit outside
and breathe steady. Staring off at the distance. I don't think
It will matter next week or the next
because I have called for an early spring.
I will grill outside tonight!
And howl at the moon with my pup.
I might not even build a fire.
Ok, I probably will.

'GIVE IT A SHOT'

When it is raining
No one can remember
what the sun last looked like-

Figures.
Some hardly could care.
Imagine that?

Secure with a bold umbrella
Or under the hoodie hiding,
Dashing away.

It's like that, forgetting what is bright and
special about the world.
Some of you

Dance in the mud instead
And I admire you for it.
I'm not stuffy all the time. Hardly.

I'm more like you than
I care to admit.
Knowing the clouds

Cover up the rest
Of the day
I wish I could let myself

Stomp in puddles
Calling forth joy
Laughing like a child again.

I'd like to wipe the rain
From my face
Hoping for sunlight to dry my eyes.

'LAMENT OF MAY'

Ithaca
We can do better!
In May
I want some sun,
Feel me?
Ithacans, I apologize
I called for the early spring
And so far,
It has only appeared
In a break of the clouds.
I would like,
to make Spring
Great again.
Lose the PCoat
The thick socks.
I want to live someplace
Where tulips don't
Have to face a sudden
death or the apple
buds aren't punished
For their ambition.
This, my friends
Is my campaign.
Are you
With me?

'SHOULD PROBABLY MOW'

You need to feel
Uncomfortable
Occasionally
Do you hear that?
It isn't always going to be a bed
Of dandelions.
Those get mowed down
Overtime. This is supposed
To be hard. Feel me?
When you want roots
In the soil
There's a chance they will
Die in the process.
Always that. Always a chance.
If you can't work like that
Then just enjoy the fucking frame.

'ACHE OF SPRING'

On the other end of a
season.
Before the 60 degree days
and the sound of shoes
slapping
loudly on pavement
without the sight of our
breath
heaving in front of us.
Take one more look before.
You've waited long enough.

'PATHS'

There was another path. You see that right?
You could have chosen to live and love another way.
You could have taken it.
Maybe you think there's
Another version of you out there.
Spare me the theoretical.
Out beyond ideas of right and wrong and all that.
I don't know what it matters-
Though fun to contemplate.
How we could have made things work.
The maybe (ifs).
There was another way, sure.
We all get that.
Each and everyone of us
But you have to live here, people.
This is what you get.
This is where you are.

If the voice you hear tells you to run.
Trust that.
It's the light between two people that will allow things to grow.
If all you have is a long long winter,
Well, hard days, friend.
Better to enjoy this sunshine and watch things bloom!

Let's admit it, the days are a lot more beautiful now
Stuff of day dreams.
We've spent enough time lamenting.
We've spent enough time wishing on the change of season
Before you're ready.
Time to walk around folks, let the air in your belly and laugh
about how damn lucky you are.

'FEAR OF A FLOWER'

There have been times
that I have been scared of the flower.
Times when the marks of patience
Cast more shadows over my future
Than I care to mention.
I travel in the light these days
Wander about pleasantly. It's been sunny.
Finally.
I guess
Vitamin D is to blame.
Not to complain
I started planting a garden.
Made the beds. Trucked in the good stuff.
Ammended the soil. Got it?

When you are standing on the gates of a garden.
Give yourself permission to go in and plant something.
It's fine. Really. If you change your mind
The doors will still be open behind you
Gives you a chance to
Scatter the seeds violently over your head
and blow out of there quick.
If you must-
But if you will:
Kneel down
Be gentle
Listen
Give the cover to the ground
And say thank you.
Then you can wander off.
Just think of what's to come.

'YOU WIN'

You've spent enough time
Denying who you really are
And always
Trust me
Always
You will arrive
Someplace.
Then you have to decide:

Maybe it was east of Tampa, when you parked by the swamp on
your way across the state and threw stones
Hoping to wake
An alligator
Out of a slumber

Or when you lashed yourself to your mountain bike
And climbed 300 feet in elevation and after 12 hours to journey
to where Dracula was born.
Remember you took a break by the side of the road and said, I
know this may break me.
Maybe.
Could it be?
When he died on the side of the road
His motorcycle tipped over and the blood
You saw for days.

When she left.
When you stopped writing.
And wondered: is this it?
At some point you get there
You arrive. See that?
All those moments in your life
Like the stacked shale rocks washed over in
Cascadilla gorge.
This is an Ithacan's ritual for late spring.
A totem to what was the

Past laments
We must find a way
To memorialize it all
And what you would endure in the future.
Beautifully rendered gathering
Your pain.
We find a mark, strangers
Collaborating as we walk up the gorge.
One teeters atop of another
One to the other.
To be cleansed by the rush of water
Around the base
Turning into
Something beautiful.

You decide then--whether to see
What it all amounts to
Poem after poem
Honoring that.
That's what I'm trying to do.
But it is your choice.
You have to decide to do that
Or fucking kick it all over
And run away
As fast as you can.

'IN TERMS OF HAFIZ'

Don't you know yourself?
By now.
Really?
My thoughts on the matter are on record.
It's such a beautiful life you lead.
Haven't you taken a look around lately?
There's so much to where we are now,
God circled it all on a map for you.
It's up to you to decide where to go from here.

'GENTLEMAN FARMER AND ALL THAT'

You were raised south of here, in Ithaca
But now, in Ulysses. Square on
Perry City Road
You're used to things being this way:
The comings and goings of lovers and family.
In and out of paradise.
Out and in of love.
It comes with land
Always pushing people to the end point.
Healing them
and then,
walking away.

The past few
The foxes come at night.
Sneak into the coop. And take a life, to feed their family.
Long ago
A Romanian peasant told me of an evening,
When he was married,
and how they came one night and killed his entire flock. Hearing
the death curdle, his wife asked him,
"What are you going to do?"
And, his response was only,
"I can't." Raising his hands he finished the tale,
"Ce sa fac?"
"Whare are you to do?"
I awoke at 2am and wondered the same
The empty side of my bed asking me.
I do not want to be the sort of man who cannot rise to meet that
challenge.
I picked up the flashlight
Bare chested, my feet wet with dew and cut grass.
Just a hair of briefs to protect the kibbles. I charged, waving
the machete -- screaming into the night air.
I was too late.