

## STARTING SCHOOL

After you have wiped off flies  
And eaten the jelly of strength and cunning  
And taken the knob of cheese and the quivering bird  
And left home with these in your pocket

And you've met the giant  
And given blood from a stone  
Thrown the stone without return,  
Stripped the cherry tree of sweetness

Someone whispers: every cause  
Has a pearl; every cure has effect  
But who will protect the innocent?

You are walking home from school  
A classmate stalks you  
He has five stones in his pocket  
He lets fly the first and the second  
And the third. You run so fast that the fourth and fifth  
Remain in the air: they do not fall to earth

Then your mother says, That boy in your class, the one  
Who followed you home, his sister strangled to death in her crib  
On a strand of real pearls. Imagine!

## CONNECTION

I was never a drug dealer  
I wore a knitted red sweater  
And green hair ribbons, and ate tinned jam  
With a spoon  
When I looked out the window  
I found orchards of green-gage plums  
Caterpillars tented their leaves  
In gauzy detail and then re-invented

I was never a drug dealer  
But my brother and I knelt in the grass  
Of the flats and picked magic mushrooms  
I kept mine in a tin  
While men from black limousines  
Grazed the fields clean

I was never a drug dealer  
But when the counter-weight slipped on the drill-rig  
I sat in a car with my boyfriend  
And stared at some pills  
It's okay, he said—and I hated him  
I know exactly how it must feel  
When somebody dies  
And you loved them

## FIDELITY

It was dark, yet the gorse was still a blaze of yellow  
And green above the little stream  
We sieved for drinking water  
Indoors, on the bed, I took  
Your knife: scored my palm and passed  
The blade to you  
The ancient stones nearby, crabbed in broken circles  
The mothy bull; the red deer just about to butt  
And send a rutting roar across the glen  
Agreed that blood's been shed before  
To prove a point. You scarred your hand and when  
I pressed the welling lines to mine, you calmed  
Lay down your broken-heartedness in sleep

Inside a poem's no place to fix  
A spiral loosed between us then  
And since; but I would always  
Mix your blood with mine  
Though you are fixed on gathering darkness  
I have a means  
To find you through the red-deer witness  
The stones that never stop their starry  
Turn; the bull's seed-lives, spilled in a womb  
And on the grassy turf which sharp hooves drive  
These can be touched.  
Just as a heart breathes in its life and rest  
Like apples keep their seeds  
To feed the wayfarer on her travels  
Now, alone, or with the company who find her  
Worthy