

AWAKE AMID ANCESTRAL DREAMS

Poetry

EMMA MOONSINGER

Emma Moonsinger



ESTUARY PUBLICATIONS

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Mars Hill, NC USA  
ISBN-10: 1456445499

*Cover art by: E. Moonsinger*

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*'Looking down upon us surely they weep throughout Eternity.'*

Yet we live our lives in doubt beyond their tears .

## CONTENTS

- 7 AWAKE AMID ANCESTRAL DREAMS
- 8 UNCOMFORTABLE WITHIN
- 11 DEPTH
- 13 MY DOG
- 15 DECLARING I HAVE KNOWN
- 18 THE GREAT DIGNITY
- 21 LIKE A CHILD LOST
- 24 THIS IS ALL REGRET
- 28 MY THRONE
- 31 WE KNOW HOW SHORT WE FALL
- 35 FOR IT TO BE TRUE
- 37 IT'S RIGHT TO MARVEL
- 40 IT'S ONE THING
- 44 IF THEY KNEW ANYTHING
- 45 AGINCOURT
- 49 NAGGING DISCONTENT
- 51 MY CANARY
- 53 HERE YOU GO
- 55 WHAT DO I KNOW OF KINDNESS
- 56 MOSQUITOES MAKE MORE SENSE
- 59 NO LONGER UNDER GOD'S WATCHFUL EYE
- 60 TO RIDE THIS BUS

63 THIS IS BUT THE WORKINGS OF MY MIND  
66 SEEN AND UNBELIEVABLE  
68 BUT ONLY LISTEN TO MY TROUBLES  
72 IN THE CARELESSNESS OF AN AFTERNOON  
74 DOWN A DARKENED ALLEY  
75 TOSSED ABOUT ENDLESSLY  
79 JOKE OR NOT  
81 UNNOTICED AND UNSPOKEN  
83 IF MAN IS ANYTHING  
85 LOGIC TELLS US  
88 THERE'S SO VERY MUCH LEFT TO BE SAID  
91 THE CONFUSION OF THE AGES  
94 LIKE A RABBIT  
96 THIRST FOR WHAT  
97 TO PULL MYSELF AWAY  
101 WHAT DARK MESSAGE  
102 THIS IS THE STORY  
105 REJECTION  
106 DISADVANTAGED BY NATURE  
108 OFFSPRING  
111 THE DEVIL HIMSELF  
112 SO LET'S START HERE  
116 THESE ARE THE THINGS  
118 I THINK BIRDS



A DOORSTOP BOOK  
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AWAKE AMID ANCESTRAL DREAMS

Lights above us  
We can not see  
What's under foot  
We do not feel  
As we tread about blindly  
In ever decreasing circles

Awake amid ancestral dreams  
We despoil their gifts  
And carry away only trinkets  
From over-abundant treasuries  
With no concept that they  
Us see  
Or hope that we they  
Will ever hear

Asleep among ancestral bones  
We dream no dreams and leave only  
Shallow marks upon the walls of Time



## UNCOMFORTABLE WITHIN

Uncomfortable within ourselves  
We're fearless in the wide wide world  
Out 'n' about  
Playful, joyful, thoughtless, free  
Carelessly drunken

Well, not really  
Or at least not always

But we could be  
We could be  
Playful, joyful...  
We are (thoughtless)  
We remain (free)  
Carelessly drunken  
Perhaps not always

We kill our time with duller things  
Doting over the past

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Near mindlessly  
Snared and caught up in photographs

Slouching through the months  
For that's the shortest measure  
Undistracted (Or so I suppose)  
Things left behind  
Left unexplored  
Lost treasure

That world  
Which we carry wounded within  
Is what they make  
Self-help books for  
Wisdom cheaply bound

I once truly thought--  
I think we all did--  
That we might capture  
This very moment  
And live it fully

Fat chance! we cheer  
(Yes, I hear the raucous laughter)

Uncomfortable within ourselves  
We may be just a little too content (do you think?)  
Inside the cage  
In which we dwell  
Without thought of escape  
Or yearning for  
What might be more elusive  
Less easily attained  
Of greater value  
Purer

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## DEPTH

I *wish* I knew what Depth was

I said laughingly

And she said

That she knew Depth by watching me

By watching me struggle

I asked

No, she said, by watching you at rest

Wow, I thought

Someone--

And not just anyone

But someone who knows me--

Thinks I have a moment's rest

A moment's rest, I thought

With longing

(Oh god, with such longing)

I wish I knew a moment's rest

I said

Mostly to myself

Searching her eyes

I could see that she was quite sincere though

And so, I had to love her

More deeply

For her innocence

MY DOG

My dog--  
Humble creature--  
Out of the most thoughtful  
And kind consideration  
For the burden  
That is my daily obligation  
To him  
Made a valiant attempt--  
Not entirely in vain—to  
Just for one day  
Feed himself  
While I remained too long away

It was a kind of gift, I suppose  
Breakfast in bed, perhaps  
But in reverse form

He showed concern  
And took great care

Not to deplete  
The wealthy, o'erflowing stores  
Of kibble  
Or defile in any way  
Those great heaping bags  
A thought  
I thought  
Quite nice

Instead  
He thought, I think,  
Apparently  
From the evidence  
Or greasy lack there of  
A pound of butter  
Would  
For himself  
That day  
Suffice

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## DECLARING I HAVE KNOWN

Declaring, "I have known..."

I dwell upon the declaration

Of Love I have known

Of tears I've shed,

Disgrace,

Shame,

Humiliation,

All earned, of course

Kept nicely hid

There's that smile!

These things I bring upon myself

I deserve no better

Unwilling or unwitting scoundrel

For lack of vision

These things I bring

Upon myself



The wounds I bear, simple as they may be  
I bear willingly  
But not proudly like some  
Shamefully like  
(and here I have a chance to be kind)  
Most (I suppose)

In full, light of day, knowledge  
That my tread upon this earth  
Bears the mark of arrogance  
Offers no rebuff which I can not bear  
With flighty indifference

This chin held high  
Puts a nice face on my belligerence  
Pugnacious,  
Defiant,  
Challenging,  
Vain,  
The false face of Pride and  
Hair bleached eternally blonde

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My claim to know anything  
Would be laughable  
To anyone who knows me  
Or knows of me

That look planted so firmly in my unwavering eye  
Declares  
My own stupidity  
To anyone that might care to see it  
Which is, I think probably is,  
(and here I have a chance to be cruel)  
Anyone (I fear)

But that's just a guess

And with this burden  
I trudge on  
Seemingly un-wracked  
And unrepentant  
Quite pleased with myself  
(But aching)

## THE GREAT DIGNITY

A small bird

A small bird has come down

And nestled in my heart

I could feel her settle in

Her singing

Her singing delights me each morn of every day

Her cooing soothes me nightly into sleep

Does this bird

Does this bird belong to you my love?

It bears your mark upon its wings

These wings

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These wings flutter

At your approach

Your nearness

The thought of you

Your smile

Your smile lifts my heart

And I take flight

And I do not take readily

To the sky

Only place

Only place your hand in mine

And

The bird of my heart stirs within me

And (for the moment)

I fear her escape

But gladly

But gladly would I see her take wing  
If knowing she would fly to you  
And reside within your heart  
Causing it to sing like mine

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## LIKE A CHILD LOST

Like a child lost  
I stand here stubbornly  
As if the sweep of time  
Might mean nothing to my jaded heart

It's my soul that cries  
For the comfort of things  
That I know are out there  
And free for the taking  
But which I refuse to take

This wound  
Self-inflicted  
I can bear  
I can ignore  
I can forget  
I can not give in to  
Its nagging aching persistence  
I can bear

No, I take my stand here  
On this spot  
I refuse to budge  
I will not follow

I will with these cold eyes  
Survey the horizon of my past  
With great indifference and  
Fleeting expectation  
Of falling at last upon  
My own image there

I refuse to chart  
The waters I have known  
I have traveled across  
I have swum in  
From which I have taken  
My salty, lively sustenance

Bestirred again to the sea's calling  
I have no tales to tell

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That chart laid out before me  
Could lead me yet to safer waters  
Harbor,  
Anchorage,  
An eternity of gently rocking  
Leeward rest  
Buffeted, unbuffeted  
(I know there is a word for that.)

Yet, child-like  
I prefer the open sea



## THIS IS ALL REGRET

But

Let me say only one thing more

In passing

A casual sort of observation

Stripped of nuance

Free of rhythm

Without implication

No agenda whatsoever

An amusement merely

An amusement

When I moved to Forestville

*For the sake of Love* (insert raucous laughter here)

I made myself a promise

On that first starry night

I promised myself that I would

Spend each night

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Upon that porch

Looking up at the starlit sky

It hung so closely overhead

It was unlike any sky I had seen

Since childhood

And I made a solemn vow

I thought that it could only do me good

I promised myself that I would

Each night, observe that sky

From upon that porch

It was deep and dark and somehow welcoming

That lovely sparkling expanse

And I swore that I would

From that day on (cross my jaded heart)

For as long as I lived in that neat place

Look up and upon that sky

For a moment I would dwell  
Either giving thanks or  
Barring that, open myself to  
Accept its broadcast benevolence

The trees, you know, the trees  
Seemed to know what I was up to  
Flooded with a basic, off-hand, casual thanks, I prayed  
That I would pray again  
And would continue to pray  
Under those knowing trees  
Until eventually  
I would come to understand such beauty  
And add meaning to my prayers

The cats had no problem with it  
They were out there every night naturally  
Secure in the knowledge  
Deprived to me  
By too much effort  
And far too much muddled thought

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And I went inside on that first night  
With a solemn SOLEMN sacred SACRED searing vow  
Branded fresh upon my lips  
I swore

With an unfamiliar pride  
Bravely swelling my stupid, childish heart  
I swore

With tight closed eyes and clenched hands  
I swore

And I lived in Forestville for –what?—  
Three years (or more, I guess)  
And never set foot out on that porch  
At night  
Again

## MY THRONE

The kind of throne I would have  
(For we need to plan these things)  
Is anchored in the sky  
Kept awash in ever-flowing tears

And  
It will be a kindly thing

When I am crowned I would  
Be seen surrendering to despair  
Bowing humbly, unresponsive  
To the surging adoration all about me

My unwavering humility (previously mentioned)  
False front for a scheming heart  
Will sway any doubter  
Who gazes upon my sincerely wrinkled brow

I know this because

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Though I wish to be that light

That purity

That beacon

That shelter

That protector

That lover

That friend

I am, perhaps like others

Falling far too short

But pressing on blindly

In tortuous self-deception

Wishing only

To drag others along with me

In my hidden lust

(If I can)

I feign innocence or ignorance (depending on my mood)

Or sometimes laugh it off in

Ringling bell-like tones

Oh, come on, they always say  
It can't be all that bad

But, I assure you, friend, it is  
(Why this brings laughter, I'll never know)

In fact, it's worse  
Worse because  
The nature of that sword is that  
You must run it through yourself  
To get at others

And so I have

So, go away now  
And let me work on this throne design

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## WE KNOW HOW SHORT WE FALL

We know how short we fall  
But never can admit it

That we know and do nothing is  
A mystery to no one  
Laughable to many  
Regrettable to some  
Infuriating to others  
A fact we must divorce ourselves from  
In order to continue  
Along the silly jagged path

Laughable or sad  
As someone once said  
That's pretty much the truth of it

Ah well  
As someone else once said  
Ah, well



So it is that, one brisk day  
Despite all odds and bad weather  
We set sail  
And with a good wind at our backs  
Were driven nicely, swiftly, cleanly, neatly  
Out to sea

Out there, there is no reason  
No direction, no control  
I feel that I should tell you that  
If you didn't know

And instantly we were in the midst of the storm  
(they call it a squall)  
Which everyone predicted

Lost in the roil, tossed in the trough  
Slammed up and down, from side to side  
And driven onward  
Abeam, astern, abow, again abeam  
Mercilessly

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Too tiny to fend it off

Helpless

In the Hands of God

There was no time for fear

We had work to do

Beyond the clinging and the prayer

The driving rain, the shrieking winds

The threat that we would be capsized

Surrounding us, and pounding us

Would our fears be realized?

(Thank you Thoreau)

Out there, as quickly as things change

Fears and hopes are rearranged

(Thank you Dr. Seuss)

As suddenly we found ourselves

Not quite dead calm

For that would be tedium

But in the balmy wind

And that wind  
Simply drags us gently  
Home again

And, yes  
That's how quickly it happens  
And, yes  
That's how quickly it can end

After being out at sea  
The land's stability  
Under foot  
Was, well,  
Unsettling

And so we stood there for a while arm-in-arm  
Looking longingly out at that great granite mass  
We stood there drenched and shivering  
Having faced together something very real  
With Fear's encouragement  
Still in our quickened hearts

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FOR IT TO BE TRUE

For it to be true

It must be enigmatic

(And not mathematic)

That's what they say

That's what they tell us (though obliquely)

And for that to be true

It must be made clear

Undeniably ringingly

Within that part of us

Where we've chosen

To stage our own defense

Yet we continually write and dance and sing

Expecting others to hear

And maybe sympathize (or lead the way out of here)

But, OH, wait

The thought arose within me  
Just now  
That perhaps  
It can only be explained  
Through metaphor

Two meta-twos  
Either multiplied or added  
Or one meta-eight  
(this line is yours)

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IT'S RIGHT TO MARVEL (once again)

It's right to marvel (one more time)  
At the mechanism that is the human hand  
The way it moves  
All the things that it can accomplish

It's right to mull  
To wonder, to regret  
All you've lost or have left behind  
In the blinking of a selfish eye

It's right to drag  
Those big fat feet of yours in  
An effort to slow things down  
As if we ever could

It's right to enjoy the sound  
Of your own mind  
Cleverly churning  
In silent surmise

Can you slow that 'cessant ticking  
Hold up the Past before us?  
And if you could  
What would it 'complish?

Have we learned that lesson yet?  
So many times before  
We've proven negligent  
While holding too tight to time

(Not to be cruel but)  
What's that unraveling in your hand?  
It dwindles even as we sit here

Ah, but maybe there'll be time enough later,  
When old, and sick and dying  
Maybe then we'll at last shoulder the task  
With arthritic joints and surprising skill

On the other hand--  
The reasonable one

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The truthful one--

I must urge you

I feel I must

I feel I should

While your teeth are still strong

To take a good deep bite

And render the fruit of it with pleasure

And crush it thoroughly

And savor

Every

Golden

Drop

As it trickles

Down your throat

On the other hand

For there always is one

Perhaps it's all just

A big mistake

And as was written on the liquor store wall

So what?



## IT'S ONE THING

It's one thing to choose for yourself  
A thundering depth of soul  
Or steadily seek the pounding silence  
Coddling the blinding empty vision  
Of foolish Expectation  
(But know your knots before you go)

It is quite another  
To attempt that  
While being driven forward  
By this life's biting trivialities  
The lock that will not hold  
The felling of a tree  
The car that will not start  
The bus just missed  
The distance on heavy foot to work  
With nagging time nipping at your heels

But only try

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Attempt that

Pursue it

Maintain the hunt

Keep the scent of it in your nose

Throughout the ragged course

After you have it once touched

No matter how slight the touch

No matter how briefly

There can be only disappointment

And ravaged hope

That's what the Buddha says

His eternal message being

So, don't allow yourself to

Fool yourself again

Or, you'll be left

To stand and watch

While the prey dwindles into

An embarrassing somewhat wacky idea

Forgotten in your brief time here

And impossible to explain to others  
Should you find one  
Who cares to listen to your awkward tune

Did I mention Hope  
That it MIGHT re-emerge  
Tantalizingly, sparkling, teasing?  
There ahead  
Did I see movement?

Do you feel something pulling gently upon your ear?  
Do you feel a nudge in your ribs?  
Can you hear it through the traffic?  
See it moving again  
Yet fleetingly  
In the meaty trudging sullen throng?

Around that corner it scampers  
Down an alleyway it goes  
I'm sure that was it  
Though I only caught a glimpse

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Shall we?

That's the spirit

## IF THEY KNEW ANYTHING

If they knew anything

It was that Life

Weighed out

Was tough

Perhaps for all of us

The rest they could

Hardly guess

Though guess they did

And had no qualms

About speculation

And few qualms about keeping an

Accurate accounting in which we now can find their lives

But they kept the good stuff to themselves

And took it with them to their graves

We don't know if anything has been lost or not.

Though we maintain a tendency to dig

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## AGINCOURT

In Agincourt 1415,  
I'm sure you remember this  
The French  
And the English  
And a thousand yards of mud  
Which lay in between

The French—  
They outnumbered the invaders  
Six to one (so, CLEARLY)  
God was on their side.

The English take a stand  
Do not advance  
Refuse to move  
It's six to one

Six to one  
Six to one

God on their side  
To the French it all seems pretty clear  
Six to one

The French set out  
Slogging their way through the muck and mire  
Mucking their way through the slog  
Six to one

Not quite midway (in the muddy field)  
Breathless from the seemingly endless trudge  
Their armor weighing heavily upon them  
The good French clay entrapping them  
And dragging them down  
Their optimism waning  
They foundered there  
And (I'm guessing here)  
Gazed yearningly (I mean helpless and aghast)  
In the direction from which they'd come

While the English long-bowmen,

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Drew upon them...and  
Released a hail of arrows (as someone said)  
Like driven rain

And, well, quite naturally,  
The good French soldiers panicked  
In the very real pageantry of fear they fled  
Frantic to survive, they turned  
Only to collided  
With their own rear guard advancing like nobility  
Engorged with righteous indignation  
Six to one

Entangled helpless heaps of French heroes  
Struggled in confusion  
In the deafening silence of fear and  
Imminent death  
While the English held back  
Waited, drew again  
Six to one



When the French had exhausted themselves  
Unable to extract themselves  
The English made their way  
Out to their downed and dazed opponents,  
And setting upon them with swords  
Slaughtered them wholesale

Slaughtered them wholesale  
Six to one

Six thousand French,  
Of gentle birth  
Were taken to be exchanged

Thirty-four thousand were  
Dispatched without mercy  
By the blade  
With God clearly  
On their side  
On that day in 1415

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## NAGGING DISCONTENT

My teacher once walked out on me  
Muttering beneath his breath,  
“Enough nagging...  
Do as you wish;  
It matters not to me.”

In pursuit I cast questions at his back  
(wadded paper projectiles would have done)  
‘Til he turned and sighing said,  
“With gentle prodding I have prepared the path  
March forward upon it or  
Continue headstrong aimlessly  
Wandering in the thicket.”

And I liked the sound of that  
“Headstrong. Aimlessly”  
“In the thicket”  
And that is what I’ve done  
I’ve chosen the thicket

And for fear that it might mark me  
With a kind of discontent--  
A snappishness, if you insist--  
I found much happiness there

This happiness lies outside the great and  
Noble ecstasy that might otherwise  
Be my claim  
But it seems quite natural still  
(You know, for me)

I like a nice starched linen  
I enjoy a wine with some depth  
I make no apologies for discernment  
In matters of that sort

MY CANARY

My canary can not be separated from his song  
It is the thing that marks him  
A creature of ineffable trust  
Though in a tiny cage he dwells  
His urge to fly unreasonably prevented  
He awakes each morning with cheerful offering

He weighs nothing  
He's really hardly there at all  
But his presence is undeniable  
Throughout the cheerful day

He makes it hard for me to be a grump  
I must admit  
He has the power to change my view  
My hope  
My odds  
My chances  
My somewhat clumsy thankfulness

He has a way of gently leading me to

Praise

Pleasure

The acceptance of things

Which I can not change

It's not only his bright feathers

It's more than his pure delight

The song is the message that is the wisdom

That is the song that is the bird

I'm jealous of course

I wish I had some of that

Swelling in me so strong

That I could not be separated from my song

I'm not even sure I know

What my song is

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## HERE YOU GO

I was snuggled up nicely in a large chair reading  
Just kind of nicely reading  
Snuggled up  
In a nice big warm chair, you know

It was a nice big thick book  
And I had enjoyed the way it had started out  
The way it began  
The way things were headed  
Just plodding along

Then HE appeared before me  
And took (well snatched) the book violently  
From my shaking hands  
And he took a hank  
I mean  
He took a healthy thickness of pages  
From the middle of that book  
In his meaty grip

And I looked on helpless as he tore them out  
He just ripped the entire center of that book out  
And before my eyes he shredded it  
Before my eyes it disappeared

Tossing the book back to me He snarled,  
“There you go. Deal with it.”

So, well, I just thought I'd warn you

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## WHAT DO I KNOW OF KINDNESS

What do I know of Kindness

What do we say we know

Perhaps it's not for us

To understand the word

What do I understand of kindness

What do I claim to understand

The kindness I extend

Is little more than show

So, why do I pretend

To know kindness

To offer what I've never known

To others

Why do I seek kindness

Expecting it from those

Who, like me,

Can not know what kindness really is



## MOSQUITOES MAKE MORE SENSE

Sleep is one thing we naturally endeavor to obtain  
And we have, I think, a kindly God  
So, what value these  
Little worthless, nagging fleeting things  
Which, nipping continually at our heels  
Drive us onward through the night?

What lesson are we to learn  
From tossing and turning  
Matters over  
That will soon enough (but maybe not so quickly)  
Resolve themselves  
In the light of day

Problems soon to be gone  
Which mean nothing really  
And though I know  
How little they mean  
Keep me awake with their incessant

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Wild gesticulation

Yes yes yes-yes

Yes Yes Yes

YES...I know how little they mean

YES...I know what the real stuff is

So, I should take comfort

Or maybe I should be more...what (more stoic?)

Trusting?

Apologetic

Forgiving

Forgetful

Patient

Disappointed in myself

Ashamed?

What value these little worthless fleeting nagging things

The price tag on some

Tiny plastic scrap-end

Which like an itch demands my nails

Until it bleeds

In this world in which I've known  
Comfort  
Sights  
And sounds  
And endless delights of every conceivable sort  
What purpose serves this nick nick nick nick nicking  
Throughout the endless night

I know the need for rest in  
Preparation for  
The ever emerging tedious distractions  
Which the light of day will bring  
And I must face  
Muffled in yawning and yearning for sleep

But this  
This serves no purpose  
In light of this  
Mosquitoes make tremendous sense

As does the plague they carry

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## NO LONGER UNDER GOD'S WATCHFUL EYE

No longer under the watchful eye of God  
I wonder what I have done  
To offend Benevolence  
And drive it so successfully from my door

It's not as if I haven't been  
Apologetic  
It's not as if I don't regret my past  
Or mourn my own stupidity

But I've banged my head a thousand times  
Upon that overhanging beam  
And I've stubbed my toe  
My fair share of times as well

I'm not asking for any gifts  
And I don't expect forgiveness  
But I just hoped that maybe, you know  
We could be friends again

TO RIDE THIS BUS (they say)

To ride this bus  
You only have to get on board  
That's what the song tells us  
(But this bus never stops)

But this bus never stops  
Never slows  
Has no doors or windows  
Is always crowded to the gills  
(Packed fairly solidly)

Packed fairly solidly  
With liars and scoundrels  
And charlatans and thieves  
Mirror admirers, clowns and at least one fool  
(And this bus)

And this bus  
Bears a sign that says

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It's on its rapid, easy swaying way

To Wisdom

(Wherever that may be)

Wherever that may be

They are clamoring to get on board

And be taken for that raucous ride

(Don't let this chance go by!)

Don't let this chance go by

Rocking on its bushings, jolting side to side

It bounces along the way

(You pay a hefty price)

You pay a hefty price

And there's something not quite right

About the smell of it

(The indifference of the driver)

The indifference of the driver

The smugness of the throng

The nagging thought that maybe  
(Now that you're aboard)

Now that you're aboard  
The nagging thought that maybe  
The others have no nagging thoughts at all  
(So, pardon me)

So, pardon me  
And let me through  
I think it's time  
That I got off  
(To ride this bus)

To ride this bus (so they say)  
You only have to get on board

Emma Moonsinger

THIS IS BUT THE WORKINGS OF MY MIND

This is not my work

This is not about my work

This is not me wielding the cudgel of my mind

This is the workings of my mind

(I am tempted to say merely)

It whirrs along unassisted

And so, what claim can I

Lay upon its frailty

Though I make ready claim

Upon any cleverness that may arise

(Dear ever-effervescent spring)

Which spills forth from my cunning lips

I bow

I simper (though I'm not entirely

Sure....uh...you know

What simper means)



I simper nonetheless

I gloat

(Though in a nice way)

Yes, I'm quick

Yes, I'm agile

I made up my mind some time ago

To be that way

(I remember the very day)

Today, I decided, (on that day)

I'll be quick, clean neat and efficient

A rapier of wit

A a a a a (what?)

Something quite impressive

Which I can no longer recall

Still, it was a good day

And a good decision

And, I'm glad I did it

Emma Moonsinger

So, there's the frailty I disclaim

Laid bare

(Before your eyes)

The good stuff is mine

Mine and *of my doing*

The other...

Well, who can say

(I have no control over that.)

Wherever you look

If you look carefully enough

There is always a devil in wait

## SEEN AND UNBELIEVABLE

It is, I believe, as Jack London said  
Not something you have to see to believe  
But something you can not believe  
Even after you have seen it

It is, I believe, as Henry Edward Fool says  
Something which is either  
Immediately understood  
Or cannot be explained

It is something which can be held  
But can never be touched  
Thought of  
But not spoken of

It is both clever and fleeting  
And cruel and thoughtless  
It is both before you and within you  
And always behind you

Emma Moonsinger

It's not a riddle

It's as much mathematics as myth

And you can wish all you want

But it cannot be tamed

So there you have it

Since you're neither coming nor going

But have decided no longer to wait

Have a seat and think about that for a moment

Then just try to forget it

It seems to have forgotten

Every last one of us

And it will forget all that follow

So, maybe just know this:

Beauty truly understood

Is crushing

## BUT ONLY LISTEN TO MY TROUBLES

Only listen to my troubles and  
I know you'll understand

Not my yearning  
For what is that really  
Not my anguish  
For I have none

But there is a thing which  
Resides like a mistake within me  
That I cannot get close to  
And cannot explain  
And cannot correct  
And cannot change  
And can never erase

Which I know that you'll  
Of course, understand

Emma Moonsinger

It fills me with doubt  
By not culminating  
Not taking on any physical form  
Which I might confront  
Alone

It persists in not being  
In any real sense  
Yet I continually  
Subject myself  
To the somewhat wobbly laws of nature  
Which keep it in play

When occupied with other things  
I feel the lack that this evasive thing  
Instills in me  
With quietly clinging claws

So, this is the part where  
I turn to you  
Knowing that you've

Defeated it and  
Remain unastonished  
As you have all these years  
By anything  
That I might say

In my awkward attempts  
(for there have been many)  
To catch and overtake myself  
I've often stopped to dwell (for a moment)  
And ponder  
Your casual indifference

So,  
You know,  
That's pretty much it

I've always felt like  
You're running beside me  
Without really knowing  
What I'm going through

Emma Moonsinger

Or what I'm getting at

Or the challenge I think we all must face

Completely alone

'Cept for you, of course

You somehow get on very nicely

Without much real contact

With your needy friends



## IN THE CARELESSNESS OF AN AFTERNOON

In the carelessness of the afternoon

I dawdled

Adrift, at a small table

In a waning sunlit room

Alone I sat and raised a cup

Before my eyes

And cast those languid eyes upon it

I admired that cup

And I admired the hands that held it

And I inspected the liquid within

Hoping to find nobility there

That may or may not exist

(Though I did not, in all honesty, expect to find it there.)

And the light that enlivened the curve of that fine porcelain

With blinding clarity

Emma Moonsinger

Revealed the miracle of the hands  
Which held it as well

Hands which  
Were given me  
Without my asking

And I didn't know  
What my next move should be  
Like all good weaklings I fear  
Or shrug off  
What I know is expected of me

## DOWN A DARKENED ALLEY

Down a darkened cobblestone alley  
Beside a barrel  
Leaking endlessly  
Through shattered wooden staves  
Sits an old man writing every  
English play ever written  
While an ancient woman sits behind him  
Weeping and at his feet  
A child sits in  
Expectation

Together, prey to Doubt,  
With troubled eyes they search  
The crevices among the stones  
For evidence that tears  
Were ever shed  
Upon that spot

Emma Moonsinger

## TOSSED ABOUT ENDLESSLY

Tossed about endlessly  
Upon an unforgiving sea  
We could only wait  
Our prayers long depleted

The darkening sky brings grave greetings  
The howling wind cruel invitation  
To surrender to our fate  
But too late that  
We each had decided  
When next given that chance  
No longer to hold fast

I recall the morning with  
Blinding sun extending in unbroken lines  
Toward every hope in all directions  
And falling upon breakfast with  
The hunger of young animals  
Though we had not been for years

Untroubled in our minds  
Joy-drunken in our hearts  
Farewell winds at our backs  
The welcome draw of the open sea ahead  
Seabirds circling above  
Like gifts for parting guests

There was a long reign of wonder  
Followed by a reign of calm  
That seemed to promise lovely things  
Before the monstrous swell began

We were all surprised that our tiny ship  
Could withstand the repeated shock  
That fell upon us so suddenly  
In ringing hammer blows  
Vanguard to an overtowering juggernaut  
Delivering relentless dread  
In merciless onslaught  
Throughout the night

Emma Moonsinger

And so we clung  
And so we prayed  
And so we knew that we were dead  
And so we prayed some more  
But drained of hope  
And far beyond forgiveness  
We asked for neither

Long after giving up  
Long after  
No longer having tears to shed  
No longer any fear  
Hours in and out of consciousness  
Surrender and weariness mixed in

The good sea leveled  
Took on the false face of kindness again

Arriving from above  
The West Wind quickened  
And birds appeared once more

To see us home  
Just as if we had never gone

With many months behind me now--  
Not months but years--  
I look out still with troubled eyes  
And plant my feet most stubbornly  
Upon this good too-stable earth  
And vow  
Never to set foot on any dock  
Or, lean in that direction

No longer eagerly deceived  
Refusing the challenge  
Confronting me  
I vow here, and I vow now  
To never again  
Go out to sea

JOKE OR NOT

Joke or not

I did not take it well

Though I dwelt among them for a while

A monstrous shapeless form

While they in graceful lines

Danced and damned me

To shameful isolation

Though silent in every possible way

My moving form

Always drew their sharp attention

Heralding my passage

With blaring searing horns

Which muster crowds for leering

And raucous disapproval

So thanks to them these days I find

Myself ever where I

Only ought to be



And know this with some bitterness  
But with undying certainty:  
Destruction of the mighty never comes  
Joke or not

Emma Moonsinger

UNNOTICED AND UNSPOKEN

Unnoticed and unspoken  
A language by all understood  
I can not myself speak

But sit quietly  
In distant admiration  
Of those who try

And snort, loudly  
Of course knowingly  
At those who think they can

Such followings they always have  
Such throngs they often draw  
Such theatrical contrivances  
They stoop to shamelessly employ

It's those unseen  
Unknown

Unheralded

Except by angels

Who apply

They are not admired

They are never heard

Nor do they harbor the desire

Like birds, like flowers

But only strive

To learn that language

In the hope that they

Will in time stand at the door

With a child's grasp

Of what's expected

And like children

Once accepted

Long for nothing more

Emma Moonsinger

IF MAN IS ANYTHING

If man is anything  
He is forgetful  
So let me pass the blame around  
As if  
It isn't me we're talking about here  
But you

If man is anything  
He (ha-ha) is forgetful  
So, let's keep moving as though  
It isn't me  
I'm sidestepping to avoid  
Stepping instead  
Upon someone else's toes

If MAN is anything  
He is forgetful  
If he has any skill at all  
Forgetfulness is his finest

Most developed

Most refined

Carefully maintained and

Most commonly employed

(I'm surprised we haven't worn it out)

So, let's see then

What are some of the things which

We've forgotten

Whatever they are

There are those in the church

Who, knowing these things

Are torn

And those who see it as a deadly threat

And those who see it as evil incarnate

And those who see it as no threat at all

Or even non-existent

But Testis Sum Agni

Lord, let us not forget

Emma Moonsinger

## LOGIC TELLS US

Logic tells us

Never mind what Logic tells us

Well, then the Law

Never mind the Law

Our instincts then

Puh...instincts

Inward struggle

What nonsense

Disastrous collapse

Now you're talkin'

From exhaustion

There you go again

I think that if we

WE?

I think that if I

YOU?

So, where to begin

We've already began and long ago

But, to begin again

Forgetting the past

The past can not be remedied

But can be learned from

Not from my experience

And whose fault is that?

Learning from the past is our struggle

Struggle or acceptance

I'm not sure I can learn by acceptance

Then struggle is the only way

But I'd rather not struggle

And so will never learn

I've heard of people who wake up one day and suddenly

Speak a foreign language with great skill

Never having studied a day

Emma Moonsinger

I mean I've dreamed of such things

I've dreamed of playing the piano that same way

And knowing Shakespeare's works by heart

And quoting lengthy passages from Dostoyevsky

In Russian

And flying a plane

Let me just whip up a nice soufflé

Or knit a cap

Or play a few bars of that on this old lute

I've dreamed of such things

A new husband goes to a priest and says,

"Father, we have prayed and prayed and prayed

To have a baby

And it's just not happening."

And the priest says,

"Some things require more than prayer, my son."



THERE'S SO VERY MUCH LEFT TO BE SAID

Poking around in the Templar ruins on Bezu  
I discovered nothing that I had not  
Brought with me, in my heart  
From St. Louis

Sixteen hundred years earlier  
In 410 the Visigoths departed Spain  
Taking with them only  
What they themselves had brought

Across the mountains  
Through the lavender fields of France  
They trudged

And when they got there  
They plundered Rome  
And left that place  
With only what they had arrived there with

Emma Moonsinger

Returning to France

They erected temples throughout the south

Which, excavated by us revealed

Ransacked vaults

Whatever treasures they once held

Were lost

If, say, they had held

Genealogies dating back to the fifth century

What would we now have

That we do not now possess

The Merovignians, with what they had

Ran the Visigoths out of France

And they departed with what they had after sacking Rome

Merovich, with only what he had

Fought off Attila outside of Paris

And they both had only what they had

Before the mighty clash

And so I must face the fact  
Sadly  
That I went  
I stayed  
I turned  
And returned  
And studied  
And read  
And held artifacts in my hands  
(In these very hands)

And while packing up  
Or unpacking  
Whether here, whether there  
I had pretty much  
All that I had from the beginning  
And that's all I'll have  
In the end

If there is sadness in that or joy  
I do not know

Emma Moonsinger

## THE CONFUSION OF THE AGES

Based on events of thousand of years ago

We to ourselves these days attend

But...

To what avail we know these things

Of what real use know popes and kings

Phillipe the Fair a man of will, had

Boniface VIII kidnapped to killed,

Benedict XI had he poisoned then

And, by chance I guess, had a friend

From Bordeaux appointed pope

Of course Clement V, his friend

Could then

Give the French king

Any little thing

That king--his friend--might ask

And knowing this

We now know what?

The Visigoths were unorthodox  
They knew Jesus was the Son of God  
But Christ, to them  
Was rightly foreign  
And they shrugged off Catholicism  
But clung to their misunderstanding

And knowing this  
We now know what?

Heathens though the Merovingians were  
They could be taught orthodoxy  
Demanding no need for re-education  
They formed a more catholic nation  
Of their own misunderstandings

Confused in the most basic sense  
To them all Marys were the same  
Revere the Mother or Mary the wife  
They lead a happy religious life in a time  
When pepper was more valued than gold

Emma Moonsinger

And knowing this

We now know what?

As we walked along the beach

I remarked at how soft the sand was that day

Pliny, I was told

1900 years earlier

One day made that same observation

And knowing this

We now know what?

## LIKE A RABBIT

In the park I sat down on a bench  
Next to an old man with a cane  
He was smiling, laughing openly  
Watching a young child running  
In crazy circles  
Upon the grassy sunlit knoll

“Like a rabbit, she runs,” he remarked  
His laughter was warm and deep and genuine  
And, gosh, I liked him immediately

“Is that your grand daughter?” I asked  
“No, but her happiness makes me happy  
Just as if she was,” he said  
“Like a rabbit, she runs!”

I watched the child run like a rabbit for a while  
Until her mother caught her up in her arms and  
Carried her away

Emma Moonsinger

So, there we were

*In the very heart of life*

She enjoyed running

He enjoyed her enjoyment

And I enjoyed his

I like to think

From somewhere, undetected and undetectable

We are being watched

And our enjoyment

Brings enjoyment to others

As we run around down here

In crazy circles

Until someone who loves us deeply

Comes along and

Scoops us up

And carries us away



## THIRST FOR WHAT

Thirst for what

Other than water

The blessing in that

Is in its simplicity

Hunger for what

Other than bread

The very fullness of life

Is found in each loaf

Yet we look around greedily

Emma Moonsinger

TO PULL MYSELF AWAY

To pull myself away from a calling path  
I've taken throughout all known history—  
In fact, some would say  
It is history itself

Disentangled from the confusion of the ages  
The simple fact that Clovis married Clothilda—  
The only Catholic Princess in all of Gaul—  
Means nothing to most

Vowing before battle, to be baptized if he survived  
After defeating the Alamans at Strasbourg  
He submitted  
Then defeated the Romans near Soisson

Doves then guided him on his way to victory  
Through every subsequent battle

You see--

For me now this is interesting--  
Clovis displayed an express disinterest in  
Conquering the Languedoc

But for me—unbaptised and unbaptisable--  
To ignore the Languedoc--  
My attempt to do any such thing--  
Would remove a vital block in my foundation  
Eleanor of Aquitaine  
Joan d'Arc  
Genevieve  
Anne of Austria  
Elizabeth Vigee-Lebrun

Long after the Carolignian dynasty was in place  
Merovignian descendants with long hair  
Allowed themselves to be reduced  
To being hauled around the streets of Paris  
Drunkenly in ox carts

These long-haired, do nothing kings

Emma Moonsinger

Were resented by everyone  
Most notably the Church  
Until the pope grabbed Childeric by the hair  
And shaved his head in the public square

And so, now you're asking me  
To unravel history  
That is 1600 years old  
From a comfortable spot in my library  
With a smug cup held in both hands  
You seem eager to learn  
Because you say  
You're curious

You are in fact curious, my friend  
And I have no history to simply give you

Because of those who sell you books  
By the Broadway ton  
It's easy to think that  
Sacred history is a toy

Something to be played with  
For a moment's delight  
(And I've done that myself  
And so I know)

But this toy should be set aside  
Because no one knows the cost  
My fear is that the greater crime  
Is too late found in ignorance

Emma Moonsinger

## WHAT DARK MESSAGE

What dark message hidden in these words  
Will come to you unbeknownst  
By reading them

None

It takes work  
It takes study  
It takes understanding  
None of which we've got time for

Let's sidle up to some other form of insta-wisdom  
I think the buy-in for Scamology  
Is something like \$3200

And, in that game  
You buy your way up the ladder  
Let's give them a try  
I'm sure they have a fully staffed 800 number

## THIS IS THE STORY

This is the story of a man who had a great secret  
And left small clues everywhere  
But the clues were not recognized  
Like on TV  
And his great secret  
Was simply thrown out  
With the rest of his garbage  
(As will, no doubt, be mine)

I'm not saying strangers  
Didn't go through his things  
And take his computers  
And carry off his CDs  
(Oh, they did that alright!)

I'm saying that all of his good work  
His study  
His knowledge  
His insight

Emma Moonsinger

His wisdom

His humor

His kindness

His thoughts

His hopes

His accomplishments

His projects about to reach fruition

His photographs

His writing

His artistic excursions

His passion

His dreams

Were all trashed

Along with his carefully assembled library

Including the few books I loaned him

Before he died

I don't mean to trivialize this

I don't mean to be cold or cruel

They've done that for me.



I have cried over this man's departure  
I have wondered why others with so much less to offer  
Are allowed to stay in the old game  
Linger on  
Self-serving and self-satisfied and supplied by Life with  
All they need to continue along their selfish childish path  
Contributing nothing more than their own satisfaction

So, I guess that's it  
That's a complete thought  
Except for this  
If it were up to me, it would be otherwise  
If it were up to me, things would be different

There's the mystery you seek  
It's not up to us  
And at times the entire mess looks  
Just so stupid and thoughtless and cruel

He was a good man

## REJECTION

Philip the Fair, king of France

Had his application to join the Templars---REJECTED

Not surprisingly I'd say

On the very next available Friday

October, 13, 1307

Every Templar in France was rounded up and

Placed under arrest

(And their goods confiscated also)

So, not be outdone by himself

Philip the Fair, king of France

First slapped and then arrested Boniface VIII

Who then very timely died

Some say of the humiliation of it all

And, Philip the Fair, King of France

Had the papal seat moved to Avignon

Where, with pomp and ceremony

Both right well suited

He appointed an old friend Pope

## DISADVANTAGED BY NATURE

Whatever it may look like to you  
Disadvantaged by Nature, I fall  
Inside I fall  
And I continue to fall

And I know that this is not  
A TV talk show for women  
But I continue to fall  
And it gets pretty frightening at times

And I don't expect anyone to hear me  
And I don't expect anyone to understand  
And to know that others are falling too  
Brings me no comfort

And I am not bitter that  
No one sees my hurt  
But I know how  
They look at me

Emma Moonsinger

In our world

Whatever we may profess

We look at the blind

We look at the deaf

We look at the lame, the ugly

As having somehow brought their plight

Down upon themselves

No matter what we may say

On those days when I walk with a cane

I am guilty

Or unworthy

When I am seen at all

And, whatever it may look like

From that side of this smile

On this side, on the inside

I continue to fall

And at times

I feel like I've been shoved

## OF HIS OFFSPRING

Of his off-spring only one seemed content  
Not to expand  
Their sniveling power beyond  
What lands they already held  
Good heavens  
I don't think I've ever seen a more beautiful sky  
How does all this grit get in between the sheets?

He was looked upon as a do-nothing King  
But with the exception of his third son  
You know, it's the dog, I know it's the dog  
I don't know why he insists

If I painted a sky like that  
No one would believe me  
They'd all say  
Postcard sky, never been a sky like that  
He carries half the beach home with him

Emma Moonsinger

Well, so, *Of his offspring* only one seemed  
If I painted those clouds EXACTLY that color  
Precisely that color  
No one would ever think it real  
And it's not just the sand either  
Why does he leave bits of dog biscuit behind

Looks at me as if I am his last hope for  
Survival  
Hasn't eaten in a week, poor dog  
Then he leaves chucks of dry food in my bed

Do-nothing king  
Please be kind enough not to forget your poor  
Starving  
Hungry helpless dog

The dog that I walk along the beach each day  
Is that the one of which you speak  
The one I boil a week's worth of eggs for each Friday  
Is that the poor starving creature to which you refer

But I really wonder why they are never content  
With the lands they have  
Most of them don't seem to be able to handle  
It's probably unfair of me to blame it all on the dog  
Of course, but I really  
Wow, was that lightening

Yes, you saw it too huh?  
Come here, it's OK  
It's OK, it's OK  
Come here  
Come on  
Jump up  
Jump up here with me  
That's a good boy  
I know how frightening lightning can be

Look what I have here  
I know you prefer turkey  
With the *exception* of his third son

Emma Moonsinger

## THE DEVIL HIMSELF

The Devil himself

Crowned the Pope himself

The man who crowned himself king

Then he himself was crowned by the Pope

Just to make sure there were no loose ends

So, well, none of this

Took place in secret

None of it

Was done so that no one would ever know

The participants all took pride in their shameful acts

As part of that act, at the Pope's request

The king was crowned by the Pope again

Here's where humility comes in

Sideways, through a window in the back

He did not call himself Pope

The other did not call himself King



## SO LET'S START HERE

So, let's start here

Shall we?

Constantine's mother

Quagmired in the old ancestral home

Ventured out cautiously at first

In a Jerusalem-like wayward leisurely direction

Guided by a dream and nothing more pernicious

(though I'm not entirely sure what pernicious means)

She—St. Helena to be—

Using only her nose

And instinct

And that dream we just mentioned

Well, and perhaps some spiritual intervention

“Guided by the fragrant aroma of the crypt,” we're told

Discovered part

Not a LARGE part, but part nonetheless

Of the One True Cross

Emma Moonsinger

You know the one

The one upon which Jesus had been hung

So set that aside for a moment

And consider this

*By the fragrance of it* (by the fragrance of it)

We're told

St. Ambrose found a fairly impressive cache of skeletons

All martyrs

Undoubtedly and irrefutably all martyrs

And carrying them away from their various resting places

Despite the oversight

Of some very basic religious etiquette

Recognized by almost every sect of

every religion known to man

Put these things—for lack of a better word

(though there are many I'm sure)

In the basilica which he had had

Constructed constructed

Far in advance for that very purpose.

So add all of that up

And see what you get

The quandary—for me--arises

Each afternoon

When the dog-in-law arrives

And placing himself directly under my nose

Collapses in a dog-like rug-like form

Stinking up the place

In a manner which only the French would deny

Others in the room

French every last one of them

Claim not to smell a thing

This animal produces no scent at all

(Nor does he slobber)

Me, book in hand

Always overly sensitive of nose

Develop each day at this time

Emma Moonsinger

A kind of affection-based resentment  
Knowing that I now  
No longer have any chance at sniffing out  
The vestiges of crosses, true or not  
Or the skeletal remains of martyrs  
Though I have a little spot set aside  
In the vitrine

You know, in the off-chance

Certain things  
Must always wait  
What's truly important  
Must continually be set aside

And, I know it's wrong of me  
But, if I NEVER  
Sniff out any part of the One True Cross  
Or find myself drawn to any martyr's bones

I blame it on the dog-in-law

## THESE ARE THE THINGS

These are the things we must consider

During our daily toil

In Venice they—you know, THEY—

Claim to have the clavicle of St. Sebastian

In an independent survey people have chosen to have their

Thoughts replaced by an *authorized* thought merchant

In 390, two French monks

While searching for other things entirely

In the ruins of some old castle

(Herod's)

Discovered what was undoubtedly

The cranium of John the Baptist—

It could be no other--

And they made no secret of it

Much of this

Seems inconceivable to many

Discerning people

Emma Moonsinger

Yet these and other thoughts—

When will the car be ready?

I wonder if that guacamole's still good

Oh man, did I leave my keys in the door again?

Drive us with spurs and heavy boots

Through the live-long day

Meanwhile—as Bob Dylan warns—

Outside

Life goes on all around us

So, you know

It's quite a mess

And please I beg you god or gods

Remove a few things from this menu

And then let me have another look at it

I'm sure I'll find something

To my taste

## I THINK BIRDS

I think birds would be a good final thought  
The final thought being  
A doorway to  
Gloriously open-ended slack-jawed speculation

Something about their flight is always said  
Oh, how we wish we could  
That sort of tripe  
And mankind's centuries old desire  
To conquer the air

But the thing about birds is not  
The casual way they take to the air  
Or their miraculous pinpoint migration  
Though how we still don't know

I don't want to lose you at this point  
I'm no longer trying to win you over either  
(So, feel free to simply quit.)

Emma Moonsinger

Birds though

The thing about birds is not  
The way they glide and bank  
And wheel and drift upon the wind  
In the magic of their way

Their dedication as parents  
Is remarkable of course  
And their trust in humans  
Can not be denied  
Sometimes expressed in indifference  
They are like cats in that way

But the assurance that possesses them  
That this is a kindly world  
Where they can always find what they need  
Is the most remarkable thing about them

To find another bird  
No matter how far away  
By song



Is a beautiful thing

Their trust in that alone

Is a beautiful thing

And wondrous

To think about

And it only becomes more beautiful

And more wondrous

The more thought you give it

I wish I could lay my hands on such trust

If only for a delirious day or two

I've never held it for a minute