

## **That was Then. This is Now.**

It punctured my thoughts like shattered glass.  
Making holes for my soul to slip through.  
Particles, specks of me landed in several directions.  
Scattered, broken.  
That was then.

Shackled to a self-inflicted suffering soul broke my spirit.  
Initially I felt empathy, tried to help, offer solutions.  
Eventually I learned that I couldn't learn his lessons for him.  
He had to do the work himself, and only when he was ready.  
Six years seemed an eternity to wait. That was then.

Abram was my slave name.  
Now I am free.  
Call me Love. This is now.

"I'll be happy when . . .  
    I make more money  
    I get a better car  
    I get a promotion  
    I make more money than you" he said.

But even when what he thought happiness was manifested, it still wasn't enough.  
The notes and chords that constructed his tunes remained brittle and unharmonious.  
He wasn't happy with him  
And if he didn't like himself, How could he ever love  
me?  
That was then.

Eventually I found the pieces of  
me  
that I'd lost underneath an umbrella of failed attempts.  
The remnants of my spirit that slipped away,  
unable to breathe under the sodded blanket  
of his displeasure with himself, snuck back into  
me

one day when the sun and the moon simultaneously  
bathed the sky.

I sucked my achievements inside me, knowing  
that he internalized my gains as his failure.  
Silence.

A brown leaf falls. The only one left on the tree.  
The other leaves had turned, bursts of boisterous yellow, ubiquitous orange, and resilient reds.  
Alive. They crowd the brown leaf out, closing their ears to his broken chords.  
The lone leaf sails in the wind, drifting, drifting, reaching the ground.  
It stays. This is now.

“Reduce your light so that his can shine,” the church counselors said.  
Goes against everything I’ve learned about love, acceptance, and marriage.  
But I concur.  
Things get worse. That was then.

I stand in a meadow full of weeping willows  
their branches heavy with blooms. The wind  
steals some away each time it marches through.  
The blooms whirl around me, covering me, surrounding me.  
Soon there are enough enveloping me. I too am lifted, soaring through the meadow  
like a kite on a string. Happy. Free. Hopeful.  
He pulls the string. Steers me back down to the cold, hard earth  
with so much turbulence that I’m dismembered.  
I see parts of me floating away on the stem of blooms,  
hiding in the folds of the weeping willows.  
That was then. This is now.

I’m a plastic doll. Someone else forms me, changing my  
hair, clothes, words, and actions to suit them. I am thoughtless.  
Pulling me off the shelf. Change. Putting me back on the shelf. Change.  
That was then.

Still my heart bled at the end of my beginning in one surly summer.  
Standing in the closet we once shared. The earth oil fragrance he wore still  
stinging the air. Empty hangers in the closet. Cool sheets next to me at night. Too much room in  
the bed now. Speaking into the air. Echoes.  
No response.  
Brunch. Dinner. A table for one. Brows lifted. Pity oozing.

Staining my pillow with tears. Bleak eyes. Hollow heart.  
I learned the posture of being one after six years of being two.  
All part of the birthing process.  
That was then.

Lack of confidence and self-loathing breeds isolation.  
Siamese twins. Bonded by one's needs.  
The loner suffocated me. Twills of nonsense. Trepidation.  
Do I speak? Should I ask what's wrong? And risk wrath!  
Silence. That was then.

Peeking from underneath an unwanted shield, I extend my arms.  
Daring to unfold my legs and stretch,  
to reach for the pearl orbs of cotton in the azure sea above.  
The sun skates across my face,  
its warmth races through my veins. I bow my head in deference.  
I can speak. I can feel. I can think. For  
me.  
This is now.