

EDUCATION

You don't have to read this.

Reading things you have to read
can make your mind frost up like a windshield
on a cold and cloudy day. You are running late,
the car is warming up and you just want to go.

Reading is difficult because there are too many heavy things to lift.
If a paragraph is both heavy and exciting at the same time,
one can forget to bend the metaphorical legs
and keep the metaphorical back straight,
tiny muscles in the head get strained.

I used to come home from school complaining that my brains hurt.
All I wanted was a hot washcloth and a kiss on my cheek.
My parents used to confront me in the hallway, waving magazines
in front of my face, saying, "If you keep this up,
you will end up wearing glasses for the rest of your life."

Did I listen?
Am I wearing glasses now?

AFTER RAIN

For Paul Suntutup

1.

They say
write what you know,
but if you have lived what you know
you don't want to talk about it
to people
that haven't been there.

2.

A good cookie
makes a mess on your shirt.

All of our stories
will crumble like cookies,

leave them laughing
with your crumbs on their lips.

3.

Poetry is quick and
cool as the spaces
between raindrops.

Women will teach you
how to cry
and how to feel better.

You will find yourself
with empty hands
in the desert but for poetry.

4.

Walking to your car
I was watching the gravel
moving below our feet like
an audience.
I was averting my eyes
from a couple embracing,
but they stopped.

I wondered
if we could change history
or even the future.

You sold me a serious book
from the trunk of your car.

5.

When I was young
I was like the bear.

When I was old
I was like the cave.

I carry wind in my mouth.
I form words. I eat the wind.

6.

I remember my father singing
after the divorce:

*My love don't give me presents.
I know that she's no peasant.
All she ever has to give
is love forever and forever.
I know she's only fooling.
She's a woman.
She's a woman.*

He loved that song.
It made him laugh.

He told me again and again
that women were different than men.
I disagreed.

I was so young.

7.
My father told me
to leave them laughing
and then he bought me a cookie.

LOOSE LIPS SINK SHIPS

Be wrong with yourself
as often as possible,
even when you believe
you are correct.

Line up alphabetically.
Put your short letters first.
Put your long letters last.
Line yourself up in hills.
Line yourself down in valleys.

Stand there silently.
Be seen, not heard,
learn to listen.
We will break your heart.

See how mistaken you are
even when you are truthful?
What do you know anyway?
Not enough—
let that be a lesson to you.

There is your chair.
Go sit in the first row.
I want to see you.