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**THE VIEW
FROM HERE**



Gallery Books

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Contents

Minor Star	page 11
The Habit of Laughter	13
Carrying	15
Night Horses	17
A Poem About Happiness	18
Dark Summer Days	19
Swimming Pool	20
The Business of Rain	21
Heart's Desire	22
Approaching Eight	23
Sacrificed	25
Lightning Catchers	26
You Don't Have to be Mary Oliver to Write a Poem about Geese	27
Bicycle Ride, Point Reyes	28
Oak	29
The Island	31
Golden Temple	32
Azimuth	34
Glaces, Sorbets	36
Daisy Dress	37
The 49-mile Scenic Drive	38
Fairfax Theater	39
Warm Bodies, Cold Bodies	40
Where He Is Now	42
The Angel of Poetry	43
Jar and Flower	44
All Souls Passing Over	46
Aquifer	47
The Influence of Ghosts	48
The Nearest Exit	50
Elegy for Kate	51
Untwinned	52
Meals for Friends	54
59th Street Bridge	55

Shelter 56
Ghost, Soho 57
Park Bench, Queens 58
How It Will End 60
Barstools, North Beach 61
Absolution 63
Rain at Easter 65
This I Take With Me 66
Boathouse 67

Acknowledgements 70



A Poem About Happiness

It would begin like this:
a man in his overcoat, head bowed,
walking from end to end of his town
in the armour of his life, not so much heavy
as close-fitting, a kind of light chain mail
he pulls on at the break of every day.
Some nights he never takes it off.
Those are the nights he dreams.

It would go on, through innocence of mornings
in his pale green rooms,
the ease of days, philosophy and song
the unlikely companions of this man
who turns his collar up against the world, at whom
the world stares back without a sign.

Consider this:
the dew that collects by itself
on the grass that finds a crack in the slab
is enough to slake his thirst,
and that is why he thrives on so little love

and why it finishes thus:
with evening lush around his house,
the spring trees almost all dressed, the oaks,
black locusts, only the silks holding out;
and a moment on a cluttered street —
happiness from nowhere;
it rises like the first glorious journey
of a childhood kite, like distant voices
from one of those unplanned
all summer evening long
football games that nobody wants to end,
that go on and on and on
until the light fails.

Dark Summer Days

I have written my daughter to sleep.
She lies in the other bed among her books and toys,
the bowed and weathered instruments of her navigation.

In fragile possession of her course
and her own short set of ship's orders
she steps bravely out with me onto the burning waters.

We travel in this single room
where the nails are growing out of the wood
and the paint flakes off the window ledge.

On dark summer days when rising is difficult
this is my Parisian garret, my narrow turret,
my writer's attic with its high beams and precious dust;

it is here I hunker down and shout into the dark,
some nights nothing, some nights
starbursts of language, jubilant at their release.

Across the fearless moon
hastens what little sky we can see; what few trees
stand in the mornings with their arms out;

through every time zone their same song
fills the loudness of our being alone,
together, in the gentle rocking of our sea-glass room.

In her sleep my girl is made of sand,
but at first light she's a young redwood
driving up like a mast through the sea foam;

and as for me, even if no words come,
I'll be here waiting by the window in the pre-dawn
before the birds.

Swimming Pool

I have fallen for water,
a silky bolt of it, rolling and unrolling
under the heavy sky.

This was where
I saw the first girl swimming;
when she came up from a dive
I was kneeling by the water,
a makeshift altar.
I did not call out to her.

And this is where
I swim each evening around six;
sun slanting through the olive tree
breaks life down to its simplest concerns.

If I did not have her
there would be no more summer
and the darkness would not go
with the night.

The Business of Rain

This Saturday morning
we are not washing clothes
or cleaning house —
we are going about
the business of rain.

Late October, sometimes early,
five months of heat and dust
surrender their devils, give up their ghosts;
the world comes alive in russet and silvery green,
the world is washed clean.

She opens the windows,
she opens all the doors;
she is the small daughter
of the goddess of women and girls,
of water and the sea,

and she bursts upon the great outdoors
in her flip-flops and her summer cotton;
she takes joy and brings it to a new high;
she places it like a star in the treetops
and flies back to my side.

Angels fly like that,
butterflies and winged things,
fairies number her among their own,
she says, and I believe her.
I believe her. Yes, I do.