

Shore Line

I think it started when my mother almost died. I was turning one so I can't remember, but I can't remember a time when I didn't know the story.

I remember reenacting her near-death:

1. She lies on the ground. I lie on top of her.

I'm small enough to lie completely on her body so this might be a memory of a time when I remembered my mother almost dead.

2. We're both covered by a blanket.
3. I pry open her teeth with my fingers
4. and stare into her mouth.

This is the ocean:
It breathes, I'm always wet now.
The rocks won't let go.

Marie Tharp was a mapmaker who mapped the ocean floor. She was dry the whole time. It was there, the bottom, somewhere deep, she knew—you can never see the deep things but the ocean.

And the ocean has to rest on something.

This is the ocean:
It's wet, it can breathe freely,
come and go from rocks.

I think it started when my aunt Norma died, two years ago next March. I started to notice that I'm undone—edges untucked and gone torn so they can't fold back in. Slight—a soft fray here and there.

This is the ocean:
It's free, it's wet from breathing.
Its rocks come and go.

She was a woman, so she couldn't go out on a boat; she wasn't fit for the waves—cracks and holes, not tight. Fit to be flooded. Fit to be filled up, rinsed out.

She would overflow.
So no. But men. Men could send their sound, the sound would slip right in, dive right down. Deep and then spread. Here you rise up. Here, you dip.

Nothing is private, not from their strong, steady sound. Suddenly—
rifts! Rifts and suddenly mountains.
Craters!

This is the ocean:
It rocks, its breathing comes and
goes. We are all wet.

I think it started when my mother almost died.

I think it started when my Aunt Norma died and then her grandson killed himself.

Then we got my cousins' aged cat and then he died. I felt like I was coming undone—soft. Just at my edges. I wasn't sure how to hold it in my hands or map it out, how to fold it back together. I'm still not sure.

This is the wetness
It comes and it goes breathing
we are all ocean

Before it was flat, below the sea. The beach, the shore, just more of that—but now...I mean, who knew? Who could even imagine.

Imagine—all along—rifts. All along rifts and mountains.
Doesn't that change everything? How will things ever be the same?

Some Figures

After college I saw Noam Chomsky speak. The audience seats rose only slightly:
Noam Chomsky, the head of a sleeping person—we, his downy quilt.

I saw Noam Chomsky speak, I didn't hear him. I heard him like traffic or birds, rain or leaves against leaves or the sea
against the sea. I
heard my thoughts.

My thoughts called out *I hope Noam Chomsky likes me best!* My thoughts like birds or rain.
I Hope he likes me best.

Noam Chomsky

was sturdy-wilted, something that hasn't been watered on time but will survive, a building with almost all the lights off, a car-door sound at night. The head at the end of our quilt, water me when you get to it:
Noam Chomsky.

It was winter. The room was orange. Orange and brown like all homes are. The students were warm and

damp. The students were scarves on a radiator or towels, many tea kettles just getting started or just dying down.

The students listened, I didn't listen. I wasn't a student. My boyfriend was—not of Noam Chomsky. He would
become my husband (not Noam Chomsky). Because of him I learned:
MIT is tunneled under. I learned warm concrete and warrens
made quick for war then everyone grew fond of it. Fond of the bleakness and the way it didn't bother them.

It didn't bother me.

I went to see Noam Chomsky speak because of his trees and his arrows. He drew them for us on a green chalkboard. Trees dangling words. They were maps. Maps of language. Maps. Of language. Tree shaped maps. Bird words or rain or leaves against leaves. The sea. And arrows.

I hope Noam Chomsky likes me best.

Noam Chomsky, the head of a sleeping person.

Sketches for 5 Useful Maps (Drawn from Memory)

1.

I found them without trying. I was alone. None of the flowers could stand on their own but some weren't wholly crushed. I climbed them like I was a girlfriend or a boyfriend—self-conscious, stealing everything. Outside the circle there was no city, just a map of the city. Not even a good map. Just a sketch.

2.

I was meant to look for two pine trees, but there are more than two pine trees, and follow the street as if it were one blue line on a map and every other street faint, lavender, and not even there. Once inside the babysitter's house the map could do what it liked—but there are more than two pine trees. I tried.

I knew all the streets but had never seen the woods, so they must be very small woods and not real. Someone's

3.

idea of woods—someone who's not good at knowing what woods are. I might break through. It must seem strange to the dogs to be in small, fake woods, I thought: we might get lost. I could put my foot right through but there was also a good chance we would be lost forever. It must have been fall or spring—puddles, no map.

He was in the middle of the road and it wasn't the country. It *was* by the ocean but that's not the same even though there aren't people for miles because there also aren't trees and turkeys are birds so they're meant to be

4.

where trees are. There he was. I was married at that time. A male, I think, though again—I don't know much about turkeys. He was big, puffed-out and mad. Clearly mad. Nothing muddied his pure, righteous anger. He attacked the car. I was alone.

They were huge and black and screamed a crazy noise. They were aristocratic. Was I intimidated? Yes—but not how I'd expect to be, because they were glorious and high. Almost still. We scurried on paths below but they were uninvited so they might stay forever. In their eyes

5.

there was no campus just easy water, tall enough trees and they were huge and menacing but incidentally like tornados sketched against the sky.

I.

I found them without trying. I was alone.

Good map. Just a sketch.