

## 1. Midnight Bus

Last night,  
You had abandoned the warm yellow lights of the city  
for the quiet darkness of the outer suburbs.

You had to meet someone  
in a small white house.  
There was a threatening figure underneath a tree.

You stayed too late.  
You had to take the midnight bus.  
It stopped at all the dying malls in the area.

There were fifteen people on the bus the whole time.  
No one got on and no one got off.

And when you looked at them  
out of the corner of your eye,  
they had the faces of aliens.

## 2. Unnatural

On Tuesday you sat by a fountain  
in an office plaza downtown.  
You were the eye in the center of a whirling crowd.  
Thousands of people —  
a wild tangle of blood and bones,  
covered in their neighbors' opinions.

Every haircut, hemline, horizontal stripe,  
lapel, lens shape, leather jacket,  
was suddenly a map and a survey and an autobiography.

And you thought:  
you make me feel like an unnatural woman.

### 3. Tiny Holes

When you were 20 years old,  
you saw a picture that you weren't supposed to.  
You were convinced it was real.  
You couldn't stand it.  
It stayed inside you.

It made tiny holes in you.  
It made tiny holes in you.  
It made tiny holes in you.  
But then you forgot all about it.

The year you turned 26,  
you found others who had seen the picture.  
They remembered it well.  
Now they're afraid  
of pockmarks and pores and indentations.

Now you can't look at the showerhead.  
Now you can't look at the showerhead.  
Now you can't look at the showerhead.  
It looks like it has a disease.

### 4. This American Life

This tight dress is uncomfortable.  
This nail polish is chipped.  
This drunk patron is laughing.

This ballpoint pen is stolen.  
This part-time job is tedious.  
This facial expression is permanent.

This moonlit night is warm.  
This heaped earth is moist.  
This white shirt is stained.  
This tall passer-by is wary.  
This dead dog is underground.

## 5. Science Park

3 AM.

You stood on a grassy expanse,  
a nuclear reactor humming deep beneath your feet.  
To your right: the observatory.  
To your left: a deserted parking lot.

You hadn't seen the stars so clearly in years,  
They seemed to form an elaborate diagram.

Suddenly, a pair of headlights.  
As they swept across the asphalt,  
they revealed a figure in silhouette, impossibly tall.

You could see a network of roads spanning the continent.

Something dropped!  
And you went home as someone else.

## 6. Fishmouth

When you walked in the door, they were waiting.  
They confronted you with the evidence.  
You'd been practicing in the mirror.

They caught you off guard. You weren't ready.  
If they'd waited another day, you would have been fine.  
But when you attempted to speak:

Whole fish flopping from your mouth,  
Wriggling on the floor,  
Gasping for air.  
Ocean water everywhere,  
staining the carpet and running out the door.

"So that's your secret?  
You've been swallowing live fish?"  
You weren't listening  
You were trying to get the taste from your mouth.

All over the city, you'd noticed people spitting on the sidewalks.  
You'd always just thought of them as rude,  
but now you wondered:  
Did they try to explain a disconcerting situation to soon  
and end up with the ocean in their mouths?

You could still taste the salt two weeks later.  
You could still feel the friction of the scales in your throat,  
And your teeth were slowly dissolving.

All the dentists you saw shrugged their shoulders.  
They couldn't figure out what was happening.  
And bit by bit, you retreated from your daily life.

## 7. Purple Stain

June.

It was the end of your second date.  
Everything was going well.  
You were walking to the train station,  
imagining a parting kiss by the turnstiles,  
his fingers tracing patterns on your spine.

But as you passed beneath a streetlight,  
he suddenly stopped.  
A look of horror passed over his face.  
He pulled away,  
and never returned your calls.

Months later, you remembered something:

At the end of a wild night  
on the roof of a hotel,  
you shared a taxi with a man  
that you didn't know, and would never see again.

He had a purple stain on his forehead.  
It smelled like beets and vinegar.  
He'd gotten used to it.  
He didn't know it was there.  
He couldn't understand why you leaned away  
and pressed yourself against the window.

## 8. Night After Night

In another century,  
you could have gone to a masquerade  
in the courtyard of a vast palace,  
hiding your form beneath voluminous skirts  
and your face behind a jeweled mask.

You did the next best thing:  
a party at an art gallery.  
The mask was the same,  
but your body was much more exposed.

In the deep blue light,  
everyone could see what had happened to you,  
but nobody knew who you were.

Someone heard you laughing nervously  
from across the room.  
A golden mask covered most of his face,  
but the gleam in his eye was plainly visible.

And somehow you knew  
that he'd remember your laugh as a flirtatious one.  
And night after night,  
he'd revisit this moment,  
rewriting the scene,  
and slowly revealing your face.

## 9. Jolene

Cut to the interior of a spacious modern house.  
Open plan.  
Open windows.  
White walls.  
Wooden furniture.  
Moss green shutters.

A breeze from outside.  
Translucent curtains.  
The scent of conifers and summer rain.

The two of you are lying in a bed  
covered in soil and dried leaves.  
The room is filled with light.  
You're sleeping peacefully,  
the wind scattering your auburn hair,  
but she's been awake for hours.  
The house is changing.

She's terrified,  
but you've never felt more at ease.  
Everything is so familiar!  
The new picture window.  
The new fourth floor.  
The new iron staircase.

Last night, looking for the bathroom,  
she walked into a wall that wasn't there the night before  
and broke her nose.  
Last week she tried to leave,  
but she couldn't find the way back to town.  
Dirt roads branching and branching.

Now she says you've been talking in your sleep,  
but she won't say what she heard.  
She's begging you to stop  
before there's nothing of the old house left.  
But it's too late.  
It's out of your hands now.

## 10. Spires

Someday the rising sun will reveal another world on top of our own.

You'll stand on a grassy peak  
among people the size of trees  
and trees as tall as mountains.

And across the water, you'll see the gleaming spires of a city the size of the moon.

And you'll know that all of this was here the whole time.  
And you'll understand that you have finally come home.