

**After *Dreams***

*Your despair is quite improper!*

Shakyamuni Buddha  
At His Death and Pass Into Nirvana

However happy Heaven is  
golden boulevards and pearls  
do less for mortal cheeks  
than handkerchiefs. In *Dreams*

The solemn Sunday bell shakes  
Its dew-drop tears with tolls, dampened  
By my distance from the locus  
Of mournful calls to congregate.

I watch a watermill spill  
its load of gold-frilled glacial pull  
back to the blue,

your funeral, a jovial passel  
of maracas, songs  
and jungle-colored dress,  
pass the camera's eye and celebrate  
the proper End for him who lived to mend  
the fishing nets. *Who can be sad?*  
an old man asks.

But in the background blurred  
by shallow focus plane,  
this daughter of the dead,  
bank in my knees, cheeks  
dappled by the spray  
of golden peaks.

Did it have to end like this?  
A Sunday morning ambulance?

I steal  
bucket after bucket from the mill  
and spill them on my face.

But despite the ice-  
burg archipelagos across

the surface of the waves,  
I cry. The cold, it seems,  
can't cauterize my streams.

Even after months, I miss  
The hymns we sung along  
Our morning trips to mass, quietly  
For fear we'd scare the ruddy-breasted  
Singers in the oaken choir  
Above our heads. I miss the way  
You hated to be late, the subtle pull  
To hurry up the fourth street hill and still  
My search for God in every finch  
And icicle. I remember how

You ran ahead, quickened  
By sermons in your heels  
And front row seats first on  
Your bulletin, and then

a pair of lights, three horns,  
sparrow bursts, communion wine  
seeping in the altar sleet.  
You didn't even scream.  
My life became a liturgy that day. If I

Had sacrificed my pace, just once, my love  
For mushroom chunks and rocks,  
Would you be here to watch  
These squirrels chase their tails  
And take the oak-nut sacrament?  
Will God forgive  
everything I didn't see  
Inside your palms? A psalm

Rising from the pipes as I  
Ingress the double doors: a doe  
Standing by a stream, panting  
For water covered by an icy sheen.  
I sing along, but quietly  
For fear I'll hear my voice say she  
Never found another spring.