

# Calling

I am called to speak  
myself in flights of words;  
pelican wings  
they glide in sea breeze,  
inscribe my being  
on rolls of waves  
inked in indigo sky.

I am called to fight  
my fears;  
they fret me  
jangled notes on the broken neck  
of an unknown instrument,  
and my task  
is to make music  
somehow, and  
alchemist of words,  
distill fear into syntax,  
spin out lightening from  
darkness.

I am called to sing  
in any notes I can,  
pitch high into my wilderness  
such wild phrases and  
sweet harbingers  
as reach horizons  
well beyond my range  
of tones,  
because they call to me  
these ragged peaks,  
stark depressions,  
shadow lined meadows,  
again and again,  
they call upon me  
to try

## Seaglass

Nothing cuts to the quick  
like shattered dreams  
smoothed out in waves of grief,  
sea glass on the shore  
opaqued by tears  
in wounds that never close,  
just dull,  
while fingers feel the smoothing,  
fingering each bead of thought  
in rosary of explanation,  
as waves of comforting ideas  
tell the tale  
how what once gleamed  
such beauty in the morning light  
with promises past counting  
broke in countless waves  
again, again  
against that clear sharp edge of grief  
to make a curve that could be held  
inside a hand  
clenched  
without bleeding,  
the eye washed by tears  
till it couldn't see,  
wouldn't see  
how glass becomes opaque  
inside a sea  
of tears.

## Reef Dance

The reef is up!  
Out they run,  
with toast crumbs  
to feed the fish.  
They hunt the coral ledge,  
pole and bucket ready,  
nets poised, seek crabs hiding under rocks,  
find seaweed of richest green,  
catch fish  
and give them names.

They'll carefully unhook  
Fred or Bill,  
release it into the pail,  
to swim around  
the small round pool  
they fill with sand and shells,  
some seaweed or a hermit crab  
to make that small world  
feel familiar.  
Later, they will turn the bucket  
carefully on its side  
and let the fish swim free.  
Otherwise, they know, it will die.

They don't see, out on the reef,  
how they dance with waves  
in time with tides,  
ebb and flow with summers past,  
and all their tomorrows.  
Only I see them so,  
framed in my mother's lens  
as I watch, camera ready,  
to capture not the line,  
but the pulse they dance.  
I know, as the shutter closes,  
I have caught not them,  
only this moment we share.

I give them names,  
but I must let them go  
out from the round lens,  
my mother's lens,  
and its sun-warmed sky

## Bathing my mother

The body is mine too, you know,  
I see my future in your skin and bones  
—a bit unsteady,  
subject to falling—  
and mine will soon enough be just  
as stiff, won't bend  
to reach those places  
behind the upper arms  
or down the lower back  
with soap and washcloth.

And yet,  
the body is not mine  
but yours, different from me,  
though once, and long ago,  
our two selves shared a rounded darkness,  
you crooning to a stranger  
more intimate than speech,  
and me, washing up  
in tides of pulsing love.

And now I see  
you more unsteady  
than ever I remember  
when I could turn to you  
whenever, for whatever reason,  
yet now, when I need you in a different way,  
I don't  
and can't say why—  
afraid perhaps of what you'll say,  
afraid of needing you too much  
to lose,  
or of breaking our most tender thread  
of silent touching  
with words that could be misunderstood  
or worse, be off the mark and mar  
the refuge I imagine  
always waiting for me warm,  
my head resting on your lap,  
your hand softly on my hair.  
And so I say nothing  
and wash your back,  
with my gentlest touch,  
because that I can do,  
with all the love  
I cannot speak.

# Lines

My life is drawn in lines  
across my map of things.  
I make continents connect  
even if I have to find  
a submerged land bridge somewhere,  
or cross polar ice caps  
with a path I lay desolate  
to take me where I need to go.  
I throw out conjunctions that will link me  
to those I need,  
or maybe break my line  
with those whose words don't fit my syntax.  
In darks times, I cast my lines  
delicate, glistening, so they rise and fall  
with waves,  
then wait till dawn to see my way  
to shore where with my fingers I dig lines,  
parallel in fertile ground,  
throw out my seeds  
and wait and work,  
patient for the harvest  
I will write  
and need to taste.

## Blackberrying

You sit there tap tap tapping  
as I drive, heading with you to an airport,  
and you are sending an important message  
to people I don't know in places far away,  
and the humming of the tires  
and the tapping of your thumbs  
make no harmony,  
but echo loudly through the space between us,  
sound my memories,  
find days once filled with laughter  
and warm smells from the kitchen,  
the touch of fingers making salad,  
the jingle of your bracelets as you tossed  
first one story then another  
and I caught your  
eye and we smiled.  
And now your tapping is like no sound  
I can decipher,  
and there is no window we can open  
to a time when blackberries  
were for jam on warm toast  
and chilly mornings  
began our heading out together,  
the car already loaded, going somewhere  
so important.

## Parallax

You never know  
what will change the world-  
a word lightly spoken,  
a touch from a stranger,  
a glance from a woman  
in a red dress,  
or a flower opening in your garden.  
What you do know  
down deep in your bones  
is that the cells have  
lined up in a new arrangement,  
muscles grown  
where before was weak and hollow,  
and when you woke up this morning,  
something else was on your mind  
because the old furniture had moved  
around to make room.  
A momentary alignment of planets  
has opened a door somewhere.  
You never know how or when,  
only that it means  
Everything.

## Dancing with Trees

Sometimes at night  
when I should be sleeping,  
I climb the oak at my window,  
reach up hand over hand  
to tallest branches.  
I sway beneath the canopy,  
wrap myself in sheets of leaves,  
as sap sings in my ears,  
and crickets beat a steady bass,  
stars treble brightly at me  
and I clap my hands  
in time with twigs,  
cool my bursting heart  
with dew,  
wind leaves around my legs  
and twist them in my hair,  
wrap myself in bark,  
and drink the wild wine  
of moonlight.

Who can sleep  
when there is  
dancing?  
The trees call  
me for their partner,  
their dark arms hold me tight  
as we waltz with wind  
tango with clouds,  
whirling and swirling in gusts,  
lifting our leaves,  
branching as we go.

## Towards the Light

By moonlight,  
or starlight,  
or in the sun's bright rays,  
I journey,  
guiding my way by  
keeping to the light  
as best I can.  
Sometimes all seems dark,  
then I remember  
how the poppy turns its head,  
follows the sun's passage across the sky,  
then rests in night's cool shadows,  
bowing in thanks  
to whatever power  
makes the stalk  
stand straight and strong,  
drawing deep from its roots  
a wine dark love.  
In moonlight,  
the garden glows,  
silvering the poppies.  
And even by starlight  
you can tell  
shades of darkness  
if you try.  
So do not lose heart  
when vision dims.  
Journey forth  
as best you can-  
bloom when you are able,  
rest when you must,  
keep faith,  
keep always  
towards the light.

## Last Lines

You know when the last line  
comes to you.  
It greets you like an ending,  
complete.

A summation?  
reversal of perspective?  
an exhortation,  
even a prayer?

The last line rounds the poem  
with a final period.  
and feels right—  
for now.

But it ends  
a fragment only;  
an assumption,  
its circle spins.

Take all the endings, all their smooth  
and orderly complacencies  
and what would you have?

A string of pearls?  
Or the dots that hold up question marks?

# CALLING

## Poems by Lenore Horowitz

<b>Calling</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Seaglass</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Reef Dance</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Bathing my mother</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Lines</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Blackberrying</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Parallax</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Dancing with Trees</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Towards the Light</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Last Lines</b>	<b>10</b>

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