

# *Border Crossing*

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**FREMANTLE PRESS**

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## The Falling

I want the building  
that stretches up past  
the top of the white like driving

up a summer road into heat haze  
that ends, might end, here  
with low grey

and I never noticed the sky.  
Why fear what's out of the frame?  
I cannot name this city

except to say I went there once  
and everywhere was white  
and perpendicular and nothing

was like myself or my city.  
Man has not burnt with fire,  
this building shall not either.

Black has a falseness.  
I grow nostalgic  
for primary colours, for sound.

I think the sky is clouded  
but maybe it's not. I give myself  
the lassitude of stone.

I wanted none of this. Speech  
beyond speechlessness.  
A slow lyric.

Step away from me,  
back towards the cars  
parked resting in a row.

I want to gather together  
our last breaths  
and float.

I cast nothing behind. Step.  
I'll find a piece of wood, a bridge.  
I'm casting shadows you can't see.

Here. It's all the way  
gone down slow.  
Talk slower. We tear

tissue thin, skin,  
voices the opposite  
of cloud.

I've missed  
the sensate elements of thought.  
Your mouth

tastes metal as you fall  
or as you remember  
falling.

What my hand holds  
is not mine  
but the sensation is,

those small tendrils  
of electricity.  
I am never going to be a person.

I am never going to be a person  
who dies in a fire,  
I am never going to.

Put your face  
up against  
a window,

it's yours  
these clouds,  
slow pokes of air,

your lungs burn  
even if a fire  
couldn't make a match flicker,

keep this: sand, sky, stone,  
the grim thing of what's outside,  
your own fallow feelings,

the falling.



## I-610 Inner Loop

A man wearing a sandwich board wants gold.  
Another holding a piece of cardboard wants  
just enough to get home for the holidays.  
The light of January in Houston  
makes me feel like a piece of static  
in an old CRT TV.

When I'm driving I forget I'm translating  
Australian English to American English,  
and the birds mimicking leaves on electric wires  
I mistake for forests. Houston is densely wooded  
with Targets & Walmarts & Petcos & Churches & Night  
Bingo & Day Bingo and none of these buildings have any windows  
and in that way they are like trees.

Curving through south-east Houston,  
understanding panaderia, carceria, tortilleria,  
mean only bread, meat and round bread,  
flattens the world out like a penny,  
which is why some religions let their gods remain nameless  
and from above, these concrete monoliths cup the freeways in  
their boughs,  
a fleur-de-lis of faceless beauty.  
But from the road if these are trees or gods  
they are ringbarked ones. Neptune  
banished by the towering rigs of the Gulf Coast,  
trying his luck inland.

From my bed when I hear this road  
I can believe it's the sound of waves.  
For this I like the freeway best when it rains,  
when the cars have prows and wakes. The lanes  
dissolved by falling silver, cars moving only  
in relation to one another.  
The flooded underpasses and outer lanes  
forcing us to go deeper and if it's heavy enough  
all the billboards can sell is muffled light.  
And after rain, wrong-facing utes  
in underpasses make the descent from storm  
a passage, and flowing through Galleria  
in the jet stream of a road train I coast  
on the memories of my stepfather driving trucks around the country.

When Mum couldn't afford a babysitter  
she would send us to the docks where we would read  
the truckies horoscopes over the radio,  
the long cord of the CV stretched back  
to where my sister and I hid under a blanket –  
*no children allowed at the port.*  
I would look at the cranes, wondering  
which would be strong enough to pick us up  
and deposit us in the Swan.  
My stepfather told us about driving across the Nullarbor  
straight through a mob of roos,  
the blood and fur caught in the rims and wipers,  
how when you drive you can never stop.

There are no kangaroos on the 610.  
What we drive through is the afternoon,  
plowing through the minutes.  
In the outstretched arms of the Energy Corridor,

if I'd wanted to I could've found a love  
of silt and pimple-prairie, wetlands' slowly sinking suburbs.  
Even the sky isn't big, just near and heat-stained.  
But summer storms find me like a Rorschach test  
of where desires land, large and unmistakable. Cast out of country,  
on the wind and then the wetness bedding me  
in the bayou banks, asking me for roots.  
Is it brave to refuse the home that's offered?  
Or just another form of denying sight.  
The soft opal light easing through clouds,  
lifting the weeds scraggling through the pavement to our eyes.  
Sun turning the tar to water, passing under the car  
like pain, moving invisible beneath skin.

Closer

I take myself out  
past the end of the Target-Walmart-Loews  
to find the green.

Like a tourist  
fumbling for language in a guidebook,  
I look for home

and find translation.  
Not dune but forest uprooted by a wind  
long blown to brown gulf sea.

On the rustling pine-needle floor  
a log slow burns, ember without fire.  
From tip to tip its path is ash.

What makes a tree burn like that?  
Already fallen, already dead, the other trees  
just hurdles to walking.

They have no fire  
unless it starts at centre, and all around  
lit candles lie

making light where it can't be seen.

Tinnitus

When the cilia  
of the inner ear  
fail in mobility  
the result  
is a particular pitch,  
a drone inside  
the vestibulocochlear,  
not loud enough  
to be a scream.  
You don't know it,  
but that's the noise  
of that tone  
being heard  
for the last time.  
For some people,  
it's silence  
that brings the noise.  
Their auditory cortex  
alone in a room  
cannot stand the quiet.

I have nostalgia  
for multiple trace theory,  
the idea that it's the path  
the impulses take  
which is the thing itself,  
that the distance  
between temporalities  
is as simple  
as any other  
stochastic process.  
The mind as  
stock exchange.  
What do we sell  
for the memories  
we hold?

We look to black holes  
for the memories  
of our universe,  
in *Astrophysical Journal Letters*  
a photo of shock diamonds –  
galaxy-sized cosmic eruptions –  
leaping out  
and back in,  
this gold trace on A4  
what we have of that force  
which can stop the stars  
from forming.  
We reach out only  
to collapse.

Above my bed  
I hang plastic stars,  
they first need light  
to glow.  
Sometimes in the dark  
I am visited  
by the constellations of home,  
other times I feel clearly  
the path of my feet  
down from Cott beach,  
the hot bitumen,  
the peppermint leaves  
under our lips  
as we try to whistle  
the Violent Femmes,  
our skin  
blistering beneath  
the sun.