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Poems by Hope Houghton

The Wrong Car

well, you've got to believe me
we're riding in the wrong car again
peggy was always so wonderfully honest
except when she needed to survive for one more day

she talks to me in the backseat
you know that i'm slipping away again
it's the wall street wednesday wrestler
he wants me to try harder to fight back

well, you've got to believe me
we're riding in the wrong car again
she whispers as she rubs her thin pale arms
mr. cul-de-sac tries so hard to be truthful
as much as his prudish wife will allow
till he needs me some more this week

and she shivers as the sunrise hits her
stuffing her cold hands under her legs
she cries that she's slipping away again
staring down at her stained red dress
remembering the high school teacher
who thought he could teach her something new
peggy laughs as she tells me there is nothing new

well, you've got to believe me
we're riding in the wrong car again
she shouts back to me as she leaves the car
putting on her black leather raincoat
on her way to meet sam the dentist

he likes her to drown for him on sundays
she hopes one day she can be honest
but she knows she's slipped too far away

Bring Back My Son

waves of devils and their kin
lick and eat, tear off my skin
as i walk through hell again
knowing i am cursed as i burn
still i can't wake up this time

bring back my son
morning light screams aloud
the earth has stopped, turned around
still there is spinning in my head
and i can't remember where my god has gone

death and plague
collapses in the brain
no one can explain
what has happened to my son

there's a lullaby heard
in a vacant board book
sung by every other child but mine
and the ripped out pages on the floor
won't allow me to forget what's wrong

and i can't go back, i can't go forward
and i don't go home, not in the now
so i wander from face to face, eye to eye
but i never look up to the sky
cause i don't want to see him in this life

so, i'll break my body almost in two
removing my mind and soul from the room
as i try to get through one more day
bleeding myself, purging the pain
waiting to hear from my son, anything

Trees in the Brain

clatter, chatter, shatter
you see i'm all mixed up
trees growing in my head
branches breaking my brain

i can't make sense of anything
noises, voices, feelings, faces
and i'm getting sick from the pain
think i'm scared to walk in the rain

can feel myself crumbling
a pile of dust on the floor
can't seem to pull myself together
and i'm waiting for someone, maybe him
to see me, hold me, dream of me
but he doesn't have time anymore
and i wonder when that became okay

black and blue and bruised
bet you won't fight again
leaves blinding my eyes
sap strangling my throat
i tried to separate from the suffering
but i'm afraid of losing what's me
so i turn my head down to the ground

decaying a bit more each day
collapsing inside this skin
as he tells me he loves me
and i never say a thing

my heart tells me i'm broken
she's been beaten and battered too
still i'll be okay, i'll be fine someday
maybe i'm just still a boy
digging holes in my hands
leaving branding marks

Cowboys and Indians

nods from the manager
as i meet mr. cowboy
in some forgotten motel
his wedding band still on

cowboys and indians
never could decide
which team to ride
so i let both sides
capture me inside

i broke a vow, caught on fire
born in a tipi, crushed the tribe
ceramic kin, blood prison
notes stapled to my head
father says i'm just like him

never wanted to be his indian
can remember daddy's women
and how he wanted divorce
wanted to kill the him in me

but hate feels like home
as i fall into a cowboy's lap
loved his boots and voice
even after i refused him twice

met mrs. cowboy today
don't think she knows
as she carried two kids
and was growing a third
made me sick to feel this pain
as i relived my mother's cries

still sin fuels this family
as i chase down that cowboy
begging him to conquer
an indian girl escaping
she smiles to me, you know
from that ceiling mirror

Lucy

waves of water
rise from the earth
floating in the air
wrapping me in a wall
smothering me, filling my lungs
i'm scared, but i can see through
to a calmness, an apple orchard
and a pair of birds circling above

bristol black days
and a man i shouldn't have known
drew my plans, forged my life
from metal, millwork, and madness
he always said he liked america

lucy, tell me where you're going
but it's too late, she's already gone
signs of her are everywhere
waitress in a plaid hat
cleaner with a diver's watch

and her coat out with the trash
her ghost lingers still
too lost to know where to go

wanted to fall since 1914
but couldn't get it right till now
boots and bullets and bravery
strewn across a watered graveyard
as people pass and leave bouquets
lucy found her exit at last

thought she deserved something more
than this, being just honey and glue
well, that's kind of a shame
cause i really enjoyed your sin

show me this heaven
that they speak of
show me this world
they all dream of

lucy, tell me how brave you are
lucy, tell me can you keep running
lucy, tell me where you're going

Hope Houghton is in her mid-30s and resides in North Carolina. Her bachelor's degree is in English Literature. Hope's work has appeared in numerous literary magazines including *Phati'tude Literary Magazine*, *Write From Wrong*, *Skyline Review*, and *The Write Room*. In 2010, Hope was nominated for a *Pushcart Prize* for her work in the *Literary House Review* and was included in the *Hudson View's* International Poetry Digest available online. Hope recently had her first collection of poems, *Skeleton Prayers*, published through Water Forest Press (June 2011). A further listing of Hope's work can be found on her public Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/hope.houghton1>

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