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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

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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

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## 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

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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

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**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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