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## Poems

*by Lyn Lifshin*

### Drifting

things I have and  
don't have  
come from this  
moving between  
people like  
smoke. I've been  
waiting the way  
milkweed I  
brought inside two  
years ago stays  
suspended, hair in the  
wind it seems to  
float, even its  
black seeds don't  
pull it down  
tho you don't under  
stand how any  
thing could stay  
that way  
so long

---

### Why Areograms Are Always Blue

Because of the distance to you.  
Because the wind fades,  
dries out the verbs  
until the background they've  
leaned against blends  
with the sky.  
The blue reflects your eyes.  
No, that's a lie, I don't  
remember them, only the  
feeling in my hands, some  
thing longing, aching the  
blue in my veins a fast  
blue burning barriers

---

### Not Quite Spring

Baby, you know I get high

---

on you, come back with me  
whispering in her ear.  
It was all she could do to say  
no, spring leaves budding,  
his hand on her breast,  
crocus smell and  
everything unfolding.  
She gasping *I want, I*  
*would* but instead hurrying  
back to the windowless room  
where she locks the heavy door.  
Lemons are rotting on her pillow,  
she studies her nipples,  
nyloned crotch in mirror  
then hugs her huge body to sleep

---

## **Cat Callahan**

being fat until  
that spring, I still  
felt fat on Main St  
in my town but

not when the science  
fair went north,  
Burlington for 3 days,  
I met the kind of

long haired boy I  
hadn't. The photograph  
with my eyes huge,  
how the cop downstairs

groaned when he screamed  
in with that Ford.  
Relatives squirmed at  
his name. By June I

unbuttoned my sweater,  
wriggling in a back  
seat near Champlain  
Al Martino's *Oh My Love*

I've hungered for so,  
the pink check dress  
wrinkling a long time  
as things inside  
unchained were saying

---

yes, yes tho I didn't

---

## **Fitzi in the Yearbook**

grin muffled but  
sneaky, slithering  
out like his penis  
did in the Drive In  
a June before I could  
imagine anything so  
slippery sliding up,  
let alone inside  
me after months of  
Saturdays in my  
mother's grey apartment,  
my sister giggling  
behind the couch,  
a tongue pressing  
between lips should  
have been a warning in  
the blue Chevy I felt  
he was all whale  
crashing with his  
now you've done  
this to me, you have

to, everything in  
me sand he  
collapsed on

---

## **In Spite of His Dangling Pronoun**

He was really her favorite  
student, dark and just  
back from the army with  
hot olive eyes, telling her of  
bars and the first  
time he got a piece of  
ass in Greece or was it  
Italy and drunk on some strange  
wine and she thought  
in spite of his dangling  
pronoun (being twenty four and  
never screwed but in her  
soft nougat thighs) that he  
would be a  
lovely experience.  
So she shaved her legs up high  
and when he came  
talking of foot notes she  
locked him tight in her  
snug black file cabinet where

---

she fed him twice a day and  
hardly anyone noticed  
how they lived among bluebooks  
in the windowless office  
rarely coming up for sun or the  
change in his pronoun. Or the  
rusty creaking chair  
or that many years later  
they were still going to town in  
novels she never had time to finish

---

## **Eating the Rain Up**

grey Tuesday  
rain all night  
You said do you  
want to go  
for cigarettes  
do you want to  
listen  
I've got a  
got a room we  
could  
I've got something I want  
you  
at least  
we could  
talk  
tell me your name  
Books fell across the bed  
Your mustache  
was the kind, I  
wrapped your mouth  
into me

---

yes I knew  
your thighs would be  
friendly, your  
hair closing  
down  
small hands a pillow  
and the  
wetness we grasped,  
that warm together  
ate the rain up

---

## **Lemon Sun, Saturday**

wind chimes

Jenny's slightly sour  
sheets

the few white hairs on  
your chest  
I'm sorry I couldn't  
forget  
and swing, but my eyes  
were burning

lying now, this mattress  
in your old friends' house

lemon sun, Billy's

---

## ***Tennessee Blues***

thru the shade. He's been

---

playing since midnight

Jenny standing in the  
door, parting the  
curtains slowly

---

## **Light from This Turning**

I have lost touch with  
distant trees,  
the wind you brought  
in your hair  
and lilac hills.

Something different  
bites into the river  
and the river of lost days  
floats over my tongue.

Love, you are like that  
distant water, pulling  
and twisting,  
you turn me

apart from myself  
like some frightening road,  
something I don't want  
to know

Still, let my  
hair float slow through  
this new color,  
let my eyes absorb  
all light

from this turning  
that has brought us  
here, has carried us  
to where we are,  
we are

---

## **On Another Coast**

Maybe  
could it have  
been because of

---

rain that we fell  
together so  
easily that first time  
rain keeping the  
others near the  
fire your hair was  
blacker than the melon  
seeds under the straw the towels  
smelling of sweet trees our  
bodies lifted to each other in the  
rain cottage the  
wet leaves pulling us  
close and down

---

## **All Afternoon We**

read Lorca  
by five snow  
blurred the  
glass. February. I  
leaned against  
those chill panes.  
Gypsies  
burned through the  
snow with apples  
You in the  
other room  
I was thinking  
don't let  
this be some  
warmth I can  
move near  
and never know

---

## **Lemon Wind**

all day  
nobody wanted  
to talk

the sleeping bags  
were still wet  
from the storm  
in Cholla Vista

Nothing went right.

But later the  
wood we  
burned had a sweet

---

unfamiliar smell

and all night  
we could taste  
lemons in the wind

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**Lyn Lifshin** has published more than 120 books of poetry, including *Marilyn Monroe, Blue Tattoo*, has won awards for her non-fiction, and has edited four anthologies of women's writing. Her chapbooks include *NOVEMBERLY* from ETC Press, *When a Cat Dies and Another Woman's Story*, *Barbie Poems*, *She was Last Seen Treading Water, what Matters Most*, *August Wind* from Portrait Press and *In the Darkness of Night* from Concrete Meat Press. Her most recent books include *Barbaro: Beyond Brokenness* from Texas Review Press, *Persephone* from Red Hen, *Mad Girl* and *Tsunami*. . New World Press published *Desire* and will publish *All the Poets (Mostly) Who Have Touched Me, Living and Dead*. *Katarina* is forthcoming as well as a new selected and collected and she is working on other manuscripts. Her web site is [www.lynlifshin.com](http://www.lynlifshin.com).