BROKEN DAYS

'My voice repels death; my death; your death; my voice is my other. I write and you are not dead. The other is safe if I write.'

 – Hélène Cixous, *Coming to Writing and Other Essays*

SLEEPWALKING

We'd like to peek at what's beyond, but nothing's there, so we dance our way to the back of the queue and hope our names will not be called. I didn't get where I am today by being dead, but I will be dead when I get to wherever I am going. A time machine might take us back to where we came from but in the future we'll be forgotten saints turned to dust. All that was yesterday, now there are new liturgies of shouts, hollers and howls, and a makeshift lean-to heaven.

Invisible connections, white starline song, sounds from another world

SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS

Ask your mother and see what she says, ask your father and find out if he agrees. There will always be a shadow in the house where others used to live. The cat avoids these places, and dust is settled there; time stands still or moves more slowly and it is hard to work out why. Your name is nearly all that's left apart from an awkward portrait on the wall and some poems I wrote at the time. Death is out of reach of explanation when it comes to worry and acceptance, rarely at the forefront of our minds unless we're ill. We second guess ourselves and ignore sensible advice, march on towards our end.

Dirty fingernails, over-ripe fruit, dreams we used to share

DEAR FATHER

All I have is what I can remember, and what I can remember isn't much at all. The years pass and my photo of you on the windowsill fades. The back garden at home is still small, but the apple tree has gone and the fence has been replaced, the alleyway is gated, and the neighbours have built a big extension. By the tube station there are new tower blocks for students, built where factories used to stand. We passed them on the way to school, which has also been demolished. No-one can take memories away but I have mislaid mine all on my own.

Yesterday, today, tomorrow, the spaces in between

ANOTHER SIDE OF THE SKY

I am the moments you never had, the time after you died, and you are still wherever you are, shimmering in imagined light. It has been a while, body and shadow no longer adhere to the rules of our abandoned world and we have tried to mend the broken days without you. When there is no sun it is often dark and night is here to stay: it is all too clear no-one is home. Backyard memories are all I have, cycling round the park and playing on the swings. Recent photographs of you and me are empty, each one blurred, underexposed.

Silence is twice as long backwards, singing makes it even worse

BEFORE YOU GO

Before you go, turn out the light and reassure us we will be okay. Please explain how it feels to die and what you hope we can achieve. Tell us how to remember you, whether you want celebratory fireworks or distressed cries and tears. Hold our hands and help us understand, direct us in our loss and grief. Would you like fresh flowers on your grave or prefer us to live with ashes in a dusty urn? Should we mention your name out loud or pretend you never were? Stop going out and shrivel up or make new friends out there? Here comes our future now, just as you turn into the past.

Sky dance, dark forest echoes, aftertaste of old

ELUSIVE

You are building your own coffin and mapping out the future, the way the whole thing ends, and what wonderland will be. Are you ready for another country, to stop facing your tomorrows? Do you have questions for the angels and a back-up plan if not? It feels as if you might be vanishing. Where the sun touches the water and the sky turns darker blue is as likely to be home as here. The clouds went that way, the sun another; high winds are forecast for tomorrow. All my spells are broken and you are nowhere to be found.

Agnostic bliss, nothing but words, no time after meaning

SUNSHINE BOY

There are moments I forget you aren't and start to write a letter or to call. You're still in my address book and smiling at the end of that concert video, but there is always rain and thunder to remind me you will not be arriving any time soon. Our friendship was tried and tested, there were no reasons left to give: we just turned up, turned out, as and when required. Now, I know that no-one's there, and we are both always alone. In your absence I try and measure the length of wind, count the stars and watch the prescribed burn.

Summer tears, fever shot, anger too far gone

TROUBLED CHILD

Strangers beside me, every step of the way; I am going nowhere and so, it seems, are they. Over my shoulder, the eternal present echoes through the canyon. I was a photograph but my smile isn't needed any more. I hope tomorrow is like today, do come downstairs and say hello. This is no way to get to heaven, is how it feels to have a broken heart before I wake up dead. I know this is my fade out but I am turning it right up loud. Listen out for me: silence will do the rest.

Ancestral meditation, groove machine, the beginning of the end

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

I was with you all summer, but will not be now. I have moved into the house of shadows and whirlwinds, ready to take my place in the dancing mist. I have someone else's blues and an adventure I do not want. Let my grave be a frozen field where I can listen to songs made by birds and trees. It is the lonely time: someone here is missing and I suspect it's me.

Open door, moss houses, forgotten estuary

BEWILDERED

It should have happened a long time ago, but I was busy cheating myself out of the end game. I dream all morning and dance all night, sleep to avoid the strange perfume of day. What have I to lose? An ocean of fear, shipwrecked songs, and yesterday's desire. I can't bear to think about how I must be my own understudy for the rest of the beautiful now.

Burning bridges, final score, the way you look tonight

LOVELESS PRAYERS

I spit into the river and listen to the silence of the muddy bank. I am trapped in three dimensions, an early morning sweat before the sun arrives, have forgotten what living is for and how to find my own way home. All the answers have gone and I have said my goodbye; I am stranded in sunrise and the tide is going out. Days like these, nothing matters. The charred fragments of later flutter in the breeze.

Field report, four minute warning, a silver-grey reprise

OUTGOING

The spirit of death is a serpent's kiss: so many tired old people waiting to rest. When he came home from the funeral he had had enough, was ready to move out. He abandoned a house full of memories and possessions and moved into a room. Mourning is a broken record, repeating over and over. He never went home again, simply rehearsed life in the dark while he was supposed to be asleep.

Pale electric light, house of cards, pray the soul away

GOLEM

Night fades softly and then it is dark. Tools of the imagination are put away and the cabinet safely locked. The stranger at the table speaks under my breath, puts music through the silence. I am waiting for the morning to see what I have made. The full version is only just coming to light, the creature wants to be found. Where you are is always your world; where I am is known as despair. Dying is a continuous process, there may be no end to this.

Story book, mud monster, many moons ago

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

I have known myself for many years now, don't like what I see. But in the past I played team sports and used public transport, have first-hand knowledge of love and pain. It's a mixed blessing, being wide awake in winter when the nights close in, but better than forever waiting. I have made music for the future and become nostalgic for the past. I have current or recent experience, and nothing more to say. Don't hesitate to contact me if you need to know anything more. In the meantime, I commend myself to you, I'm sure I'll fit in fine.

Last words, surrogate pleading, discontinued line