

RELICT

Karise Gililand on the Transition from
Bewildered Suffering to Active Hope

Flying all to pieces, you
vanished
One brilliant flaming mass,
flitting off in a million wingbeats
and the stopping of my heart
shaken from your roost
the trembling in the trees,
the rattle to the very roots
sent you scattered.

Bewitched, a heinous game of hide- and- seek
transitory glance
of wing, a flash of orange, and then
you were off and flew away again
Miles away, the trees
snatched you from all sight,
cryptic keepsafe.

Straying, your wings would freeze
(delicate, trembling things)
certain degrees allow the allopatric;
survival's separation
mimics a mountain keep-
The price paid for that safety
is steep; far countries cost.

I lay a garden on the hearth
all your favorite flowers,
sunny minutes stacked in hours,
the snow outside outwits at every turn.
Daneus, perplexed.
Waiting for you
to migrate back to me
is double winter
Will all those so fractured find the way back
home?

I know for whom I watch,
dissolved through distance.

In a chance, a laugh, a moment
You have landed on my shoulder, flown in
fleetingly
Shyly for second, searching.

Sometimes I think all of you will come back to
me,
Flying back in mass of glory
And shake of golden sun
Surrounded in the garden by the spicy scent of
roses;
spell undone.

A 'relict' is "a remnant of a formerly widespread species that persists in an isolated area."¹ This poem is dedicated to those who've watched someone they love disappear and fly away into a million pieces. Perhaps they were not the same because of illness of mind or body, spiritual wanderings, rebellion, death. Perhaps you get them back as I have, in pieces, in fleeting glances or expressions, a relict of a smile- but only for a short while, and then they're gone again. Sometimes, we long for the whole person we were before a crisis, before illness, or depression. We wonder if we will even return to our whole, healed selves.

Like the life cycle of the migratory Monarch butterfly, this suffering and symbolic resurrection demonstrates repeated regeneration: life, changes, seeming death, transformation, and shivers of

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/relict>

hope. The irregular rhythm of this poem reflects the same sort of transition from bewildered suffering to active, poignant hope.

We long for that ultimate healing, when "everything broken is made new again" and the spell is utterly undone.