

*Origin Unknown*

Outside, all day  
An uncertain sky  
In uncertain times, shifts  
First snow, then sun, snow again  
Blazing blue blasts into blustery-white  
Inside, only atoms and art,  
I ask an impossibly tall guard,  
“Can I sit?”  
He looks up from his cell  
“Students do it all the time.”  
Though I see no students, I sink  
To the floor, silencing my phone  
Deep in a pocket of grief  
Beneath the black column  
**Tower of Life & Death**  
A Raven perched on its **Precipice**  
A whispered warning

It is **No Longer Morning in America**  
And **Not All Probabilities are Conditional**  
Where is the **Protector** now?  
With this news of **Affliction**, arriving  
Like the **Drop of a Hat**  
Inoperable brain cancer, Hodgkin’s  
No room for **Renunciation**  
My God, Michael is only 39!  
His sons seven and eight  
For the sake of the children  
Measures must be taken  
**Sacrifices** made, **Scorch** it out  
The tinder’s have been laid  
    **Rice Crispy** chairs  
    **Snap, Crackle, Pop**  
    **Pepsi** Picture frames  
    Carbonated memories fading fast  
    **Cliff Bar** boxes rounded into logs  
    All waiting for the **Orange Crush** of flame  
Pray the Chemo works  
Save the **Cheerio** box tops  
Something must sustain the heart

And is not the soul, always a slave to the heart?  
Perhaps the gleaming **Torah Pointer**  
Will unite our sudden scrambled search party  
Now desperately seeking signs  
From long forgotten **Faces of Indigenous Gods**  
As elusive as the soft underbelly  
Of a **Red Tiger Moth**

We **Dig**, anyway  
Only our hands entangled  
In a **Black Mass**  
Of mahogany roots  
Redoubling our efforts  
Deeper, deeper  
Clawing, clipping, hoping to hit  
**The Great Wall of China**  
Anything is possible, right?  
It's how they took down  
The Berlin Wall  
Brick by bloody brick  
Stone by bloody stone  
So why not, let the chemo  
Chip away, cell by bloody cell?

My moods shifts like the fickle sky  
Fingers following a maze  
Of **Trees, Happiness** turns to **Gloom**  
And back again, to **Love**  
**Love** holds out  
Paper, scissors, rock  
Cover the sounds of **Joni Mitchell**  
Singing silently amidst a **Wall of Women**  
When **Snap, Crackle, Pop**  
The **Pepsi** frame bursts into  
The long awaited **Orange Crush** flame  
Scattering rice paper memories  
While the **Ladies With Guns** salute  
A **Wedding Procession**  
Said to be the source of such an **Affliction:**

Michael, sold cell phones for a living

Always, invisible bullets

Aimed at his head  
Indeed it is **No Longer Morning in America**  
We must pack up our misguided **Probabilities**  
Conditioned or not  
Trust in the constantly evolving exquisite vagaries  
Of insight and art,  
**Of Life and Death**  
All the while sink to our knees  
Praying our perception will be enough  
Like Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle  
Sometimes the best we can do  
Is honor the mystery  
Imagining the best of any probable outcome  
Free the beauty  
Which is our life  
Which is our art.

--Bridget Birdsall