

SOMETIMES

Sometimes a person you love
becomes someone else. It takes years to realize
that person is never coming back.

Sometimes something wonderful occurs,
a sister you thought exotic but brittle
becomes your best friend, maybe through
mysterious and troubling circumstances. Maybe
she has a breakdown. Speaks with demons.
Walks through bright and terrible fields.

I can't know what happened inside Gale's mind
after it broke. She told me later
about the fields of lilies, the lady from Hell
who became her confidante,
but like a war veteran did not talk much
about what I could not understand.

I am trying to remember when
formality dissolved between us,
when we began to laugh together like two crones
over the same oddities. When it became easy
to tell her anything.

Sometimes I know I loved Gale enough.
Sometimes I am sure I did not.
She wouldn't agree—she believed in me more
than I ever believed in myself.

When my sister was in hospice,
I fumbled with her head scarf.
The straw I placed carefully in her mouth
dribbled water onto her neck.
I'm a bad nurse, I said,
trying to laugh away shame.

No you're not (patting my hand
with her own very weak one).
You're a good nurse.
You're a very good nurse.