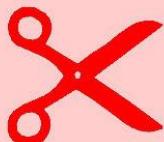


MIDWESTERN SKIRT



poems by
K WEBER

2018 INTRO

It's been 15 years since I self-published the very slim print version of *midwestern skirt*. To date, it is the only one of my 4 books of poetry to be available in a physical copy. It is no longer in print, and it seemed time to give this collection a digital hurrah since my other titles only exist as downloadable PDFs with an audiobook MP3 version as well.

What to say about *midwestern skirt*? There is a whole other iteration of me that exists inside a lot of these poems. I was at the pinnacle of undiagnosed bipolar disorder. I lived in many reckless and strange ways I can't explain, even re-reading a few of these poems. I didn't sleep much but I kept going. I was constantly social and drunk and I was headed toward the hospital. Not long after I published *midwestern skirt*, it was a new year and 2004 immediately put me in a screaming ambulance.

I am glad I was able to capture some of those unusual times in free verse. Some of my favorite poems I have ever written like "Spring, Glen Helen" and "near to sleeping" would never have written themselves or found a way to my page without some deeply inspired times in nature and in trouble.

It wouldn't be until 12 years later, after moving once a year around Dayton and Cincinnati and Dayton and Cincinnati and Dayton and Covington and Dayton that I would be properly diagnosed. Despite the fact that I ran out of that hospital, and for years tried to get well and better, numerous obstacles and bad luck just seemed to keep me in a delicate imbalance. I lost my first "real" job a few months after this book was finished and read. From there I just held on to whatever I could in

order to have some sort of life. The days that were filled with euphoric mania were good until they weren't and I didn't want to get out of my bed's underbelly. Most of the time I tried, but when the depression and medication were all wrong and turned on me, the feeling of wanting to fly because you feel an adrenaline rush became a feeling of wanting to fly to the top of the apartment building next to mine and jumping.

So many doctors and therapists and it took me until 2015 to find a human being who immediately saw that I was vastly undertreated for bipolar mania. Say what you will about medications and I will say what I will about my life still kind of being crappy nowadays, but the biggest instigator of my bizarre behavior with nonstop energy and the sudden abandon of all consequence is finally at bay.

These poems rush through my blood. I feel distant from some of these scenes but also find an amazing gratitude for having survived myself or the settings I put myself in when I had little control. I am proud of myself for maintaining a connection to the outdoors during those times when I would rather have been in a bar, lacquered in my own cigarette smoke. I relied heavily on music to act as soundtrack at this time, when I also was going through a divorce, but not really sure what was important to me or why I felt so good or why I felt so very, very miserable.

Moments like the ones I recall in "pavement movement" and "cemetery" were critical. Even though I was spiraling and hadn't quite seen it for myself at the time when I was putting *midwestern skirt* together, I still saw beauty in the ordinary, paused to breathe.

k weber/august 2018

Foreplay

I fit your form:
bee-buzz your ear, save
you from hum-
drum

Your back rests
my spoon, your curve
slight
as moon
sliced against sky

When we've been
frontal
and facing, I have
tasted the fork
in the tip
of your tongue

Moved mouth
over finger-
tips
and dented earth
with my elbow; whole
arm tugging
for your shirt

Favorite Velvet Day

wrestle on the floor
and untie me
from monotony

the sound
of a shriek is only
a few decibels away
from the canopy
bed to the bathroom
where everything becomes
clean

I notice the details
in the cool-tiled floor
and under the sink
wine bottles
are wrapped in towels and you
smell too much like a flavor
of fruit juice
to sip

to touch
a match would rip
the skin and think
about the skin and the scent
of skin and how
skin seems to melt
under fluorescent light

why did georgia o'keefe ever
decide to eye the petals
and invite herself

inside the microscopic
beginnings

tomorrow
we will be
in mid-morning
pajamas

and it will be some
kind of saturday stretched
out like a siamese cat
if not thinner
the lazy
yarn ball rolled out
to infinity

you'll dissolve
into the couch again
the trees will tap
against the house there
will be a haze which forecasts
a storm

when we were kids
we thought the fog was dry
ice almost a smoke
screen and sometimes as good
as grey

Karma calls

When someone stops
looking at me but instead
looks right *through* me
I know
the jig is up

My bills have been
stacked for weeks
I was nine
beers high last night

I woke up
feeling like I was in
someone else's dream

I didn't understand
the onion skins
on the floor, the
three cats, the dog
shit

I made the walk
of shame to the calmly-lit
bathroom; stuck my head
in the toilet
like I was trying to climb
back into the womb

Instead of rebirth, I tasted
mucus and Miller Lite
all over again

Spring, Glen Helen

Among the dog-sniffed snow
trillium, jack-in-the-
pulpits
suck in their stomachs
and get hard
when you walk by

Sun seeps through
trees and waters
a staircase of stones
pressed
in dirt

Soon shaded miles
break into open
air: a field of green
grass where wind
runs

Then trees
reconvene—

gray-green
quiet over head

beds of fallen needles
below cushion footsteps

Even the pines
hold their breath

The summer scratch

This season I have already peeled
mosquito stings
from my too-bare
forearms and unwound

fresh fruit, leaving skin
under my fingernails

At night I tuck my
elbows inside lemongrass
sleeves and under citronella sweaters,
and I avoid summer dresses

with my legs
To become a catch in this humidity

is like playing the lottery
without ever learning
winning numbers
It's easier to simply rub

silver grit off of a ticket
to reveal a prize

Is this hit or miss? Sure
thing, missus
I am currently alive
to the sound of me

not digging at my face
with anger or taking apart

my bedroom wall or closet
with a kicking leg
or a hair-pulled scream
I am letting lightning

bugs taste what
I am really like

And I like the way an evening
walk now mostly ends where
it started fifteen years in the past
with a hand under my shirt

and not an ashtray thrown
or a mirror being broken

into the palm of my hands
as a bad-luck
reminder, a seven-year
itch that won't pass

Seasonal wardrobes

Spring: The cherry
blossoms

burst
into linens

You come

downstairs

wearing
their fragrance

Summer: So humid,
your mouth under
my dress

Autumn: Our morning robes
off in a pile
of leaves

Our afternoon
sweaters beside ciders

The scent
of evening is cedar
closets (full-bodied)

Winter: We'll wear anything to keep
warm where there is
ice or

where there is
eyesore

Mmm hmm

Out of tune, un-
furled

I mix
myself up

and you
(thank you)

reminded me I was
everything

on your list
and I laughed

when you said "stable"
was on that list

but you told me
I was stable

because I knew
when I wasn't

Nuance

If you pull my hair
while making love to me
it won't satisfy
my urge to pull out
every strand alone

I know how
to make my legs
wet when I want
and that's not just
a sweet diversion

Kind of funny
when we all realized
the woman who didn't
have sex on her wedding night
or during her honeymoon
was me

Because when we played
the tape back
of all my memories
we saw those private moments
in my grandma's backyard: me
next to the drain pipe and under
the maple tree that to this day
still has my kite's tail
trapped at the top

Barbie's tits were in my mouth
more than once
and refrigerator boxes
became cardboard boyfriends

Every other 1980's song
on the jukebox
at my favorite bar
has a video that somehow
got me hot and all the fire
hydrants I pass by remind me
of Dayton summers when I was six
and no one ever told me
about sex so I just assumed
the position

this month, medicated

you would have thought
the bed was on fire
by my urgent voice, at night,
disoriented: broken
lock on a broken
box

my thoughts unhinged
themselves, rambled
for days, had every
disease, felt every little
death

it's times like these
i miss my dog
and my handwriting's gone
shaky

and the smell of you
comes into my home--
intensified-- reminds me
of how you made yards
and bicycles
easy

i will never know why
the ease of you
drifts into my fingers
and mouth

and the uneasy beauty
of me right now exists
in blue-eyed tears

This morning's walk

retraced last night's
distance with you
but I added one more
block and alleyway for myself; inhaled
new daffodils, brown ivy, a heavy
trash bag that Thursday
forgot

I missed the past two
months as I laid restlessly
indoors, in bed--
a precursor to laying
on an operating table
with my back open
and parts removed

Three days later I notice
the neighborhood
awoke as undisturbed
as sleeping children; the sun
was so quiet I could
almost hear the ache
of an oak

I guess I'm feeling reborn
right now and maybe next week I won't
observe the color of the skin
under your fingernails
or the rhythm of awkward feet
shuffling the sidewalk as I make my way
through physical therapy and the city

As much as I, freshly
separated and dissolution-anxious, thought
four months ago that the phoenix
tattoo I wore on my back would seem
cliché, it keeps coming back to remind
or haunt me

cemetery

when you can't relate
to yourself
or the living

might as well try the dead

and we did, softly
stepping past granite
headboards where they

sleep; souls propped up

in coffins, blanketed
with earth they used
to cartwheel and touch

as quietly as pillows

my grandparents rest
without cancer
while i smoke and notice

the sky, unclouded

their memorials have stains
from family
decorations, since removed

we hold our breath

while a thin sheet
of a sundried plant
whispers past

then climbs through the air

higher and still
yet higher, until we can
no longer see

and there is not even a breeze

pavement movement

(for jacob motherfucking stahl)

the child you wants to ride
up near-summer hills and steep, paved ways
when i see you i wonder when
your cheeks first rose to color
and how your hair got so strange
later, sitting in damp grass
watching and spitting into fountains
in the park, we eat sushi
like adults but drink chocolate
beer like babies nursing aluminum teats
we feel young and free
cutting across lanes of traffic and singing
but strict as schoolmasters
when kids yell "eat me" and throw
popsicle sticks and yard clippings at us
as we stretch a mile or so of shroyer road

drunk in Cincinnati

or Newport
or Covington

wandering off
from the mansion
with neon windows

several blocks
of laughing
find us
finding your car

and we wanted to go
to the Anchor
so we drove
away from the water

to the nearest
gas station to ask
directions from the nearest
drunk cab driver

and then we smoked
the parking lot
and ate diner food
under reflections

of rotating colored glass
and seaman's belongings
while the earth rotated
around our conversation

on the ride home
i eased into sleep
with your hand on my head
and my eyelids calm

as sailboats

The weeds nestled next to the lilies

You could never be
a lily, laundered

with your topographical
mess of hair

Daylight flickers by
and fumbles

over you
Looking beyond

I picture you
in your ragweed dress, dragging

thick along the sidewalk
while you wait for rain

to drink you in
to drink you in again

until you're finally filled
to lily-tips; a wildflower

And this is what happens

I know you miss
my slow tease
of lips

except when they kiss
cigarettes

What's happened
to the bike or the bed
or even time spent?

I didn't think to lose
my thoughts: the box
of wine
invented everything
past 10PM

That Saturday
I ashed on a plate

of food you didn't want
to make and I cried
on the stairs

because I made
your face change

near to sleeping

uptight and now
tied up: you
with red hair
running down
your cheeks

your sweat
is my sigh
as we play, breath-
to-breath, while thigh
undoes thigh

near-sleeping and wet
i muffle your mouth
firm with my
kiss; hard-pressed
to let you go

reserve

my hair swims
like seaweed
through the air

you follow
your dog down
all these watery
paths to me

and then a handhold
turns into a death-
grip

and a walk
in the woods
becomes life
support

over and over and end

all i know about
what you think
of me now is that you
think of me

on paper

and you
are pushing twenty
pages to force
me out

which is more

comfortable than a door
screaming shut on me
which i arrive
at your house

like a death letter

as soon as
you stop
writing me
down

i will

or won't
hold my breath
or your hand
waiting for the epilogue

so this has been the best and worst year of my life: love and loss, breakups and breakdowns, getting separated, visiting los angeles, sobering up from workaholism, racking up points on my license, writing songs, laying in bed for a few months, having surgery, dog walking, kitchen fire, buying a bike, having my bike stolen, going to shows and being a social butterfly, going to shows and seeing through everyone, fixing up and selling my old house, packing and unpacking, moving out of a ridiculous suburb, moving into an affordable place, settling and re-settling, knitting hats and blankets and purses, sewing, unraveling everything, managing to get wrapped up in drama while simultaneously trying to avoid it, swearing off cell phones, making and receiving mixtapes, listening to records, panic attacks, going on and off benzos, hiking, hand-



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holding, thrift store dresses, being outside and inside, playing guitar on the front porch, scrabble, reading, canoeing, basement floods, pipes bursting, ed wood movies, documentaries, blacking out, ambiguous romance, having/lacking self-confidence, cigarettes, tattoos, poetry readings, working on magazines, drinking, french films, journals, chambord martinis, appreciating family, dressing up like the 1951 donut queen, reading zines, hanging out, being in love & loved, spooning, being inspiring and inspired, visiting medway, elbo's overload, cooking, creepy polaroids, your bullshit, mine, spending time, spanning time...& some people don't even get to experience all these things in their entire lives, let alone a year... good or bad, this all added up to me seeing/tasting lots of situations from different angles and gauging how i dealt/deal with my newfound independence in post-separation mode and moving on... i'm writing a lot these days which makes me happy but i remain very true to my undying sad bastard-ness which says a lot about how these things affected me in the end...

yes you

francis possibil, jacob stahl, brandy voiles, debbie kirk, stephanie hoerner, alice goguen, tim krug, josher lumpkin, joe liston, misty hudson, amy hunter, nicole friend, greg schultz, jason o'mara, joel wheeler, andy molloy, lucy nguyen, marc betts, brad wright, mark luntzel, karen whyte, mike o'neil, bob miller, rob butler, nathan lewis, marc betts, brian gerhardstein, failed seeker, places that let me read this stuff out loud using a readily/not-so-readily available PA system (southgate house, jags, leaf and vine, yellow springs monthly reading), neil young, leonard cohen, damien jurado, lou barlow, rolling stones, soledad brothers, the velvet underground, songs:ohia, bob dylan, mallory, the kinks, will oldham, billie holiday, red house painters, donovan, the clientele, pavement, mitch ryder and the detroit wheels, nuggets vol. I and II, heather mchugh, spencer short, david sedaris, david cross, indian food, old issues of hermenaut, belle the dog, documentaries, some like it hot, woody allen movies, sinus/nasal decongestants, karaoke nancy, french films, bike rides, hikes, carbohydrates, valley thrift store, adequate rest, vodka chocolates, knitting and sewing little things, bedrest-turned-surgery, my decent record collection, found objects, cheap beer, my really creepy polaroid camera, cemetery walks, hearty soups, mixtapes, my mistakes and my family

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- twitter: i am not a big fan of twitter, but i do occasionally loiter there under the username **midwesternskirt**



est. 2003

...this has been the 15th anniversary edition of 2018...