

Lessons

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I cannot remember
a day when I did not think
about dying.

The fish hasn't been filleted
that doesn't hide the
bone to choke me;

the bridge hasn't been built to stand
my crossing. As a
child each trip had me

sick on the backseat, my face
in a paper sack
once with the car still

parked in our garage.
The entire way
to Niagara

Falls, I saw the railing fail,
my family plunge
into the gorge.

Until I was eight my bedroom
 had a door leading
 to the attic,

and I lay in the dark knowing
 it would open if
 I closed my eyes.

Watching television alone
 when I was nine, I shook
 to hear *We interrupt*

this program –
 Cuban missiles were
 aimed at our house.

Then in the crowded lobby
 of the William Penn
 Hotel, I heard
 the President
 had been shot dead. When
 my brother got

Hodgkins, so did I. When my mother
 got Myasthenia,
 so did I.

Sitting in a cold hospice room,
 I was holding her
 hand when she died.