

*Journal*

26jano1, *flying west*

yesterday a year ago was the last time my sister spoke to her  
children

five-days-before-they-died

isn't it homeopathic, the ocean now?  
dilutions of her first daughter diluted  
into not-penance-but-ocean-now

the could-have-beens!  
the sparkling house

28jano1, *my sister's house, Seattle*

so what are we to make of the whole disappearing?

but there are still the girls' books and notes and keychains lit  
with dust,  
and dust is just skin so I wonder—  
are they here in the dust

in the paper this morning—  
a partial list of what-was-found  
bandana-slash-camera-slash-jeans

in two days they're burying all unidentified remains  
into a common grave

my mother is trying to paint again

the bird outside the window doesn't take off but gets caught in  
the branches  
and the sky's all tangled, too, reluctant to get bright

even claire's hair is getting light

38

29jano1, *beach house, morning on Vashon Island*

what but the water being high  
and it being colder than usual, earlier than usual  
and my sister waking in the dark  
and there being no clock so what time it is she only wonders  
not moving because not wanting to move  
though outside the water is all movement  
and glass gets washed up on the island  
reminding us how even heavy things tend toward shore  
where a woman walking alone after a break-up  
might find the glass and think it's a message for her  
until she thinks of my sister  
because out here everyone sad thinks of my sister  
while my sister in her bed waits for it to get light  
so it will get dark again  
and everything in between is impossible  
and so is the getting-to-sleep and the waking-up  
and even to lie by her side is almost impossible  
my body like eyes reading some incomprehensible text

who asks *is she better now?*

who's cleared the shore of every piece of washed glass,  
restored the scattered glass all softened and battered by the waves  
to its former state—a vase on a windowsill one spring day  
with yellow flowers and fresh water  
and a penny for good luck and to keep the flowers from wilting?

there is no other light, she says, it's all dark here

the same front page says 15,000 people killed in an earthquake,  
they keep trying to dig them out—

is it better to have someone to blame?

cold this morning—

31jano1, *small gathering in my mother's home, Seattle*

my niece wore a t-shirt with a yellow smiley face,  
the shirt my sister claims from the catalogue they sent her—

everything unclaimed got buried together  
and it fit in one coffin

we lit eighty-eight candles,  
they weren't supposed to drip  
but the colored wax spilled off the mantelpiece right down to  
the floor

sometimes I try to convince claire the girls aren't dead  
the plane didn't go down

*you're sick and lossened* my friend told me in a dream  
she said it mean but it was the truth

*lossened* sounds like *lozenge*,  
something to suck on, a tiny flange to shunt under the wobbly  
tongue

there was candlelight on my mother's face  
as she shaped the wax drippings into tiny rafts,  
held wax to the flame and taught my son what to do,  
she said, *do it like this*

islands of wax,  
bodies of wax, branches—

in that light she looked like a candle,  
pain lit up, as in church

what's unfinished is what we love—  
the ceiling at St. Mark's Cathedral  
and its raw beams

we don't finish, we leave the door unlocked